



*The* **LIGHT**  
*of the*  
**DHAMMA**

Published by the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council

Vol. III No. 2

K 1.50

Electronic Publishers Notice: This work has been republished by Pariyatti as an electronic publication. All of the addresses and contact information provided in this online edition of The Light of the Dhamma are no longer valid. They have been included here for historical purposes.

Questions or comments regarding this electronic publication can be addressed to [treasures@pariyatti.org](mailto:treasures@pariyatti.org)

For other issues in this series please visit [www.pariyatti.org/treasures](http://www.pariyatti.org/treasures)



## PARIYATTI

867 Larmon Road  
Onalaska, Washington 98570 USA  
360.978.4998  
[www.pariyatti.org](http://www.pariyatti.org)

Pariyatti is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching the world by

- disseminating the words of the Buddha,
- providing sustenance for the seeker's journey, and
- illuminating the meditator's path.

*The* LIGHT  
*of the*  
DHAMMA

VOL. III

No. 2

2499 B.E.

January 1956



## 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.

2. Any articles herein may be quoted, copied, reprinted and translated free of charge without further reference to us. Should you care to acknowledge the source we would be highly appreciative.

3 Foreign subscription. (including postage to any part of the world) is but the equivalent of sh 9/- (Nine Shillings) sterling per annum.

### HOW TO REMIT

In any country subscribing to the International Postal Union, International Postal Certificates are obtainable from the post office.

TRADING BANKS can usually advise, in other cases, how small remittances may be made.

THE EDITOR,  
 "THE LIGHT OF THE DHAMMA"  
 Union Buddha Sasana Council  
 16, Hermitage Road, Kokine  
 Rangoon, Union Of Burma




---

 Vol. III

2499 B.E. January 1956 C.E.

 No. 2
 

---

## CONTENTS

	Page
What is Buddhism? .....Honerable U Nu	5
The Buddhist Doctrine of Karma and Rebirth...Bhadanta Nārada Mahāthera	10
Speech by the Honorable Sir John Kotelawala	20
World Lunacy.... .Francis Story	21
Satipaṭṭhāna—The Simple Way....Bhadanta Nyanaponika Thera	25
Buddhism ..... Bhadanta M. Paññāsiri Thero	28
What is Reborn?.....Francis Story	32
Book Reviews	35
Glossary	40
 <i>Also in the original issue:</i>	
The Paṭṭhānuddesa Dīpanī.....Venerable Ledi Sayadaw	
Brahma-Jāla Sutta.....	

Translated by the English Editorial Department, Union Buddha Sāsana Council

## WHAT IS BUDDHISM?

Speech delivered at New York University on July 6, 1955, by Hon'ble U Nu,  
Prime Minister of the Union of Burma.

I think that Buddhism is not properly understood in the West. Some believe that Buddhism merely teaches the avoidance of such evil things as taking life, theft, seduction, falsehood, taking liquor and drugs, and so forth. Others understand Buddhism merely as a Body of Doctrine teaching people to cast off hatred and disseminate love towards all humanity.

But these aspects of Buddhism are merely partial aspects. They are only part of Buddhism and do not represent all that it stands for. Metaphorically speaking, they are just one of the many legs of a centipede. After all, the doctrine of avoidance of evil practices and of love for all living beings were doctrines that appeared at certain periods of human history even before the rise of Buddhism.

Then what is it that distinguishes Buddhism from other religions and from other codes of moral and ethical conduct? The answer lies in the practice of Buddhist Doctrine, which involves an exercise of a rigid personal discipline, so as to attain a serenity of mind, which in turn will lead to a way of escape from suffering and distress.

It is not easy to explain this to those who are not initiated in the teachings of the Buddha. It is particularly difficult to do so in another language because frequently, as in English for example, there are simply no words which can convey the exact and full meaning of certain Buddhist concepts. If you will bear with me, however, I will attempt this difficult task.

Perhaps I should first explain that there is no state religion under the Constitution of the Union of Burma. We believe in, and also practise, full freedom of religious belief. Eighty-five per cent of our people, however, are Buddhists, and since Buddhism is part and parcel of our national life, I am taking this opportunity to explain Buddhism to you.

Now back to the question: What is the essence of Buddhism? In answering this question, let me hasten to say that I do not intend to give a full discourse or a detailed discussion of Buddhist Philosophy. I shall attempt merely to give you the essential principles of our religion.

The first principle of Buddhist Philosophy is a belief in and an understanding of the thirty-one planes of existence, which may also be called the wheel or cycle of existence.

These thirty-one planes are as follows:—

Twenty planes of Brahmās, or higher spiritual beings;

Six planes of Devas or lower spiritual beings;

Human plane existence;

Four Nether planes called Apāya. Apāya comprises beings-in-torment, animal beings, beings-in-woe called Peta, and beings in-demi-woe, called Asūra.

You will see from the list that there are twenty-six planes above the plane of human existence, and four planes below. If we take the human plane as our criterion, the beings in the higher planes of existence have much pleasure and enjoyment, whereas the beings in the four lower planes are in pain and torment. If I may borrow terms from other religions, the upper twenty-six planes of spiritual existence are the planes of "Paradise" and the four nether planes are the planes of "Purgatory".

The second principle of Buddhism is, a recognition of a realization of the following three cardinal facts. They are: —

One, no being born in any of these thirty-one planes of existence is permanent.

Two, all beings born in any of these thirty-one planes of existence will be reborn endlessly in one of these planes as a result of their past

mental states, utterances and actions. Buddhism lays down precisely the nature of these planes for a particular mental state, utterance or action, but I will skip over it as the primary purpose of my talk today is not concerned with it.

