



The LIGHT *of the* DHAMMA

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of the
DHAMMA

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2499 B.E.

June 1955 C.E.



THE LIGHT OF THE DHAMMA

1. Please regard this not just as a quarterly magazine but as a continuing service for Buddhism.

Your frank criticism will be welcomed in a Buddhist spirit and if there are any questions pertaining to Buddhism that we can answer or help to answer, we are yours to command.

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THE EDITOR,
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Buddhist View of Religion

Bhikkhu Silācāra

WHAT is religion? That question is one that has been asked by many. And it is a question to which many different answers have been given. Some have asked it out of a genuine desire to probe the why and the wherefore that men should concern themselves so much with something having no very obvious connection with the world the ordinary man lives in, the common world he perceives with his five senses. These are those commonly called materialists because they have little interest in anything that is not in some way connected with the world of matter, and are genuinely surprised and puzzled that any one else should be concerned about anything not belonging to that world. We hope it is not being too unkind to classify such men as those who have not yet become men in the full sense of that word. For the plain English word *man* is surely derived in direct line of descent from the Sanskrit word, *Manas*, Mind. So that a man who truly is a man, is a *mind*, and not just a body. And being a mind, he must be a thinker, since thinking is the specific function of a Mind. And being a thinker, so soon as he has arrived at the age when the power of thought has attained to some development within him, there arises in his mind insistently a question that refuses to be set aside: “What is all this business of life about? What is it all for? Is it only just to eat, drink and sleep so many years, and then die? Surely there must be more in it than that. What is it?”

This, succinctly put, is the question which arises in the minds of nearly all thoughtful men as soon as they begin to think at all. And the various answers to it

given by different teachers and founders of religion in different quarters of the globe, constitute the different religions that have been, and are, believed in by the various races of men in different parts of the world.

We have just said that the *thoughtful* man asks these questions to which the differing religions give their differing replies. But what about the vast majority of the *thoughtless*, the *unthinking*? These latter, who have not yet become men in the full sense of the word *man*, thinker, for the most part simply accept without much question the answers given by the religion current in the region of the earth where they happen to have been born. As indeed, what else can they do, supposing them to pay any attention at all to the matter of religion? These may be quite fairly termed the child-minds of our species, and are to be found in all countries, in the so-called civilised countries quite as much as in the countries called uncivilised, professing belief in a hazy way in whatever religion they find current around them. With these we are not here concerned.

Rather are we here concerned with those who, having passed the stage of mental childhood, have arrived at mental manhood, and are asking *for themselves* the questions just indicated, and want to get *for themselves* the answer to them. These, when given the ready-made answers to their questionings furnished by the various established religions, ask: “How do I know that this that you say is true? I don’t say that it is untrue. I only want to know where I can find corroboration—if that should be the

case—of its truth?” And when told:

“You must have *faith* that this that we say is true,” they next ask: “What is this *faith* that you speak of?” And when a further exchange of question and answer in the same strain has gone on for a while, the questioner finally says: “It seems to me from all your replies to my questions, that this ‘faith’ of yours is just a boundless capacity for believing what all my experience and reasoning, thereupon, tells me cannot be true.” And with that he turns away from them, wholly unsatisfied and disappointed with those forms of religion which before all else demand of him “faith” in what they tell him. For this type of questioner, the man of full-grown mentality, is not looking for “faith”—which, be it noted, cannot be found by looking for it, its own protagonists themselves say: What he is looking for is fact, positively demonstrable reality that can be made clear to his reason, the reason which he uses to the best of his ability in his investigation of all other subjects that engage his mind apart from the subject of religion, which latter subject, he makes bold to believe, must be demonstrable to his rational faculty as much as these other concerns.

Has the mentally adult human being any justification for such a belief? He possesses an intellect just as he possesses hands and feet. And it is his duty and privilege to make the utmost possible use of that intellect of his, in the same way that he makes all the use he can of his hands to make things and of his feet to bear his body over the earth beneath them. And he cannot accept any limit that any man or body of men may seek to impose upon his use of the former, any more than he can allow any to put a limit upon the

private uses he may choose to make of the latter. He cannot sacrifice his intellect any more than he can sacrifice his hands or feet. Hands and feet are there for his service and use, and equally so is his intellect. To refuse to make full use of *it* in contradistinction to his other faculties, is simply senseless, foolish, absurd. There is no more ground in right reason why a man should cut off his reason and throw it away, than there is for his cutting off and throwing away hand or foot.

In the exercise of his reason, of his intellect, then, the mentally adult individual cannot help but question a good deal that is presented to him as truth by the faith-religions of the world—all of them. These set before him rules of right conduct, bodies of doctrine concerning a variety of undemonstrable matters, which they call upon him to accept simply upon their say-so. But this he finds himself unable to do. And so he feels strongly inclined to cast overboard all concern with religion of any kind as something that has to do only with the irrational. In the irrational, however, he is not in the least interested, but rightly regards it as matter that can only engage the minds of children, or those with the minds of children.

But here he would be mistaken, as in fact, so many people are. Religion is not essentially irrational. It is only the faith-religions which present it in a manner that—putting it at its mildest—strongly tends towards the irrational. Nevertheless, let us not fail in justice towards the faith-religions where they deserve it. Though they set forth their vision of truth in a manner that makes little appeal to the rational mind, still, they do set it forth, and in their own fashion seek to impress it upon the minds of their adherents.

All of them that are worthy of the name of religion at all, as well as all the great philosophies of the world in East and West, as for instance, Confucianism in the Orient and Stoicism in the Occident, have inculcated, one might almost say, are founded upon, a belief in each man's responsibility for his actions. All these religions and philosophies alike hold that a certain class of men's thoughts words and bodily actions, are to be regarded as "right" and another class as "wrong." They also teach that there is some power in the world that awards recompense to those who do what is good, brings retribution more or less severe upon the man who does evil. All the religions which teach thus, do not indeed, have the same scale of measurement for what is good and evil in men's conduct: far from it! The differences between them in this respect, are very wide, and very various. Yet they all do have the idea of righteous and unrighteous conduct at the basis of all they teach. Morality of some code or other forms the foundation of all religions deserving the name, that have ever influenced men for good in the history of the world. In fact, they are, and have been, of genuine value to the human race just in so far as they inculcated a right way of living, apart from all that they have taught in other directions. They have done real service to humanity precisely to the degree that they have taught that the natural desire of the "average sensual man" for the securing of what he regards as his own private pleasure and satisfaction, must be subordinated to something less narrow and restricted, namely, the good, the well-being, of other men, and eventually extended to a concern for the weal of all his fellow men.

Needless to say, men do not all at once arrive at this height of right conduct. It is only gradually, and by a steady evolution in this direction, that they eventually draw near to what is the culminating point of all right action,—freedom from all self-regarding considerations in the conduct of their lives. At what may be called the lowest levels of the pursuit of right conduct, we have the ethically primitive man's fear when he has done something wrong, that some great unknown Being, he knows not very well what, will in this lifetime or in some other—punish him for his wrong deed. And along with this idea there naturally also goes the hope that the same unknown great Being, when a man does a good deed, will reward him for the same, in some substantial way, in this world or another. After this, with further growth, the man's conception of right conduct leaves behind all ideas of gaining something for himself by such conduct, and widens out into the idea of gaining some good for his city for his nation, for his country, by the course of conduct he pursues. From being a narrow individualist he has become a lover of his townsmen, of his fellow countrymen, and of the land they and he spring from. This is a great advance; but there is still more to be attained before he can be called a true man, a practiser of right conduct in its fullness. He has to become—and this is a great achievement indeed—a lover of the whole race of mankind in every country and clime, and not alone in his own native land, and have all his conduct dictated by that love.

In these latter days when men are ceaselessly engaged on all hands in searching into the reasons why things are as they are in all domains of human

activity, this question of what constitutes right and wrong in their conduct has also come in for much criticism and investigation, and a good deal that used to be accepted without question is now very much questioned indeed. Intelligent men no longer believe that just because many thousands of years ago some great Being—called a god or what not—laid down a set of rules for men's conduct in which he declared such and such deeds to be "wrong" and such and such other deeds to be "right", that therefore without any question, those deeds must be accepted as quite wrong and these other deeds as positively right. In those past days of man's mental childhood, it might be enough for man that the expounders of theologies of one brand or another, declared with high decision that this and this men *must* do, and that and that they must *not* do.

But those days are long past. Men today want a moral code that is based on something other than the *ipse dixit* of no matter what body of grave and reverend seigniors, even of the most imposing ecclesiastical claims. Today men feel more than ever that a system of right conduct that has no firmer foundation than the word of some supposed great Being is not good enough. They require that it shall spring from something more rational than the capricious interposition in the affairs of mankind of such a hypothetical invention. To-day men want that any system of morality offered them, shall lead to definitely visible and useful results here and now in this world we all are living in, and not in some vague remote future that is to ensue after death.

It is a large claim to make, yet we boldly make it. When the man of adult

mind asks, as he has every right to do, for a religion which shall do no violence to his sense of what is just, reasonable, rational, there is only one religion in the world which meets this his demand, just one and no other, and its name is Buddhism. It is this religion alone which answers his requirement that it shall set forth a moral teaching based on sound logic and common sense. Such a moral teaching is to be found in the records of the Buddha's own words, as handed down by word of mouth—as was the custom in ancient India—and then later in writing incised on palm leaves, at a Council called together for the express purpose of gathering up all the words of the Buddha remembered by those called to the Council, and there given the stamp of authenticity for all future time. In that teaching as in all religious teaching, the effect it has had on the social life of mankind is that which weighs most with the modern man. It is with this aspect of Buddhist teaching, therefore, that we are now going to concern ourselves.

Taking Buddhist teaching as a whole, the first thing to note about it is that in it there is nothing whatever of the nature of a *theology*. "A strange omission in a religion!" many will say, and scarcely be able to believe it. Yet it is a fact. Buddhism is a religion, that is, it is a guide to men through life, and a comfort and a solace in death. And it is this, without reference to any kind of god as being necessary to either the one or the other of these two qualifications. All Buddhism has to teach mankind, is in line with, is based upon, the facts of life and strictly rational deductions drawn from these facts. And in setting out upon an examination into the character of this — to many —

surprising religion which is founded, not upon any supposed divine revelation but quite simply upon facts and logic, reason and truth, we must get a clear idea as to the exact nature of the matter with which we are going to deal.

Ethics, as usually understood, has to do with right and wrong, with what is good in conduct, and with what is bad in conduct. That, to begin with. Next it considers what are the effects of good and bad actions, what follows from them, regarding them as causes. And finally, it enquires into the manner in which these causes, good and bad actions, bring about the results that follow from them. And in our investigation of what makes an action to be right or wrong from a Buddhist standpoint, we find ourselves faced with a view of this question entirely different from what we find in other religions, leaving out the Vedānta and Sāṃkhya systems and some of the other great philosophical systems of India. Here the great line of cleavage between Buddhist teaching and the religious systems of the West in particular, is most clearly marked out by the fact that in Buddhism there cannot be found a term which with any approach to accuracy can be translated into the language of western religions as sin or evil, as these words are understood in the West. Buddhism knows nothing of a quality, and essential characteristic of anything which stands out in opposition to the quality of good.

Unlike the the majority of the great religious teachers of the world, the Buddha is strictly a psychologist. True teacher that He is, he makes his concern the states of consciousness we find in man and, in the ultimate analysis, takes nothing to do with the states of matter in the

hypothetical universe which we have constructed out of our states of consciousness. For it is a genuine, indisputable fact that what we all know and alone can know, at first hand, is just our states of consciousness. The supposed universe outside ourselves is no more than an inference from the data we find in our consciousness. So that when we talk about the universe, as we cannot help doing sometimes, we are actually talking about changes and variations in our own perceptions of we do not precisely know what, and in the mental changes and variations that follow upon these changes in our perceptions. Buddhism, in fact, deals with the actual world, the only actual world there is, the world that each man knows immediately within himself, the other being only a hypothetical one drawn from that one within him. Essentially the Buddha is always a psychologist, never a cosmologist.

To come back to the question we are dealing with: Right and Wrong are no more than particular modifications of our states of consciousness. The world we each carry about with us in our individual consciousness is just made up of good, bad, neutral states of mind, constantly changing. But the Buddhist conception of what is good, bad, and neutral, as regards our thoughts, or mental changes—which, be it noted, lie at the foundation of all our saying and doing, of all our words and actions—is quite different from what we find in the religions established in Western lands. In Buddhism, the idea of “sin”, of a something infecting some of men’s actions like a positively harmful blight, a downright evil principle, simply has no existence. In Buddhism “good” just

means fitting, appropriate, skilful; as “bad” means unfitting, inappropriate, unskilful.

And so a good or skilful thought is just one that conduces to happiness; as a bad or unskilful thought is just one that leads to unhappiness. From this it follows that ignorance, lack of understanding, is the source whence springs all that we call bad,— ignorance of the law of nature governing the actions of our mind. It is through a lack of right understanding, of correct knowledge of these laws that evil thoughts arise in our minds, evil words issue from our lips, and we come to the doing of evil deeds. For if we truly saw and understood beyond all peradventure how such thoughts, words and deeds produce, and can produce, nothing but suffering and sorrow, we should never think, say, or do, such thoughts, words or deeds.

Take the case of a little child,—and, more or less, we are all only children. “Men are but children of a larger growth,” as the poet Dryden truly says. It sees a candle flame,— such a beautiful bright, shining object, as it imagines in its simple, inexperienced mind. Surely it would be splendid to lay hold of such a splendid looking thing! No sooner thought than done! It grasps, or tries to grasp, the dazzling object, but by its action only gets its little fingers painfully burnt. Its action was an unskilful one, very much so, since it resulted in so much pain. And how did it come to do this so unskilful deed? Simply through lack of knowledge or understanding of the true nature of candle flames as burning fire. Through that ignorance or defective understanding, there arose in it the desire to seize and makes its own, the lovely, shining toy,

such as it had never seen before. If beforehand the boy had known, had understood the burning, pain-producing nature of a candle flame, such a desire for it could never have arisen in him; he would never have done the foolish, unskilful deed. His deed was a bad deed because it led to pain. And in this case, the pain was felt immediately by the one that did the unskilful deed. But the action of the child would have been equally bad, equally unskilful, if he had used his kitten’s paw in place of his own hand, to perform it, for this also no less would have been a cause of pain, of suffering. And even if, at the time, the child might not have experienced any of that pain yet, as we shall see later, in the long run he would find out that it was to himself he was causing hurt, even more than to his kitten.

So then, the true foundation cause of all that is bad in men’s conduct is simply ignorance. Consequently, the sure and certain cure for all that is bad in men’s conduct, is completely to get rid of ignorance from men’s minds. But in order to do this effectively, we have to understand before everything else the precise character of the ignorance that we are trying to get rid of. And this brings us immediately to the foundation of Buddhist cosmology,—so far as it has one—and to Buddhist ethics. For we are not overstraining speech if we say that the world we live in is made by this ignorance; and that all the suffering that is to be found in this, or in any other world, has been caused, and all the time is being caused afresh, by our lack of knowledge, by our lack of understanding.

Yes, it is through our not knowing, through our not understanding, that sorrow and suffering come to be. It is

through not knowing and not understanding, only from these, that desire arises in man and all that follows from desire, in brief: To a Buddhist these two things are the cause of the arising of all that is evil in the lives of men. If only one little ray of genuine understanding were to enter the mind of a murderer as he raised dagger or pistol to do his cruel deed, he would not, he could not, do it. Or if an intended thief could only see rightly, have true vision of the succession of causes and consequences that would follow on his action, his craving to seize to himself another's goods would die before it was born.

This ignorance, potent origin of all the evil that is in the world, is the active, growing root from which spring these three main stems: the craving to possess the things which move the thief to robbery, the passion of hatred that causes the murderer to raise his hands and kill, and the belief in a separate self,—his own individual self—which thief and murderer mistakenly believe is going to secure benefit to itself by their deeds of violence. This great tree of evil, along with these its three main branches from which all other lesser evils spring like offshoots on any growing piece of vegetation, can be cut off at its root so it can never grow again, only with the axe of right, true understanding, and with nothing else. This right, true understanding which we may equally well call at once, right seeing, is the perception, the seeing, the perceiving that all things and beings whatsoever are characterised by three typical marks and qualities, namely, *that they are continually changing* in all their parts; ceaselessly assuming other shapes. It is also the seeing, the perceiving that everything,

every creature that is alive suffers, but suffers only because it does not understand things rightly, and in its mental confusion does the deeds that bring upon it the suffering it encounters. Finally it is the seeing, the comprehending, the insight that there is not, and never was, a separate self-entity in this, or in any other world that can be known to man, whether high or low, subtle or gross, long-living or brief of years, whether god or man or insect under our feet. And the man who possesses this correct seeing, this true vision, this true understanding of the nature of all things and of that which he deems himself, *cannot* crave the possessions of another any more than he can hurt or kill another in a passion of hatred, increasing thus in the world the heap of suffering already great enough there, without his adding yet more to it.

The Noble Eightfold Path which is the one way to general wellbeing which all men must eventually follow, if not now then in the future, if they wish to attain lasting happiness, starts out with Correct Seeing or Right Understanding. And this right seeing or comprehension of things, above all else is the seeing, the understanding, that there is no such thing in the world as self-existent entity, whether called “eternal soul” or whatever else one likes. Even to lay hold of this truth merely with the intellect, is to have taken a great step towards peace. By deep meditation to have actually *realised* this truth for oneself in mind and heart, is to have reached the supreme height to which Buddhism seeks to lead humanity. Let us then proceed to examine its opposite pole, that contradiction of right comprehension which is ignorance, namely, the belief in the existence of a lasting entity called

“soul” or “ego”, and try to see what relation such a belief bears towards the question of the cause of evil, and how far the removal of such a belief from the minds of men will be likely to remove their suffering, to further the wellbeing of mankind at large.

In the lives of the ordinary members of humanity we have little difficulty in finding many examples of what the belief in separate self-ness—let us just call it plainly, selfishness—leads to. In the common man’s desire to get and enjoy things for himself, regardless of what distress or suffering his acquisitiveness may cause to others, in his passionate determination to secure the preservation of his own life at the cost of no matter whom else, we see clearly and unmistakably what is done by man to man through this prevailing selfishness of his. By far the larger proportion of human misery is caused just by this. As the poet truly says: “Man’s inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn.”

But there is a more deep-seated manifestation of selfishness which produces no less evil fruits on the tree of humanity than the more obvious manifestations seen in men’s daily lives. It is that form of the self-delusion which in the field of religion is responsible for some of the blackest crimes against humanity that have ever stained the annals of our race. It is what, for want of any better word, we must call “spiritual” selfishness. It is the belief that after death an “immortal soul”, a superior, refined sort of separate self, will still go on existing, and garner in the results of his past deeds in the present life. This “spiritual” selfishness it is which, hungry for the continued existence of its own

separate self, seeks to carry forward, to perpetuate, the delusion of self even past the portals of the grave. This it is that has been responsible for all the awful cruelties of which men have been guilty in the name of god and religion, from the “holy” wars of Saracen and Christian and the horrors of the unholy Inquisition, to the hatred in the name of religion which has kept alive almost down to our own day, the bloody persecutions carried on by zealots and fanatics of all kinds. It is this kind of selfbelief which has encouraged men to imagine that the most horrible cruelties perpetrated upon their fellowmen who did not hold their particular beliefs, might be well pleasing to their god, that war with all its iniquities, the burning pyre with its living victims, and wrenching rack, might ensure to the slaughterer and the torturer of others, a place among the highest ranks of the blest after death. This delusion of an immortal self continuing on after death has begotten in men a frightful readiness to ignore every impulse of kindness, or even common decency, towards their fellow men, if only they might, as they imagined, make sure of a splendid hereafter for themselves in a supposed future life. And it is also this same delusion of immortal selfhood which at times imparts even to some of the noblest actions of men, a repellent tinge of selfishness, turning much of their benevolence and well-doing into something very like a tradesman’s bargaining for future gain or profit.

In saying this we do not by any means wish to assert that every one whose professed creed teaches the continuance of self right on through all eternity, has throughout taken the bargainer’s view of all he has done for the good of others.

But still, where this creed holds secure place in any cranny of a man's mind, it is bound to have a good deal of influence on his religious and moral thinking, and so mix in with his otherwise purely altruistic actions for the good of his fellows, just a little tinge of what he himself hopes to gain in the future as the outcome of his deeds of this kind. So Buddhists cannot help thinking that the many great souls throughout the world's history who worked and toiled and suffered for the good of their race, with no expectation of reaping any reward for themselves in any future life, were of a nobler cast than those who went to scaffold and stake, looking forward to an eternity of bliss beyond the grave.

In the eyes of the Buddhist, the greatest virtue of all, indeed, the basic foundation of all other virtues, is compassion, pity for the suffering and sad among their fellow mortals, accompanied by every possible effort to relieve that sadness and suffering, with no admixture whatever of thought as to what oneself might "get out of it". (The very idea of anything of this sort mingling with the thoughts of the heroes of our race, is simply nauseous.) And the feeling and action that spring from pure undiluted pity and compassion, can only exist at their purest in those who know that they have no self-dependent existence of any kind, but belong in the most literal sense of the words, to the world; and that because this is so, all their good thoughts and words and deeds go to make the world better and happier, as alas: equally so do all the evil thoughts and words and deeds they may happen to do, go to make the world worse and more unhappy.

At this point some readers of Western birth will almost certainly point out that

such pure altruism is not conspicuously present among Buddhist peoples any more than among the generality of those who profess the eternal-self creed of the West. They will call attention to the fact that the ordinary Buddhist in any Buddhist country does his good deeds for the sake of the "merit" they bring him, just like any Roman Catholic of Christian Europe: that, as reward of his good actions, he expects to reap a happier lot in life in some future birth upon this earth. In fact, the missionaries in the East of the Western faith, far from that charity that is long-suffering, kind, without envy or self-praise, and is not puffed up, who spend much of their time and energy in seeking out all the supposed evil they can find in every other form of faith but their own, make it one of their chief charges against Buddhism that a Buddhist is as selfish as any other religionist in his constant endeavours to gather together all the merit he can, so as thereby to offset what of evil he may chance to do. To a certain degree, it must be confessed, this charge is a true one, but not to the extent some have tried to make out. But where it is true, it is so only where some Buddhists have not succeeded in laying hold of, and living up to, the teaching of their Master.

That teaching, however, is divided into three main compartments. Thus to the commonest sort of man who only understands rewards and punishments as respectively inducements to do right, and deterrents from doing wrong, Buddhism teaches: "If you do what is wrong, you will be punished in a state of suffering, and will be kept there till you have expiated all the evil deeds you have done." This is the teaching given on the first reach of the Path of Good. It is the

teaching given to the poor creature whose main motive in all his actions is fear for himself. And it works in keeping him away from the commission of much wrongdoing. The second stage of Buddhist teaching is a little more elevated. It makes its appeal to the man who in his actions is mainly moved by his desire for happiness; and to him it says: "Do what is right and you will get a reward for your good actions, after death, in heaven. Accordingly, he does what is good and, following his righteous ways, he acquires some wisdom, some of his ignorance is removed. Then, through the purification of his mind gradually brought about by his following courses of right action, he is ready, and in some measure able, to comprehend and grasp the ultimate truth taught by the Buddha, that in very truth there is no individual self that gains rewards or suffers punishments—though reward and punishment will certainly follow upon good and evil action—but that wrong is to be avoided and right to be practised, out of pity for later manifestations of life which will be the heirs of deeds now being done. Good is to be followed and evil shunned, out of compassion for the generations of men who will be born upon the earth in the future. And these three ways of meeting the various grades of mental development in men with their differing possibilities of understanding Buddhist truth, are each in its place and mode of presentation, perfectly true. There is heaven; and there is a hell to cure the wrong-doer of his will to do wrong. But wisdom, when we attain to it, tells us that heaven and hell are alike here within us due to the lesser or greater degree of ignorance that infects our minds. The moment when a man realises,

not merely with his brain as an intellectual concept, but with his whole being, with *heart* as well as mind, there is no permanent self to be found anywhere, within him or without, thus rightly seeing and comprehending things as they are, he no longer thinks of himself as a suffering or happy being. Perceiving clearly that there is no self at all within him, it is no longer possible for him to work for the benefit of a "soul" of his own; he cannot work for what he has now come to see, is a pure fiction. And so all his religious feeling assumes a grander, wider sweep. The future for which he works is one into which the illusion of himself does not and cannot enter. The one sole motive of all his thoughts and words and deeds is compassion, pity for all the sufferings and sorrows of the world, his one desire a desire to do all he can to make less these sufferings and sorrows.

This is a tremendously high ideal; indeed, it is the highest man can reach. Yet it is not so high but that something of it, a little, has reached the minds of the common folk in Buddhist lands. And the making of "merit", to be found as a favourite religious activity of such, when looked into, turns out to be not such a very selfish pursuit as some would like to have the world believe.

In Burma the people will readily build a new pagoda, but do not care about repairing one already built that is falling into ruin for want of attention. And on this account some people take pleasure in saying that the Burmese Buddhist wants to get to himself all the merit of any good deed he does, that he does not wish that his neighbour should get any merit through his repairing the pagoda that neighbour has built. This conclusion,

however, is quite erroneous. The Burman is not as selfish as all that. It is only those who delight in discovering faults in every religion but their own, who would say so.

When a Burman builds a new pagoda, he does so out of a deep regard and veneration for the Founder of his religion whom he desires to commemorate in this manner. If we have a relative or friend we love to whom we wish to give something as a token of our regard and love, we should not like to patch up some old thing given to them by someone else, and give that to them by way of showing our love and esteem. No! We should want to give them something fresh and clean and new, as the only thing worthy of them. And that is how the Burman feels when he builds a new pagoda. He wishes to present a gift that is bright and new not second-hand, to the memory of the One he loves; and to do this worthily, does not care if he spends all he possesses,—as in fact he very often does. Besides, there is in Buddhism what is called “transference of merit”. In all Buddhist countries, when there is performed the little ceremony of pouring water over the hands of the giver of any religious gift, the words that giver utters as the ceremonial water is poured forth, are an express invitation to all living creatures in all the three worlds—this visible one and the two invisible ones—to accept a share in the merit of the good deed that he, the donor, has done. So much for the selfishness of the Buddhist.*

But let us go back to our proper subject. Let us enquire how the delusion of eternally separate selfhood which is the root cause of all the misery in the world, may be overcome, and so all misery overcome. How may we men come to a

vision of the truth in this matter, in such wise that we may truly know, and not merely hold it as a matter of pious opinion, that it is delusion, and so live our lives for the sake of the good of all life, the suffering of which we increase or decrease, precisely as we continue to cherish, or strive to get rid of, this delusion? There is only one way here, and that is by a clear, unprejudiced facing of the facts of our own nature, and deep and continuous meditation upon these facts until their full purport is open and manifest to our minds. When we do these two things we find that our whole make-up is a transient compound, regarded as a whole, and in every one of the elements that compose that whole. We see that it is something that has no independent existence of its own, but is constantly coming into being—more properly, into *becoming*—at every fresh moment, in response to the sights and sounds and so forth, constantly playing upon it, and constantly ceasing to be at every fresh moment, in brief, a purely *relative* thing, no constant positive entity. When we have meditated upon these things long enough to have become penetrated by their truth—to some degree at least—then comes the first glimmering vision of what follows from their truth, this, namely—since there is no positive entity that can rightly claim to be such, under the name of “I”, all attempts to secure anything solid and lasting for that supposed “I” must fail.

What then? What rests? What remains? Nothing but this: that since life cannot be lived for self since there is no fixed self to be lived for, it can only be lived for all life. This is the final shattering

* Also, the old, crumbling pagoda is a lesson in Anicca (Impermanence) and of value thus. Ed.

conclusion that breaks up in a Buddhist all his selfishness, or at least, plants in him the seed that, growing up into a mighty tree, with its ever-spreading roots seeks out all the nooks and crannies of his self-ideas, and slowly, surely reduces that seeming block of solid granite into ultimate dust. And since self and the striving to get and gain for self, is the ultimate root of all evil, in this getting rid of all notion of self from our thinking, in the clear perception that it is pure delusion, we have found the root from which springs all in the world that is good. It is just ignorance of this truth of the delusive nature of self that keeps suffering alive in the world of sentient life. All evil is born of this ignorance as all good is born of its opposite, right knowledge, clear seeing, correct perception of the entirely delusive nature of the notion of self in any of its protean forms, not least, its “spiritual” form.