Three, all beings born in any of these thirty-one planes of existence are bound to meet, more or less, with suffering and misery in the form of separation from loved ones, having to live or work together with hateful ones, non-fulfilment and frustration of desires, advancing age, illness, death and so on.

The third principle is this: Buddhism is a way of life which will lead to complete freedom from all these sufferings. What then is this way of life ?

The Buddha has clearly said that there is but one way which will lead to freedom from suffering. This way is no other than the way of complete awareness. The nature of this awareness will be understood better if one practises contemplation, but I will attempt to explain its nature in very general terms.

All human beings have the same sense organs. One of these sense organs is constantly in contact with same kind of sensation. As a result of these sensations we experience, roughly speaking, either a pleasant or an unpleasant reaction. Close on the heels of this sensation, there arises in us a mental state of liking the sensation or disliking the sensation. And with this liking or disliking, there arises a mental state of attachment or revulsion.

Pleasant sensations breed attachment, and unpleasant sensations breed revulsion. These mental states of attachment or revulsion recur continuously in us, and just as we cannot see when our eyes are covered with cataracts, so we cannot get a true perception of ourselves when our minds are occupied with either attachment or revulsion. We also fail to get true perception of the things around us, both animate beings and inanimate objects.

Let us illustrate this point with a personal experience. One night, in my youth, I was

walking alone. It was past midnight. The wind was blowing rather heavily and a loose zinc sheet in the roof of a building was fluttering in the wind. At first I was terribly frightened at the sight of what I thought to be a huge monster rising and bending to frighten me. I stood still and looked at the phenomenon. After some time, when I had completely recovered from the fright, realized to my relief that it was not a monster but a loose zinc sheet fluttering in the wind.

In the same way, as we are letting in a free flow of sensations through our sense organs, mental states of either attachment or revulsion are occurring in us every day, every hour, every minute and every second. So long as we allow ourselves to be victims of these states of mind, we will have an incorrect perception of ourselves and of things around us, both animate beings and inanimate objects, in the same way as I had the incorrect perception of the fluttering zinc sheet so long as I was overcome with fright.

What is therefore required, is the sense of awareness about the first impact of sight, sound, scent, taste, touch and thought. If you open the door, all visitors waiting outside the door will enter the room. But if you close the door after the entry of the first person the rest of the visitors will be kept outside. In the same way, if you apply a sense of awareness every time you see or hear or eat or smell or touch or think, mental states of attachment or revulsion will not occur in you so long as that awareness lasts. An angry man, at the instant application of "awareness" of his anger, will find that his anger subsides. I believe many of you must have had such an experience of "awareness" at one time or another, but I think there are only a very few people who have attempted to strengthen this ability to be "aware".

This awareness of mind can be strengthened if it is continuously applied in the correct manner on all occasions. It will certainly be difficult at first, but a constant application of this awareness of mind to all your senses will preclude the possibility of the encroachment of attachment or revulsion. After a sufficient practice, awareness

will become firm and constant. When it becomes “firm and constant”,

(1) You will reach the first stage of spiritual development, called the Sotapatti Magga;

(2) And then, if you continue and persevere with this mental awareness, you will reach the second stage, called the Sakadāgāmi Magga;

(3) And then, if you continue and persevere with this mental awareness, you will reach the third stage, called the Anāgāmi Magga

(4) And then if you continue and persevere with this mental awareness, you will reach the fourth stage, called the Arahatta Magga.

This is the end of the long road of existence for you will now obtain serenity and tranquillity of mind. From this point onwards, whatever you see or hear or smell or eat or come in touch with or think of, there will not arise in you attachment or revulsion. You will no longer have an incorrect perception of yourselves or of all things around you. You will now have the right perspective and you will see all things in their truth.

What I have said so far is an attempt on my part to answer the question “What is Buddhism” in the shortest, simplest manner possible. But immediately after giving this answer to the question, to the best of my ability, allow me to tell you a little story about what happened in one of our villages when I was a young boy.

There was a village in my country where cholera was rampant every year. And every time cholera occurred, the villagers, instead of taking such measures as inoculation, boiling drinking water and clearing the village of rubbish and dirt, would make a great din in the village by beating on tins, brass trays and all sorts of noisy utensils. This was their custom, because they thought cholera was due to evil and powerful spirits entering the village, and by making a huge noise they thought they were frightening the spirits away and driving them out.

One day a health officer came to this village. This official in public health service told the villagers in a lecture that the occurrence of

cholera was not due to evil and powerful spirits, but to the drinking of impure water containing cholera germs. He said that if cholera was to be prevented, it was not necessary to make a noisy din in the village, but it was necessary to drink boiled water. The villagers were too polite to say anything in the presence of the health official, but as soon as he went away they all laughed at him and made him a butt of their jokes. They said to one another “This health official must be crazy Everyone knows that cholera is due to evil and powerful spirits, and he said it is due to germs in the water. How ridiculous! How naive!

The next year, in the same season, there was again a cholera epidemic in the village. This time, the health official brought a microscope to the village. This time he did not give a long lecture as previously. He asked for a sample of their drinking water, and made the villagers look at it through the microscope. Only then were the villagers surprised and alarmed. They started to drink only boiled water, and from that time onwards there was no cholera in this village.

Just as those villagers laughed, you may laugh and say “We cannot see those higher planes of existence of the spiritual beings, or the lower planes of existence. This man talks about such strange things as Brahmas and Devas and beings-in-torment. Has he seen them himself? How ridiculous and naive to believe that we after our death will endlessly be reborn in one or the other of the thirty-one planes of existence. And there is nothing wonderful in the doctrine that a man can come to the end of the road of existence merely by an application of awareness to all sensations.” Perhaps such thoughts are now passing through the minds of my gentle audience, and only politeness and courtesy restrain them from showing disbelief and disagreement, or breaking out into laughter.

In telling you this little story, I do not mean to suggest in any way that the members of this learned audience are ignorant and superstitious as those simple villagers. I merely want to emphasize two points. First, without the right



vision, you cannot see the truth; the villagers could see the microbes only when they attained the right vision, namely through the microscope, and I will say that you can see the truth regarding human existence only through the microscope of “mental serenity”; secondly, truth can be discovered only through personal experience. No amount of explanation could make the villagers understand what a microbe was and in the same way, no amount of explanation on my part can make you understand exactly what “awareness” is. But just as practical experience with the microscope opened to the villagers a new field of vision, in the same way a personal experience of mental exercises of contemplation as practised by Buddhists will open for your eyes new fields of vision.

Therefore, I should like the members of my audience to try and test whether the doctrine of the Dhamma I have outlined is true or not. The Buddha said that the Dhamma or doctrine of Buddhism has the following six qualities:

- (1) It has faultless excellence.
- (2) It is not a doctrine that has to be accepted on hearsay, or because someone has said so; it is a doctrine that has to be practised by oneself to be realized fully.
- (3) It produces results without a deferment of time. The truth of the doctrine can be known in this life and the proof need not be postponed to the hereafter.
- (4) It has the quality of being able to invite the nonbelievers to come and prove its truth themselves.
- (5) Since it is a doctrine without inconsistencies and other blemishes, it is one which everyone, high or low, can and should follow.
- (6) It is not a doctrine that a father can know from his son’s practising of it, or a son can know from his father’s practising of it. It has to be practised by oneself for one to be able to realize its truth.

Thus, I would like the members of my patient audience to find out and prove for themselves the truth or falsehood of what I have said. Man, until and unless he gets insight, is sceptical whatever the religion he professes. Even a man who is a devout Buddhist, who has donned the yellow robe from boyhood, and who may have become the Buddhist equivalent of an Abbot, after acquiring great learning in Buddhist doctrine, will some time be assailed by doubts within him as to the truth or otherwise of the teaching of Buddhism. And because of these doubts, he may be converted to other religions or he may give up all religions; but as soon as a person has reached the first stage of “awareness” of spiritual development called the Sotapatti stage, the characteristic tendency of the human mind to doubt will become completely annihilated. At this stage, he can no longer have doubts regarding the endless chain of suffering or cause of that endless chain of suffering, or the state of complete freedom from the endless chain of suffering, or the way to achieve a complete escape from the endless chain. If such a man has been a very bad man before he reaches this first stage of awareness, he will himself recognize and realize a great transformation as soon as he reaches that stage. Other people who know him well will also see the transformation clearly. If, for example, this man has been a great drunkard or robber or murderer, the transformation in him will be more clearly manifest than in the case of other ordinary people. The reason is that it becomes absolutely impossible for a man who has reached this stage to kill or to take other’s property not given to him or to utter falsehood or to drink alcohol or take drugs. In short, he will never again make evil utterances, perform bad actions, or have bad thoughts.

When the second stage is reached the experience is still similar to the first although of course there is a further development.

But when the third stage is reached a greater development is met with. A person who teaches this third stage will have shed revulsion entirely. There will be no one anywhere who can cause the slightest anger to appear in him whatever

the provocation. This is indeed a great mental achievement. However, the person at this third stage of spiritual development still has one desire remaining in him, namely to reach the plane of existence of the higher spiritual beings.

But, when the fourth stage, or Arahatta Magga, is reached, there is no more any kind of anger or any kind of desire in him. He has become serene and tranquil.

These stages are the four great stages that can surely and certainly be achieved in this lifetime by those who test and prove the truth of Buddhism. They will not have to wait till after death for the proof. And, even before the first stage or Sotapatti Magga is reached, a person, practising awareness, will experience eleven kinds of mental realization or *Nāṇas*, so that he will be convinced that he is on the right track. I will not attempt to explain beyond this the meaning of the various mental states of "awareness". Let those who embark on the spiritual exercises of contemplation find out the truth for themselves. For however hard I try to explain, the members of my very patient audience will only faintly grasp their significance, whereas after they have completed the course of spiritual exercises they will not need my explanations any more, but will understand these various mental states clearly and fully by themselves.

I know full well that Americans can only be convinced by "scientific proof", that is, by practical experiment and practical demonstration. And owing to this belief in practical and tangible proof, they have made experiments in the field of science at great expenditure of money and manpower and have attained such success that the world stands astounded at their scientific achievements.

Therefore, I earnestly plead with the people of the United States of America, through this distinguished and representative audience, to put the truth of Buddhism to the test in the same way as a scientific theory is put to the test.

I would like to make a suggestion in regard to this practical experimentation with the truth of Buddhist doctrine. I suggest that ten persons, chosen and selected by a competent body, should come to Burma for the purpose of personally putting the doctrine to proof by actual practice of the spiritual exercises. When they reach Burma they will be my guests. These ten persons will come back to the United States of America after they have practised the required course of spiritual exercise and will relate to the American people their experiences and their findings.

May I conclude by urging earnestly that Buddhism may be put to a practical test and personal experiment. Thank you.

## THE LIGHT OF THE DHAMMA

### Rates of Annual Subscription (Including Postage)

Burma: Kyats 5.00; India and Ceylon: Rupees 6; Malaya: Straits dollar 3.65;  
Britain and British Commonwealth Countries: sh. 9 (sterling or equivalent);  
United States of America: \$1.30.