Wrong behaviour, then, in Buddhism is simply behaviour that is the expression of self-seeking, and is therefore productive of suffering. On the other hand, right behaviour is all behaviour that is the expression of unselfishness, and by that fact is productive, not of suffering but of happiness.

The practical rules of right behaviour, as promulgated by Buddhism, are now well known, and except for the last of the five, are common to all religions that have any value. They are counsels or injunctions or recommendations—not in any sense of the word, commands; never that—to abstain from taking life, from stealing, from illicit sexual conduct, from lying and harsh and frivolous speech, and from using narcotics and intoxicants. The first of these injunctions means more to

the Buddhist than it does to other people. It means abstaining from taking any life, and not human life alone. Also harsh and slanderous words are to a Buddhist wrong conduct in speech, and not the telling of falsehoods only. And it is not drunkenness alone that to a Buddhist is evil; it is the partaking of alcohol in any quantity except where required as medicine, or as an ingredient of some medicine, by a physician’s prescription. Though there are many Buddhists who will not take alcohol into their system for any reason whatever.

An ordinary physician will sometimes tell a patient that he must not use this or that article of food, or such and such a drink, but give no reason for his prohibition—as is the way of physicians sometimes, like all other custodians of mysteries that must not be profaned by revelation to the common herd. Such a physician the Buddha is not. In anything that concerns his patient’s welfare, he has no secrets, that he keeps back in a tightly closed fist. His whole intention is to let them know all about their case, to give them a proper comprehension of how matters stand with them. And so there is a good reason, a reason that is not concealed, for each of the Five Precepts bearing on Right Conduct, that are given to Buddhists by their Teacher. We are told that we shall bring future sufferings upon ourselves if we kill or steal or lie or practise sexual misconduct or partake of intoxicants, in addition to the immediate ill consequences we shall incur if found out doing so by our fellows. How does this future suffering come about?

It does so very simply. If a man kills another living creature, human or sub-human, from self-regarding motives, in order to satisfy any feeling of ill-will or

hatred, or so as to gain possession of the property of the persons he has killed, so doing he increases, intensifies his own sense of being a self, separate in his interests from the person he has slain, wholly divided from that person. Indeed, his act of violence was just an outward expression of such a sense of separate selfhood. And in giving his sense of separate selfhood outward manifestation in an actual deed he has made it all the stronger within him, therefore all the longer lasting; and so he has lengthened out the period during which he will be a separate self, and consequently come again and again into a world of separate selves like himself, and there meet with all the unpleasantnesses and sufferings which life in such a world inevitably entails on all who inhabit it.

Again, if he deliberately practises theft on any scale, large or small the same thing happens. His desire for gain for *himself* is gratified and accentuated. The line of demarcation he has made in his mind between the interests of others and of himself, is graven deeper in that mind. His feeling of self is sharpened, intensified, by so much as he goes on taking others' goods without their knowledge or consent. If he gratifies his sexual instincts without regard to the hurt and wrong he may do to others thereby either in their persons or their feelings, again he heightens his sense of his own selfness. If he lies for his own benefit, again his lying magnifies in him the belief in a self of his own who gains by his lying. And finally, if—In Shakespeare's phrase— "he takes that into his mouth which steals away his brains", well, there is hardly anything he can do which more immediately begets every sort of delusion

and wrong-headedness of the worst kind, so that in a very craze of selfness, he is ready to commit any foolishness, any crime whatsoever, prone to break any and all of the rules of decent and right behaviour. But unfortunately there is little need to elaborate this effect of indulgence in the use of alcoholic liquors. It can be seen all too plainly in the criminal statistics of those countries whose current religion unfortunately contains no injunction against the use of alcohol as a beverage. And its pernicious psychological effect is no less evident from these statistics. An utterly reckless assertion of self at its most blatant is the dominant motive to action of all alcoholised brains, and the most outstanding feature in the conduct of the alcoholised individual.

Coming now to the deeds that in Buddhism are considered "good", we find that those actions are regarded as righteous and befitting and "skilful" which tend to reduce in man his belief in self, those deeds that are not the outcome of self-assertion but in some degree, great or small tend toward its opposite, self-abnegation.

First of all, on the Buddhist path we are advised to practise Charity, giving, liberality in assisting others with our worldly goods. Such action has a twofold good effect. It blesses him who receives. His physical wants are met, his need relieved. Then in no less measure is it a blessing to the giver himself. If a man gives a few pence to one poorer than himself in order that he may buy a meal of food or a bed to lie down in at night, thereby he has done a deed that to some degree however small, has diminished the desire for possessions. He has also somewhat reduced in himself the delusion

of separate selfhood. For his action is, in fact, a product of the compassionate feeling within him, however obscure and subconscious, that this poorer, less fortunate fellow man, is not another being wholly apart from him, but in some way himself. And in thus attenuating his own selfness, even to this slight extent, a man is lessening in himself the forces that make for evil, that is, for egoism, and so lessening the powers that make for suffering in the world at large, as well as in himself. The character of each one of us is his destiny. There is no other destiny or fate ruling mankind. By your deeds make your character less *self* ish, more and more *unself*ish, and you have done a little, rather a great deal, as much as it is in the power of any one man to do, towards making yourself and the world in which you live, better and happier. And you cannot do this more effectively, more surely, than by earnestly dwelling in mind upon that ultimate, highest teaching of all the Buddhas, that in good sooth, in profoundest verity, there is no lasting self

in any creature whatever, that in none of us is there, or has there ever been, anything at all that in final, ultimate truth can be rightly be called Me or Mine, and so winning free from that egoism, that selfness, which is the one cause of all the evil that is in the world of life.

Good were it if only the whole world might begin to set its feet upon the path that leads to the subdual and final abrogation of the very notion of "I". Good were it if all mankind were to accept the high teaching which, hinted at, set forth dimly, obscurely, in fitful gleams, and clouded with many impediments in the dicta of other religious teachers, is presented, plainly, clearly, without any disguise, in the religion called Buddhism, for then humanity would be well on the way to the ceasing of strife and contention, to the ending of the sadness, the madness, that weigh so heavily upon it today. Then would open before it a new era when man would truly begin to leave the brute behind, at last start out to be truly man in the full and proper sense of the word.

On the murky morning when I first saw it, Shwedagon pointed like a tongue of fire into the sky. At noon on a clear day it was peaceful and sublime. On a moonlight night it had a mystic cast. The Shwedagon can be seen from any point of the compass. Its moods are the moods of man; and yet its dignity, its plain beauty, its purity make it the symbol of the noblest things for which man has strived. I have seen sunsets and storms, glaciers and peaks, flowers and faces that have moved me more. But of all the things that man has created by his hands, the Shwedagon is the loveliest I have known. It made my heart leap when I first saw it; and its beauty keeps coming back to me no matter how distant I am.

—Extract from p. 216 of NORTH FROM MALAYA
by Justice Douglas of Supreme Court, U.S.A.

Shrines of Burma, No. 9

MANDALAY

U OHN GHINE

THERE are names that thrill by some innate magic, striking by the music of their syllables a basic chord in the hearts of men. Whether it be their call to the pursuit of the exotic, the swing and jingle of their sound or something deeper in their sheer power of evocation, they make the old men to dream dreams and the young men to see visions. Such a name is "Mandalay", the old city that sits today rather somnolently in the very centre of Burma, pondering past glories but awake nevertheless to the possibilities of a more glorious future.

Modern trains roll in and out of Mandalay and modern planes alight and take off daily, yet the bullock carts jog along the roads and the old magic still clings round its ancient pagodas and monasteries.

Of the many pagodas and monasteries in and around Mandalay one of the most interesting is the Shwe Kyi Myint, right in the heart of the city. This has become the repository of the ancient images collected by successive monarchs and brought from the palace after the dethronement by the British of the last King of Burma, King Thibaw.

Built 800 years ago by Minshinsaw, the exiled son of the great King Alaungsithu, the Shwe Kyi Myint enshrines the original image consecrated by its builder.

But perhaps the most famous of Mandalay's shrines is the Mahamuni Pagoda, also known as the Payāgyi or "Great Pagoda" and as the "Arakan

Pagoda", in the southern quarter of Mandalay.

Just over 170 years ago, King Bodawpaya of Burma brought from Mrohaung (the Ancient City) in Arakan a huge (12' 7") cast metal Buddha Image, reputed of great antiquity and which had certainly been venerated for many centuries by the Arakanese. The image is in a sitting posture and the original metal has been so lavishly covered with gold leaf by devotees that soft gold, inches thick, overlays the original metal. The temple was damaged by fire in 1884 and the present pagoda with its terraced, gilded roof, dates from after that fire.

There are, here, bronze figures brought to Pegu from Ayuthia (Thailand) three hundred years ago, then taken to Arakan and in 1784 brought with the "Great Image" to Mandalay.

A still larger Buddha Image (16' 8" high), of bronze, is in the Thetkyathiha (Sakya Sīha) Pagoda in Mandalay. This image also is of the Buddha in the sitting posture and was cast by skilled Burmese artisans at Ava, at the instance of King Bagyidaw, just over 100 years ago. The pagoda was badly damaged during the last war but has since been reconstructed.

Mandalay Hill overlooking the city and the old palace has at its base the Kyauktawgyi Pagoda. It was built 100 years ago and enshrines an image of the Buddha carved from a single block of marble from the mines of Sagyin, a few miles north of Mandalay.



The Eindawya Pagoda—historic shrine in Mandalay, Built in 1847 by king Pagān, contains the famous Mahuya Paya Sacred Image which was brought from Gaya in India in 1839.

The image, completed 90 years ago, is surrounded by 80 figures representing the 80 Arahāt disciples of the Buddha. It was dedicated in the presence of the King with great rejoicing by the people.

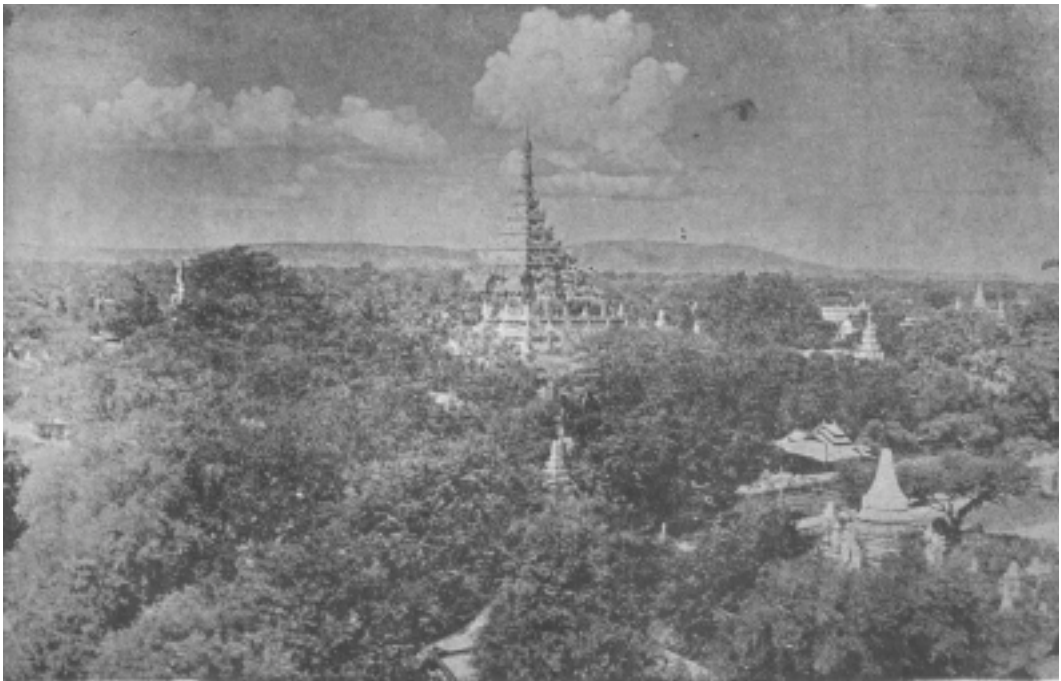
Also at the foot of the Hill, near the Kyauktawgyi pagoda, are the huge marble slabs, 729 of them, on which are inscribed the Tipiṭaka Texts (the Buddhist Canon) as authorised by the Fifth Great Buddhist Council, held in Burma in 1861 C.E. They are enshrined at Kuthodaw Pagoda built in 1857 by King Mindon. The inscriptions of Aṭṭhakathās (Commentaries) are in the dagobas around the Sandamuni (Candāmuṇi) Pagoda which is situated not far from the Kuthodaw Pagoda.

On the Hill itself are numerous shrines and images, the works of a pious hermit, the late Venerable U Khanti who obtained great public support in establishing these.

In the western quarter of Mandalay is the Eindawya Pagoda built by King Pagan just over 100 years ago.

Seven miles south of Mandalay is the former capital of Amarapura. It was founded in 1783 but deserted, as a capital, in 1857 when King Mindon moved the capital to Mandalay. The palace and its buildings fell into decay with the pagodas built at the time of its establishment and these joined in ruin the ancient pagodas nearby, which date from the 12th century.

Today the jungle is again retreating and the ancient pagodas are being restored by the activities of independent Burma.



The famous Mahāmuni Pagoda in Mandalay, located in the Kyun-lon-ok-shaung Quarter, is greatly venerated by the people, who flock to it to worship in large numbers on all Buddhist feast days.



The embasured wall of the old palace of Mandalay looking accross the lotus-filled waters of the moat. The City of Mandalay was founded and built by King Mindon in 1856-57

Thirteen miles to the south-west of Mandalay is the town of Sagaing on the west bank of the Irrawaddy. This also is an early capital and there are seven or eight ancient pagodas of great beauty and interest dating from some 500 years ago. Among these the most famous is the Rājamañicuḷā Kaunghmudaw Pagoda, erected by King Thalun Mintara in 2180 B.E. (1636 C.E.). In this pagoda is enshrined a Tooth of the Buddha, a relic presented by Dhammapala, the then king of Lankā (Ceylon).

But this pagoda, which is being repaired by the Government of the Union of Burma, is important enough to form, with some mention of the other pagodas in this area the subject of a special article in this series for a future issue.

From Sagaing stretches the bridge to Ava yet another former capital of Burma (founded in 1364 C.E.)

About 7 miles north of Mandalay is Mingun, where is an enormous bell, one of the largest in the world, and the Mingun Pagoda covering 450 square feet, and 162 feet in height. It was never finished and was to have been almost 500 feet in height. Though unfinished, and cracked by the earthquake of 1838, it is one of the most imposing structures that exist.

There are dozens of other pagodas and monastery buildings round Mandalay that are a delight to the archaeologist and the historian; that cast their spell on the inquisitive stranger and redouble the awe of the devout Buddhist.

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THE TEN FETTERS OF EXISTENCE

(DASA SAṂYOJANA)

(Translated by Mr. F. M. Rajakaruna and revised by Ven. Nyanatiloka Mahāthera.)

Introduction

“There are 10 Fetters, by which beings are bound to the wheel of existence. They are

- I. Self-Delusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*),
- II. Doubt (*vicikicchā*),
- III. Clinging to mere Rule and Ritual (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*),
- IV. Sensual Lust (*kāma-rāga*),
- V. Ill-Will (*paṭigha*),
- VI. Greed for Fine-Material Existence (*rūpa-rāga*),
- VII. Greed for Immaterial Existence (*arūpa-rāga*),
- VIII. Conceit (*māna*),
- IX. Restlessness (*uddhacca*),
- X. Ignorance (*avijjā*).

One who is freed for ever from the first 3 fetters is called a *Sotāpanna*, lit. Stream-Enterer, i.e., one who has entered the stream leading to Nibbāna. He has unshakable faith in the Buddha, His Doctrine and His Holy Order, and is incapable of breaking the five moral rules to abstain from killing, stealing, adultery, lying and drinking of alcoholic drinks. He will be reborn seven times at the utmost, and not in a state lower than the human world.

One who has overcome the fourth and fifth fetters in their grosser form, is called a *Sakadāgāmi*, lit. Once-Returner, i.e., he will be reborn only once more in the Sensuous Sphere (*kāma-loka*), and thereafter reach Holiness.

The *Anāgāmi*, lit. Non-Returner, is wholly freed from the first 5 Fetters which bind one to rebirth in the Sensuous

Sphere; after death, while living in the Fine-Material Sphere (*rūpa-loka*), he will reach the goal.

The *Arahat*, i.e., the perfectly Holy One, is freed from all the 10 Fetters.

Each of the aforementioned four stages of Holiness consists of the ‘Path’ (*magga*) and the ‘Fruition’ (*phala*).

The ‘Path’ consists of the single moment of entering the respective attainment. With ‘Fruition’ are meant those moments of consciousness, which follow immediately thereafter as the result of the Path and which, under circumstances, may repeat for innumerable times during lifetime.” (Word of the Buddha.)

I. Self-Delusion (Sakkāya-Diṭṭhi)

Self-Delusion is the belief in a so-called Ego, or Entity (*attā*). It may refer to the “Corporeality-Group” (*rūpa*) or to the four “Mental Groups” (*nāma*), i.e., to Feeling, Perception, Mental Formations, or Consciousness. If we, e.g., consider one of the five groups as [identical to] the “Ego” [and disappearing completely at death], then we get five materialistic “Views of a Temporary Ego” (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*); and if we consider the Self as owner of one of the groups—or [that particular group] contained [within the Self],—or the Self contained in one of the groups, then we get 15 Views and “Eternal Ego” (*sassata-diṭṭhi*), that is altogether 20 Ego Views. [The bracketted words were added for clarity:—Editor]

This Ego-Belief, or Self-Delusion, has detrimental effect on the person who holds such a belief and he becomes liable to be born in states of woe and subject to endless suffering, associated with the repeated cycle of births. It is therefore advisable to dissociate oneself from such wrong belief and also from those who profess such belief. It should therefore be realized that, what is conventionally referred to as I, or Ego, or Personality, etc., is but the arising of the five groups of Existence; that it has Craving for its origin, that the Extinction of this Personality-Belief is the Extinction of Lust, is Nibbāna, and the path leading to this Extinction is the Noble Eightfold Path. Having understood these four aspects, one should strive to remove all false beliefs by following the noble eightfold path and realise Nibbāna, the supreme bliss, the final release, the extinction of suffering.

II. Sceptical Doubt (Vicikicchā)

Doubt being one of the 10 Fetters that “bind” a person to Saṃsāra, by obstructing his path to Emancipation, should be understood as that state of uncertainty, with which the person who seeks after the true nature of things, is sometimes beset. Failing to decide the correct perspective, man becomes fatigued through doubt; and this doubtfulness reaches an incurable state. It is this state that is referred to as “Doubt”.

A man who journeys along a road reputed to be haunted by robbers, is alarmed by the slightest noise produced through the falling of leaves or the twittering of birds, is bewildered, and stands undecided as to whether he should proceed on his journey, or retreat, and is

obsessed with fear and unable to reach a place of safety. Doubtfulness should be understood as a parallel to the state of mind of the traveller. Doubtfulness is the state of mind that makes a man puzzled as to which way he should proceed, when he has arrived at a junction of cross-roads on an unfamiliar way; but doubtfulness which constitutes the “Fetter of Doubt”, is not the uncertainty that arises on ordinary factors, but on the eight factors regarding the Buddha and matters associated with His teachings. They are:—

(1) The doubt that arises regarding the Blessed One. This doubt is again twofold, regarding both the outer form and the inner virtues of the Buddha. The outer form refers to the 32 major signs on the body of a noble being. It has been said that even the universal kings do not possess these signs in their fullness. The persons who are obsessed with this state of mind, entertain doubts regarding the physical perfections of the Buddha, whose beauty of form could be compared with a fearless work of art, whose sculptor was the perfection of Virtue practised through innumerable periods of time.

(2) The doubts regarding the Omniscience of the Buddha, and whether it includes the power of seeing the past, present and future.

(3) The doubts regarding the Ninefold Super-Mundane Virtues of the Buddha’s doctrine, i.e., path and fruition of Stream-Entrance, Once-Return, Never-Return, Holiness, and Nibbāna.

(4) The doubts regarding the existence of the Holy Order consisting of Noble Disciples who have attained the Four Paths and their Fruits, and the doubts of the resultant benefits of offerings made to this Holy Order.

(5) Doubts regarding the resultant benefits of being disciplined in the threefold exercises of Virtue, Concentration and Wisdom.

(6) Doubts about the Existence of the 5 Groups, the 18 Elements and the 5 Senses in the past; and the doubts whether these would exist in the future.

(7) The doubt whether there was a past (existence), and whether there will be a future.

(8) Doubts regarding the Teaching of Dependent Origination of existence.

Doubt is surely an unwholesome mental state and is rooted in Greed, Hatred and Ignorance. An ignorant person cannot believe in, or realize the Virtues and Powers of the Buddha. As it has been said:

“He who finds pleasure in thinking of the Buddha, is possessed of wisdom. Just as it is not possible for a hare to cross the ocean by swimming, so it is impossible for the ignorant to fathom the depths of the vast ocean of the Buddha’s Virtues.”

The ignorant worldling, whose one dominating passion is the craving for worldly good and the pleasures of the senses, attaches no value to the Virtues. Only the wise one who sees the appalling nature of the cycle of rebirths and its attendant suffering, through the wisdom gained through seeing the Truth, attaches value to Virtue. And only they who understand the value of Virtue, have no doubts regarding the Buddha, and are happy in thinking of Him as the embodiment of all Virtue, will entertain no doubts whatever with regard to the Buddha. There is room even for those who profess to be Buddhist by religion, to entertain doubts on matters regarding the Buddha and thus fall into the category

of those who follow Wrong Views, for such things are in the nature of the worldling. Therefore those who would aim at unchanging and eternal happiness, should have an unchanging and steadfast faith and understand the Virtues of the Buddha. Therefore has it been said:

“He who sees the Dhamma sees me”. He who “sees” the Buddha and “recognises” Him, is the one who entertains no doubts regarding the Buddha, His Doctrine and Order, holds in high esteem the words of the Teacher, follows it in spirit and strives hard to eradicate doubt by achieving the wisdom of the Paths.

The Doubts regarding the Buddha cease at the attaining of the Wisdom of the Path of the Stream-Enterer. By reason of this extinction of doubt, the Stream-Enterer is freed from rebirth in the four stages of woe; and if reborn again in this world, such a one will not be liable to commit the five heinous actions, or to take to Wrong Views; for, with the springing up of the wisdom of Stream-Entering in one’s mind, one becomes relieved of the first three Fetters: Self-Delusion, Doubt and Clinging to Rule and Ritual.

III. Clinging to Rule and Ritual (*Silabbata-Pārmāsa*)

The person who believes that by following mere rule or ritual, or both of these, [i.e.,] follows the heretical non-Buddhistic theories regarding the self-purification and escape from the cycle of Rebirth, may be said to be bound by the Fetter of Attachment to Rule and Ritual.

According to the Dhamma-Saṅgaṇī-Commentary, Rule and Ritual may be understood in this connection, as the

taking up, e.g., of bovine and dog practices, taught by some heretic religious teachers who were devoted to the habits of cow-grazing, lying on the ground and moving about on all fours, etc. In the same way they imitated the movements of a dog, sleeping near the fire, lying down, often scraping the ground with the feet, barking and eating food without help of their hands. If a person wishing to gain purification or salvation by such imitation of animal behaviour and by observing mere Rules and Rituals, as mentioned in the sixty-two forms of heresy, and thinking that such observances would lead to purification and emancipation and attainment of Nibbāna, and clings to such observances in blind imitation of those who follow them, such clinging or attachment is a “Fetter” which binds him to the round of rebirths.

Once when the Blessed One was residing in the city of Vesālī, a certain Licchavī Prince named Sunakkatta, who had joined the Order of Buddhist Monks, was greatly taken up with the habits and observances of a certain heretic recluse named Korakkattiya, who practised the Dog-Vows, and moved about on all fours and, like a dog, ate his food without using his hands, having smelt it first, according to dog-fashion. He ate only food kept on the ground and slept on the ashes near the hearth, and wore no clothes. Sunakkatta, although a follower of the Omniscient Buddha, entertained the foolish belief that Korakkattiya was a genuine Arahant and that in morality he was peerless. The Blessed One who learnt of his misunderstanding, said to him ‘O, Ignorant and misguided One. Korakkattiya, whom you think an Arahant, will die seven days hence and he will be

reborn and suffer thereafter in the world of demons’. Thereupon Sunakkatta went to that heretic, reported to him what the Buddha had said, and advised him thus: ‘Therefore, Sir, take as little food as possible during this week and endeavour to avoid the slightest ailment. Then can we accuse the Buddha of Mendacity’.

Having given this advice he visited the heretic twice or thrice everyday and plotted to malign the name of the Blessed One. In pursuance of his advice Korakkattiya refused food, and on the seventh day of his fast, being offered some rice and pork, and being tempted by it, decided that, whatever happens to the Buddha’s prediction, it was better to take that meal, and if the worst should happen, he would die happily after a good meal. Accordingly, he ate as much as he could, and was reborn in the Demon World.

Thus, if anyone clings to the belief that such outward Rules and Rituals, as imitating the behaviour of a dog, etc., are conducive to the extinction of the defilements of mind, then such belief is called Clinging to Rule and Ritual (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*) and is as such included in the 62 Wrong Views given in Dīgha-Nikāya (7). Such Wrong Views take hold of the mind of those that have no interest in the search after Truth, and shun the company of noble friends and their association and teaching.

The origin of such wrong views can be traced to the habit of heedlessly accepting, through a false sense of respect, the words of unorthodox teachers as Sunakkatta did. Other causes of this misbelief are the association with friends who entertain false views and avoid the teachings of noble qualities such as

Mindfulness (*sati*). The lack of restraint is to be controlled in conformity with the Disciplinary Code, the faculties, mindfulness, wisdom and the overcoming of such false views. Indulgence in unwise consideration and captiousness produce such false views as well.

IV. Sensual Lust (Kāma-Cchanda)

This fourth fetter may be defined as the intention to indulge in sensual pleasures, indulgence and attachment, sensual craving, attachment to happiness in sensual pleasure; thirst after sensual craving, love, sensual love, burning, sensual fire, torpor, brought about by sensuality, and attachment which aims at sensual pleasures.

Sensuality (*kāma*) now, may be considered as twofold, namely: as Objective Sensuality and Subjective Sensuality. Objective Sensuality (*vatthu-kāma*) are the sensual objects such as alluring forms, sounds, odours, tastes, and bodily impressions. Subjective Sensuality (*kilesa-kāma*) denotes sensual intention, sensual greed, pleasure in sensibility, intentional sensuality, intentional greedy sensuality, imaginative sensuality, imaginative, greedy sensuality. Here, the intentional sensuality is greed through aspiration. Greedy sensuality is attachment to the aspired object. Intentional greedy sensuality is a greater greed than that. Imaginative sensuality is greed that helps the formation of objects. Imaginative greedy sensuality is a greater greed than both of them. These are included in subjective sensuality. Objective Sensuality and Subjective Sensuality are both included in the term “Sensuality”.

Intentional sensuality means the insatiable thirst for sensual pleasure. If Personality-Belief, Sceptical Doubt, Clinging to Rule and Ritual, the five groups, the course of existence, the process of existence, take pleasure in conjunction with the results of wholesome and unwholesome volitions, then they are called Fetters. As they bind beings to the round of Existence, they are called Bonds. Further it should be understood that something that binds and ties a being to the round of wholesome and unwholesome volitions, to the round of defilements and the round of births, that this is called a Fetter. Beings suffer till they attain Arahatsip by breaking this Fetter that binds them to the round, of existence owing to their greed for sensual pleasures.

For the five sensual organs—Eye, Ear, Nose, Tongue, Body—visible form, sound, odour, taste and touch form the objects. Craving arises in the beings who claim the pleasing and alluring sense-objects as “I” and “Mine”. With this craving there arises suffering in the mind. The sense-objects that are pleasing to the ignorant are void and empty to the wise. It should be wisely analysed as to what does constitute the beautiful form that is capable of satisfying eye-consciousness. There are no gold, jewel, silver, sweet odours to be found in this body. In short, it consists of nothing desirable. It consists only of thirty-two impurities. As long as ignorance obstructs clear thinking, the right understanding of the five groups of existence is impossible.