THE LIGHT OF THE DHAMMA,

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF BUDDHISM

Union Buddha Sāsana Council, Sixth Buddhist Council P.O.,

Rangoon.

*Telegram: 'BUDHSASANA', Rangoon.*

Monies may please be remitted to the Chief Executive Officer

# THE BUDDHIST DOCTRINE OF KAMMA AND REBIRTH

By

BHADANTA NĀRADA MAHĀTHERA

(Continued from the previous issue)

## REBIRTH

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 Karma that conditions rebirth. Past Karma conditions the present birth; and present Karma, in combination with past Karma, 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 forethought 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 Karma 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.”<sup>1</sup>

[Here *Gandhabba* (= *gantabba*) does not mean “a class of devas said to preside over the processes of conception,”<sup>2</sup> 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.”<sup>3</sup>

This life-stream flows ad infinitum, as long as it is fed by the muddy waters of ignorance and craving. When these two 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.”<sup>4</sup>

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*),<sup>5</sup> 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,<sup>6</sup> 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 (*paraloka\_vajjabhayadassāvino*).<sup>7</sup>

In several discourses the Buddha clearly states that beings, having done 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 Sutta<sup>8</sup> 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 Sutta<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

An unusual direct reference to departed ones appears in the Parinibbāna Sutta.<sup>11</sup> 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.

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 life-time, 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 psycho-physical 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 life-span 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,<sup>12</sup> “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 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 implicity. . .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 Sīlacāra “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:<sup>13</sup>

“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.

Notes:

1 Majjhima Nikaya ( Mahatāṇḥasamkhaya Sutta, No. 38) i. 265.

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

3 Samyutta Nikaya, ii. 178.

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

5 Dhammapada, Verse 153.

6 Mahavaggo, p. 10; Samyutta Nikaya, V 420.

7 Majjhima Nikaya, i.169.

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

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

10 Anguttara Nikaya i.111.

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

12 Religion of Science, p. 132.

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

**Speech by the Right Honourable Sir John Kotelawala,  
Prime Minister of Ceylon, at a Reception to Burmese monks  
on Friday the 29th of July 1955, at King George's Hall, Colombo.**

I am happy to have been able to welcome to this fair Island of ours the three Venerable monks who have come to spend the Vas Season here. The people of Ceylon do appreciate the fine gesture on the part of the Government of Burma and these Venerable monks in making arrangements for the teaching of the technique of Buddhist meditation to the monks and laymen in Ceylon. This is not the first time I have had an opportunity of thanking Burma for the assistance she has given in carrying on our spiritual activities. A few months back I had occasion to speak to a similar audience on the cultural and spiritual ties which exist between our two countries. As I did at that time, I reiterate that our friendship is unique in the history of nations in the world. We have always stood for the highest spiritual ideals. We have always striven for the happiness of humanity and not the welfare of a group or a race.

It is gratifying to observe that His Excellency U Ba Lwin has taken a keen interest in the formation of the Lanka Vipassana Bhāvanā Samitiya. As you may be aware, meditation forms an integral part of our religious observances, for Buddhism emphasizes the training of the mind. In Ceylon we have a number of meditation centres in which Buddhist monks engage themselves in meditations of various types. I am also aware of a number of places where monks who have

themselves had their training in Burma are giving practical lessons to the lay devotees. But I must frankly state that this is the first attempt made by an organized body to make available to every citizen of the Island who is willing, an opportunity of learning the technique of meditation from the Burmese masters who have spent long years of training under the Most Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw. I take this opportunity of wishing, this Samitiya all success in its endeavours.

I am also thankful to the Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu and to the Government and the people of Burma for the inspiring sentiments expressed in their messages sent through the monks. It is my sincere hope that the Venerable monks will find their time in Ceylon very useful and enjoyable. I appeal to my Buddhist brothers and sisters to make the best use of this opportunity. It is our duty to see that the time and energy spent by these Venerable monks in Ceylon will not be in vain.

Venerable Sirs, on behalf of the people of Ceylon I have great pleasure in welcoming you here. I am grateful to you and to your country for having made these arrangements for your visit to Ceylon on this very useful mission. You will no doubt contribute immensely to the strengthening of the bonds of friendship which have existed for centuries among our countries.

.....

● 'To be rough and harsh, slanderous, faithless, void of compassion, haughty full of  
● avarice, giving to none—this, and not the mere eating of flesh, is impurity.'

● 'Anger, drunkenness, self-will, feigned piety, treachery, envy, ostentation, pride and  
● conceit, companionship with the unrighteous—this, and not the mere eating of flesh, is  
● impurity.'

● 'Those in this world who are wicked, who neglect the fulfilment of their duties, who are  
● slanderers and falsifiers, dishonourable, who act like the lowest of men—of these, and not  
● of the mere eating of flesh, may we utter the word "unclean".'

● 'Neither abstention from fish or flesh, nor nudity, nor a shaven head, nor braided hair,  
● nor disfigurement of the body, nor many-coloured garments, nor the worship of any deity,  
● can purify a man who is not free from delusion.'

.....

*Amagandha Sutta, Sutta Nipata.*

# WORLD LUNACY

By

FRANCIS STORY

Lao Tse, the Chinese sage, said : “When the Way (of natural harmony) is lost, then arises virtue; after virtue is lost, then rises justice; after justice is lost, then arises ritualism”. By this he meant that when people lose their natural love of the moral order they consciously abstain from vice, and call it virtue; when this self-conscious virtue is lost they formulate a code of justice, and when this also fails, they turn to ritualism, and so on in descending order.

He might have added that when peace is lost the people turn to pacifism. One of the symptoms of a world plunging madly from conflict to conflict is the number of pacifist movements that have come into being and the peace-conferences that are being held in various parts of the globe. We have had them lately in Switzerland, India, America and elsewhere; yet still the disease continues its course unabated. The same upsurge of pacifism took place after the first World War, and the present one may be expected to produce exactly the same result, neither more nor less.

In a sane world there would be no occasion for great numbers of people of different nationalities to assemble, some coming from the far corners of the earth at considerable expense, in order to assure one another that war is a bad thing and harmful to humanity, and that it ought to be abolished. Viewed dispassionately, such a proceeding in itself is insane enough, but it is the outcome of a larger lunacy which decrees that, even while the delegates are solemnly bandying these platitudes across the conference tables their respective countries shall be busily and efficiently preparing themselves for the next war of extermination. The ordinary citizen of any country, regarding these portentous but unfortunately barren conclaves from the (temporary) security of his home, may be forgiven if he cynically comments: “Thus it is, was and ever shall be, war without end!”

The sincerity of those who organise these conferences and of those who attend them cannot be questioned. They are people who feel strongly about the present trend of world affairs and wish to do something, in collaboration with those of like mind among their past and potential enemies, to check the headlong rush to destruction. Their motives are good; they are people of ideals and intelligence; they have great patterns of non-violence to follow and from which to draw their inspiration and, last but not least, they represent the feelings of the vast majority of inarticulate mankind in a war-weary world.

They have at their service powerful instruments of international propaganda in the press and radio—who remembers now, I wonder, that in its early days the then British Broadcasting Company had for its motto, “Nation shall speak peace unto nation”, until the pressure of events in Europe and the increasingly bellicose tone of continental broadcasting made the retention of that hopeful prophecy too farcical to be continued?

All these advantages the pacifist movements have, plus the sympathy of right-thinking people everywhere—and yet they fail. What is the reason? The arguments against war have been reiterated over and over again, so that it is now impossible to say anything on the subject that has not been said before times out of number, but there must be still one primal factor in the problem that has been so far untouched, by ethics, politics, religion and every other branch of knowledge that has any bearing on the subject

For the answer we must first of all examine the known causes of war. These fall under two main heads: politico-economic and historico-psychological causes. In the first are combined the influences of power-politics, the problem of expanding populations and the competition for

the world's markets, together with the universal trend towards over-industrialisation. The second embraces all national animosities that have their roots in past victories and defeats; for example, the French distrust of Germany, dating back to the Franco-Prussian war, which later influenced the Treaty of Versailles and so paved the way for the outbreak of war in 1939. Closely allied to this is the racial and nationalistic mystique, which lies in the field of the psychologist, since throughout history it has been applied, under the name of "patriotism", to engender mass enthusiasm for "one's country, right or wrong".

In assessing the causes of war we are apt to over-emphasise the first group and minimise the second. If war is brought about by economic conditions, it none the less draws its sustenance from the historico-psychological region of the mass consciousness, and when this sustenance is exhausted in the course of a long drawn-out conflict, the war comes to an end, even though the economic and political problems that originated it are still unsolved. If this factor did not exist, indeed, the economic forces brought into play by the struggle for supremacy between nations in times of peace could not gather enough momentum to lead to war. It is worthwhile, therefore, to examine this psychological factor more closely, for here, if anywhere we have the true cause of war.

The instinct of belligerence in children is a form of self-assertiveness; it is partly psychological and partly physical, for the stronger the child is physically, the more marked is its aggressive urge. The child wishes to impose its will on others and on its environment, and failing to achieve this with adults, it resorts to coercing its weaker companions. This is the first and simplest manifestation of the self-conscious ego. Passing through this primitive stage the child then becomes a communal being and manifests the tribal instinct in the form of team-spirit and devotion to the school. The primal ego has become partly sublimated and is then identified with the corporate group of which the individual is a part. It is not a true sublimation but more precisely an extension of the ego which

leaves the personal ego not only unimpaired but actually strengthened. The so-called sacrifice of self that comes from devotion to the family, tribe, team or country is merely the sacrifice of the smaller, individual ego on the altar of the larger self with which it has become temporarily identified.

The sportsman who cheers his team at a football match is celebrating the glorification of his extended ego; the man who exhibits excessive nationalism is giving vent to the same primitive instinct, and in his case it is formally approved by society because it is this sublimated (and therefore disguised) form of egoism which preserves the homogeneity of the state. It is the one form of egoism the open expression of which a civilised community praises.

Professor Sung, in one of his books, claims to have discovered the subconscious current or tendency that finally found open expression in Nazi aggressiveness in 1939, in the psychology of a representative section of young Germans whom he analysed several years before any political or economic situation had arisen that could possibly be said to make war unavoidable. This is a strong indication that the political and economic causes of war are only the outward manifestations of a bidden urge that develops in the collective consciousness of a people it may well be that they are the actual products of the psychic tendency and brought into being as a direct result of it. The psychic pre-disposition of the majority tends towards aggression and the trend of events follows it, so that in time circumstances are brought about which make it appear that war was the inevitable result of economic and political factors.

The view put forward by Tolstoy in "War and Peace", that the great leader is nothing but the instrument of a force more powerful than himself; on the crest of which he rides to victory, and that this force is nothing but the collective psychic impulse of the mass of the people, the whole obeying the universal law of cause and effect, seems to be correct. Napoleon was a psychic type, so was Hitler; they both believed

that a destiny directed their actions and they were partly right, but it was not a god-directed destiny but rather the psychic volition of a great number of people—the nation, in fact—stimulated over a period of years by growing discontent and the suppressed urge for national self-assertion. When this psychic energy exhausts itself, as it is bound to do in the case of a protracted conflict—for example, the Napoleonic wars— or more rapidly in the case of modern intensified warfare, the first symptom is loss of faith in the leader. The leader in turn feels the force failing him and begins committing blunders; he loses faith in himself and his “destiny”. The result is defeat. A democratic government, in which the burden of responsibility is divided among a group of men, has an advantage in such a case, since one man acting as the psychic instrument of so many is certain to collapse in course of time under the strain of the psychic tension to which he is exposed.