In the past, the intelligent ascetics who passed through the air, lost this psychic power owing to their desire for beautiful forms, by seeing flowers that resemble the pleasing form of a woman. Once a

peacock greedy of sweet sounds, was lured by the sweet cry of a peahen and fell into the hands of a hunter. The bees that approach the ears of the elephant, discarding all the sweet nectar of flowers, get crushed by the flapping of the ears. The fish born in deep water, despite the abundance of food available, swallows the bait of the angler and dies because of its greed for taste. Therefore, the craving for sensual pleasure bears terrible fruits.

The main factors that induce sensuous lust to arise, are the pleasant objects in mind. The root cause of it is Unwise Consideration. Pleasant Objects in mind are that which helps craving to rise. Unwise Consideration prompts the mind to accept something impermanent as permanent, something miserable as happiness, something impermanent as ego, something evil as good.

“No other Object do I know, O! monks, through which in such a degree Sensuous Lust comes to arise, and once arisen ever will grow on, as a pleasant object. Who is not wisely considering the pleasant object, in him there will arise lust, and once arisen it will ever grow on.” (Aṅguttara I).

In the heart of a worldly man the defilements may be stronger. But anyone who is engaged in noble deeds, can suppress them; as soon, however, as the mind becomes relaxed, the defilements come again into prominence.

One may begin the study of the Pāli Texts together with their commentary, but later on, after relaxing one's energy, the defilements begin to arise again.

One may begin to practise the thirteen ascetic exercises; and no defilements will arise as long as one is zealously striving.

But once one falls back, then the defilements come to arise.

One may be well trained in the Eightfold Path, and may have attained even all the mental absorptions. But as soon as one loses one's psychic powers through clinging to a pleasant object of mind, the defilements will again arise.

Wise consideration of loathsomeness of objects brings about the extinction of Sensuous Lust. It is extinguished by deep insight into the Impermanency, Misery and Impersonality of Existence.

There exist six factors that help to destroy Sensuous Lust: (1) Learning to concentrate on the Impurities; (2) Meditation on the Impurities; (3) Closed Sense-doors; (4) Moderation in eating; (5) Presence of virtuous friends; (6) Good conversation.

One who takes hold of tenfold objects of loathsomeness (cemetery meditations) and who partakes of food moderately, will overcome Sensuous Lust, just like the elder Asabbhakamma-Tissa. Those who associate with noble friends and meditate on the Impurities, also overcome Sensuous Lust. When Sensuous Lust is suppressed by these factors, it will not rise again before the attainment of Arahatsip. With the attainment of Arahatsip the complete extinction of Sensuous Lust takes place. This twofold sensuality (subjective and objective) haunt the six heavenly worlds, the human world and the four lower worlds. Even the animals born in the lower worlds have the desire to live. They do not like death, though they undergo untold suffering. If the beast is such, how glad will a human being be to live without dying! If a human being is such, what need be said of a Heavenly being who enjoys great pleasure?

V. Ill-Feeling (Paṭigha)

This Fetter consists in repugnance, or anger, or hatred that arises in mind defiled by such feelings as “This person did me wrong”, etc.

“This person did me wrong in the past; he does me wrong now; he will do me wrong in future”. “This person did wrong to my beloved ones; He does so now; He will do so in future”. “This person did good to my detested enemy in the past, and does so at present; And he will do good to him in future”. If with such a motive a man hates another, or if in the absence of such motive a man hates anyone or anything without reason, then such hatred, anger, or ill-will is called the Fetter of Ill-feeling.

That which disturbs the original state of serenity of the mind, is repugnance or hatred. It corrupts all other states of mind and spoils their original purity. As soon as one of the “inlets” of the body, such as eye or ear, meets a person or thing abhorred by the owner of that “inlet”, the original state of his mind vanishes and, owing to the absence of clear thinking and feeling, displeasure arises in the mind. With that displeasure comes hatred. This hatred is ninefold according to the manner of its origin; and with the hatred that comes up without causes or reasons, it is tenfold. The first nine forms of hatred originate when one thinks

- (1) This person acted against me.
- (2) This person acts against me.
- (3) This person will act against me.
- (4) This person acted against my beloved relatives and friends.
- (5) This person acts against them now.
- (6) This person will act against them in future.

(7) This person did good to my enemies.

(8) This person does good to my enemies.

(9) This person will do so to them in future.

These are the circumstances in which one person hates another one, depending on the way he treats him, his friends and foes in the past, present and the future. These are nine sources of hatred. If then, through one’s own fault, one stumbles against a stone and for the pain one experiences, hatred arises in one’s mind, then this is the tenth form of hatred. According to the Sutta-Piṭaka there are nine more forms of hatred like those that arise when one thinks that so and so did not do one a favour, that he does not do so now, and that he will not do so in future either. Thus, with these nine, there are nineteen forms of hatred in all. They are all similar in their ultimate sense, and their root-cause can be traced to the absence of clear and discrete thinking. Greed, too, is a source of hatred, and hatred invariably is a source of evil which makes man suffer.

A person, whose mind is corrupted by hatred, is unable to judge whether a thing is good or bad, or whether an action is right or wrong. Hence the Buddha has said that those in anger are like the blind.

The owl cannot see in the day-time, and the crow is at night blind. But a person driven to heights of hatred, does not observe anything either by day or night. The blind does not see the path and does not walk properly. In the same way, the person corrupted by hatred will fall a prey to great suffering in the lower worlds.

A Fetter is what binds beings to this round of rebirth, without allowing them

to free themselves from suffering. These Fetters are ten in number. Hatred is one of them as it ties men to this world of suffering.

The Buddha, the Enlightened One, has admonished us to look upon hatred as an enemy to man, who thrusts suffering upon him in abundance. Happy is the man who has done away with all hatred.

Replying to a question of a certain Brāhmaṇa, the Buddha once said that to live happily, one must destroy hatred. For one who has got rid of hatred, will never come to grief

To abstain from hatred, we must cultivate clear reasoning, good company, listening to the Dhamma, practise patience and such other good habits. “Clear reasoning”, here means: taking a thing for what it truly is, after sound consideration. When a person thinks: “That man did me wrong”, he must first pause to consider which really of the five groups of existence was meant by the so-called “me”. Then only will he understand that there is nothing involved to be considered as “I” or “me”, and therefore hatred will end then and there. Those who think in this light are naturally people with patience.

Countless are the good effects of patience. Five of them are very important and are worth mentioning. The one who is patient, is loved by all and has no enemies. He is more or less infallible. When he dies he is not senseless, and after death he will be born in a heavenly sphere. Thus this effective patience is just the opposite of hatred. Whereas hatred is conducive to suffering, patience is the proper path leading to bliss.

Those who wish to free themselves from this Fetter and attain Deliverance,

should know the remedy, i.e. the cultivation of compassion. Loving all and wishing to see everyone happy, is called *Mettā*, or all-embracing kindness, which brings us happiness in this world and in the next, like a miraculous gem which grants everything wished for.

All-embracing kindness, being the wish for the real happiness of all beings, is a summoning of blessing all over the world and being found among all forms of wholesome karmical deeds that produce material benefit for the doer, it is the foremost one. “The light of all the stars in the sky is not worth one-sixteenth of that of the moon.” (*Itivuttaka* 27); in the same way even much effective deeds, as Generosity in giving (*dāna*), may not be worth one-sixteenth of that all-embracing love and kindness. This was what the Buddha taught.

One day addressing the monks, the Buddha said that if merely for a passing moment, a monk practised this meditation of kindness, he would not be without mental culture, and would be a true follower of the master, and worthy of the offerings and the homage of the people.

If any one offers anything to a monk who even for a moment cultivates all-embracing kindness, the merit acquired by him through that offering, will be immeasurable. And how much more will it be in the case of a monk who continuously cultivates that great kindness? Thus Subhūti, a great monk, when he went before a house for alms, used to fall at once into a trance of meditation on all-embracing kindness till the alms were brought to him, and then to accept it after emerging first from the mental absorption. This he did so as to increase the amount of merit due to the giver of alms.

According to the “Sutta on the merits of Kindness”, a kindly inclined person (1) sleeps soundly, (2) gets up comfortably, (3) sees no evil dreams, (4) is loved by human beings, (5) is admired by ghosts, (6) is well protected by gods, (7) is free from danger through fire, venom and weapon, (8) is capable of concentrating his mind, (9) has a winsome face, (10) dies with all his senses awake and (11) if he does not attain enlightenment in this birth itself, he will be born again in the Brahma-World.

A tremendous power lies in all-embracing Kindness. If a tigress sees some young deer in a place where there are hermits meditating on Kindness, she would give them her breast with motherly affection. Cobras oppressed by the extreme heat of the sun, would take shelter under the wings of peacocks. Such change comes over them, because the power of loving Kindness makes their inborn wickedness disappear.

Prince Siṃhabāhu tried twice in vain to kill his father. On each occasion he failed to do it, because in his father there arose love, thinking that he was playing with him. But also no sooner did he fly into a rage, thinking that his son was attempting to kill him, then an arrow struck him, and he was killed instantaneously.

VI. Greed For Fine-Material Existence (Rūpa-Rāga)

Everything that comes under the influence of change, may be termed Corporeality (*rūpa*). Here, however, *rūpa-rāga* means the “Craving for Fine-material Existence” which exists within the space bounded from beneath by the Brahma-world, and from above by the *Akaṇiṭṭha* Heavens.

Just as the elephant who has earned the name of “Battle-Field Wanderer” because of his constant association with the battle-field, is called by the same name when he walks about the city streets; or as the water-born animals when found on land are still called water-born animals and not land-born animals. Even so those who have attained concentration through trances associated with these spheres are still the same even if they are found in other spheres. Any craving for corporeality is the attachment and desire for the Fine-material Existence.

Everything that is impermanent, subject to suffering, and impersonal, existing in all the three spheres, comes under corporeality. But only the Greed for Fine-material Existence should be understood by this term.

The beings in all these Brahma-worlds have several aeons as lifetime. But they also cannot live in these for ever. When they pass away from them, they are completely unaware as to where, and under what conditions, they would receive conception. Therefore, Greed for Fine-material Existence resembles, a rope that ties you to the cycle of rebirths. To be born in these spheres one has to acquire the absorptions. The first absorption, or *jhāna*, consists of 5 *jhāna*-links, namely: Thought-Conception, Discursive Thinking, Rapture, Joy, One-pointedness of Mind. The second absorption consists of 4 links (missing: Thought-Conception). The third absorption consists of the last three. The fourth consists of Joy and One-Pointedness of mind. The fifth is Equanimity and One-Pointedness of Mind. Those who strive for these absorptions should first attain the purity

of Morality consisting in restraining one's speech and bodily actions, and seeking guidance from a teacher and obtaining suitable mental exercises, and then retiring to a suitable place and beginning the meditation. Places not suitable for meditation are: large buildings, dilapidated buildings, buildings on highroads, near ponds, places surrounded by green vegetable foliage or flowers, places with abundance of fruits, places frequented by many townspeople, places for firewood, places near fields, places haunted by robbers, places near harbours, places on the frontier of two countries, places with unsuitable objects, places frequented by ghosts, places devoid of good friends.

But by those whose minds are covered with impurities, and who do heinous deeds with immediate results and have impure thoughts, by them the absorptions cannot be attained.

Those, however, without these impediments can attain concentration and peace of mind.

VII. Greed for Immaterial Existence (Arūpa Rāga)

Immaterial Existence (*arūpa-rāga*) consists of four spheres, namely: (1) the Sphere of Unbounded Space (*ākāśa-nañcayatana*), (2) the Sphere of Unbounded Consciousness (*viññāṇa-nañcayatana*), (3) the Sphere of Nothingness (*ākiñcaññayatana*), and (4) the Sphere of Neither perception nor non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). If a person craves for rebirth in these spheres, or clings to them, he is still possessed of Greed for Immaterial Existence.

There is nothing to be touched, seen, or heard in these four Spheres, owing to

the absence of any form or corporeality. Those four Spheres, when taken as one, are known as the Immaterial World.

Birth in the Sphere of Unbounded Space can be effected only through the *jhānas*. This in short is how it has to be done—The disciple who wishes to enter into these trances, perceives the thousands of worldly ills which the flesh is heir to, and the numerous diseases of the body. And thinking that these ills are absent in the Immaterial Worlds, and with the idea of getting rid of corporeality, he, after having attained the four *jhānas* chooses one of the suitable *Kasiṇas* and develops a great disgust towards anything physical and corporeal.

“And through the total overcoming of the corporeality perceptions, through the vanishing of the reflex-perceptions and the non-attention to the multiformity-perceptions, at the idea ‘Unbounded is Space’ and abides therein.

Through the total overcoming of the sphere of unbounded space, and at the idea, ‘Unbounded is Consciousness’, he reaches the sphere of unbounded consciousness and abides therein etc.

VIII. Conceit (Māna)

Conceit (*māna*) is a most powerful fetter that ties beings to the Round of Rebirths.

Now, how does this conceit arise? When a person thinks “Better am I”, or “Equal am I”, or “Lower am I”, then his mind becomes filled with conceit. Accordingly, conceit is of three kinds, i.e., Superiority-Conceit, Equality-Conceit, or Inferiority-Conceit.

Generally all the beings in the world are divided into either greater men, equal

men or inferior men. Of them the first group comprises the Royalty, etc., while Ministers form the second group, and Slaves are put to the category of the inferior. In all these men conceit originates in all its three forms, namely Superiority-Conceit, Equality-Conceit and Inferiority-Conceit. When a king imagines himself as being better than another king, he feels proud that none can match him in possession of land, wealth, palaces etc. In the same way, when a monk thinks of another as junior to him, he may become proud of the fact that no other monk is comparable to him in seniority or in morality, or ascetic practices. This vain pride is the Superiority-Conceit that affects the great.

A king, when thinking about another king of his own status, says to himself with pride: "What difference is there between the two of us in possession of land, wealth and chariots? I am indeed equal to him." "Likewise, a monk thinking about another monk of his own position, says to himself:

"After all, what difference is there between two of us in morality or virtue? I too am equal to him". And thinking thus, he becomes filled with conceit. This is the Equality-Conceit that affects the great.

Again a petty king compares himself to a superior king and thinks: "That king has much more land, wealth and chariots than I have. I am a mere normal king. Am I really a king in the actual sense of the word?" Such thinking produces some sort of vanity in his mind. In the same way, a monk who lacks support and patronage, comparing himself to another with higher morals and virtues, thinks: "This monk excels me in high morality and virtue. I am a monk in name only. I

am no clever religious preacher, neither am I a learned person, although I appear to be both. I am not a great monk either, though I am supposed to be one". With such thoughts as these, there arises some kind of vanity. This vanity is the Inferiority-Conceit affecting the great persons.

Now let us see how Conceit affects those that are equal in the three ways mentioned above.

If a minister, while thinking of another of his own status, feels proud of the fact that no other minister is richer than he, such pride or vanity is the Superiority-Conceit affecting those that are equal.

If, on the other hand, he proudly thinks, "That Minister and I are equal in wealth. I too am equal to him. Such pride is the Equality-Conceit affecting them. Lastly, if a poor minister thinks of another minister of a higher status, and says to himself that he is poorer than the second, that he is a minister in name only, and that he is destitute of food and clothing even, the vanity that arises under such circumstances is the Inferiority-Conceit affecting the Equal or Ordinary people.

The slave or the inferior person too is affected by conceit in all its three forms, as shown above.

Thus we can see, how this Fetter of Conceit arises in mind. It is indeed a very powerful fetter. The monk as well as the laymen gives rise to conceit, in foolishly trying to become great, and thereby they become inferior. Once because of this useless conceit, a monk had to be pardoned by a layman. That incident in short is as follows:— During the time the Buddha was alive, there lived in the city of Maccikasanda a famous householder by name of Citta. One day he met a monk

named Mahānāma, and as the latter pleased him very much, he offered him food and listened to his sermons whereby he became a Stream-Enterer. After that he built a large temple in his park for the use of the monks who visited him from all the four directions. A monk called Suddhamma also lived there in the city. During this time, the great Sāriputta and Moggallāna had come to know of the great virtues and the generosity of this householder Citta; and out of compassion for him, they visited this city. On their visit, they were respectfully received by Citta, and at the hands of Sāriputta he became a Non-Returner (*Anāgāmi*) after listening to a religious sermon from him.

The householder afterwards invited Sāriputta and Moggallāna for midday-meal. He next invited the-resident monk Suddhamma. But this monk was a very haughty person, and therefore he did not accept the invitation on the grounds that he had been invited afterwards. Not satisfied with that, he scolded the householder bitterly, went to the Buddha, leaving the temple, and reported the matter to him. The Buddha, however, found fault with the monk and directed him to go and beg pardon of the righteous householder. So the monk went to him and begged his pardon, but the latter refused to forgive him. Disappointed, the monk went to the Buddha again and informed him of what had happened. But the Buddha knew it already. He had sent him there with the idea of destroying his vanity.

Then the Buddha sent him in the company of another monk to the householder to beg his pardon, remarking that monks should not indulge in vain thoughts like: "This is the temple built for

me, this is my supporter, etc." Thereupon Citta granted him pardon, and, as a mark of courtesy on his part, he begged the monk to pardon him, if any wrong had been done by him.

Thus, from this story we can understand the amount of disgrace we have to suffer as a result of Conceit. Its retribution in the other world will be thousand times worse. In short, Conceit is an utterly useless and harmful thing, which puts men into degradation in this world, as well as in the next.

IX. Restlessness (Uddhacca)

The ninth fetter binding to the Wheel of Rebirth, is Restlessness (*uddhacca*), i.e. scattered-mindedness, disquietude, or mental flurry. It makes the mind restless, just like a heap of ashes is whirled up, when one throws a stone at it.

Uddhacca is one of the fifty-two mental factors and the constant companion of any evil state of mind.

This state of Restlessness has to be studied according to how it appears, functions and feels, and also according to its proximate cause. It is like the sea, or a river, overflowing the land. You see how restless the sea may become. Exactly so is it with the restlessness of the mind.

In action or behaviour, it is just like a flag shaken by strong winds. A flag tied to the end of a stick will not rest unmoved when caught up by the winds. In the same way, behaves this flag of mind, tied to the stick, or object in view, when caught by the winds of Restlessness.

Unwise reasoning gives rise to Restlessness; because it arises, if the individual thinks unwisely, when the mind is not at rest. Hence the Buddha said:—

There is restlessness in the mind, and a multitude of unwise considerations, [will] tend to create restlessness and worry, if not already created; and to make them rise again and again, if already created. Further, this unwise reasoning is instrumental in spreading restlessness and worry.

If, a person considers something impermanent as permanent, something miserable as happy, something impersonal as personal, something unwholesome as wholesome, that is unwise consideration.

Thus this Restlessness which originates as a result of unwise consideration, can be avoided by thinking wisely, when the mind is at rest. Therefore said the Buddha:—

If in the serene mind clear and wise reasoning will abide, restlessness and worry hitherto not arisen will not arise; and if already arisen, it will by all means suppress it.

To keep the mind at rest, one must practise concentration and insight. Concentration destroys the five mental Hindrances namely: Sensuous Lust, Ill-will, torpor and languor, restlessness and worry, and sceptical doubt.

The hermit who wishes to attain concentration and *jhānas*, should select a subject of meditation in keeping with his individuality, and on a secluded spot he should meditate in the most proper way. If, having meditated thus, he attains gradually a state of pure mental serenity, the hermit will enter the trances in question.

Insight (*vipassanā*) means the clear perception of the physical and mental phenomena of existence as impermanent, miserable and impersonal.

Besides the foregoing methods, there are six more ways of destroying Restlessness. They are (1) knowledge, (2) the habit of asking questions, (3) a sound opinion of disciples, (4) keeping company with elders, (5) keeping company with good friends, and (6) indulging in wise conversation.

The person who knows what is right and wrong through questioning, who is trained in proper discipline, who possesses intelligence, who approaches the elder monks, who associates with good friends like Upāli-Thera, and who, having known what is right and wrong, indulges in wise conversation, it is such a one who can destroy Restlessness.

Thus this Fetter of Restlessness is for ever annihilated only on becoming an Arahāt.

X. Ignorance (*Avijjā*)

The Fetter of Ignorance is the ignorance regarding the Four Noble Truths; suffering, the origin of suffering, the extinction of suffering, the Path leading to the Extinction of suffering.

It is ignorance that tempts people to indulge in what should be discarded, and to avoid what one should be devoted to. The ignorant does not realise the collective nature of the psycho-physical Groups, the sensitivity of the sentient Bases, impermanency of the psycho-physical elements, unchangeability of the Truths and the all-importance of ten senses-bases. He does not possess the knowledge of the four truths of suffering and is roaming in modes of generation, in courses of existence, processes of existence in the endless cycle of rebirths. It is ignorance that veils the true nature of

the objects coming to Consciousness, and the conditions of their Dependent Origination. Its function is to lead beings astray.

Ignorance could be compared to a blind man, who goes astray owing to the absence of a guide. Thus the ignorant during the course of his roaming in the Process of Existence does sometimes karmically wholesome deeds, sometimes karmically unwholesome deeds.

Once a person happens to realize the Four Noble Truths, by fully understanding them, he will be freed from Ignorance and all the other unwholesome qualities by attaining Arahatsip.

The text of the Four Noble Truths, frequently recurring in the Sutta-Piṭaka, runs as follows:—

I. “But what, O monks, is the noble truth of Suffering?” Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; in short, the 5 groups of existence connected with clinging are suffering.

II. “But what is the noble truth of the Origin of suffering?” It is that craving which gives rise to fresh rebirth and, bound up with lust and greed, now here now there, finds ever fresh delight. It is the Sensual Craving (*kāma-taṇhā*), the Craving for Existence (*bhava-taṇhā*), the Craving for Self Annihilation (*vibhava-taṇhā*.)

III. “But what is the noble truth of the Extinction of suffering?” It is the complete fading away and extinction of this craving, its forsaking and giving up, liberation and detachment from it.

IV. “But what is the noble truth of the Path leading to the extinction of

suffering?” It is the noble eightfold path that is leading to the extinction of suffering, namely:

III. Wisdom (*paññā*)

1. Right Understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*)
2. Right thoughts (*sammā-saṅkappa*)

I. Morality (*sīla*)

3. Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*)
4. Right bodily Action (*sammā-kammanta*)
5. Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*)

II. Concentration (*samādhi*)

6. Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*)
7. Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*)
8. Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*)

1. “What now, O monks, is Right Understanding?” It is the understanding of suffering, its origin, its extinction, and the path leading to its extinction.

2. “What are Right Thoughts?” Thoughts free from sensual lust, ill-will and cruelty.

3. “What is Right Speech?” Abstaining from lying, tale-bearing, harsh words, and foolish babble.

4. “What is bodily Right Action?” Abstaining from injuring living beings, from stealing and from unlawful intercourse with the other sex.

5. “What is Right Livelihood?” When the noble disciple rejects a wrong living and gains his living by means of a right livelihood.

6. “What is Right Effort?” When the disciple incites his will to avoid the arising of evil, unwholesome things that have not yet arisen—to overcome the evil, unwholesome things already arisen—to arouse the wholesome things not yet

arisen—to maintain the wholesome things already arisen, and not to let them disappear, but to bring them to growth, to maturity and full perfection of development; and thus he strives, puts forth his energy, strains his mind and struggles.

7. “What is Right Mindfulness?” When the disciple dwells in contemplation of corporeality—feeling—mind—mind-objects, ardent, clearly conscious and mindful, after putting away worldly greed and grief.

8. “What is Right Concentration?” When the disciple, detached from sensual objects, detached from unwholesome things, enters into the first trance, etc.”

I tell you, O monks, there are two kinds of understanding: There is, e.g., the understanding that it is good to give alms and offering, that both good and evil actions will be followed by good and evil fruits. This, O monks, is an understanding which though still being subject to biases is wholesome, yields worldly fruits and brings good results. But whatever there is of wisdom, of penetration, of right understanding conjoined with the path, the holy path being pursued, this is called the supermundane (*lokuttara*) right understanding.

Much has been written about the Eightfold Path by both qualified as well as unqualified authors, but I must confess that, in both cases, the true nature of the path has been piteously misinterpreted. In this connection therefore I consider it most appropriate to give a few elucidative hints on the true nature of this path, which really forms the foundation of Buddhism.

First of all. I should wish to point out that this so-called path in reality is no path

at all, i.e. no path on which one may advance step by step until, after successively passing through all the eight stages one after the other, one finally may reach one's destination Nibbāna. If this really were so, one should have realized, first of all, Right Understanding and penetration of the truth, before even one could hope to proceed to the next step. In reality, however, the links 3-5 constituting moral training are the first 3 links to be brought to perfection, then the links 6-8 constituting Mental Training (*samādhī*), and at last Right Understanding, etc. constituting Wisdom (*paññā*).

It is, however, true that a really unshakable and safe foundation to the path is only provided by Right Understanding which, starting from the tiniest germ of faith and knowledge, gradually, step by step, develops into the highest state of enlightenment and penetrating Insight (*vipassanā*) and thus forms the immediate condition to the entrance into the four supermundane paths and fruits of holiness, and to the realisation of Nibbāna. Only with regard to this, highest form of supermundane insight, we indeed may say that all the remaining links of the path are but the outcome and the attendant symptoms of Right Understanding.

Regarding the Mundane eightfold path, however, its links may arise without the first link, Right Understanding.

Here I have further to emphasize that the links of the path are not only not arising one after the other, as already indicated, but also that they, at least partly, arise simultaneously as inseparably associated mental factors in one and the same state of consciousness. Thus, for instance, are under all circumstances at

least four links inseparably bound up with any karmically wholesome (*kusala*) consciousness, namely, 2, 6, 7 and 8, i.e., Right thought, Right effort, Right mindfulness and Right concentration.

Delusion possesses qualities of misleading. It drowns beings in the flood of Ignorance. It entangles beings in the cycle of Birth.

The specific Buddhist knowledge, as part of the Noble Eightfold Path to Deliverance, is 'Insight' (*vipassanā*), i.e. that intuitive knowledge which brings about the four stages of Holiness and the realization of Nibbāna, and which consists in the penetration of the Impermanency, Misery, and Impersonality (*anattā*) of all forms of existence.

“And now friends, desires are evil and hatreds are evil; and for the getting rid of desires and hatreds there is a Middle Way, vision and knowledge bestowing, which leads to cessation, to insight, to the Supreme Awakening, to Nibbāna. And what is that Middle Way? It is even the Excellent Eightfold Path of Right Understanding, Right Mindedness, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Living, Right Endeavour, Right Recollectedness, Right Concentration. Also, friends, wrath and enmity are evil, and hypocrisy and self-esteem, and envy and niggardliness, and deceit and cunning, and obstinacy and clamorousness, and pride and conceit, and wildness and heedlessness,— all these are evil; and the Middle Way by which they may be overcome is even the Excellent Eightfold Path; for even this is that Middle Way, vision and knowledge bestowing, which leads to cessation and to insight, to the Supreme Awakening, to Nibbāna.”

So spake the venerable Sāriputta, rejoicing the hearts of all that heard his word.

Majjhima Nikāya, Third Discourse.

“Such a doctrine, friend, that in the heavens or on the earth, amongst the hosts of Māra or Brahmā, or among the race of ascetics and recluses, of none in all the worlds, whether gods or men, does he stand in awe; such, moreover, that of him who lives sundered from desirings, the holy one, done with all questionings, severed from distress of mind, thirsting neither for existence nor for non-existence, perceptions no longer lay hold. That is my doctrine, friend; that is what I preach.”

Majjhima Nikāya, Eighteenth Discourse.

EVE OF DEPARTURE

Am I to call this happiness that's held
like a bright jewel in my hollowed hand
for doting eyes that cannot understand
how the heart sickens when a hope is felled?

Shall I be dazzled by the rainbow light
of this immediate world, make friend of time
that killed my childhood and shall kill my prime,
and think the day eternal until night

swallows up all? I who have felt the bone
shudder at thought of its last nakedness
and lain in darkness of the world's distress
wounded by heat of fire and the chill of stone

have seen disease, decrepitude and death
crawl like a blight across my flower-lit way.
For what shall it avail a king to pray
whose rule is measured by each passing breath?

Towers have fallen on the season's grass
falling to music in the wilderness
ten thousand ages of a measureless
infinity, and I have seen them pass

beyond the weariness of kingdoms lost;
as who should ponder on an ancient deed
have seen Death lay his mandate in the seed
and wait, as on each summer waits the frost.

Red flame of sacrifice and the sword's high song
that hymns a nation's destiny are less
to me than dreams of a child's idleness
who plays at priest and emperor all day long.

These are no bonds of mine; but love has spun
a harder thread to break, from you who wear
all heaven's mysteries in your midnight hair,
weaving a thousand fetters into one.

But your voice also in the world's lament
tells me that beauty passes like a gleam
on rippled water. We who share the dream
must share the waking when our night is spent.

Think then I go to seek a gift for you
greater than lover ever gave before—
I who have met beyond the palace door
forgotten woes and tears we never knew.

Francis Story

The Dasa Dhamma Sutta

DISCOURSE ON THE TEN DHAMMAS

(Āṅguttara-Nikāya—Dasakanipāta)

With Notes

(Translated by Bhadanta Kassapa Bhikkhu of Vajirārāma)

Ignorant foolish folk indulge in heedlessness;

The wise man guards heedfulness as the supreme treasure.

(Dhammapada)

Ten factors now we adumbrate,
Ten factors of significance
That every monk should integrate
In thoughts of constant vigilance.

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti, in Jetavana, Anāthapiṇḍika's Temple.

There then, the Blessed One summoned the Bhikkhus: "Bhikkhus!"

"Lord!" replied those Bhikkhus; and the Blessed One spoke thus—

"These Ten Essentials, O Bhikkhus, should ever be reviewed by one who has given up the worldly life. What are the ten?

1. 'Having consented, in a casteless state am I'—*this should ever be reflected upon by one who has gone forth to the Holy Life.*

2. 'My very life is dependent on others'—*this should ever be reflected upon by one who has gone forth to the Holy Life.*

3. 'What should be done by me (i.e. My duty) is of another character' (i.e. different to the layfolks' ways) —*this should ever be reflected upon by one who has gone forth to the Holy Life.*

4. 'Does my mind not upbraid me concerning my virtues?' —*this should ever be reflected upon by one who has gone forth to the Holy Life.*

5. 'Do my wise fellow-brethren in the Order, having tested, not upbraid me concerning my virtue?' —*this should ever be reflected upon by one who has gone forth to the Holy Life.*

6. 'With all, pleasant and dear to me, there is inevitable subjection to change, and parting'—*this should ever be reflected upon by one who has gone forth to the Holy Life.*

7. 'Of Kamma (i.e. set up by mental, vocal and physical activity) am I, have Kamma for inheritance, Kamma as mould, Kamma for kinsmen, Kamma for protection. Whatever action I do,—be it good or bad,—of that shall I be heir'—*this should ever be reflected upon by one who has gone forth to the Holy Life.*

8. 'How do my nights and days pass?' —*this should ever be reflected upon by one who has gone forth to the Holy Life.*

9. 'Do I delight in solitude?' —*this should ever be reflected upon by one who has gone forth to the Holy Life.*

10. 'Have I gained faculties transcending the normal human level (such as Jhānas),—the truly distinctive attainment of Noble Wisdom—insight,—so that, questioned by fellow-brethren of the Holy Order in my last days (i.e. when nearing death), I shall not be upset?' —

this should ever be reflected upon by one who has gone forth to the Holy Life.

These, O Bhikkhus, are the Ten Essentials that should ever be reviewed by one who has gone forth to the Holy Life.”

So spake the Blessed One, and pleased, those Bhikkhus praised the words of the Blessed One.

Notes.—With regard to the First Essential for constant review, it must be remembered that, in the Buddha’s time, there were four main castes in India,—the warriors, the Brahmins, the middle caste of merchants and landowners, and the low caste of Sudras, who were skilled mechanics, overseers etc. All these were “caste people”, and proud of their various levels of social elevation, wealth and prestige.

There were also, and these constituted the majority, a multitude of outcastes or *vasalas* of various grades. These were the hewers of wood, the drawers of water, and those who did the menial toil for the rest of the community.

When the Buddha inaugurated his Order of the Saṅgha, He said that, as all rivers, flowing into the ocean, there lose their identity and are henceforth “ocean” and not Gangā, Yamunā etc., so all who enter the Order of the Saṅgha, of their own consent drop every notion of “caste”, and lose thereby all pride of birth, family, class, and so forth.

The outcaste *vasala* was as good a Bhikkhu as he who formerly, when layman, paraded as a “caste man”.

The Buddha and His Great Arahanta Disciples never refused ordination, as Bhikkhu, to a man merely on the ground of caste. When giving up the household

life, to become a Bhikkhu, a man gives up the world and all its ways of counting men as “high and low” by birth, wealth, position, worldly learning etc. All this is stressed under the First Essential for constant remembrance.

Under the Second Essential, the Bhikkhu is urged by the Blessed One to realize that he is dependent on others for all his needs,— food, clothing, shelter and medicines. With his *Pabbajjā*, or renunciation of the household life, as a novice in the Holy Order, a man pledges to observe the precept to abstain from acceptance of gold and silver. The Commentary states that “gold and silver” stands for all money, in any form whatsoever, and not only for the metals. From his novitiate, the Homeless One is vowed to poverty; he cannot himself accept money under any condition. Any layman who has undertaken to be his supporter, may be nominated by a monk to retain and expend a sum of money specially offered to him for a specific lawful purpose,—such as procuring a robe. *But no individual or institution can lawfully act as banker for unlimited accumulation of money for a yellow-robed follower of the Buddha.*

When a Novice or Sāmanera is admitted to the higher ordination, Upasampadā, and becomes a Bhikkhu, he is bound by the rules of Vinaya Discipline. He is “Defeated” and ceases to be a Bhikkhu if he is guilty of theft. It is a *Nissaggiya Pācittiya*, a fault involving repentance and forfeiture, for a Bhikkhu to receive “gold or silver” (i.e. money), or get someone to receive it for him, or allow it to be kept in deposit for him. Again, it is a “Nissaggiya” for a Bhikkhu to engage in a transaction in which money

is used, or in any kind of buying and selling.

Good Bhikkhus are extremely careful to avoid any action that would cause financial deprivation to anyone; for, if such deprivation occurs, the Bhikkhu, according to Pārājikā Rules, can lose his Bhikkhuhood, being “defeated”, or, at the least, commits a Vinaya offence.

The fact that “his very life is dependent on others” imposes on the genuine conscientious Bhikkhu an inescapable obligation. Says the Buddha—

“‘Samaṇas, Samaṇas’—thus Bhikkhus, do the people greet you, recognize you, and, being asked— ‘What are you?’ you reply— ‘Samanas are we’.

Wherefore, thus named, thus professing, thus also should you be. Whatsoever becomes a Samaṇa, having undertaken to be such, these let us observe, so that our name shall be a true fact and our profession made good,—and that those through whom we receive food, robes, medicines and shelter,— these of their deed, shall have abundant fruit, exceeding recompense; and this, our life of homelessness shall not be in vain, but shall be fruitful and produce results.”

With this, we come to the Third Essential.— “My duty is of another character.”

As a layman, one is absorbed in layman’s duties, layman’s interests and pursuits, but, on giving up lay life, the Bhikkhu gives up all that.

What then are his duties, both to ensure that his supporters should obtain great reward, and that his own life shall be fruitful? The Buddha gives the answer. First, the Bhikkhu, in shame and fear, must shrink from all wrong. Next he must be a

Silavanta,—pure of word, deed and thought. Next he must control all his “sense-doors”, so that no evil might enter by eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or mind. Next, he must be moderate in eating. Although the Buddha has never advised His followers to be “vegetarians”, He has again and again stressed “Be moderate in eating”. The genuine Bhikkhu does not eat after noon. The Bhikkhu should be *enījanjā*, “antelope like”,—not pot-bellied and fat. Next the good Bhikkhu must ever be alert to purge his mind of all evil, forbidden things. Day and night he must be alert. Next the good Bhikkhu must constantly be watchful and discriminating, *Sati-Sampajañña*, in all he does, going, coming, standing, sitting, walking, lying down, answering calls of nature, eating, drinking, speaking, everything. Next, the genuine Bhikkhu must practise *Samādhi*, first for high mental concentration *Samatha* and *Citt’ekaggatā* and next for insight—wisdom,—*Vipassanā-Paññā*. These, and *no others*, are the Samaṇa-dhammas, the duties of a genuine Bhikkhu. A Bhikkhu has naught to do with worldly affairs, governments, voting for sending into power government representatives, and thus being involved and interested and concerned in such worldly things.

A true Bhikkhu has no business to teach worldly sciences and arts to others, monks or laymen, for such have naught to do with a Bhikkhu’s aim for Deliverance from Dukkha, which means Deliverance from the world and all its ways.

Under no circumstance whatsoever can a genuine Bhikkhu accept *any* remuneration, money, or even food, clothing, shelter and medicine; for thus

acting, he becomes a hireling of laymen, and ceases to be a genuine *Samaṇa* but becomes instead a cheat, a rogue and a contemptible *assamaṇa*. Any Bhikkhu may teach the Dhamma, for nothing, but out of compassion to those who ask for instruction; but, because of such preaching, he must never neglect his true duties as outlined above.

About “missionary work” it must never be forgotten that the Buddha’s words, oft misquoted, without the context— “Go ye forth O Bhikkhus and declare the Dhamma,” were spoken to Arahantas; and Moggaliputta Tissa Thera’s “missionaries”, sent forth after the Third Great Council, were Arahantas. So, the duty— “What must be done” by a true Bhikkhu, who is still a *puṭhujjana* or unattained one, is absolutely apart from concern in the world and the world’s ways. His living example must be an inspiration to layfolk.

It is improper and foolish of a layman to expect a “return” from a Bhikkhu whom he may be supporting, in the shape of Dhamma teaching and so forth. Any good Bhikkhu will, of course, out of compassion discourse on the Dhamma to any that invite him to do so, be they supporters or not,—unless, as may happen, he is not able to do so for some reason. The “return” a layman gets for supporting a Bhikkhu, except in rare instances of immediate fruit, is a hidden return during this life. It is the satisfaction and joy that he has been able to do his good deeds, which will ripen in time. The Dhammapada says—

“As a man long absent and safely returned from afar, kinsfolk, friends and well-wishers joyfully greet on arrival,—even so, his good deeds receive the doer

of good, gone from this world to the next, like a home-coming dear relative.”

The Fourth Essential deals with introspective examination of his purity. It is a personal analysis (*ajjhātam*) and arouses Shame of Evil (*hiri*), or wrong behaviour in any shape or form.

The Fifth Essential also deals with purity (*Sīla*) and is here looking outward (*bahidda*), and aimed at arousing Fear of Evil (*ottappa*).

The Sixth Essential, accepting the inexorable nature of universal transience (*anicca*), and resultant suffering, aims at guarding the genuine meditating Bhikkhu from unpreparedness and possible shock and discomposure in his even practice of the *Samaṇa-dhamma*.

The Seventh Essential stresses the Law of Cause and Effect in the realms of mental activity,—for vocal and bodily activity only stamp and accentuate the mental in the *Kāma-vācāra* (sense) sphere. In the higher *Rūpa* and *Arūpa* spheres, it is Mind that is all-powerful in the Kamma Law,—you reap even as you sow. This should be fully and clearly grasped by constant reflection.

The Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Essentials are very important and hang together. They drive home to any sincere Bhikkhu, the meaning and object of his Bhikkhuhood, which is only for the attainment of Nibbāna, the Final Deliverance.

For this noble aim, *Sīla* and *Samādhi* are essential. And, for these, seclusion is a vital need.

So the Eighth Essential in effect asks, “Do I spend my nights and days in vain chasing after worldly name, gains and honour or do I spend my time as the

Buddha wants me to spend it, on a definite road of graduated progress towards the Goal? This tends to sharply pull up any sensitive true Bhikkhu, though the thick-skinned will fail to penetrate into the meaning of this Essential.

The Ninth Essential is definite. “*Do I delight in solitude*, or do I sit waiting for visitors to come and chatter to me on all sorts of worldly matters,—politics and all supposed wrongs and slights to the Sāsana not excluded? *Do I delight in solitude* or do I delight in roaming about the face of this earth, in an insatiable itch of the pleasure of travel, the diversion of popularity, honour and respect from “great ones” of lay life, making as my high-sounding excuse that I am doing “missionary” work, for which I duly keep on unloading the same old little bundle of knowledge of Dhamma that I have acquired for this special purpose?

Soon my meagre stock of Dhamma-tricks is exhausted, and I am driven to repeat myself. Perforce, I must then find fresh fields where my sermons and catchwords are unknown, and thereby I satisfy my unending lust for travel and gain, honour and fame as a much-travelled “missionary monk”.

The direct question “Do I delight in solitude?” if faced sincerely, by any but those whose veils of Avijjā and Taṇhā have made insensitive, will put the sincere Bhikkhu on the right path. Only he will see and profit by the meaning of the Tenth Essential.

The Tenth Essential brings vividly to the mind of any Bhikkhu blest with imagination and even a moderate ripening of insight and understanding, the fact that

right here the Blessed One draws pointed attention to the actuality of the “faculties transcending the normal human level”—such as the high jhānas and iddhi powers,—and the reality of “the truly distinctive attainment of Noble Wisdom-Insight”, the Ariya Nāṇa-dassana” of the Four Stages of Deliverance.

Here the Buddha calls up the Bhikkhus and Himself tells them to ask themselves whether they have or have not yet reached these heights that are the heritage of each true disciple. To us of today, in these degenerate days of scepticism and sceptics, of people who doubt and ridicule the quiet seeker of the heights of attainment, these words of the Buddha, spoken as crown of the Dasa Dhamma, “to be constantly reflected upon by one who has gone forth to the Holy Life”, drive home a guarantee from the Master’s own mouth, a positive, definite firm declaration of the actual truth of these high attainments that inspires renewed confidence in our hesitant hearts.

These are the worthwhile high fruits of genuine Samaṇa life. To the Buddha and His great Arahanta Disciples these were the things they had themselves attained and they well knew that similar attainment is possible for all who sincerely and strenuously strive on towards the Heights. So, with restored confidence, even though we be of a less heroic mould and of duller mental acuity, we can march on with steadfast reliance on the words of the All-Enlightened One. Today we may win out, or, maybe tomorrow. Let the Muñja-grass crest inspire victory.

PARISITTHA KANDA

Abhinna (Dasa Dhamma) Sutta.

THE BEAUTIFUL PAGODA

The Shwe-Dagon Paya

Ethel Mannin

IT is usual when reporting on a foreign country to deal first with the capital. I have observed this in the best travel books, and have also gone to work in this way myself. The Eastern traveller, visiting London or Paris, would not report first on Westminster Abbey or Notre Dame; he would first study and report upon the cities enshrining these treasures. But then Rangoon does not enshrine the Shwedagon Pagoda, which though it dominates the city is not strictly speaking in it but on the outskirts of it. So that it may be considered as a separate entity. Rangoon enshrines the Sule Pagoda, as positively as London's Piccadilly Circus enshrines the Eros fountain, and the Sule Pagoda is beautiful and of interest, but it is not dramatic like the great Shwedagon. It was not of the Sule Pagoda but of the dramatic, the incomparable Shwedagon that Ralph Fitch, that considerable traveller, declared in the sixteenth century, that it was 'the fairest place, as I suppose, that doe bee in all the worlde.' Fitch had almost certiinly seen the Taj Mahal, that 'dream in white marble', before he reached Burma and had his first glimpse of the dream in pure gold as he sailed up the Rangoon river. The present writer, having also seen the turquoise enamelled domes of the Mosque of Shakh-Zinda, the crowning glory of Tamerlaine's Sumarkand, would still place the Shwedagon Pagoda first, without having to think about it.

I do not know why the Shwedagon is so incredibly moving. Perhaps it is because of the sheer purity of its line

against the flawless sky. It is dramatic and beautiful from whatever angle it is approached. There are four covered staircases up to it, North, South, East and West. The main entrance is the South, and here at the foot of the steps stand huge guardian beasts, half lion, half dragon, characteristic of the pagodas everywhere. They are white, picked out with red, blue, and gold paint, and have a fabulous fairy-tale quality. At either side of the steps as you mount—barefooted—there are small open-fronted shops or stalls, selling Buddha images of all kinds, small gilt shrines for the home, tinselled pictures of the Buddha and his chief disciples, strings of large rosary beads, tinselled marionette dolls, tiny paper parasols for placing on shrines, wood-carvings of the guardian lions, ivory carvings of all kinds, real tortoiseshell combs, small oblong drums—essential to Burmese music—and near the top of the stairs flower stalls, where also joss-sticks and candles are sold. The flower stalls are of a sweetness unknown to any European flowerstalls, for they are stacked with jasmine, tuber-roses and many other heavily scented flowers native to the East, as well as roses and carnations, and lesser, scentless, flowers such as asters and marigolds. The flowers, singly and in bunches, are tied to thin sticks, so that they may be easily placed in the vases in front of the Buddha images. They will not live, for there is no water in the vases, but they are not intended to, since they are not placed there as a decoration for the shrine, as flowers are arranged on a Christian altar, but



Miss Ethel Mannin, famous authoress, whose book on Burma “Land of the Crested Lion” is shortly to be published.

solely as an offering; this being so their perfume should not be inhaled by those who offer them, and they should be carried upright, not in any careless, casual fashion.

At the back of some of the stalls, in a kind of half dark hinterland, there are small cafes at which meals are cooked and tea is made, and here are benches where after dark, when there is no more buying or selling, people sleep. A whole world of life goes on in that half concealed hinterland beside the pagoda steps.

The approach to the East steps is through a long bazaar where all manner of things are sold, slippers, clothing, combs, jewellery, religious books and pictures, all the conglomeration that makes up a bazaar, and this bazaar continues on up the steps which seem as a result merely like the continuation of the busy narrow street. Once on these steps with David Maurice we met with a friend of his, an old hermit in from the country. He wore the dark clothes and carried the staff of his calling. After he and David had warmly greeted each other we all three continued on up the steps. David explained that it would not be correct to say that the old man lived by the begging bowl, for he did not in fact beg, but that if anyone liked to make him a present he would accept not as a favour but as conferring one, for the chief benefit would accrue to the giver, who would acquire merit thereby. Without any desire to acquire merit, however, I nevertheless thought it would be nice to give the old man a few- kyats, and asked David to convey this to him. This was done and the offer accepted, with the request that it be done in the proper place, up on the platform of the pagoda—the marble

paved terrace, that is to say, which encompasses its base.

When we reached the platform we walked round a little past various carved wooden shrines, beautiful with red lacquer, housing Buddha images of marble or gold or brass or alabaster, until we came to a spot where the hermit said it would be right to give and to accept alms. Having given we abased ourselves at the feet of the venerable man, who gave us his blessing. Then seeing what was going on, and that they had a holy man in their midst, other people came and gave gifts of money, so that it was altogether a good day for the hermit that he had encountered his old friend on the steps, and a good day for David and for me and for the others who rallied round. The old man explained to us what a good thing it was for us all, and how it was part of his kamma that he should have been on those particular steps at that particular moment, and we parted in that aura of goodwill which is always a good thing whenever and wherever it is met with.

The West steps are flanked by golden pillars, and the roof is gilded and painted. There are fewer shops and stalls here and in places none at all, so that there are views out over the city, and the walk half way up the pagoda hill is visible. It is beautiful to do this walk at sundown, when the tall palms which spring up here and there at either side of the path lean against the crimson sky and the pagoda takes on an incredible sunset splendour of golden fire. Then as the brief twilight fades the lights come out on the pagoda and the palms blacken against the violet sky. But then, too, by moonlight this walk is most magical; then the palms and the wild plantains at each side of the path,

and the little chalet-like wooden houses at various points, are touched with mystery, and the soft silver light seems to drip from the trees and the ornately carved gables of the houses like water. Inside the little houses people squat on floors eating rice, or telling their beads before a Buddha shrine, by the light of a single candle. There is a tremendous commotion of cicadas.

Between the palms and the neem trees at one side of the path there are sudden glimpses of the lights of the city down below. Above, at the other side of the path, poised between the plumes of the strangely leaning palms, there are glimpses of the illuminated pagoda on its hilltop, its gold as burnished by moonlight as by sunlight, and when the moon is young it is like a jewel that has somehow strayed from the spire of the pagoda. There is a desolate, eerie patch before the path crosses the East steps; only weeds and thorns grow here, and the ground suddenly makes the bare feet aware of flints. I had here the strange experience of feeling suddenly cold and afraid, with an unaccountable feeling of horror. I explained to my companion that it was as though 'something awful' had happened here at one time. My companion, however, felt nothing except that the going here was stonier. Crossing the steps and continuing to follow the path at the other side the magic reasserted itself, and I had again the feeling of walking in a fairyland of beauty and strangeness remote from everyday reality. It is a curiously private world, too; on neither of the occasions when I invaded it did I see anyone else walking there for the sake of it, and the people living there stared with the air of people not used to being intruded upon,

though only the prowling pariah dogs seemed to resent it. It was not until I got back to London that I learned that during the second war of annexation, in 1852, under Lord Dalhousie, the pagoda had been fortified and there had been bitter fighting at that point, where the Burmese had been taken by surprise, and many soldiers, both British and Burmese had died there.

At the top of the hill, where the pagoda stands surrounded at its base by lesser pagodas, and by shrines innumerable, all encircled by the flat marble-paved terrace, another new world of strangeness and beauty is revealed. The small golden pagodas round the base of the big one all have their little crowns of bells which tinkle most sweetly in the wind. At the base of the pagoda, too, there are carved wooden shrines, red lacquered, and with charming gabled roofs in tiers, terminating in fine spires, and they too have their little bells. There are shrines, too, large and small, across the terrace from the base of the pagoda, all of them housing Buddha images, reclining Buddhas, standing Buddhas, Buddhas in the conventional lotus position. At the top of each flight of steps there are big shrines, with huge Buddha images, and long altars where flowers are laid and candles and incense-sticks lit. In these major shrines men, women and children are always to be found, kneeling on bamboo mats contemplating the Buddha image, bowing down in the act of worship till their foreheads touch the ground, repeating such formulas from the scriptures, such precepts of their faith, as are suited to the occasion, but always that which reminds them that life is sorrow, impermanence, illusion, from which, as the Lord Buddha

taught, only the overcoming of craving can release them.

When someone makes a donation to the pagoda fund the big bell is struck, and its reverberations spread far out over the terrace. In his most beautiful book about Burma, *The Soul of a People*, the late Fielding Hall, who was an official in Burma during the British Raj, tells how the British took this bell from the pagoda and sought to bring it to England as a war trophy, (it was after the first war of annexation) but as it was being put on board ship it slipped and fell into the river, from which all the efforts of the British engineers failed to raise it. Then the Burmese asked if they might try to recover the bell, their sacred bell, and if they were able to might they be allowed to restore it to the pagoda. 'And they were told, with a laugh, perhaps, that they might; and so they raised it up again, the river giving back to them what it had refused to us, and they took it and hung it where it used to be. There it is now, and you may hear it when you go, giving out a long, deep note, the beat of the pagoda's heart.' The Burmese have not forgotten this story of the bell; I was told it more than once, in Rangoon and in Mandalay, and more than once I read it.

In addition to the lesser pagodas, and the shrines, at the base of the pagoda itself there are little gilded wrought iron trees, very decorative and charming, with the names of their donors set forth in plaques at their feet. There is also strip-lighting, now, in the various shrines, and on the pagoda itself, and the names of the donors are everywhere prominent. There are many who like the present writer deplore the vulgarity of this ostentatious giving as much as the inappropriateness of the

strip-lighting. Yet so great is the sum of beauty of the Shwedagon and its surrounding shrines that no vulgarity, no anachronism, can really take from it. It is a pity; it would be better not there, but magnificence is not minimized by minor blemishes.

The gaunt pariah dogs, many of them bitches, with litters of skinny little pups running round them, which inhabit the pagodas everywhere—they too would be better not there. To the Western mind they would be better put out of their misery, but this is not acceptable to the Buddhist mind, and nothing except an outbreak of rabies, when a child or two gets bitten, can provoke any action; then the services of some Moslem will be sought, poison laid, and a minor clean-up carried out. But for the most part the wretched creatures contrive to stay alive on the border-line of starvation, and even to breed and rear their litters on the odd handfalls of rice the kindly-disposed put out for them, and such edible scraps as they can find among the refuse in the gutters. In time one learns to accept them as part of the general picture, even not to notice them very much. Life is struggle and suffering for all creatures, particularly in the East; it always has been, for thousands of years, and no doubt always will be, and whilst there is grave cause to be exercised concerning man's inhumanity to man, is it not disproportionate to wax excited over some miserable pariah dog? Fielding Hall thought that at the Shwedagon even the pariah dogs looked in not too bad a condition. Perhaps it is true—or was true when he wrote at the end of the century. I don't know. We see what we want to see, and it is anyhow not important.

What is important is beauty, and

human life, and love, and the light men live by, and the faith, and the hearts of men. What is important in Burma is the Buddhist faith which gives meaning to their lives, and the beauty created out of that faith—through, by and for that faith. What is important in Rangoon is not that it is no longer ‘the most beautiful city in the East’ as was once—extravagantly—claimed for it but that the Shwedagon Pagoda has survived a war which laid low a tragic amount of the man-made beauty of the world, and has survived the changes of the after-war, and is still ‘the glittering mass of golden stupa standing on the last hill, of the Pegu Yomas.’ What is important is what this glittering mass means to the men and women, young and old, who climb its many steps, in the brief coolness of early morning, or the long heat of the day, to lay a few flowers, light a few candles or perhaps merely to sit and contemplate the image of the great teacher by whose precepts they seek to live. And what it means is hardly to be compassed in a few words, for it is a way of life, and ultimate truth. What is important is the impact of all this beauty on the hearts and minds of those who do not wholly—or even in part—accept the faith it symbolizes. Anyone who has ever felt, as opposed to merely observing, the beauty of the Shwedagon Pagoda is as spiritually enriched thereby as from the impact of any other great art; perhaps more so, for here the beauty is not merely aesthetic, but alive with the soul of a people—and with a moral force six hundred years older than Christianity.

There are always many people up on the pagoda terrace, in early morning, at midday, at sundown, and after dark. The atmosphere is not oppressive as in a

church, but as lively as a street. Children race about playing games; I have even seen young people fooling about as young people do, and it is not considered irreverent when sitting in front of a Buddha image to smoke a cheroot, and I have seen both men and women doing it in pagodas everywhere, and chatting as they sit. The Buddha is not considered divine. He was a great teacher, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One. The people come to pay his memory homage, and by repeating his precepts remind themselves of the truths he revealed to the world and which they accept as a way of life. It is a conception of worship and of prayer quite different from the Christian and the Moslem conception. It is a conception of religion in which man must look to himself for salvation, not to any divine power.

So the people at the Shwedagon, and at the pagodas everywhere, behave according to their current moods and needs; they do not whisper or tiptoe about. They talk and laugh, or they repeat the precepts, or they merely sit silently gazing, each paying homage in his own way, worshipping in his own way. There are many trees up on the platform of the Shwedagon, and a number of odd corners behind the shrines where there are little courtyards and terraces looking out over the city to the lakes. There are tall palms here, and shady neem trees, and there is a big old sacred tree round whose base the people apply gold-leaf and during the water-festival they bring a great deal of water to this tree—for it was under such a tree that Prince Gautama, who became the Lord Buddha, received his enlightenment. It is very pleasant to sit in the shade of the trees in what might be

described as the back streets of the pagoda—taking the broad marbled walk round the base to be the main street—and the people like to sit there, on wooden benches, or perched on the parapet, talking, smoking, eating, admiring the view, or merely watching the coming and going of their fellow men.

People make the pilgrimage to the Shwedagon from all parts of the country; Shans from the Shan States, Kachins from the northern hills, Mons from the villages of the deep south. And there are always pongyis—monks—walking about in their orange coloured robes, and shaven-headed nuns in their pale pink robes; and there are a few beggars, but they are not beggars in the ordinarily accepted sense but beggars as it were for the kingdom of heaven's sake, and mostly they are lay nuns in dark robes.