Here we are dealing with a very obscure and little-understood relationship, that between the leader and the led. But we know enough, at least, to acknowledge that war like all other things, arises from the mind, and that it does not rise from the mind of one man, or a small group of men, but from the mass-mind of the people. Now this mass-mind is always of a lower and more primitive, more violent type, than the individual minds that compose it. A man in a crowd will be guilty of excesses that as an individual he would shrink from. Yet it is that mentality which, in the form of the extended ego of the people, ultimately directs the fate of nations.

The root-cause of war, then, as of all other evils, is the ego-instinct; of that we can be certain. It is the ego which demands expression, conquest and acquisition, and if we are to tackle the problem of war effectively we must tackle it from the ego itself. And to do that the approach must be to the individual direct; it must not be confused by external issues in the form of political creeds, economic theories, race antagonisms or the misguided heroics of patriotism.

This appears to be the reason why religion has failed to bring peace to the world. The people cry aloud for peace with their tongues while their ego-instinct craves for self-expression in conflict. Buddhism is the only Teaching which attempts to curb this ego-instinct at its source, or which even sees the necessity for doing so; other religions are content to canalise it and provide an alternative to its cruder manifestations; the self is not subjugated, but merely harnessed to a higher motive, and that motive in itself may be (and usually is) diverted to the cause of war when occasion arises.

Buddhism cuts out non-essentials and gets down to the basic principles of thought and action. It teaches that there are five kinds of spiritual darkness and five of spiritual light. Among these the first kind of darkness is that which makes people ignorant of the fact that their tendencies and actions are their own inherent property, their cause and their fate. This is called *Kamma-sammoha*. It also includes ignorance of the nature of volitional actions and of the fact that certain types of action lead to evil results and others to good. Its opposite is *kammasakata-ñāṇa*, the illumination by which people know the nature of Kamma (actions) and know that it is these tendencies and actions which produce individual beings, and also become aware that they fall into distinct classes, some of which produce evil and others good results. To understand the science of mental and physical activity it is necessary to be familiar with the five principles of darkness and illumination, particularly these first two. If these were thoroughly comprehended by people throughout the world we should have gone a long way towards eliminating the principal causes of war; but for this end to be attained it is also essential that people everywhere should understand the process of rebirth in Saṃsāra, its cause and the nature and origin of the various types of consciousness in the chain of cause and effect. This is the only answer to the instinct of egoistic aggression that is inherent in the majority of mankind.



Diagnosis of the disease of world lunacy is useless unless we can also supply the remedy. The disease is *Self*; the only treatment must be recognition of the evils that come from the different forms, of egoism, and the way to their elimination, through knowledge of the fact that there is really no such thing as the self. Could this knowledge become widespread, the power of the ego, both in its individual and sublimated forms, would be reduced to ineffectiveness in the sphere of world events; with this form of aggressiveness removed we should be at last on the way towards true civilisation.

The time has come to give Buddhism a chance to rid mankind, of the fatal delusion of selfhood to which the evils of war on ultimately

be traced. Other remedies are merely palliatives: they succeed for a time, to a certain limited extent and with certain types of people who are advanced enough to have recognised the need for subjugation of the ego from their own personal observation. But, for a genuine change of consciousness throughout the world—a complete “turning-about” in human understanding and human relationships—something drastic has to be brought into operation, something which strikes at the roots of the trouble as nothing so far has done. That Buddhism can bring peace has been proved by history; it is no mere empty theory. It can bring peace to individual beings, and that is the first, most essential step, towards bringing, peace and sanity to the world.

## BUDDHA DHAMMA LOKA

A Weekly Journal in Burmese published

by the

**BUDDHIST WORLD MISSION**

Annual Subscription:

Burma—Kyats Ten

Foreign—Kyats Fifteen

Apply:

Headquarters Buddhist World Mission,

No. 26, 28th Street,

Rangoon.

Where authentic Buddhist literature in English is also available.

# Satipaṭṭhāna

*The Simple Way*

By NYANAPONIKA THERA

One of the striking features of Satipaṭṭhāna is its character as a Simple Way. Its simplicity may well be taken as one of the implications of the distinctive name given to Satipaṭṭhāna by the Buddha :— *Ekayāno Maggo*, The Only Way. If it is truly The One and Only Way to Liberation it needs be simple. And in fact, with many other great works of creative genius it shares the distinction of being profound as well as simple. But just in that respect, that is in the ultimate as well as basic significance of its Simplicity, Satipaṭṭhāna surpasses all those other products of human genius, in the same degree as Enlightenment surpasses mundane wisdom.

But one might ask: Is not a Simple Way entirely out of place in this life of ours where complications and complexities so much abound that they seem to be life's very nature? In view of that, once the following question was put to the Buddha:—

“Tangles within and Tangles without,

Folk are entangled everywhere.

This I inquire from Gotama:

Who disentangles all these ties?”

The Simple Way does not ignore the complexity of life. Just because complexity exists, the Simple Way has made its appearance in this world, for the purpose of cutting through the mesh of excessive complications, dissolving the numerous knots, making man free from entanglement. It neither denies nor excludes diversity, which is inherent in the very nature of life in general and of mind in particular. On the contrary, by its “disentangling” functions as applied to mental and physical phenomena, Satipaṭṭhāna makes diversity more distinct and, at the same time, more manageable. Simplicity does not mean uniformity. The Simplicity of the Only Way refers first of all to the method of approach and finally to the results to be

achieved. It also acts as a selective and unifying principle that musters the various forces and activities of mind and body for service in the attainment of the final goal, as proclaimed by the Buddha in the opening words of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta:

“This is the Only Way for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and misery, for the destruction of pain and grief, for finding the right path, for the attainment of Nibbana, namely the four Foundations of Mindfulness.”

Four qualities are at the base of this method's Simplicity:— Lucidity,  
Thoroughness,  
Truthfulness,  
Soberness.

They are the cardinal sources from which the Simple Way derives its strength as well as its beauty.

Disposing radically of all unnecessary complications of thought, the Method of Mindfulness puts the fundamental problems simply and forcibly before us. By its insistence on *Lucidity* it closes effectively some of the roads of evasion which the worldly mind, being afraid of nothing as much as of simple truth, is very fond of using: the flight into the darkness of ambiguities (pretending to be abstruse), or the escape into a mass of complicated detail and technicalities which divert attention from the essentials.

The postulate of lucid simplicity helps to prepare the mental object for the purpose of analytical investigation, in the same way as a material specimen is carefully prepared for scientific research. In Satipaṭṭhāna the respective object of mindfulness is disentangled from all confusing and falsifying mental associations which are so often attached to the first impressions of an untrained mind; furthermore the object is kept carefully circumscribed. In

that sense, the ancient commentary to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta explains the words “contemplating the body in the body” by saying that the repetition of the word “body” is intended to give an “Unambiguous delimitation” of the subject of meditation. “Therefore, in the body, one does not contemplate feelings, states of mind or mental objects (concerning the body), but one is contemplating only the body itself.” It is the same clear delimitation of the pure, unadulterated object of cognition, which is called for by the Buddha in His instruction to Bahiya: “Thus should you train yourself: In what is seen, there should be only the seen; in what is heard, only the heard; in what is sensed (by the other sense faculties), only the sensed; in what is thought, only the thought” That means every act of perception should be kept free from matter extraneous to it, from the intrusion of delilements and from the assumption of a Self unwarranted by the facts of observation. This procedure which embodies the true spirit of Satipaṭṭhāna, will make for clarity of perceptions and lucidity of the thoughts concerned with these perceptions.

The Simple Way of Mindfulness does not shroud itself in a veil of mystery. It neither demands nor promises esoteric initiations or occult powers. It does not require from its followers vast learning or subtlety of philosophical thought. Accessible to all is the Simple Way: plain is its manner of instruction: simple are the first steps to be taken, but they lead to the highest.

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step” said Laotse. But that first step, and likewise all that follow, must be on a sound footing and ought to be mastered fully before the next step is undertaken. It is *Thoroughness* which is the indispensable guarantor of progress. Very often it is only the lack of thoroughness which makes progress in spiritual training so difficult and a thinker’s ideas so complicated and obscure. The initial defects due to lack of thoroughness are carried along and will constantly militate against a spirit of Simplicity, of inner lightness (*lahuta*) and pliancy (*mudutā*)

that ought to accompany any work that is well mastered (*paguññatā*). Therefore, among the synonyms of Mindfulness (*sati*) mentioned in the Abhidhamma, appears rightly “absence of superficiality “.

Closely connected with Lucidity and Thoroughness is *Truthfulness* without which there cannot be any lasting progress on the Simple Way. If there is any insincerity, hidden or overt, simplicity is lost. That inherent insincerity will, earlier or later, demand adjustments to it that will grow more and more complicated. The slightest trace of moral or intellectual insincerity will endanger the edifice of spiritual training. Moral insincerity will destroy the innocence and joyful devotion of the striving spirit, casting over it a depressive shadow and paralyzing its fervour. Moral insincerity includes, for instance, any ulterior motive connected with the spiritual life, as desire for fame, gain, influence, self-aggrandisement, and so on. Intellectual insincerity destroys the roots of the searching intellect itself. There cannot be any gain of genuine knowledge—not to say of true wisdom—if self-deceptions nourished by irrational likes and dislikes, are tolerated or if, out of cowardice, tacit mental reservations are made, blocking certain areas of thought or emotion against honest inquiry. Lucidity and Thoroughness will on their part be valuable helpers in detecting the loop-holes of a mind that is afraid of complete moral or intellectual sincerity.

Coming now to the fourth of the cardinal qualities of the Simple Way, it is *Soberness* of mind that removes from any object chosen for observation or contemplation, all that may have remained of its deceptive appearance, its false glory, and so on. Soberness of judgement is. a powerful protector of the meditative mind and its befitting climate of simplicity. Soberness of judgement protects the *intellect* against being sidetracked into the complexities of speculative thought; it protects the *heart* against being carried away by ebullient emotions of any kind that may lead into confusion and conflict in one’s inner as well as outer life. It protects against

misinterpreting of overrating any unusual experiences, occurring during meditation. Soberness of speech, appearance and behaviour is the befitting garb of the meditator who will wish to be inconspicuous. Soberness, however, is certainly not identical with an unimaginative heart or intellect. It excludes neither human warmth nor the growth of the intuitive faculties of the meditative mind; for both will be sound in their respective natures only if they are rooted in a sober cognizance of facts.

It need hardly be mentioned how closely connected Soberness is with the three other constituents of Simplicity, that is Lucidity, Thoroughness and Truthfulness.