The pagoda enshrines eight hairs of the Buddha's head brought from India more than 2500 years ago by two Burmese merchants. There was then on this southernmost spur of the Pegu Yoma only the Mon—or Mun—village of Dagon, which eventually became Yangon, from which comes the modern name Rangoon. The shrine now known as the Shwedagon Pagoda, strictly Shwe-Dagon Paya—was the creation of Shinbyushin, King of Ava, in 1774. He raised it to its present height and gilded it with his own weight in gold. But centuries before then, during the years of the Mon Kingdom of Pegu, Shinsawbu, Queen Regnant of Hanthawaddy, had gilded it with her own weight in gold. King Singu, the son of King Shibyushin, regilded the pagoda in 1778 and had a sixteen ton bronze bell cast, which stands now at the north-east corner of the platform. This is

the bell which fell into the river during the Anglo-Burmese war of 1824, and was brought up by the Burmese in 1826 and restored to its place. The great canopy or umbrella—the *hti*—was the gift of King Mindon, who founded Mandalay. It cost half a million rupees and is hung with some fifteen hundred bells, one hundred of which are gold, the rest silver. This wonderful gift was sent by the king down the Irrawaddy in 1852, when Lower Burma was already in the hands of the British. The king had begged that one of his own representatives be allowed to officiate at the hoisting of the *hti*, but the British considered that this would be in the nature of a political gesture, and taken as such by the people, and the request was refused. Nevertheless a vast crowd attended the event and celebrated it with great festivities.

The hoisting of a new *hti* for even the smallest of pagodas is always an occasion for festivity, for *pwe*, as it is called, when open-air performances of dancing and singing go on literally from dusk till dawn. People come in from far and wide for *pwe*, and innumerable eating booths are set up, and stalls for the sale of fruit-juice, drinks, sweets, fruit, cakes, and all manner of things. The Burmese love festivals, and it unifies their national life that these festivals are invariably in connection with their religion. There is more to say about *pwe*, so important in Burmese life, but the place is not here, where we are considering “the fairest place that does bee in all the world.”

Aldous Huxley, who found the Taj Mahal ‘disappointing’, reacted to the Shwedagon as to a ‘sacred Fun Fair, a Luna Park dedicated to the greater glory of Gautama—but more fantastic, more

wildly amusing than any Bank Holiday invention.*' That is sad for Mr. Huxley that his eyes and his spirit were denied the vision of beauty, that he missed 'the perfume of the thousand prayers that have been prayed there, of the thousand thousand holy thoughts that have been thought there.' I have seen this pagoda athwart the mango tree beside my bedroom window at sunrise, and have leaned upon its parapet at sundown; I have seen it burnished to golden fire in the mid-day sun, and bewitched into something in a dream by moonlight. I have heard the *tauk-te* lizard calling its name somewhere out of sight as I wandered barefoot over the warm stones behind the shrines. I have sat and watched the people come and go in their bright clothes, the women with flowers in their hair, and themselves like flowers, and the young men so straight and slim in their *longyis* and neat light jackets. I have been up and down the many stairs many times, always at the top meeting with a fresh shock of delight the scent of jasmine and

(* "Jesting Pilate"—1926.)

tuber-roses. I have seen the fabulous golden cone reflected in the lake at the other side of the city, by sunlight and moonlight. And by sunlight and moonlight rising above the city in sheer golden purity from its surrounding forest of trees.

I do not merely remember it all, how it looked at these different times, from these different angles, but feel again, recalling it, the emotion it evoked. It is as though the heart itself remembers. Words do not seem adequate to convey such shining beauty; paint might serve the purpose better. But then I think that perhaps the words of Fielding Hall, in which he sums it all up—after describing it as like 'a great tongue of flame', and a 'most wonderful sight, so brilliant in the hot sunshine that it seemed to 'shake and tremble in the light like a fire'—in a very simple phrase, are after all the most telling, since words will not compass such beauty, and there is nothing for it, therefore, but to fall back as he did upon the simplicity of the statement— 'it is a very beautiful place, this pagoda.....'

And as with the thought of Craving, so with the thought of Ill-will and the thought of Cruelty: when these sought lodgement in my mind, I considered how that they were injurious to oneself and to others, to all concerned, unwise, ruinous, not tending to deliverance; and so considering, they died away from me. And as oft soever as they strove to arise, I put them from me, crushed them out, knowing that thoughts of ill-will and Cruelty drive away thoughts of Good-will and Kindliness, and so the mind is inclined to Ill-will and to Malice.

Majjhima Nikāya, Nineteenth Discourse.

THE BUDDHIST DOCTRINE OF KAMMA AND REBIRTH

By

NARADA MAHĀTHERA, VAJIRARAMA, BAMBALAPITIYA, COLOMBO

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-Sambuddhassa

Kamma is the law of moral causation. Rebirth is its corollary.

Kamma and Rebirth are inter-related, fundamental doctrines in Buddhism. These two beliefs were prevalent in India before the advent of the Buddha. Nevertheless, it was the Buddha who explained and formulated these two doctrines in the completeness we have them today.

What is the cause of the inequality that exists amongst mankind?

How do we account for the unevenness in this ill-balanced world?

Why should one be brought up in the lap of luxury endowed with fine mental, moral and physical qualities, and another in absolute poverty, steeped in misery? Why should one be born a millionaire and another a pauper? Why should one be a mental prodigy and another an idiot? Why should one be born with saintly characteristics and another with criminal tendencies? Why should some be linguists, artists, mathematicians and musicians from the very cradle? Why should others be congenitally blind, deaf and deformed? Why should some be blessed and others cursed from their birth?

There must either be a cause or causes for this inequality of mankind, or it must be purely accidental.

No sensible person would think of attributing this unevenness, this inequality, this diversity to blind chance or pure accident. In this world nothing happens to any person that he does not deserve for some reason or other. Usually the actual

reason or reasons cannot be comprehended by men of ordinary intellect. The definite invisible cause or causes of the visible effect is not necessarily confined to the present life, but may be traced to a proximate or remote past birth.

With the aid of telesthesia and retro-cognitive knowledge, may it not be possible for a highly developed seer to perceive events which are ordinarily imperceptible to the physical eye? Buddhists affirm such a possibility.

Some religionists conveniently attribute this inequality to a single cause such as an incomprehensible God-Creator. The Buddha explicitly denies the existence of a Creator, interpreted either as an Almighty Being or a causeless cosmic force.

The Pāli equivalent for the God-Creator in other religions is either Issara (Sanskrit—Isvara) or Brahma. In the Tipiṭaka there is absolutely no textual reference whatever to the existence of a Creator or to his relation with man.

Despite the fact that the Buddha placed no supernatural God over man, some scholars assert that the Buddha was characteristically silent on this important controversial question. The following quotations will clearly indicate the viewpoint of the Buddha towards the concept of a God-Creator.

In the Aṅguttara Nikāya the Buddha speaks of three divergent views that prevailed in His time. One of which was:

“Whatever happiness or pain or neu-

tral feeling this person experiences, all that is due to the creation of a Supreme Deity (*Issarna-nimmānahetu*).”¹

According to this statement we are what we were willed to be by a Creator. Our destinies rest entirely in his hands. Our fate is pre-ordained by him. The supposed free-will granted to his creation is obviously false.

Criticising this fatalistic view the Buddha says:

“So, then, owing to the creation of a Supreme Deity men will become murderers, thieves, unchaste, liars, slanderers, abusive, babblers, covetous, malicious, and perverse in view. Thus for those who fall back on the creation of a God as the essential reason, there is neither the desire to do, nor the effort to do, nor necessity to do this deed or abstain from that deed.”¹

In the Devadaha Sutta² the Buddha, referring to the self-mortification of naked ascetics, remarks:

“If, O Bhikkhus, beings experience pain and happiness as the result of God’s creation (*Issara nimmānahetu*), then certainly these naked ascetics must have been created by a wicked God (*Pāpak-na Issara*), since they are at present experiencing such terrible pain”.

Kevaddha Sutta³ narrates a humorous conversation that occurs between an inquisitive Bhikkhu and the supposed God-Creator.

A Bhikkhu desiring to know the end of the elements, approached Maha Brahma and questioned him thus:

“Where, my friend, do the four great elements—earth, water, fire, air—cease, leaving no trace behind?”

The Great Brahma replied:

“I, brother, am Brahma, Great Brahma, the Supreme Being, the Unsurpassed, the Perceiver of all things, the Controller, the Lord of all, the Maker, the Fashioner, the Chief, the Victor, the Ruler, the Father of all beings who have been and are to be.”

For the second and third time the Bhikkhu repeated his question, and the Brahma gave the same dogmatic reply.

Then Maha Brahma took the Bhikkhu by the arm, led him aside and made a frank utterance:

“O brother, these gods of my suite believe as follows: ‘Brahma sees all things; knows all things; penetrates all things.’ Therefore was it that I did not answer in their presence. I do not know, O brother, where these four great elements cease, having no trace behind. Therefore it was an evil and a crime, O brother, that you left the Blessed One, and went elsewhere in quest of an answer to the question. Turn back, O brother, and having drawn near to the Blessed One, ask Him this question, and as the Blessed One explains to you, so believe.”

Tracing the origin of Maha Brahma, the so-called Creator, the Buddha comments in the Pāthika Sutta⁴:

“On this, O disciples, that being who was first reborn (in a new world evolution) thinks thus: ‘I am Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Vanquisher, the Unvanquished, the All-seeing, the Disposer, the Lord, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Assigner, the Master of Myself, the Father of all that are and are to be. By me are these beings created.

1 Aṅguttara Nikāya i.174; Gradual Sayings, i.158.

2 Majjhima Nikāya (No. 101) ii 222

3 Dīgha Nikāya No. 11 Part i 221.

4 Dīgha Nikāya (No. 24) iii 29: Dialogues of the Buddha, iii 26.

And why is that so? A while ago I thought: Would that other beings too might come to this state of being! Such was the aspiration of my mind, and lo these beings did come.'

"And those beings themselves who arose after him, they too think thus: 'This worthy must be Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Vanquisher—the Father of all that are and are to be.'

"On this, O disciples: that being who arose first becomes longer lived, handsomer, and more powerful, but those who appeared after him become shorter lived, less comely, less powerful. And it might well be, O disciples, that some other being, on deceasing from that state, would come to this state (on earth). So come, he might go forth from the household life into the homeless state. And having thus gone forth by reason of ardour, effort, devotion, earnestness, perfect intellection, he reaches up to such rapt concentration, that with rapt mind he calls to mind his former dwelling place but remembers not what went before. He says thus: 'That Worshipful Brahma, the Vanquisher,—the Father of all that are and are to be, he by whom we were created, he is permanent, constant, eternal, unchanging, and he will remain so for ever and ever. But we who were created by that Brahma, we have come hither all impermanent, transient, unstable, short-lived, destined to pass away.'"

"Thus was appointed the beginning of all things which, ye, sirs, declare as your traditional doctrine; to wit, that it has been wrought by an over-lord, by Brahma."

In the Bhūridatta Jātaka (No. 543)⁵ the Bodhisatta questions the alleged justice of the Creator as follows :—

"He who has eyes can see the sickening sight;

Why does not Brahma set his creatures right?

If his wide power no limits can restrain, Why is his hand so rarely spread to bless?

Why are his creatures all condemned to pain?

Why does he not to all give happiness,

Why do fraud, lie, and ignorance prevail?

Why triumphs falsehood;—truth and justice fail?

I count your Brahma one th'unjust among

Who made a world in which to shelter wrong."

Refuting the theory that everything is the creation of a God, the Bodhisatta states in the Mahābodhi Jātaka:⁶

"If there exist some Lord all powerful to fulfil

In every creature bliss or woe; and action good or ill;

That Lord is stained with sin. Man does but work his will."

Now, how do modern scientists account for the inequality of mankind?

Confining themselves purely to sense-data, they attribute this inequality to chemico-physical causes, heredity, environment, and so forth.

Julian Huxley, a distinguished biologist, writes that some genes control colour, others height or weight, others fertility or length of life, others vigour and the reverse, others shape or proportions.

5 Jātaka Translation vi 110.

6 Jātaka Translation v 122.

Possibly all, certainly the vast majority, of hereditary characters are gene-controlled. For mental characters, especially the more complex and subtle ones, the proof is more difficult, but there is every evidence that their inheritance is due to a different mechanism from that for bodily characters. That which is inherited in our personality and bodily peculiarities depends somehow upon the inter-action- of this assorted battery of genes with which we are equipped at fertilization.⁷

One must admit that all such chemico-physical phenomena, revealed by scientists, are partly instrumental,—but could they be solely responsible for the subtle distinctions and vast differences that exist amongst individuals? Yet, why should identical twins who are physically alike, inheriting like genes, enjoying the same privilege of upbringing, be so temperamentally, intellectually, and morally totally different?

Heredity alone cannot account for these vast differences. Strictly speaking, it may account for the similarities, more than the differences.

The infinitesimally minute chemico-physical germ, which is about 1/120th of an inch across, inherited from parents, explains only a portion of man; his physical foundation. With regard to the more complex and subtle mental, intellectual, and moral differences we need more enlightenment. The theory of heredity cannot satisfactorily account for the birth of a criminal in a long line of honourable ancestors, for the birth of a saint in a family of evil repute, for the arising of infant prodigies, men of genius and perfect spiritual teachers.

The Buddha showed that this inequality is due not only to heredity, environ-

ment, “nature and nurture”, but also to Kamma, the result of our own past actions and our present doings. We ourselves are responsible for our own happiness and misery. We create our own heavens. We create our own hells. We are the architects of our fate.

Preplexed by the seemingly inexplicable, apparent disparity that exists amongst humanity, a young truth-seeker approached the Buddha and questioned Him about this intricate problem of inequality.

“What is the cause, what is the reason, O Lord,” questioned he, “that we find amongst mankind the short-lived (*appāyukā*) and the long-lived (*dīghāyukā*), the healthy (*appābadhā*) and the diseased (*bavhābādha*), the ugly (*dubbaṇṇā*) and the beautiful (*vaṇṇavantā*), the powerless (*appesakkhā*) and the powerful (*mahesakkhā*), the poor (*appabhogā*) and the rich (*mahābhogā*), the low-born (*nicakulinā*) and the high-born (*uccakudinā*), the ignorant (*duppaññā*) and the wise (*paññāvantā*).”⁸

Briefly the Buddha gave the following profound reply:—

“All living beings have actions (kamma) as their own, their inheritance, their congenital cause, their kinsman, their refuge. It is Kamma that differentiates beings into low and high states.”⁸

He then explained the causes of such differences in accordance with the law of cause and effect.

We, no doubt, are born with hereditary characteristics. At the same time we

7 Julian Huxley, *The Stream of Life*.

8 Majjima Nikāya (Culakammavibhanga Sutta No. 135) iii. 203.

do possess certain fixed abilities that science cannot adequately account for. To our parents we are indebted for the gross sperm and ovum that form the nucleus of this so-called being. There they remain dormant until this potential germinal compound is vitalized by the Kammic energy needed for the production of the foetus. Kamma is therefore the indispensable conceptive cause of this being.

The accumulated Kammic tendencies, inherited by individuals in the course of their previous lives, play at times a far greater role than the hereditary parental cells and genes in the formation of both physical and mental characteristics.

The Buddha, for instance, inherited, like every other person, the reproductive cells and genes from His parents. But physically, morally, and intellectually there was none comparable to Him in His long line of royal ancestors. In the Buddha's own words, He belonged not to the royal lineage, but to that of the Ariyan Buddhas. He was certainly a superman, an extraordinary creation of His own Kamma.

According to the Lakkhaṇa Sutta⁹ the Buddha inherited these exceptional features, such as the 32 major marks, as the result of His past meritorious deeds. The ethical reason for acquiring each physical feature is clearly explained in the Sutta.

It is obvious from this unique case that Kammic tendencies could not only influence our physical organism, but also nullify the potentiality of the parental cells and genes —hence the significance of the Buddha's statement,— ‘we are the heirs of our own actions.’

Dealing with this problem of variation the Atthasālini¹⁰ states:—

“Depending on this difference in Kamma appears the difference in the birth of beings, high low, base and exalted, happy and miserable. Depending on the difference in Kamma appears the difference in the individual feature of beings as beautiful and ugly, high-born or low-born, well-built or deformed. Depending on the difference in Kamma appears the difference in worldly conditions of beings as gain and loss, fame and disgrace, blame and praise, happiness and misery.”

“By Kamma the world moves, by Kamma men

Live, and by Kamma are all beings bound

As by its pin the rolling chariot wheel.

By Kamma one attains glory and praise,

By Kamma bondage, ruin, tyranny.

Knowing that Kamma bears fruit manifold.

Why say ye, ‘In the world no Kamma is’?”

Thus, our present mental, moral, intellectual, and temperamental differences are preponderantly due to our own actions and tendencies, both past and present.

Although Buddhism shows this variation to be due to Kamma, as the chief cause amongst a variety, yet it does not assert that everything is due to Kamma. The law of Kamma, important as it is, is only one of the twenty-four conditions (paccaya), described in Buddhist Philosophy.¹¹

9 Dīgha Nikāya (N. 30) iii. 142.

10 P 65; The Expositor, i. 87.

11 See Compendium of Philosophy, p. 191.

Refuting the erroneous view that “Whatsoever weal or woe or neutral feeling is experienced, all that is due to some previous action (*pubbekatahetu*),” the Buddha states:

“So, then owing to a previous action, men will become murderers, thieves, unchaste, liars, slanderers, babblers, covetous, malicious, and perverse in view. Thus for those who fall back on the former deed as the essential reason, there is neither the desire to do, nor effort to do, nor necessity to do this deed, or abstain from that deed.”¹²

This important text contradicts the belief that all physical circumstances and mental attitudes spring from past Kamma. If the present life is totally conditioned or wholly controlled by our past actions, then certainly Kamma is tantamount to fatalism and determinism and predestination. One will not be free to mould one’s present and future. In this case freewill too becomes an absolute farce. Life becomes purely mechanistic, not much different from a machine. Whether we are created by an Almighty God who controls our destinies and fore-ordains our future, or are produced by an irresistible Kamma that completely determines our fate and controls our life’s course, independent of any free action on our part, is essentially the same. The only difference lies in the two words God and Kamma. One could easily be substituted by the other, because the ultimate operation of both forces would be identical.

The Buddhist law of Kamma is not such a fatalistic doctrine.

In this connection it should be stated that, there are five orders or processes (*Niyāmas*) which operate in the physical and mental realms.

They are:

1. *Utu Niyāma*, physical inorganic order, e.g., seasonal phenomena of winds and rains. The unerring order of seasons, characteristic seasonal changes and events, causes of winds and rains, nature of heat, etc., belong to this group.

2. *Bīja Niyāma*, order of germs and seeds (physical organic order); e.g., rice produced from rice-seed, sugary taste from sugar-cane or honey, peculiar characteristics of certain fruits, etc. The scientific theory of cells and genes and the physical similarity of twins may be ascribed to this order.

3. *Kamma Niyāma*, order of act and result, e.g., desirable and undesirable acts produce corresponding good and bad results. As surely as water seeks its own level so does Kamma, given opportunity, produce its inevitable result,—not in the form of a reward or punishment but as an innate sequence. This sequence of deed and effect is as natural and necessary as the way of the sun and the moon.

4. *Dhamma Niyāma*, order of the norm, e.g., the natural phenomena occurring at the advent of a Bodhisatta in his last birth. Gravitation and other similar laws of nature, the reason for being good, and so forth may be included in this group.

5. *Cittā Niyāma*, order of mind or psychic law, e.g. processes of consciousness, arising and perishing of consciousness, power of mind, etc. Telepathy, telesthesia, retro-cognition, premonition, clairvoyance, clairsaudience, thought-reading, all psychic phenomena which are inexplicable to modern science are included in this class.

(See *Abhidhammavātara* p.54;

Mrs. Rhys Davids, Buddhism, p.119).

¹² *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, i. 173; *Gradual Sayings*, i. 157.

Every mental or physical phenomenon could be explained by these all-embracing five orders or processes which are laws in themselves. Kamma as such is only one of these five orders which as is the case with all natural laws, demand no law-giver.

Of these five, the physical inorganic order and the order of the norm are more or less mechanistic, though they can be controlled to some extent by human ingenuity and the power of mind. For example, fire normally burns, and extreme cold freezes, but man has walked scatheless over fire and meditated naked on Himalayan snows; horticulturists have worked marvels with flowers and fruits; and Yogis have performed levitation. Psychic law is equally mechanistic, but Buddhist training aims at control of mind, which is possible by right understanding and skilful volition. Kamma law operates quite automatically and, when the Kamma is powerful, man cannot interfere with its inexorable result though he may desire to do so; but here also right understanding and skilful volition can accomplish much and mould the future. Good Kamma, persisted in, can thwart the reaping of bad. Kamma is certainly an intricate law whose working is fully comprehended only by a Buddha. The Buddhist aims at the destruction of all Kamma.

What is Kamma

The Pāli term Kamma (Sanskrit-Karma) literally means action or doing. Any kind of intentional action whether mental, verbal, or physical is regarded as Kamma. It covers all that is included in the phrase “thought, word and deed”. Generally speaking, all good and bad actions constitute Kamma. In its ultimate sense Kamma means all moral and im-

moral volition (*kusala akusala cetanā*). Involuntary, unintentional or unconscious actions, though technically deeds, do not constitute Kamma, because volition, the most important factor in determining Kamma, is absent.

The Buddha says:

“I declare, O Bhikkhus, that volition (*cetanā*) is Kamma. Having willed, one acts by body, speech, and thought.”

—*Āṅguttara Nikāya*, iii 415.

Every volitional action of individuals, save those of Buddhas and Arahantas, is called Kamma. The exception made in their case is because they are delivered from both good and evil; they have eradicated ignorance and craving, the roots of Kamma. “Destroyed are their (germinal) seeds (*Khīnā bijā*); (selfish) desires no longer grow,” states the Ratana Sutta. This does not mean that Buddhas and Arahantas are passive. They are tirelessly active in working for the real well-being and happiness of all. Their deeds ordinarily accepted as good or moral, lack creative power as regard themselves. Understanding things as they truly are, they have finally shattered their cosmic fetters—the chain of cause and effect.

Kamma does not necessarily mean past actions. It embraces both past and present deeds. Hence, in one sense, we are the result of what we were; we will not absolutely be the result of what we are. The present is no doubt the offspring of the past and is the parent of the future, but the present is not always a true index of either the past or the future; so complex is the working of Kamma.

It is this doctrine of Kamma that the mother teaches her child when she says:

Be good and you will be happy and

we will love you; but if you are bad, you will be unhappy and we will not love you.”

In short Kamma is the law of cause and effect in the ethical realm.

Kamma and Vipāka

Kamma is action, and Vipāka, fruit or result, is its reaction. Just as every object is accompanied by a shadow, even so every volitional activity is inevitably accompanied by its due effect. Like potential seed is Kamma. Fruit, arising from the tree, is like the Vipāka, effect or result. The leaves, flowers and so forth which correspond to external differences such as health, sickness, poverty, etc., are Vipāka, Ānisamsa and Ādinava, inevitable concomitant consequences. Strictly speaking, both Kamma and Vipāka pertain to the mind.

As Kamma may be good or bad, so may Vipāka, fruit, be good or bad. As Kamma is mental so is Vipāka too mental; it is experienced as happiness, bliss, unhappiness or misery, according to the nature of the Kamma seed. Ānisamsa are the concomitant advantageous material things, such as prosperity, health, and longevity. When Vipāka's concomitant material things are disadvantageous, they are known as Adinava, “full of wretchedness”, and appear as poverty, ugliness, disease, short life-span and so forth.

By Kamma is meant the Moral and Immoral types of mundane consciousness, and by Vipāka, the resultant types of mundane consciousness. The eight types of supermundane (lokuttara) consciousness are not regarded as Kamma and Vipāka, because they tend to eradicate the roots of Kamma. In them the predominant factor is wisdom (paññā), whilst in the mundane it is volition (cetanā).

As we sow, we reap somewhere and somewhen, in this life or in a future birth. What we reap today is what we have sown either in the present or in the past.

The Samyutta Nikāya¹³ states:

“According to the seed that's sown,

So is the fruit ye reap therefrom,

Doer of good will gather good,

Doer of evil, evil reaps.

Sown is the seed, and thou shalt taste thereof”

Kamma is a law in itself which operates in its own field without the intervention of any external, independent ruling agency.

Inherent in Kamma is the potentiality of producing its due effect. The cause produces the effect; the effect explains the cause. The seed produces the fruit; the fruit explains the seed, such is their relationship. Even so are Kamma and its effect, ‘the effect already blooms in the cause.’

Happiness and misery, which are the common lot of humanity, are the inevitable effects of some cause or causes. From a Buddhist point of view they are not rewards and punishments, assigned by a supernatural, omniscient ruling power to a soul that has done good or evil. Theists who attempt to explain everything by this one temporal life and an eternal future life, ignoring a past, may believe in a postmortem justice, and may regard present happiness and misery as blessings and curses conferred on his creation by an omniscient and omnipotent divine ruler who sits in heaven above, controlling the destinies of the human race. Buddhism that emphatically denies such an Almighty and All-merciful God-

13 Vol. i., p. 227.

Creator and an arbitrarily created immortal soul, shows that there is a natural law and justice which cannot be suspended either by an Almighty God or an All-compassionate Buddha. According to this natural law, acts bring their own rewards and punishments to the individual doer whether human justice finds him out or not.

Some there are, who cavil thus: "So you Buddhists too administer capitalistic dope to the poor saying:

"You are born poor in this life on account of your evil Kamma. He is born rich on account of his past good Kamma. So be satisfied with your humble lot; but do good to be rich in your next life.

"You are being oppressed now because of your past evil Kamma. That is your destiny. Be humble and bear your sufferings patiently. Do good now. You can be certain of a better and happier life after death."

The Buddhist doctrine of Kamma does not expound such ridiculous fatalistic views. Nor does it vindicate a post-mortem justice. The All-Merciful Buddha, who had no ulterior selfish motives, did not teach this law of Kamma to protect the rich and comfort the poor by promising illusory happiness in an after-life.

Admittedly we are born to a state created by ourselves. Yet by our own well-directed efforts there is every possibility for us to create new favourable environments even here and now. Not only individually but also collectively are we at liberty to create fresh Kamma that tends either towards our progress or downfall in this very life.

One is not always compelled by an iron necessity; for Kamma is neither fate

nor predestination imposed upon us by some mysterious unknown power to which we must helplessly submit ourselves. It is one's own doing reacting on oneself, and so one has the possibility to divert the course of Kamma to some extent. How far one diverts it depends on oneself.

Is one bound to reap all that one has sown in just proportion? The Buddha provides an answer:

"If anyone says that a man must reap according to his deeds, in that case there is no religious life, nor is an opportunity afforded for the entire extinction of sorrow. But if anyone says that what a man reaps accords with his deeds, in that case there is a religious life, and an opportunity is afforded for the entire extinction of sorrow.¹⁴ Although it is stated in the Dhammapada¹⁵ That "not in the sky, nor in mid-ocean, nor entering a mountain cave is found that place on earth, where abiding one may escape from (the consequence of) an evil deed," yet one is not bound to pay all the past arrears of one's Kamma. If such were the case, emancipation would be an impossibility. Eternal recurrence would be the unfortunate result.

What is the Cause of Kamma?

Ignorance (*avijjā*) or not knowing things as they truly are is the chief cause of Kamma. Dependent on ignorance arises activities (*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*) states the Buddha in the Paṭicca Samuppāda.

Associated with ignorance is its ally, craving (*tanhā*), the other root of Kamma.

14 Aṅguttara Nikāya, i. 249. See Warren, Buddhism in Translations, p. 218.

15 Verse 127.

Evil actions are conditioned by these two causes. All good deeds of a worldling (*puthujjana*) though associated with three wholesome roots of generosity (*alobha*), goodwill (*adosa*), and knowledge (*amoha*) are nevertheless regarded as Kamma because the two roots of ignorance and craving are dominant in him. The moral types of supramundatte Path consciousness (*maggacitta*) are not regarded as Kamma because they tend to eradicate the two root causes.

Who is the doer of Kamma?

Who reaps the fruit of Kamma?

Is Kamma a sort of accretion about a soul?

In answering this subtle question venerable Buddhaghosa writes in the Visuddhi Magga:¹⁶

*“No doer is there who does the deed;
Nor is there one who feels the fruit:
Constituent parts alone roll on;
This indeed is right discernment.”*

There are two realities—apparent and ultimate. Apparent reality is ordinary conventional truth (*samuti saccā*). Ultimate reality is abstract truth (*paramattha saccā*).

For instance, the table we see is apparent reality. In an ultimate sense the so-called table consists of forces and qualities.

For ordinary purposes a scientist would use the term water, but in the laboratory he would say H₂O.

In the same way for conventional purposes such terms as man, woman, being, self, and so forth are used. The so-called fleeting forms consist of psycho-physical phenomena which are constantly changing not remaining the same for two consecutive moments.

Buddhists, therefore, know that there is not an unchanging entity, no actor apart from action, no perceiver apart from perception, no conscious subject behind consciousness.

Who, then, is the doer of Kamma? Who experiences the effect?

Volition or will (*cetanā*) is itself the doer. Feeling (*vedanā*) is itself the reaper of the fruits of action. Apart from these pure mental states (*suḍḍhadhammā*) there is none to sow and none to reap. In this respect Buddhists agree with Prof. William James when, unlike Descartes, he asserts— “Thoughts themselves are the thinkers.”¹⁷

What is Kamma?

“Stored within the psyche”, writes a certain psychoanalyst, “but usually inaccessible and to be reached only by some, is the whole record, without exception, of every experience the individual has passed through, every influence felt, every impression received. The subconscious mind is not only an indelible record of individual experiences but also retains the impress of primeval impulses and tendencies which, so far from being outgrown as we fondly deem in civilised man, is subconsciously active and apt to break out in disconcerting strength at unexpected moments.”

Buddhists would make the same assertion with a vital modification. Not stored within any postulatory “psyche”, for there is no proof of any such receptacle or store-house in this ever-changing complex machinery of man, but dependent on the individual psycho-physi-

16 Vol. ii. p. 602. See Warren Buddhism in Translations, p. 248; The Path of Purity, iii. 726.

17 Psychology, p.216.

cal continuity or flux is every experience the so-called being has passed through, every influence felt, every impression received, every characteristic—divine, human, or brutal. In short the entire Kammic force is dependent on the mental flux (*citta-santati*) ever ready to manifest itself in multifarious phenomena as occasion arises.

“Where, venerable Sir, is Kamma?” questioned King Milinda from the venerable Nagasena.

“O Maharaja,” replied the venerable Nagasena, “Kamma is not said to be ‘stored’ somewhere in this fleeting consciousness or in any part of the body. But dependent on mind and matter it rests manifesting itself at the opportune moment, just as mangoes are not said to be stored somewhere in the mango tree, but dependent on the mango tree they lie, springing up in due season.”

Just as wind or fire is not stored in any particular place, even so Kamma is not stored anywhere within or without the body.

Classification of Kamma

There are actions which may produce their due effect in this very life (*diṭṭhadhammavedaniya*), or in a subsequent life (*Upapajjavedaniya*), or in any life in the course of one’s wandering in Saṃsara (*aparāpariyavedaniya*). When such actions that should produce their effects in this life or in a subsequent life do not operate they are termed ‘ineffective’ (*ahosi*).

This classification is according to the time in which effects are worked out.

With reference to different functions, Kamma is classified into another four kinds.

Every birth is conditioned by a good or bad Kamma that predominates at the moment of death. Such an action is termed Reproductive (*janaka*) Kamma. As a rule the last thought-moment depends on the general conduct of a person. In some exceptional cases, perhaps due to favourable or unfavourable circumstances, at the moment of death a good person may experience a bad thought and a bad person a good one. The future birth will be determined by this last thought irrespective of the general conduct. This does not mean that the effects of the past actions are obliterated. They will have their due effects as occasions arise. Such reverse changes of birth account for the birth of virtuous children to vicious parents and of vicious children to virtuous parents.

Now, to assist and maintain or to weaken and obstruct fruition of this Reproductive Kamma, another past Kamma may intervene. Such actions are termed ‘Supportive’ (*upatthambaka*) and ‘Counteractive’ (*upapīḷaka*) Kamma respectively.

According to the law of Kamma the potential energy of the Reproductive Kamma could be totally annulled by a more powerful opposing past Kamma, which, seeking an opportunity, may quite unexpectedly operate, just as a counteractive force can obstruct the path of a flying arrow and bring it down to the ground. Such an action is called ‘Destructive’ (*upaghātaka*) or (*upacchedaka*) Kamma, which is more powerful than the above two in that it not only obstructs but also destroys the whole force.

There is another classification according to the priority of effect.

The first is called Garuka Kamma, which means weighty or serious as it pro-

duces its effect in this life or in the next for certain. In the moral side the Weighty actions are the Jhānas or Ecstasies, whilst in the immoral side they are the five immediately effective heinous crimes (*pañcānantariya kamma*) which are matricide, parricide, the murder of an Arahāt, the wounding of a Buddha, and the creation of a schism in the Saṅgha.

In the absence of a Weighty Kamma to condition the subsequent birth, a death proximate (*Āsanna*) Kamma might operate. This is the action one does, or recollects, immediately before the dying moment, owing to its significance in determining the future birth the custom of reminding the dying person of his good deeds and making him do good on his death-bed still prevails in Buddhist countries.

Habitual (*Āciṇṇaka*) Kamma is the next in priority of effect. It is the action one constantly performs and recollects and towards which one has great predilection.

The last in this category is 'Cumulative' (*kaṭattā*) Kamma which embraces all that cannot be included in the above-mentioned three. This is, as it were, the reserve fund of a particular being.

The last classification is according to the plane in which the effects take place, namely—

- (i) Evil actions (*akusala*) which may ripen in the sentient plane (*Kāmaloka*).
- (ii) Good actions (*kusala*) which may ripen in the sentient plane.
- (iii) Good actions which may ripen in the Realm of Form (*Rūpaloka*).
- (iv) Good actions which may ripen in the Formless Realms (*Arūpaloka*).

Nature of Kamma

In the working of Kamma, it may be mentioned, there are malificent and beneficent forces and conditions to counteract and support this self-operating law. Birth (*gati*), time or conditions (*kāla*), beauty (*upadhi*), and effort (*payoga*) act as such powerful aids and hindrances to the fruition of Kamma.

Though we are neither absolutely the servants nor the masters of our Kamma it is evident from these counteractive and supportive factors that the fruition of Kamma is influenced to some extent by external circumstances, surroundings, personality, individual striving, and so forth.

It is this doctrine of Kamma that gives consolation, hope, reliance, and moral courage to a Buddhist.

When the unexpected happens and he meets with difficulties, failures, and misfortune, he realizes that he is reaping what he has sown, and is wiping off a past debt. Instead of resigning himself leaving everything to Kamma, he makes a strenuous effort to pull up the weeds and sow useful seeds in their place, for the future is in his hands.

He who believes in Kamma does not condemn even the most corrupt, for they have the chance of reforming themselves at any moment. Though bound to suffer in woeful states, they have the hope of attaining eternal Peace. By their doings they have created their own hell, and by their own doings they can create their own heavens too.

A Buddhist who is fully convinced of the law of Kamma does not pray to another to be saved but confidently relies on himself for his emancipation. Instead

of making any self-surrender, or propitiating any supernatural agency, he relies on his own will-power and works incessantly for the weal and happiness of all.

This belief in Kamma “validates this effort and kindles his enthusiasm”, because it teaches individual responsibility.

To an ordinary Buddhist Kamma serves as a deterrent, whilst to an intellectual it serves as an incentive to do good purely from an altruistic point of view. He becomes ever so kind, tolerant, and considerate.

This law of Kamma explains the problems of suffering, the mystery of so-called fate and predestination of other religions, and above all the inequality of mankind.

(To be concluded in next issue.)

[Part 2 was originally in the January 1956 issue. We include it here.]

(Continued from the previous issue)

The doctrine of rebirth is not a mere theory but an evidently verifiable fact and forms a fundamental tenet of Buddhism, though the end of rebirth is attainable in this life itself. The Bodhisatta Ideal and the correlative doctrine of freedom to attain utter perfection are based on this doctrine of rebirth.

Documents record that this belief in rebirth, viewed as transmigration or reincarnation, was accepted by some spiritual teachers like Christ, philosophers like Pythagoras and Plato, poets like Shelley, Tennyson and Wordsworth, and many ordinary men in the West as well as in the East.

The Buddhist doctrine of rebirth should however be differentiated from the transmigration and reincarnation of other systems, because Buddhism denies

the existence of a transmigrating permanent soul, created by God, or emanating from a Paramātmā.

It is Kamma that conditions rebirth. Past Kamma conditions the present birth; and present Kamma, in combination with past Kamma, conditions the future. The present is the offspring of the past, and becomes, in turn, the parent of the future.

The actuality of the present needs no proof as it is self-evident. That of the past is based on memory and report, and that of the future on fore-thought and inference.

If we postulate a past, present, and a future life, then we are at once faced with the alleged mysterious problem— “What is the ultimate origin of life?”

One school, in attempting to solve the problem, posits a first cause, whether as a cosmic force or as an Almighty Being. Another school denies a first cause for, in common experience, the cause ever becomes the effect and the effect becomes the cause. In a circle of cause and effect, a first cause is inconceivable. According to the former, life has a beginning; according to the latter it is beginningless. In the opinion of some the conception of a first cause is as ridiculous as a round triangle.

Modern science endeavours to tackle the problem with its limited systematized knowledge. According to the scientific point of view, we are the direct product of the sperm and ovum cells provided by our parents. But science does not give a satisfactory explanation with regard to the development of the mind, which is infinitely more important than the machinery of man’s material body. Scientists, whilst asserting “*omne vivum*

ex vivo”—“all life from life,” maintain that mind and life evolved from the lifeless.

Some religious systems assert that soul, an averred essence of man, springs from God; parents only provide the gross garments for a soul.

Now, from the scientific point of view, we are absolutely parent-born. As such, life precedes life. With regard to the origin of the first protoplasm of life, or “colloid” (whichever we please to call it), scientists plead ignorance.

Buddhism teaches that we are born from the matrix of action (*Kammayoni*). Parents merely provide us with a material layer. As such, being precedes being. At the moment of conception, it is Kamma that conditions the initial consciousness that vitalizes the fetus. It is this inevitable Kammic energy, generated from the past birth, that produces mental phenomena and the phenomena of life in an already extant physical phenomenon, to complete the trio that constitutes man.

Dealing with the conception of beings, the Buddha states.—

“Where three are found in combination, then a germ or life is planted. If mother and father come together, but it is not the mother’s period, and the ‘being-to-be-born’ (*gandhabba*) is not present, then no germ of life is planted. If mother and father come together, and it is the mother’s period, but the ‘being-to-be-born’ is not present then again no germ of life is planted. If mother and father come together, and it is the mother’s period, and the ‘being-to-be-born’ is also present, then, by the conjunction of these three, a germ of life is there planted.”¹⁸

[Here Gandhabba (= *gantabba*) does not mean “a class of devas said to preside over the processes of conception,”¹⁹ but refers to a suitable being ready to be born in that particular womb. This term is used only in this particular connection, and must not be mistaken for a permanent soul.]

For a being to be born here a being must die somewhere. The birth of a being,— which strictly means the arising of the Aggregates (*khandhānaṃ pātubhāvo*), or psycho-physical phenomena, in the present life,— corresponds to the death of a being in a past life; just as in conventional terms, the rising of the sun in one place means the setting of the sun in another place. This enigmatic statement may be better understood by imagining life as a wave and not as a straight line. Birth and death are only two phases of the same process. Birth precedes death, and death, on the other hand, precedes birth. This constant succession of birth and death in connection with each individual life-flux constitutes what is technically known as *Saṃsāra*,—recurrent wandering.

What is the Ultimate Origin of Life?

The Buddha positively declares:— “Without cognizable end is the *Saṃsāra*. A first beginning of beings who, obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving, wander and fare on, is not to be perceived.”²⁰

This life-stream flows ad infinitum, as long as it is fed by the muddy waters of ignorance and craving. When these two

18 Majjhima Nikaya (Mahatāṇha-samkhaya Sutta, No. 38) i. 265.

19 See F. L. Woodward, “Some Sayings of the Buddha”, p. 40.

20 Samyutta Nikaya, ii. 178.

are completely cut off, then only does the life-stream cease to flow; rebirth ends, as in the case of Buddhas and Arahats. The ultimate beginning of this life-stream cannot be determined, as a stage cannot be perceived when this life force was not fraught with ignorance and craving.

The Buddha has here referred merely to the beginning of the life-stream of living beings. It is left to scientists to speculate as to the origin and the evolution of the universe. The Buddha does not attempt to solve all the ethical and philosophical problems that perplex mankind. Nor does He deal with speculations and theorizing that tend neither to edification nor to enlightenment. Nor does He demand blind faith from His adherents about a First Cause. He is chiefly concerned with the problem of suffering and its destruction. With but this one practical and specific purpose in view, all irrelevant side issues are completely ignored.

How are we to believe in rebirth?

The Buddha is our greatest authority on rebirth.

On the very night of His Enlightenment, during the first watch, the Buddha developed retrocognitive knowledge which enabled Him to read His past lives:

“I recalled”, He declares, “my varied lot in former existences as follows: first one life, then two lives, then three, four, five, ten, twenty up to fifty lives; then a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, and so forth.”

During the second watch the Buddha with clairvoyant vision, perceived beings disappearing from one state of existence and reappearing in another. He beheld “the base and noble, the beautiful and

ugly, the happy and miserable passing according to their deeds, etc.”²¹

These are the very first utterances of the Buddha regarding the question of rebirth. These textual references conclusively prove that the Buddha did not borrow this stern truth of rebirth from any pre-existing source, but spoke from personal knowledge—a knowledge which was supernormal, developed by Himself and which can be developed by others as well.

In His first paean of joy (*uddāna*),²² the Buddha says:

“Through many, a birth (*anekajāti*) wandered I, seeking the builder of this house. Sorrowful indeed is birth again and again (*dukkhā jāti punappunan*)”.

In the Dhammacakka Sutta,²³ His very first discourse, the Buddha, commenting on the second Noble Truth, states *Y ayaṃ taṇhā punobhāvika* — this very craving which leads to rebirth”. And the Buddha concluded that discourse with the words—

‘*Ayaṃ antima jāti natthi dāni punabbhavo*’— “This is my last birth. Now there is no more rebirth.”

The Majjhima Nikāya relates that when the Buddha out of compassion for beings, surveyed the world with His Buddha-vision, before He decided to teach the Dhamma, He perceived beings who realized the faults and fears affecting a future life (*paralokavajjabhayadassāvino*).²⁴

In several discourses the Buddha clearly states that beings, having done

21 Majjhima Nikaya (Mahasaccaka Sutta No. 36) i. 248.

22 Dhammapada, Verse 153.

23 Mahavagga, p. 10; Samyutta Nikaya, V 420.

24 Majjhima Nikaya, i. 169.

evil, are, after death *parammaraṇa*, born in woeful states; and beings, having done good, are born in blissful states.

Besides the most interesting Jātaka stories, which deal with His previous lives, and which are of psychological importance—the Majjhima Nikāya and Anguttara Nikāya make incidental reference to some of the past lives of the Buddha.

In the Ghatikara Sutta²⁵ the Buddha relates to the venerable Ānanda that He was born as Jotipāla, in the time of the Buddha Kassapa, His immediate predecessor. The Anāthapiṇḍikovada Sutta²⁶ describes a nocturnal visit of Anāthapiṇḍika to the Buddha, immediately after his rebirth as a Deva. In the Anguttara Nikāya, the Buddha alludes to a past birth of His as Pacetana the wheelright.²⁷

An unusual direct reference to departed ones appears in the Parinibbāna Sutta.²⁸ The venerable Ānanda desired to know from the Buddha the future states of several persons who had died in a certain village. The Buddha patiently described their destinies.

Such instances could easily be multiplied from the Tipiṭaka to show that the Buddha did expound the doctrine of rebirth as a verifiable truth.

Following the Buddha's instructions, His disciples also developed this retrocognitive knowledge and were able to read a limited, though vast, number of their past lives. The Buddha's power in this direction was limitless.

Some Indian Rishis too, prior to the advent of the Buddha, were distinguished for such supernormal powers as clairaudience, clairvoyance, telepathy, telesthesia, and so forth.

Although science has only just begun to take cognizance of these supernormal faculties, yet men with highly developed concentration, have been able to cultivate these psychic powers and read their pasts just as one would recall a past incident of one's present life. With their aid, independent of the five senses, direct communication of thought, and direct perception of other worlds are made possible.

There also are some extraordinary persons, especially children who, according to the laws of association, spontaneously develop the memory of their past births and remember fragments of their previous lives. A single such well-attested respectable case is in itself sufficient evidence for a discerning student to believe in a past birth. "Pythagoras is said to have distinctly remembered a shield in a Grecian temple as having been carried by him in a previous incarnation at the siege of Troy." Somehow or other these wonderful children lose that memory later, as is the case with many infant prodigies.

Experiences of some reliable modern psychists, ghostly phenomena, spirit-communications, strange alternating and multiple personalities and so forth shed some light upon this problem of rebirth.

The phenomenon of secondary personalities has to be explained either as remnants of past individual experiences or as "possession". The former explanation appears more reasonable, but the latter cannot totally be rejected.

25 Majjhima Nikaya. ii. 45 (No. 81).

26 Majjhima Nikaya (No. 143) iii.258.

27 Anguttara Nikaya i.111.

28 Digha Nikaya (No. 16) ii.91.

How often do we meet persons whom we have never before met, and instinctively feel that they are familiar to us? How often do we visit places and instinctively feel impressed that we are perfectly acquainted with those surroundings?

There arise in this world highly developed personalities, and Perfect Ones like the Buddhas. Could they evolve suddenly? Could they be the products of a single existence?

How are we to account for colossal characters like Homer and Plato, men of genius like Shakespeare, infant prodigies like Pascal, Mozart, Beethoven and so forth?

Infant prodigies seem to be a problem for scientists. Some medical men are of opinion that prodigies are the outcome of abnormal glands, especially the pituitary, the pineal and the adrenal gland. The extraordinary hypertrophy of glands of particular individuals may also be due to a past Kammic cause. But how, by the mere hypertrophy of glands, one Christian Heineken could talk within a few hours of his birth, repeat passages from the Bible at one, answer any question on Geography at two, speak French and Latin at three, and be a student of philosophy at four, how Stuart Mill could read Greek at three; Macaulay write a world history at six; William James Sidis, wonder child of the United States, read and write at two, speak French, Russian, English, German with sonic Latin and Greek at eight, is incomprehensible to us nonscientists. Nor does science explain why glands should hypertrophy in just a few and not in all. The real problem remains unsolved.

Heredity alone cannot account for prodigies,— “else their ancestry would disclose it; their posterity, in even greater degree than themselves, would demonstrate it.”

Is it reasonable to believe that the present brief span of life is the only existence between two eternities of happiness and misery?

The few years we spend here, at most but five score years, must certainly be an inadequate preparation for eternity.

If one believes in the present and a future, it is logical to believe in a past.

If there be reason to believe that we have existed in the past, then surely there are no reasons to disbelieve that we shall continue to exist after our present life has apparently ceased.

It is indeed a strong argument in favour of past and future lives that “in this world virtuous persons are very often unfortunate, and vicious persons prosperous.”

What do Karma and Rebirth Explain?

1. They account for the problem of suffering for which we ourselves are responsible.

2. They explain the inequality of mankind.

3. They account for the arising of geniuses and infant prodigies.

4. They explain why individual twins who are physically alike, enjoying equal privileges, exhibit totally different characteristics, mentally, intellectually and morally.

5. They account for the dissimilarities amongst children of the same family, whilst heredity accounts for the similarities.

6. They account for the special abilities of men which are due to their prenatal tendencies.

7. They account for the moral and intellectual differences between parents and children.

8. They explain how infants spontaneously develop such passions as greed, anger, jealousy, etc.

9. They account for the instinctive likes and dislikes at first sight.

10. They explain how in us are found “a rubbish heap of evil and a treasure house of good.”

11. They account for the unexpected outburst of passion in a highly civilized person, and for the sudden transformation of a criminal into a saint.

12. They explain how profligates are born to saintly parents and saints to profligates.

13. They explain how, in one sense, we are the result of what we were, we will be the result of what we are,—and in another sense, we are not absolutely what we were, and we shall not absolutely be what we are.

14. They explain the causes of untimely deaths, and unexpected changes in fortune.

15. Above all they account for the arising of Omniscient, perfect spiritual teachers, the Buddhas, who possess incomparable physical, mental and intellectual characteristics which can be explained only by Kamma and a series of births.

The Process of Rebirth

How rebirth occurs has been fully explained by the Buddha in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

Paṭicca means “because of” or “dependent upon”; *samuppāda*, “arising” or “origination”. *Paṭicca Samuppāda* literally means “dependent arising” or “dependent origination”.

Paṭicca Samuppāda is a discourse on the process of birth and death, and not a theory on the evolution of the world from primordial matter. It deals with the cause of rebirth and suffering. It does not in the least attempt to solve the riddle of an absolute origin of life.

Ignorance (*avijjā*) of things as they truly are, is the first link, or the cause of the wheel of life. It clouds all right understanding.

Dependent on ignorance arise activities (*sankhārā*), which include moral and immoral thoughts, words and deeds. Actions, whether good or bad, which are directly rooted in, or indirectly tainted with ignorance, and which must necessarily produce their due effects, tend to prolong wandering in the ocean of life. Nevertheless good deeds free from delusion, hate and greed, are necessary to get rid of the ills of life. As such, the Buddha compares His Dhamma to a raft, whereby one crosses the ocean of life. The activities of Buddhas and Arahats are not treated as Sankhara, as they have eradicated ignorance.

Dependent on activities arises rebirth-consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāna*). It is so called because it links the past with the present, and is the initial consciousness one experiences at the moment of conception.

Simultaneous with the arising of the rebirth-consciousness, there occur mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*).

The six senses (*saḷāyatana*) evolve from these psycho-physical phenomena.

Because of the six senses, contact (*phassa*) sets in.

Contact leads to sensations or feelings (*vedāna*).

Dependent on sensation arises craving (*taṇhā*), which conditions attachment (*upaddāna*).

Attachment produces Kamma (*bhava*), which in turn conditions future birth (*jāti*).

Old age and death (*jarā-maraṇa*) are the inevitable results of birth.

If, on account of a cause, an effect arises; then, if the cause ceases, the effect also must cease.

The reverse order of Paṭicca Samuppāda will make the matter clear.

Old age and death are only possible in and with a corporeal organism, that is to say, a six-sense machine. Such an organism must be born, therefore it presupposes birth. But birth is the inevitable result of past Kamma or action, which is conditioned by attachment due to craving. Such craving appears when sensation arises. Sensation is the outcome of contact between the senses and objects, Therefore it presupposes organs of sense which cannot exist without mind and body. Mind originates with a rebirth-consciousness due to ignorance of things as they truly are.

This process of birth and death continues *ad infinitum*. A beginning of this process cannot be determined as it is impossible to see a time when this life-flux was not encompassed by ignorance. But when this ignorance is replaced by wisdom and life-flux realises the Nibbāna Dhātu, then only does the rebirth process terminate.

Modes of Birth and Death

Briefly expounding the process of rebirth in such admittedly subtle technical terms, Buddhism assigns death to one of the four following causes

1. Exhaustion of the Reproductive Kammic energy (*kammakkhaya*).

As a rule, the thought, volition or desire, which is extremely strong during life-time, becomes predominant at the time of death and conditions the subsequent birth. In this last thought-moment is present a special potentiality. When the potential energy of this Reproductive Kamma is exhausted, the organic activities of the material form in which is corporealised the life force, cease even before the end of the life-span in that particular plane. This often happens in the case of beings who are born in states of misery (*apāya*), but it can happen in other planes too.

2. The expiration of the life-term (*ubhayakkhaya*), which varies in different planes. Natural deaths, due to old age, may be classed under this category.

3. The simultaneous exhaustion of the Reproductive Kammic energy and expiration of the life-term (*ubhayakkhaya*).

4. The opposing action of a stronger Kamma that unexpectedly obstructs the flow of the Reproductive Kamma before the life-term expires. Sudden untimely deaths and deaths of children are due to this cause.

The first three are collectively called “timely death” (*kālamaraṇa*), and the fourth is known as “untimely death” (*akālamaraṇa*). Explaining thus the cause of death, Buddhism speaks of four modes of birth—namely, egg-born beings

(*andaja*), womb-born beings (*jalābuja*), moisture-born beings (*samsedaja*), and beings spontaneously manifesting (*opapātika*).

Such embryos that take moisture as nidus for their growth, like certain lowly forms of animal life, belong to the third class. Beings spontaneously manifesting are generally invisible to the physical eye. Conditioned by their past kamma, they appear spontaneously, without passing through an embryonic stage. Petas and Devas normally, and Brahmas belong to this class.

How Rebirth Takes Place.

Suppose a person is about to die. This critical stage may be compared to the flickering of a lamp, just before it is extinguished.

To this dying man is presented a Kamma, a Kamma Nimitta, or Gati Nimitta.

By Kamma is here meant some good or bad action committed during his lifetime, or immediately before his dying moment. Kamma Nimitta, or symbol, means a mental reproduction of any sight, sound, smell, taste, touch or idea which dominated at the time of the commission of some salient activity, good or bad,—such as a vision of knives or dying animals, in the case of a butcher; patients, in the case of a kind physician; an object of worship, in the case of a devotee and so forth.

By Gati Nimitta, or “symbol of destiny” is meant some sign of the place where he is to take rebirth. Such a symbol frequently presents itself to dying persons and stamps its gladness or gloom upon their features. When these indications of the future birth occur, and if they are bad,

they might at times be remedied. This is done by influencing the thoughts of the dying man. Such premonitory visions of destiny may be fire, forests, mountainous regions, a mother’s womb, celestial mansions, etc.

Death is the cessation of the psychophysical life of any one individual existence. It takes place by the passing away of vitality (*āyu*), i.e., psychic and physical life (*jīvitindriya*), heat (*usmā*) and consciousness (*viññāna*).

Death is not the complete annihilation of a being, for though that particular lifespan ended, the force which hitherto actuated it is not destroyed.

Just as an electric light is the outward visible manifestation of invisible electric energy, even so we are the outward manifestations of invisible Kammic energy. The bulb may break and the light may be extinguished, but the current remains and the light may be reproduced in another bulb. In the same way, the Kammic force remains undisturbed by the disintegration of the physical body; and the passing away of the present consciousness leads to the arising of a fresh one in another birth. But nothing unchangeable or permanent “passes” from the present to the future.

Just as the wheel rests on the ground only at one point; even so, strictly speaking, we live only for one thought-moment. We are always in the present, and that present is ever slipping into the irrevocable past. Each momentary consciousness of this everchanging life-process, on passing away, transmits its whole energy, all the indelibly recorded impressions, to its successor. Every fresh consciousness therefore consists of the

potentialities of its predecessors and something more. At death, the consciousness perishes, as truly it does every moment, only to give birth to another in a rebirth. This renewed consciousness inherits all the past experiences. As all impressions are indelibly recorded in the everchanging palimpsest-like mind, and as all potentialities are transmitted from life to life, irrespective of temporary physical disintegrations, reminiscence of past births or past incidents becomes a possibility. If memory depends solely on brain cells, it becomes an impossibility.

The continuity of the flux, At death, is unbroken in point of time, and there is no breach in the stream of consciousness. The only difference between the passing of one thought to another in life-time, and of the dying thought-moment to the rebirth consciousness, is that in the latter case a marked perceptible physical death is patent to all.

Rebirth takes place immediately, irrespective of the place of birth, just as an electromagnetic wave, projected into space, is immediately reproduced in a receiving radio set. Rebirth of the mental flux is also instantaneous and leaves no room whatever for any intermediate state (*antarabhava*). Buddhism does not support the belief that a spirit of the deceased person takes lodgement in some temporary state until it finds a suitable place for its “reincarnation”. According to Tibetan works, writes Dr. Evans Wentz, there is an intermediate state where beings remain for one, two, three, four, five, six, or seven weeks,—until the forty-ninth day. This view is contrary to the teachings of the Buddha.

A question might arise,—are the sperm and ovum cells always ready, waiting to take up this rebirth thought ?

Living beings are infinite, and so are world systems. Nor is the impregnated ovum the only route to rebirth, Earth, an almost insignificant speck in the universe, is not the only habitable plane, and humans are not the only living beings. As such, it is not impossible to believe that there will always be an appropriate place to receive the last thought-vibrations. A point is always ready to receive the falling stone.

What is it that is Reborn?

Apart from mind and matter, which constitute this so-called being, Buddhism does not assert the existence of an immortal soul, or an eternal ego, which man has obtained in a mysterious way from an equally mysterious source.

To justify the existence of endless felicity in an eternal heaven, and unending torment in an eternal hell, an immortal soul is absolutely necessary. Otherwise what is it that sinned on earth and is punished in hell?

“It should be said”, writes Bertrand Russel, ²⁹ “that the old distinction between soul and body has evaporated, quite as much because ‘matter’ has lost its solidity as because mind has lost its spirituality. Psychology is just beginning to be scientific. In the present state of psychology, belief in immortality can at any rate claim no support from science.”

According to the learned author of “*The Riddle of the Universe*”—“The *theological* proof—that a personal creator has breathed an immortal soul (generally

29 Religion of Science, p. 132.

regarded as a portion of the Divine soul) into man is a pure myth. The *cosmological* proof—that the ‘moral order of the world’ demands the eternal duration of the human soul—is a baseless dogma. The *teleological* proof—that the ‘higher destiny’ of man involves the perfecting of his defective, earthly soul beyond the grave—rests on a false anthropomorphism. The *moral* proof—that the defects and the unsatisfied desires of earthly existence must be fulfilled by ‘compensative’ justice on the other side of eternity—is nothing more than a pious wish. The *ethnological* proof—that the belief in immortality, like the belief in God, is an innate truth, common to all humanity—is an error in fact. The *ontological* proof—that the soul being a ‘simple’ immaterial, and indivisible entity cannot be involved in the corruption of death—is based on an entirely erroneous view of the psychic phenomena: it is a spiritualistic fallacy. All these and similar ‘proofs of athanasianism’ are in a perilous condition; they are definitely annulled by the scientific criticism of the last few decades.

Hume in his search after a soul declares:—

“There are some philosophers who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call Self; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and implicitly. . . For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never

can observe anything but the perception...”

Dealing with this question of soul, Prof. William James writes:—

“...This Me is an empirical aggregate of things objectively known. The I which knows them cannot itself be an aggregate; neither for psychological purposes need it be an unchanging metaphysical entity like the Soul, or a principle like the transcendental Ego, viewed as ‘out of time’. It is a thought, at each moment different from that of the last moment, but appropriative of the latter, together with all that the latter called its own...”

The Buddha propounded these facts some 2,500 years ago whilst He was sojourning in the valley of the Ganges.

Buddhism, teaching a psychology without a psyche, resolves the living being into mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*), which are in a state of constant flux. *Rūpa* consists of forces and qualities which constantly spring from Kamma, mind (*citta*), physical change (*utu*), and food (*ahāra*), and perish from moment to moment.

Mind, the more important part in the machinery of man consists of fifty-two fleeting mental states. Feeling or sensation (*vedanā*) is one, perception (*saññā*) is another. The remaining fifty are collectively volitional activities (*saṅkhārā*). These psychic states arise in a consciousness (*viññāna*).

These four kinds of psychic phenomena combined with the physical phenomena, form the five Aggregates (*pañcakkhandhā*), the complex compound termed a living being.

One’s individuality is the combination of these five aggregates

The whole process of these psycho-physical phenomena which are constantly becoming and passing away, is at times called, in conventional terms, the self, or *Atta*, by the Buddha but it is a process, and not an identity that is thus termed.

Buddhism does not totally deny the existence of a personality in an empirical sense. It denies, in an ultimate sense, an identical being of a permanent entity, but it does not deny a continuity in process. The Buddhist philosophical term for an individual is *santati*,—that is, a flux or continuity. This uninterrupted flux or continuity of psycho-physical phenomena, conditioned by *Kamma*, having no perceptible source in the beginning-less past nor an end to its continuation in the future, except by the Noble Eightfold Path, is the Buddhist substitute for the permanent ego or eternal soul in other religious systems.

How is Rebirth Possible Without a Soul to be Reborn?

Birth is the coming into being of the *Khandhas*, the aggregates or groups (*khandhānam pātubhāvo*),

Just, as the rising of a physical state is conditioned by a preceding state as its cause, even so the appearance of this psycho-physical phenomenon is conditioned by causes anterior to its birth. The present process of becoming is the result of the craving for becoming in the previous birth, and the present instinctive craving conditions life in a future birth.

As the process of one life-span is possible without a permanent entity passing from one thought-moment to another, a series of life-processes is possible without anything to transmigrate from one life to another.

In the *Visuddhi Magga* and *Milinda Panhā* the venerable Buddhaghosa and *Nāgasena* have employed several similes to illustrate that nothing transmigrates from one life to another.

The simile of the flame is very striking. Life is compared to a flame. Rebirth is the transmitting of this flame from one group to another. The flame of life is continuous although there is an apparent break at so-called death.

The body dies and its *Kammic* force is reborn in another. There is merely a continuity of a particular life-flux; just that and nothing more.

Is it One who does the Act in this Birth and Another who reaps its Result in the Other Birth?

To say that he who sows is absolutely the same as he who reaps is one extreme, and to say that he who sows is totally different from he who reaps is the other extreme. Overcoming these two extremes the Buddha teaches the middle doctrine in terms of cause and effect. “Neither the same nor another” (*na ca so na ca añño*) states the venerable Buddhaghosa in the *Visuddhi Magga*. The evolution of the butterfly may be cited in illustration thereof.

Its initial stage was an egg. Then it turned into a caterpillar. Later it developed into a chrysalis, and eventually into a butterfly. This process occurs in the course of one life-time. The butterfly is neither the same as, nor totally different from, the caterpillar. Here also there is a flux of life, or a continuity.

If there is No Soul, can there be any Moral Responsibility?

Yes, because there is a continuity, or identity in process, which is substantial for an identical personality.

A child, for instance, becomes a man. The latter is neither absolutely the same,—since the cells have undergone a complete change, nor totally different,—being the identical stream of life. Nevertheless the individual, as man, is responsible for whatever he has done in his childhood. Whether the flux dies here and is reborn elsewhere, or continues to exist in the same life, the essential factor is this continuity.

Suppose a person was “A” in his last birth, and is “B” in this. With the death of “A” the physical vehicle, the outward manifestation of Kammic energy, is relinquished and, with the birth of “B”, a fresh physical vehicle arises. Despite the apparent material changes, the invisible stream of consciousness (*citta santati*) continues to flow, uninterrupted by death, carrying along with it all the impressions received from the tributary streams of sense. Conveniently speaking, must not “B” be responsible for the actions of “A” who was his predecessor? Some may object that there is no memory in this case, owing to the intervening death.

Is Identity or Memory Absolutely Essential in Assessing Moral Responsibility?

If, for instance, a person were to commit crime, and by sudden loss of memory he were to forget the incident, would he not be responsible for his act? His forgetfulness would not exempt him from responsibility for the commission of that crime. To this, some may ask,—What is the use of punishing him, for he is not aware that he is being punished for that crime? Is there any justice here?

Of course not, if we are arbitrarily governed by a God who rewards and

punishes us. But the Buddha does not talk of “punishments”.

The world is not so constituted. There is a just and rational law of Kamma that operates automatically and we speak in terms of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments.

In the words of the late Bhikkhu Śīlacāra “If a person does something in his sleep, gets out of bed and walks over the edge of a verandah, he will fall into the road below and in all likelihood break an arm or leg or something worse. But this will happen not at all as a punishment for sleep-walking, but merely as its result. And the fact that he did not remember going out on the verandah would not make the slightest difference to the result of his fall from it, in the shape of broken bones. So the follower of the Buddha takes measures to see that he does not walk over the verandah or other dangerous places, asleep or awake, so as to avoid hurting himself or anybody who might be below and on whom he might fall”.

The fact that a person does not remember his past is no hindrance to the intelligent understanding of the working of the Kammic law. It is the knowledge of the inevitability of the sequence of Kamma in the course of one’s life in Saṃsāra that more or less moulds the character of a Buddhist.

Is there any possibility for a Kammic Descent or, in other words, for a Man to be Born as an animal?

The Buddhist answer may not be acceptable to all. But nobody is bound to accept anything on blind faith.

The Buddha did teach the possibility of Kammic descent.

Material forms,—through which the life-continuum expresses itself, are merely temporary visible manifestations of the Kammic energy.

Just as an electric current can successively manifest itself in the form of light, heat or motion—one not necessarily being evolved from the other—even so this Kammic energy may manifest itself in the form of a Deva, man, animal, and so forth,—one form having no physical connection with the other. It is one's Kamma that determines the nature of the material form, which varies according to the skill or unskillfulness of the actions performed. And this again depends entirely on the evolution of one's understanding of things as they truly are.

Instead of saying that man becomes an animal, or *vice versa*,—it would be more correct to say that the Kammic force which manifested in the form of man may manifest itself in the form of an animal.

On one occasion two ascetics, Puṇṇa and Seniya, who were practising ox-asceticism and dog-asceticism respectively, approached the Buddha and questioned Him as to their future destiny. The Buddha replied: ³⁰

“In this, world a certain individual cultivates thoroughly and constantly the practices, habits, mentality and manners of a dog. He having cultivated canine practices—upon the dissolution of the body, after death, is reborn amongst dogs

In the same way the Buddha declared that he who observes ox-asceticism will, after death, be reborn amongst oxen.

The incident makes it clear how man can be born as animal, in accordance with the law of affinity.

Kammic descent and Kammic ascent are both possible, and at a bound.

Such is the intricate nature of this doctrine of Kamma and Rebirth.

³⁰ Majjhima Nikaya (Kukkuravatika Sutta, No. 57) i. 387.

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THE FIRST UTTERANCE OF THE BUDDHA

By

VINAYACARYA M. PAÑÑASIRI THERO

“Thro’ many a birth in existence
wandered I,

Seeking but not finding the builder of
this house.

A torment is repeated birth,
O, house-builder, you are seen;
You shall build no house again.
All your rafters are broken,
Your ridge-pole is shattered.
To dissoulution goes my mind,
The end of craving have I attained.”
—*Dhammapada, Verse 154.*

We should know that the word
“Buddha” is not a proper name but the
title of a Supreme Being who is able to
solve the riddle of life. From time
immemorial there have been saints and
sages and many thinkers, of fame who
also tried to work out the same problem.

But they have solved them only partly
and not completely. The Buddha alone,
with His Supreme Wisdom, wisdom that
is incomparably deeper than that of
others, unravelled this great “knot of
human death and fate” from the beginning
to the end.

The attainment of this great knowledge
we call Enlightenment and that
enlightening knowledge is known as
Buddhi or Bodhi One who possesses
Bodhi, we rightly name as Buddha and
we, therefore; say “THE BUDDHA”.

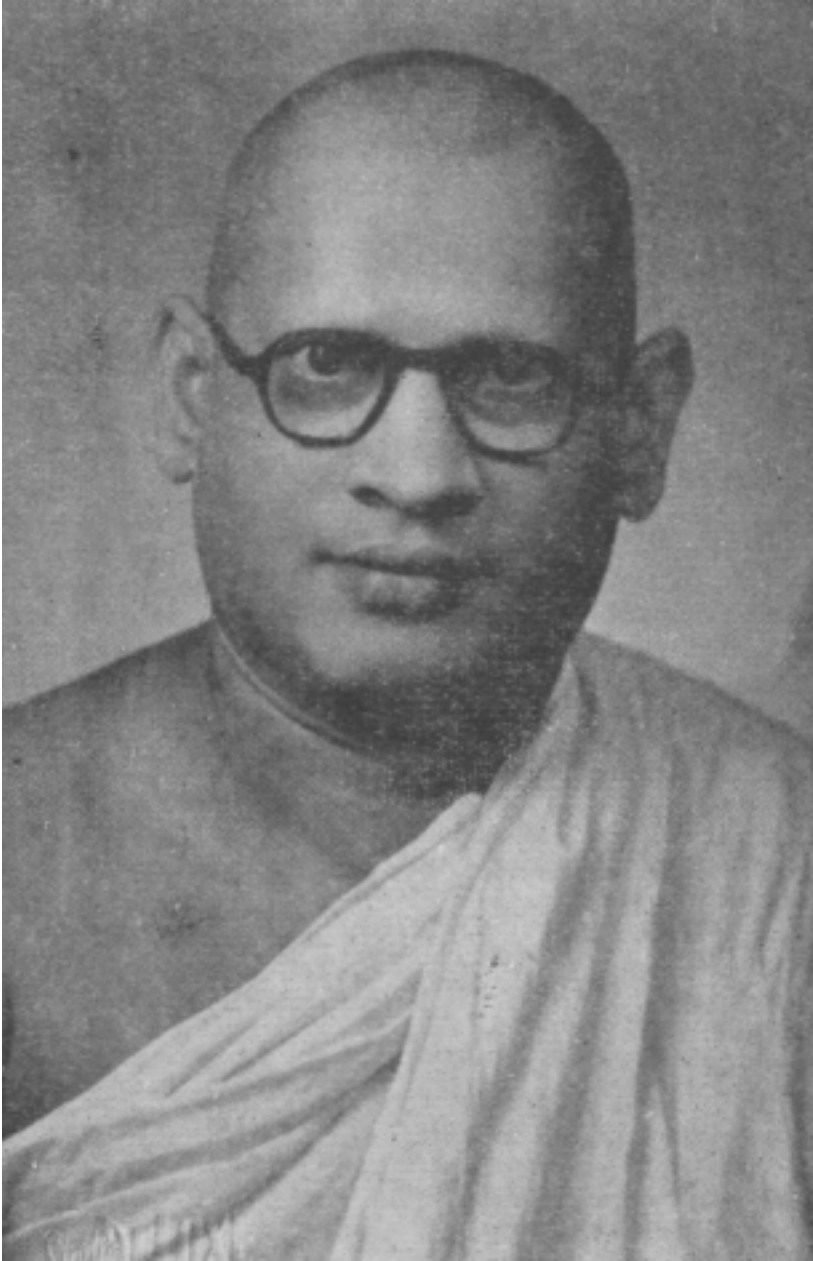
The last Buddha, whose doctrine we
are fortunate to have inherited, was by
name Gotama, as He was born in the
Sakya Clan we call Him Sakya Muni—
the sage of the Sakya Clan.

Now the question is: How did He attain
such Supreme Wisdom, a Wisdom that is
incomparably greater than that of others?
It is not the effort of a single life. It is not
within the span of a single life that He
strived to gain this knowledge. It was by
a hard struggle during, a long period and
after an incalculably great number of lives
that He managed to achieve that end.

Even in His last life, in which He
gained His final deliverance, He had to
face the laborious task of practising severe
austerities for six long years in search of
this knowledge. Finally, when He
triumphantly succeeded in finding the
Truth for Himself, He was able to
announce to the world: “This truth was
not among, the doctrines handed down
but there arose within me the eye (to
perceive), there arose the knowledge (of
its nature), there arose the understanding
(of its cause), there arose the wisdom (to
guide in the path of tranquillity), there
arose the light (to dispel the darkness from
it).”

Therefore, the Buddha in His utterance
of ecstasy, which is regarded as the first
utterance, summed up all his experiences
that enabled Him to gain the Final
Deliverance and proclaim it to the world.
The Buddha said: **“Through many a
birth in existence wandered I.”**

Now it should be understood that an
aspirant to this lofty position is also a
being wandering in Samsāra like any one
of us. He also has to experience the
miseries of existence just as any one of
us. But since he makes his firm



Ven'ble Vinayacarya M. Paññasīri Thero of
Vidyalankara Pirivena, Kalaniya, Ceylon

determination to aspire to reach this unique greatness he has to practise all that is regarded as good and benevolent, 1. Generosity (*dāna*), 2. Morality or Virtue (*sīla*), 3. Renunciation (*nekkhama*), 4. Wisdom (*Paññā*), 5 Effort (*virīya*), 6. Tolerance (*khanti*), 7. Truth (*sacca*), 8. Resolve (*aditṭhāna*), 9. Loving-kindness (*mettā*), and 10. Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

There are ten pre-requisites to Perfection. As the aspirant rolls on in *Saṃsāra*, incessantly and repeatedly, birth after birth in different capacities—sometimes as a man, sometimes as a deva or heavenly being, and sometimes even as an animal, yet he does not quite forget nor give up his original determination.

So he practises all virtues until, finally, he becomes perfected in them. The period taken in this process cannot be counted in years, centuries or even millennia. It requires a number of aeons or ages of incalculable magnitude.

The amount of suffering that a being in *Saṃsāra* experiences during such long period, without doubt, is incredible and indescribable. It does not mean that there were no short spells of happiness during this whole period. Should there be no immediate happiness for all the goodness practised by the aspirant, then, no one would care to wait for an ultimate goal.

That is the very reason the period of apprenticeship extends to several aeons. For each righteous life that he has spent, as an immediate result, he will be reborn to a better condition (in heavenly or Brahma realms) and will be marooned there for a considerably long period. It should be noted that an aspirant to Buddhahood would not commit any heinous crimes to enable him to suffer lengthy indefinite periods in the hells,

because of the fact that he is bent on something good. Still, due to the treacherousness of *Saṃsāra*, beings involved in it are liable to do wrong. Because *Saṃsāra*'s nature is such, and the aspirant is still an aspirant and not a perfected one.

Still, as wrongs are being committed, there will be suffering conditions which won't be few and far apart. Therefore, the Buddha said: "I say, that the existence in this *Saṃsāra*, even for a moment, is miserable."

What is all this due to? It is due to ignorance. Through ignorance beings perform acts and accumulate merits and demerits, which, again, urged by craving for existence, take them round and round repeatedly in this cycle of birth and death.

The Buddha taught: "What is the cause of this (going round and round incessantly in this round of birth and death?). A world-without-end, brethren, is this round of birth and death. No beginning can be seen of those beings hindered by ignorance, bound by craving, for ever running through the round of birth and death.

"Thus for a long time, brethren, have ye experienced grievous pain, experienced misery; and swollen are the charnel fields. So that ye may well be disgusted with, well turn away from, well be released from all the activities of existence."

The Buddha had this realization for the first time when he contemplated on these matters while seated under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha Gaya. And it is after that Sublime Enlightenment that the ecstasy of His Deliverance arose in Him and He uttered this stanza.

The Buddha continued:—“**I wandered seeking but not finding the builder of this house.**”

“House”, in this context means, the Five Aggregates which comprise a being: Form (material body), Feeling, Perception, Volitional activities (the Kammic forces which effect rebirth) and consciousness. So it is this Group of Existence that undergoes this ever changing process. There is nothing permanent in it. Neither this group nor anything outside it is permanent except space and Nibbāna, which are the only unconditioned states. Now, just because the unconditioned is unconditioned and words are symbols of the conditioned: we cannot adequately describe Nibbāna and while we may call it a “state” for the purpose of discussion, we must understand the inadequacy of this word.

It is this Five-fold-Group-of-existence that appears once here and disappears from here only to reappear in the same or another form of existence. As we all know, it is only one item out of this five-fold-group that undergoes a conspicuous change—a gross change. That is the form or the material body.

Although we are unable to detect a conspicuous change in the four other groups, (Feeling, Perception, Volitional activities and Consciousness) that does not mean that they do not undergo any change. They also undergo a constant change with such speed that there is nothing known to us with which we may compare it. We cannot observe it with our normal eyes. We can only discern it with the mind’s eye and only then if we develop the mind to the required standard.

So, now, it is this Five-fold-group which is the house as well as its dweller,

and it is from within this that the craving in the builder of the house is aroused. There is no separate or outside builder. This was the real problem that awaited the master-mind of a Perfected One, an Enlightened Buddha, for its solving and pronouncement of the solution for the guidance of the world.

To show that no outside power is instrumental in creating this wheel of birth and death, let me quote:

“na h’ettha devo brahmmā vā
samsārass’atthi kārako:
suddhadhammā pavattanti,
hetusambhārapaccayā.
“No God, no Brahma, can be called,
The Maker of this wheel of life,
Empty phenomena roll on,
Dependent on conditions all.”

—*Vinaya*

“kammassa kārako n’atthi,
vipākassa ca vedako:
suddhadhammā pavattanti,
ev’etam sammādassanam.
No doer is there ‘does the deed’:
Nor is there one who feels the fruit;
Only constituent parts roll on,
This is the correct ‘philosophy.’”

—*Visuddhi-magga Aṭṭhakathā-
kankhāvitarāṇa-niddesa.*

Now let us proceed to the third line of the stanza.

A Torment is Repeated Birth

Generally speaking, people do not know and therefore, it is extremely hard for them to realize that our existence in this world is full of misery. This is due to the presence of a few transitory moments of happiness intermingled in a mass of suffering; The common man looks upon such happiness as a great thing, hence yearns to have that, because he is not aware of any other better conditions.

But, correctly speaking, such limited happiness experienced in this world cannot be counted as happiness when compared to the happiness experienced in heavenly worlds and Brahma realms although that is also transitory. Therefore the real happiness, which is the Eternal Happiness can be found only in NIBBĀNA.

At the same time, people get very much worried at a little misery that befalls them, and weep, wail and beat their breasts and even become insane, leading them sometimes to commit suicide. If they only knew that such misery is very insignificant when compared to the real sufferings, that matter when reborn in the hells or the ghost-worlds or the animal kingdom, and so on; then they would be all the more happier for the trifling conditions of misery they have to face in the human world.

However, whether it be happiness or misery, both are merely fleeting phenomena; neither is permanent. Every being in existence passes through long or short periods in both states. But due to the screen between existences, or each term of existence being in quite different states, or even though it may be in the self-same states, yet usually nothing before one's birth or after one's death is known to us. Therefore, we see or experience that happiness and suffering only of one lifetime. Hence each existence is a watertight compartment in itself.

If, on the other hand, every being attached to this round of rebirth were to see while in this rational human state, before its birth and after its death, just as those who are possessed of remembrance of past births (*Pubbenivāsānussati ñāṇa*)

and Clairvoyance (*Dibbacakkhu*), then every one would be able to see for himself or herself what a long time he or she has been wandering in this *Saṃsāra*. Then he or she would be able to know whether it was more misery or more happiness that he or she had experienced. At least we should check it up from the limited few existences that we may be able to see because none, except an All-Enlightened Buddha, is able to see infinitely.

The Buddha, after developing the power of clairvoyance which enabled Him to perceive the past and future lives, said;

“With clairvoyant vision, purified and super-normal, I perceived, beings disappearing from one state of existence and reappearing in another; I beheld the base and noble, the beautiful and the ugly, the happy and the miserable, and beings passing according to their deeds.”

In short, we should understand that *Saṃsāra* is such that there is none who has enough time to find out, at least, his own past. Because its beginning is too far away; beyond the ken of any knowledge. The only possessor of the Supreme Knowledge, the Buddha, can see as far back as possible within a period of a whole aeon. Yet there will be no end; the beginning will not be in sight.

In the circumstances, it would be the best thing for one to try to understand the miseries of the present life. In the scriptures we find a fine parable for this: “Just as if a man had been wounded with an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends, companions relatives and kinsmen were to get an arrow-surgeon, and the wounded man were to say, ‘I will not have the arrow pulled out as long as I do not know the man by whom I was

wounded, whether he was a warrior, a brahmin,—what was his name and clan—whether he was tall, short or of middle height—whether he was black, or dark and every particular about the bow and the arrow.” Before learning all this the man would die. Therefore, if one has a sound and pure knowledge of the miseries of the present existence that suffices to prove that there is more misery than happiness, one should begin to pull out the arrow of Craving that causes it.

As the Buddha said, that ‘the nature of sickness is in health, in the midst of life we are in death’. If we realize this much, it is enough for us to understand that rebirth is a torment. We are unable to realise this fact fully because of the heavy veil of delusion that surrounds us and because each term of existence is sealed off from the other.

“O House-Builder, you are seen. You shall Build no House Again”

With the Buddha’s attainment of Enlightenment, the Ignorance that was feeding the fire of Craving for Existence completely vanished; He realized that it was chiefly this ignorance that conditioned His existence. So He personifies ignorance as the builder of the house and challenges: “You shall build no house again.”

Why cannot he build the house again? The answer comes in the next two lines. The Buddha said: **“All your rafters are broken; Your Ridge-Pole is Shattered.”**

As the material—ignorance and craving—with which the house was built have been totally destroyed, completely annihilated, how could the builder erect, another house with them?

When thus Deliverance comes what are the feelings of the Delivered Ones (the

Buddhas, the Pacceka Buddhas and the Arahants who live according to the Teachings of a Buddha)? The suttas explain it thus:

“He comes to comprehend Suffering, the Rise of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, and the Course that leads to the Cessation of Suffering. He comes to know cankers as they really are, to know their rise, their cessation, and the course which leads to their cessation.

“When he knows and sees this, his heart is delivered from the Canker of pleasures of sense, from the Canker of continuing existence, from the Canker of wrong-views, and the Canker of ignorance; and to him thus delivered comes the knowledge of his deliverance in the conviction that rebirth is for him no more; that he has lived the highest life, that his task is done, and that now for him there is no more of what has been.”

“To Dissolution goes my mind. The end of Craving have I Attained”.

Now, throughout this round of birth and death, the Buddha, as all are, was taken in it due to craving inspired and fed by ignorance the two of which are mental states. So, with the dawning of the Enlightenment of reality that is the Truth (Nibbāna), the darkness of ignorance was dispelled together with craving.

Thus Nibbāna is the goal because it is obtained at the end of the round of rebirths. And as there is no more rebirth, there is no consequent death, and no more suffering. Yet it is a certain unconditioned state which could be realized only by the one who has reached that stage. It is ineffable and our mundane minds are incapable of realizing it. It is only the delivered one who knows its true nature, of its true happiness, and feels the boundless security and the Eternal Peace.

It was after reaching this Supreme Goal, having tasted the fruit of His labours, that the Buddha proclaimed and preached to the world out of compassion for all beings. Since the Buddha's teaching is so well established and is existant up to this day, it is the duty of every sensible person who desires good for himself to learn and practise it for his or her own good; for his or her own Deliverance.

The Buddha- announced to the world:—

“Now I, bhikkhus, am the one that is skilled in this world and skilled in the world-beyond, in Mara's realm and that beyond, in the realm of Death and that beyond Death. I am He, bhikkhus to whom if men think fit to lend an ear and put trust in Him, it shall be to their profit

and happiness for many a long day.” (N.N.A.34).

In conclusion, I quote a verse from the Dhammapada (the translation of which is by the late Mr. F. L. Woodward).

“They who yield to their desires,
Down the stream of craving swim;
As we see the spider run,
In the net himself has spun;
Wise men cut the net and go,
Free from craving, free from woe.
“Loose all behind, between, before;
Cross thou to the other shore,
With thy mind on all sides free,
Birth and death no more shalt see.”

—*Dhammapada, Verses 347; 348.*

MAY ALL SENTIENT BEINGS BE
HAPPY, FREE FROM DISEASE AND
SORROW.

“In dependence upon the Eye and Forms there arises Visual Consciousness; the conjunction of these three constitutes Contact, and out of Contact springs Sensation. What is sensed, that is cognised. What is cognised, that is apprehended. What is apprehended, that is distinguished. What, thus engendered, is distinguished, plays upon a man as a totality of obstructing perceptions, in respect of forms discernible by the eye in past or future time or at the present moment. And as with Eye, Forms and Visual Consciousness, so with Ear, Sounds and Auditory Consciousness; Nose, Odours and Olfactory Consciousness; Tongue, Flavours and Gustatory Consciousness; Body, Contacts and Tactile Consciousness; Mind, Ideas and Mental Consciousness. In dependence upon the Mind and Ideas there arises Mental Consciousness; the conjunction of these three constitutes Contact, and out of Contact springs Sensation. What is sensed, that is cognised. What is cognised, that is apprehended. What is apprehended, that is distinguished. What, thus engendered, is distinguished, plays upon a man as a totality of obstructing perceptions, in respect of ideas discernible by the mind in past or future time or at the present moment.”

Majjima Nikāya, Eighteenth Discourse.

THE CASE FOR REBIRTH

Extracts from a Work in Progress

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BURMA BUDDHIST WORLD-MISSION, RANGOON

THAT all beings on earth, as well as those inhabiting other realms, have existed previously in some form or another, and will continue to exist or re-manifest themselves after the present life, was almost universally held as a fact in the ancient world. The doctrine, so widespread as to be free from any suspicion of being a dogma attached to one particular religion was held by Pythagoras, Plato and Socrates; it was a feature of some very ancient Rabbinical traditions, and can, indeed, be traced back as far as it is possible to search out the origins of human belief. Egerton C. Baptist, in his erudite work, "Nibbāna or the Kingdom?" gives the following quotation from Origen: "Angels may become men or demons, and again from the latter they may rise to be men or angels." proving that the great Church theologian held firmly to the Gnostic belief, older than Christianity yet quite acceptable to the early Christians, that not only do beings transmigrate in innumerable cycles of existence, but also that rebirth takes place in many realms and many widely differing forms, according to the results of actions. From the *Pistis Sophia*, a Gnostic document suppressed by the Church, Baptist also quotes a saying attributed to Jesus himself: "And ye have been in great afflictions and great tribulations, in your pourings into different bodies in this world. And after these afflictions, which come from yourselves, ye have struggled and fought; renounce the whole world and all the matter that is in it".

The authenticity of the Gnostic records may be questioned, but they are at least as valid as the material from which the Synoptic Gospels are drawn, and they give a teaching much more complete than do the latter. That belief in rebirth was accepted by the early Christians on the strength of their actual contact with its sources, and was thence transmitted to Origen, St. Clement of Alexandria and others, can be historically verified. The Second Council of Constantinople, held in 553 C.E., specifically rejected the doctrine in the following terms:

"Whosoever shall support the mythical doctrine of the pre-existence of the Soul and the consequent wonderful opinion of its return, let him be excommunicated and accursed". In accordance with this decision, Origen, who was already dead, was declared a heretic. This Council, a body of worldly Churchmen called together to satisfy the personal ambitions of the Empress Theodora, wife of Justinian I, was so notoriously corrupt, so manifestly an organ of political expediency, that the Pope, Vigilius, at first refused to acknowledge it or ratify its proceedings. In the end, however, he was obliged to submit to pressure, and its decision with regard to rebirth was formally accepted as orthodox theology. In this way the Church deliberately threw away a doctrine that would have made its other teachings more reasonable, establishing them on a firmer basis and perhaps one more substantially in accord with the actual message of its Founder.

In giving no place to any form of belief in reincarnation, transmigration, or whatever word is preferred to express pre-existence and renewed existence after death, the Second Council of Constantinople introduced what can only be regarded, in the historical context, as an abnormality in human thought, religious and philosophical. It was abnormal because it was completely at variance with every development that had gone before, and effectively isolated it from every other stream of religious belief in the world. A general survey of the most highly developed religious systems, and of those philosophies which had delved most deeply into the nature of truth, reveals that they all shared at least this in common, although they interpreted the facts in different ways, just as any fact of nature may be differently interpreted by different observers. That they formed their conclusion in favour of a succession of lives from knowledge available to each independently of the others points to a common stock of experiences—such as the actual memory of past lives possessed by some exceptional persons, or perhaps a much more frequent experience of such memories than is common to-day—as well as to an intellectual awareness of the conditions of living that can only be satisfied by the explanation that rebirth offers. In the face of this universal acceptance the abnormality of denial was one that carried within it the germs of destruction; it created a false perspective and left gaps that could only in course of time invite scepticism. From the belief that beings are born without causal antecedents, except the will of a God working through biological processes, and that after a short existence on earth

they depart for everlasting happiness or misery, it is only a step to the belief that after death they pass into nothingness. That which is inherently improbable is bound to produce an exactly opposite reaction, and human thought then swings from blind faith in the miraculous origin of life to the other extreme of materialism and nihilism. If each being is produced at birth from nothing, why should he not pass away into nothingness at death? If he can originate in time, why can he not cease in time? And, in view of the apparent meaninglessness of his life, does not this seem more likely than that he could enjoy an eternity of bliss, or suffer an eternity of torment, for deeds that had but a moment's significance, the actions of one short life, circumscribed by time and conditions; actions, moreover, often apparently forced upon him by the exigencies of his human situation? The life of a universe is only a flicker measured against eternity; what then of the life of a man? Is it possible that any deeds, however noble or evil, performed in so brief an interlude between dark and dark, could merit an eternity of reward or retribution?

Men are born with different potentialities, different opportunities, different concepts of right and wrong, and their various paths to happiness are as diverse as they themselves. The resulting conflict and confusion is explained, by one party, as the whim of the Creator who made them thus; by its opponents it is explained as a law of biologically-transmitted tendencies, with no theological or moral significance whatever. If it is necessary to choose between these two extreme views, the latter seems more likely, in view of all the evidence. But

there is a third explanation, which includes within it whatever is true in each of the others—that is to say, the ethical view of the theologian, without his theology, and the scientific truth of the biologist, without his circumscribing materialism. That is the doctrine of rebirth, as it is taught and laid open to investigation by Buddhism.

But before we enter on a detailed examination of the case for rebirth, let us take a glance at it as at a truth which has been variously interpreted and differently understood by different people at different times. The “Soul”, considered as the essential being, or Self, is usually taken to be the transmigrating or reincarnating entity that links life to life. It was such for Pythagoras, who taught that “the souls of animals infuse themselves into the bodies of men” as Shakespeare expressed it: this, with its uncomfortable and improbable corollary that the “soul” of a man may find itself inhabiting an animal’s body, may have had something to do with the Christian (and modern Westerner’s) aversion to the doctrine. It is certainly the reason why Theosophists claim, against the express teaching of the Buddha, that it is not possible for a human being to descend to the animal state. The same idea of a transmigrating “Soul” is found in the Bhagavad Gita; “As the soul in this body passes through childhood, youth and old age, even so does it pass to another body.... As a person casts off worn-out garments and puts on others that are new, so does the incarnate soul cast off worn-out bodies and enter into others that are new.” (Gita, Chapter II, vs. 13 and 22) Throughout the Upanishads the idea of “Soul” (Atman) in this sense persists; it is Selfhood, personal identity, occupying different bodies, now as man,

now as god or animal, but ever preserving its unique character as “I”. In the last phase of Upanishadic thought, Vedanta, however, some curious modifications of this soul-concept take place. The incontrovertible Buddhist position, that the phenomenal personality has no persisting identity from one moment to another, much less from life to life, had to be accepted, and the “Soul” could no longer be identified with the corporeal being, his thoughts, sensations, consciousness or activities. Then arose the theory that the Atman was unborn, unoriginated, unaffected by the activities of the phenomenal being and finally, that it was identical, not with him, but with the Supreme Soul, the Para-Atman or Brahman. This conclusion had two defects: firstly that it made the “Soul” an entity having no connection that could be logically explained, with the living being, since it was not, nor did it reside in, his body, sensations, perceptions, consciousness or volitional actions; and secondly, as the inevitable result of the first, it denied any moral significance to his actions. Thus, Arjuna may kill his relatives, elders and preceptors without committing any sin. The development of this idea in the Bhagavad Gita is perfectly clear. “Know *that* to be imperishable by which all this is pervaded. None can cause the destruction of this which is immutable. (The “Atman”) Transient are said to be these bodies of the eternal soul which is imperishable and incomprehensible. Therefore, fight, O Arjuna. He who thinks it slays, and he who thinks it is slain—neither of them knows it well. It neither slays, nor is it slain. It is never born, it never dies, nor, having once been, does it again cease to

be. Unborn, eternal, permanent and primeval, it is not slain when the body is slain". (Bhagavad Gita, - vs. 17-20).

This advice, by which Krishna justified killings from which Arjuna shrank, shows how Vedantic thought had tried to reconcile the inescapable truth of the impermanence and soul-lessness of the phenomenal personality with an animistic concept of the transmigrating "Soul" which it could not discard. The simple, individual "soul" had become a universal, cosmic "Soul"—yet one that by some curious legerdemain was still supposed to be incomprehensibly connected with the living, thinking, acting man. Since it was not affected in any way by his deeds, the moral nature of the individual was no part of it, or it of his moral nature. Buddhism, as we shall see later, proves the non-existence of such a soul, and places all the emphasis on Kamma, and therefore on morality, since it is the result of kamma which re-manifests, not the transmigration of a "soul".

Mabāvīra, the founder of Jainism (the Nigantha Nataputta of the Buddhist texts) held unequivocally to the "individual soul" theory. Jainism teaches, that there are an infinite number of such individual souls, transmigrating in happy and unhappy states according to their actions. But whereas in Vedanta, release (Moksha) comes with the realisation that the "I" is identical with the Para-Atman, or Brahman (Tat tvam asi); in Jainism it is believed to come only with the complete

exhaustion of kamma. This means that every action, involuntary and accidental as well as volitional, constitutes kamma in the sense of producing a result tending to rebirth. Here the absolute opposite of the Vedantic theory obtains; far from actions being insignificant, they carry results even when performed without intention. By placing the emphasis on *volitional action*, and disregarding those activities which are purely functional, mechanical or unintentional, Buddhism avoids both these extremes.

Here, then, are two representative examples of the forms that belief in "Soul" reincarnation takes. The one is superlatively mystical, the other primitively animistic; the only point of contact between them, although both originate from India, is that they each give an interpretation of the central fact of rebirth. Most other systems of thought incline towards the latter, the "individual-soul" theory. Such appears to be the necessarily rather vague kind of belief in reincarnation that various Western thinkers have held, including Shelley and Wordsworth. Shelley was an atheist, but Wordsworth came "trailing clouds of glory" from God who was his home; all they had in common was the conviction that they had existed in some form or another since the beginning of time, Shelly in countless earthly incarnations, Wordsworth in some heavenly realm where he enjoyed distinguished company that must have caused him bitter pangs to leave.

Courageous Faith

By

Venerable Nyanaponika Thera

“ISLAND HERMITAGE”, DODANDUWA, CEYLON

Faith is not merely a belief in the existence of a thing or in the truth of it, but it is also the confidence in the power of that thing. So is the religious faith the belief and the confidence in the power of the Good whatever different names may be given to it. Buddhist Faith (*saddhā*), in particular, is the belief in the incomparable power of the supreme Good, the Noble Eightfold Path, i.e. the confidence in its purifying and liberating efficacy.

Among those calling themselves “believers” or “religious persons” or, in our particular case, Buddhists, there are still too few who have that kind of genuine faith, i.e., the confidence in the actual power of the Good to transform and to elevate the life of the individual and of society, against the resistance of the Evil within and without. Too few are those who dare to entrust themselves to the powerful current of the Good, and too many are those who secretly believe in spite of a vague sort of “faith”, that the power of the Evil, within themselves and in the world outside, is stronger,—too strong to be contended with. Many politicians everywhere in the world seem to believe the same, particularly those who call themselves wrongly “realists”, obviously implying that only the Evil is “real”. They think that, by necessity, they have to submit to its greater power. No wonder that they cannot achieve much good, if they are not willing to put it to a test.

To be sure, in face of the great forces of evil and stupidity, this kind of genuine faith in the Good requires a certain amount of courage. But no progress of any sort is possible without courage. Progress means: to overcome the natural inertia of present unsatisfactory conditions in the individual and in society. It certainly requires courage to take the first step in breaking through that resistance of the natural inertia and self-preserving tendency of things and minds, but just that is the preliminary condition of success.

The ancient Teachers; of the Buddhist Doctrine have been well aware that courage is an essential feature of true Faith. They compared Faith (*saddhā*) therefore to a strong and courageous hero who plunges ahead into the turbulent waters of a stream to lead safely across the weaker people who timidly stop at the shore, or, excitedly and in vain, are running up and down the bank, engaged in useless arguments about the proper place of crossing. This simile can be applied to the social as well as to the inner life. In the first case, the “weaker people” are those, who provided they are given a lead, are willing to follow and to support the leader, but are unable to make the start by themselves. In the case of the inner life; the “weaker people” are those qualities necessary for spiritual progress which are either undeveloped or isolated from their supplementary virtues.

Such factors of inner progress which supplement, support and balance each other are Intellect (paññā) and Faith (saddhā). If intellect remaining without the confidence, devotion and zeal of Faith it will stop short at a mere theoretical understanding and intellectual appreciation of teachings meant to be lived and not only to be thought about. In the words of our simile: Intellect if not being helped by the hero of Faith, will merely “run up and down the bank of the stream”, an activity, with a very busy and important appearance but with little actual results. Intellect separated from Faith will lack the firm belief in its own power to be the guide on the path of life. Without this inner conviction it will hesitate to follow in earnest its own conclusions and commands; it will lack the courage to make an actual start with the task of “crossing over”. The supplementary quality of Faith, supported by the vigour and endurance of Energy (virīya) will give wings to Intellect, enabling it to rise above

the barrenness of unapplied knowledge and the futility of the wordy wars of conceptual thought. On the other hand, Intellect will give to Faith, in exchange, discriminative judgement and reliable guidance. It will prevent that Faith becomes exhausted and its energies wasted by ineffective emotional effusions and misdirected efforts. Therefore Faith and Intellect should always be kept in harmony. Both together will prove to be ideal companions, able to meet, by their combined efforts, any dangers and difficulties of the road to Liberation. Right Mindfulness (sammā-sati) will be watching that they are keeping equal pace.

Let Faith (saddhā), *i.e.*, courageous confidence, take the first step on your road. At the second step you will find many helpers, within yourself and from outside! Too many are still the believers in the might of the Evil, and too few the believers in the victorious power of the Good.

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BUDDHISM

LESSON I—INTRODUCTION

(by the Venerable M. Paññāsiri Thero)

Buddhism is the religion of the majority of the inhabitants of Asia. There are over 550,000,000 Buddhists in the world. That is nearly one quarter of the world's total population.

Many Buddhists are not aware of all the good teachings of their Master, the Omniscient Buddha. If one is to follow Buddhism properly and wishes to be called a good Buddhist, one should study the life and teachings of the Buddha.

All the difficult answers to life's problems will be understood easily if one learns Buddhism. The Buddha's approach to this subject was straight and scientific—hence easy to understand.

The Buddha did not keep his knowledge to Himself and order the followers simply to listen to His teachings. He did not promise to take any one to heaven simply because they were His followers. If He had done so it would have been a false promise because no one can take another to heaven or hell. One can gain admission into heaven or avoid hells by one's own action. An outsider can only help by giving instructions as to the way to follow in order to gain admission into heavenly realms and not to fall into the miseries of hell.

Therefore, the Buddha, following this sensible method, advised His disciples to follow His teachings and His pure examples. He proved to them what He preached was true when they actually enjoyed the good results of their good deeds. This fact was proved in those good old days and the same thing holds good even today. It will be true in the future too.

The Buddha practised loving-kindness towards all Beings—gods, men, animals, ghosts, hell-doomed beings and all included. That is why it is called Universal Love. If the Buddha wanted to find Happiness for Himself alone, that He could have done long before the time He actually attained the Eternal Happiness of Nibbāna. He could have attained that with much less difficulty also. What He thought was that entering into that Eternal Happiness alone while so many were suffering would be like an unkind mother enjoying a delicacy alone while her hungry little children were looking.

So the Buddha, out of compassion for all living beings, plunged Himself into the suffering Saṃsāra (Round of Birth and Death) and took the longer and more hazardous routes in reaching the farther shore of Saṃsāra. He had to live many millions of lives, many billions of lives, many trillions of lives; the number of lives that He spent in His self-imposed training course is incalculable! And the time involved also is so long that we are unable to count it in years or centuries, or even in millenniums which is our longest measure. It has to be counted in aeons. An aeon again is not a period that can be calculated. And the Buddha took twenty such long aeons to perfect Himself for His Enlightenment. [The traditional number actually is (10¹⁴⁰ + 100,000) aeons, Ed.]

The Buddha's compassion and love towards all living beings was so great that He undertook all the troubles of going through the sufferings of Saṃsāra without the least grumbling. When we read the

Buddhist scriptures we come to learn many of these strange facts in the stories therein.

It is only with firm determination, a great deal of energy and high wisdom that one could continue so long practising good in thought, word and deed. When this has been practised in the right way and in the right measure any one may become a Buddha. It is not the monopoly of a particular person or Being.

You could become a Buddha, I could become a Buddha and everyone else could become Buddhas, because the Buddhas do not discourage others to come to that happy state. Instead the Buddhas encourage that spirit in others who would aspire to become Buddhas. Although myriad Buddhas may come into being there still will be unfortunate beings who have not taken the chance to reach the Eternal Bliss of Nibbāna because their shroud of ignorance is too strong for them to tear off. Hence there will be the need for many more Buddhas.

Every one of us has a grain of the Buddha-spirit within us. It will not come into full bloom if we forget all about it and simply keep quiet. We should take necessary steps to cultivate that spirit until that is brought to perfection and crowned with Buddhahood.

Now how are we going to make this seed of Buddhahood grow into a big and strong tree with the fruit of Buddhahood? Just as any other plant requires to be well looked after, watered, and fertilised this also should be well looked after, watered and fertilised with more and more good deeds in this life and many lives hereafter. Then there will be a day that we will succeed gloriously in our efforts.

However, it is not an easy task to become a Buddha. A Buddha is one who possesses the greatest wisdom and loving kindness.

He is free from all passions and defilements. He is one who is able to understand fully all the aspects of life's various problems; and even matters relating to before and after life. He is able to preach and convince others of the way to find the solution to those problems.

Due to the hardship of this attainment there is a Buddha in the world once in a long while. It may be in a long aeon, or it may even be once in several aeons. Hence the Teachings of a previous Buddha are invariably forgotten in the world by the time the next Buddha appears. Therefore, it always become the mighty task for a Buddha to attain Enlightenment unaided, by Himself. There is none from whom He could receive instruction in the right system of thought that leads to Perfect Knowledge. It is only after this hard-earned Enlightenment or attainment of Perfect Knowledge that one becomes known as THE BUDDHA. It is after this that He goes forth to proclaim the TRUTH to the world.

As a rule people live in the darkness of ignorance by not knowing what is right and what is wrong. They are struggling in the meshes of worldly evils. So they think that the few fleeting moments of pleasure that they may enjoy in this world are permanent; though, in reality, they are impermanent. By not understanding this glaring fact people become engrossed in the pleasures of short duration and get themselves entangled in them more and more. Thus they become enslaved to them and thereby become totally blind to the real facts.

Even when the thing is explained to them they turn a deaf ear to the Truth. In short they become so callous in not knowing what is right that they are emboldened to say: "I do what I think is right". If everybody follows that rule then what would become of the world? In no

time virtue would disappear from the world and vice and evil alone would prevail instead. There would be confusion and untold miseries as the outcome.

It is at the beginning of such a state of affairs, that a Buddha is born into the world. And He puts it to right for the time being. After some time again evil predominates, and should it go beyond correction, even Buddhas would not appear because the evil world is not prepared to listen to good advice. The evil-ridden world has to face devastation and a better world would reappear in due course.

To be wise among the ignorant, to be strong of heart among the weak-hearted, to be patient among the impatient, to be sober among the passion-intoxicated, to be kind among the haters are some of the almost unattainable achievements in the world. Yet, there have been such unique personalities as the BUDDHAS who attained all these and many more qualities which are beyond description. There will also be Buddhas in time to come with their message of Truth when the time is suitable.

We should start cultivating good qualities in us from now on so that we may be reborn to the world when such an all-compassionate and all-awakened Buddha appears. To be reborn to such favourable condition is a hard thing too. For that we must exert ourselves from this very moment with firm determination and all the energy at our command.

For our guidance in the upward journey we should make use of the knowledge that has been given to us by the Buddha Gotama who lived only twenty-five centuries ago and which, has come down to us through the several generations of His faithful and devoted disciples. The path shown by the Buddha is quite free from danger and is

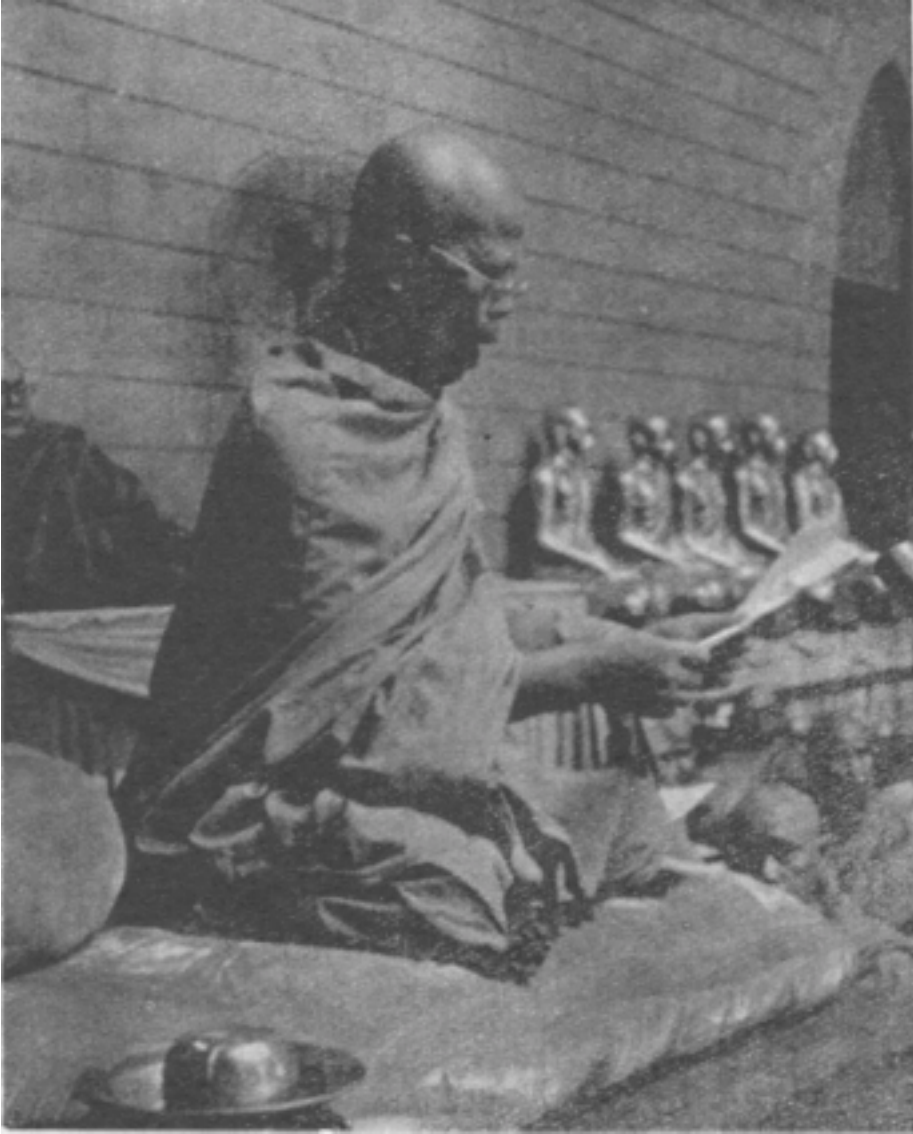
beneficial to the one who treads in it as well as to those who stand by.

The upward journey in the spiritual life may be thought as not so easy by the beginner. But if one stretches the first step forward, employing one's energy with the little knowledge one has, then half of the difficulty is overcome. We should remember that the top of Mt. Everest was not reached with one step. With continued steps, surmounting more hardship in each one of them, the journey was done until very successfully the top was reached. Similarly for the attainment of such a high aim as Buddhahood, one has to try hard. It should also be done gradually.

No one could hope to reach the goal in one life, however long that life may be, because still, the length of a life is limited. So it is necessary that one should accumulate merits in many lives in order to reach final perfection. Great oceans are only drops of water which have collected together. Buddhahood is a great collection of what is everything good. In other words it is the absence of everything evil.

While one is going in the quest of this highest goal spending many lives, which takes a very big period, there may come to pass a time that one could meet another Buddha face to face. By this time, that person would be full of merits that he had accumulated. And, if he would so choose, he would become a disciple of that Buddha and attain Enlightenment as a disciple under Him. That would be, of course overlooking the great mass of other suffering worldlings. But the one who desires liberation from the turmoil of Saṃsāra (Round of Birth and Death) would have gained the desired goal which is NIBBĀNA—the Eternal Blissful State!

MAY ALL BEINGS BE WELL AND
HAPPY!



His Holiness Phrabuddhajinoros Sakala- Mahāsangha Pāmokkha,
Sangharajā



His Holiness Samdach Preah Mahā-sumedhāhipati Chuon-Nath
Jotaññāno, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita, Sangharājā of Cambodia

Report On The Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā

The Sixth Great Buddhist Council, the Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā, has now completed half its labours and the Third of the Five Sessions has opened.

Industriously have the Saṅgha of the five Buddhist countries collaborating in this Great Council, performed their work, meeting in harmony, working together in harmony and dispersing in harmony; and the work has indeed gone smoothly and successfully.

There is only one sad event to record, the passing of the Saṅgha Nāyaka of the Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā, the Venerable Abhi

Dhaja Mahā Raṭṭha Guru Nyaungyan Sayadaw, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita. This great Mahāthera was one of those who had conceived the idea of convening the Sixth Great Buddhist Council and had been unanimously elected to head the Meetings.

One of the “Great Teachers” of the Union of Burma, his loss is keenly felt. The Venerable U Revata (Revata being his Bhikkhu name) was of great learning and utter simplicity of life. “Anicca vata saṅkhārā” “All compounded things are, indeed, impermanent.” We have only the consolation that his works and projects



H.E. Leng Ngetha, Prime Minister of Cambodia, arriving at Mingaladon Airport to participate in the Opening Proceedings of the Third Session of the Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā

remain as lasting benefits.

For the Third Session it was unanimously decided that the learned and saintly Sangharājas of Cambodia and of Laos should preside and accordingly on the 28th April, His Holiness Samdach Preah Mahā Sumedhadhipati Chuoun-Nath Jotaññāno, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita, Sangharājā of Cambodia and His Holiness Samdach Phrabuddhajinoros Sakala-Mahasangha Pāmokkha, Sangharājā of Laos successively took the Presidential Dais.

The Session was opened with an address by the Sangha Mahānāyaka and other Mahātheras followed by a speech by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Laos

in the name of His Majesty the King of Laos and of the Laotian people. His Excellency Dr. Ba U, President of the Union of Burma then delivered an address of veneration, as did the Prime Minister of Cambodia, and other dignitaries.

The Third Session is now proceeding and is scheduled to end on the 9th July.

There will be two more Sessions and then the Closing Ceremonies are to be held on the Full Moon day of May next year and are expected to draw many visitors to Burma as they will mark the completion of an important work and coincide with the 2500th. Anniversary of the Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment and Mahāparinibbāna.



H.R.H. Prince Savang Vatthana, Crown Prince of Laos, and Hon'ble U Win, Minister for Religious Affairs, Government of the Union of Burma, at the Shway Dagon Pagoda on 24th April 1955

GLOSSARY

FOR VOL. III—No. 1.

A

Aparāpariya-vedaniya-kamma:

Kamma ripening in successive births. Aparāpariya = successive, continuous.

C

Cittasantati: Citta = mind + santati = continuity. The whole means the flux of mind.

Citt'ekaggatā (Cittass'ekaggatā):

“One-pointedness of Mind”. It is a synonym of concentration or samādhi.

D

Diṭṭha-dhamma-vedaniya-kamma:

Kamma ripening in the present lifetime, Diṭṭha-dhamma means “of this world”; “in this world.”

I

Issaranimmāna-hetu: Issara = ruler; creative diety; Brahma + nimmāna = creation + hetu = root cause. The whole means “created by God”.

N

Nirodha-samā-patti: Nirodha = destruction; cessation; annihilation. Samā-patti = attainment. The whole means “attainment of complete cessation”.

P

Paralokavajjha-abhayadassā-vino:

Paraloka = the other world; the world beyond. Vajjha = to be killed; bhaya = fear; dassāvino = one who realises. Paraloka + vajja + bhaya + dassāvino = one who fears evil, realising its affect on a future life.

Parammarāṇa: After death; after the dissolution of the body.

Pāpak-na Issara: Pāpak-na = evil; wicked. Issara = God. The whole means “An Evil God”.

Pubbekatahetu: Pubbe-kata-hetu.

Pubbe-kata = deeds done in a past life. hetu = root cause. The whole means “caused by deeds done in a past life”.

S

Silavanta: Virtuous; observing the moral precepts.

Suddhadhamma: Suddha = clean; pure Dhamma = doctrine. Hence, Suddhadhamma: “sublime doctrine”.

U

Upapajja-vedaniya-kamma:

Kamma ripening in the next birth.

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to the world

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