By all four qualities together, that clarity of mind is created by which one day the meditator will succeed to penetate to the dimension of depth that is below the surface of the so-called simple things of every-day experience. Satipaṭṭhāna, as far as it is concerned with the development of general mindfulness, deals with the most simple facts of our existence, as for instance, going, looking, eating, feeling sad or happy, and so on. This is not done with a view to the lesser capacities of a beginner, but with that farther-reaching intention just mentioned to reach, with regard to these “simple things”, their layer of greatest depth where the simple and the complex, the plain and the profound, the small and the great, merge. In each of them we may discover the Truth of Suffering, the Origin of Suffering and the Path that leads out of it. Any such encounter may kindle in us the spark of liberating insight, provided we are well prepared otherwise. There are stories in the Buddhist tradition which relate such instances.

These remarks on the inherent potency of the “simple things” will make intelligible a seemingly extreme assertion in the Commentary to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, saying that a monk who has clear awareness, in the sense of realistic comprehension (*asammoha-sampajañña*), of the simple fact of his wearing the robe and carrying the bowl, is one who is acting with highest clarity of knowledge (*uttama-sampajānakāri*).

In that emphasis on the “simple things of life” we have met one of the most-striking and important features of the Way of Mindfulness.

The spirit of Simplicity inherent in Satipaṭṭhāna will, when employing the four aforementioned principles, gradually succeed in reducing and finally dissolving, the confusing and superfluous complexities of the intellect as well as the worrying complexities and tormenting complexes of the emotional life. When meeting the calm glance of Noble Soberness, many of these complexities and complexes will lose their presumed or exaggerated importance, and the difficulties which they have caused in thought and conduct will vanish.

The spirit of Simplicity will also permeate the everyday life of the wayfarer, influencing and transforming his way of living. It will make him discover and cultivate the Beauty in Simplicity. Eliminating all that is superfluous, simplifying his ways of thinking and living, clarifying his human relationships, all that will finally grow to strong urge. One day, when still living the worldly life, monk-hood may suddenly and quite naturally appear as the only way of life adequate to him. Thus the Simple Way of Mindfulness may facilitate greatly the disentanglement from worldly life, by effectively preparing for it. Then the last decisive step into the Homeless Life will be the natural outcome of earlier development. It will be undertaken with a firm calmness, accompanied with a feeling of relief when looking back, and of joy when looking forward to the open vistas of the Holy Life which is so full of the Beauty of Simplicity already familiar to the disciple.

“However insignificant Simplicity seems, the whole world cannot make it submissive.”

“As for you, do come forth in your simplicity, lay hold on verities, restrain selfishness, and rid yourself of natural desire!

LAOTSE, *Tao Te Citing*, Ch. 32, 19.

# BUDDHISM

## LESSON II—PREPARE THE GROUND

*Bhadanta M. Paññāsiri Thero*

It is a well-known fact that the farmer, in preparing the field for rice, lets in water to soften the ground. Then ploughs it once or twice, and flattens or smoothens it with a rake or plank. After letting off the extra water, he sows the paddy seedling or transplants the half-grown paddy plants. All that preparation is done because the experienced farmer knows that unless that trouble is taken he will not have a good harvest.

Similarly, if man is to cultivate his mind he has also to undergo a little hardship. In the first place, he must understand and be convinced that some improvement is needed for him. It should be felt that it is a high spiritual life that makes a man worthy of his name. For, without a spiritual background, man will be without any moral responsibility.

Man without moral responsibility is a danger to society. He is to be looked upon as one who has lost his senses—as a lunatic. That is why everyone should take a look at himself and adjust to the standard of the wise men. This is called introspection.

When the necessity for adjustment is felt and understood there is no need to wait. He should search for the worthiest and noblest of ideals that are prevailing in his surroundings. He should remember that his forefathers followed certain customs and that he too has an obligation to follow them.

While following them he should try to understand their meaning. Sometimes there may be quite obsolete and meaningless customs. Therefore, before throwing them overboard one should try to learn what they stand for and their purpose. For each and every ancient custom began with some useful purpose, although now we may forget its origin and its cause.

Say, for instance, the parents taught you to offer incense sticks at the altar. When you were

a child you didn't know what it meant. So you merely followed your elders and waved the incense sticks in front of the incense-holder. Thereafter you went on doing it at every place wherever there was an incense-burner; and maybe you bowed in homage to all directions.

But, today, as a grown-up man, or woman, you should know what it all means. Perhaps your parents also did not know and could not tell you, because they too were not taught by their elders. That does not mean that you should still be in the dark.

Today is a day of advancement in knowledge—all forms of it. So you should be equal to the needs of the time. If your friend should ask you why you wave incense sticks you must be prepared to give the right answer. The correct answer should be: "I paid homage to the Buddha."

As I have told you before you were not informed by your parents because they were not told by their parents for they themselves have doubt about it. But remember that your great-grand-parents had some idea of it and that your great-great-grand parents were fully aware of the meaning. They were all good followers of the Buddha.

The next question will arise: "Why do you pay homage to the Buddha?" We do that because He is worthy of our homage. The Buddha is our Master, the All-Englightened One who supplied us the clue to understand the riddle of life. During this AEon there was no one else who found it out.

The Buddha spent many millions of lifetimes as Bodhisatta in order to find the answer to this most intricate riddle. In all those lives He spared no pains to become better, to approach nearer to the Truth, to draw closer to the Perfection that He was looking for.

Finally when He was born as Prince Siddhattha, in his last stage of life for perfection, He saw the suffering world and left it to find a way out of Suffering—the Universal Suffering. He renounced His luxurious life, all the wealth he inherited, his dear wife and darling child; and everybody and everything that was near and dear to Him He left.

He went forth as a mendicant and struggled hard, meditating in the wilderness for six long years, in order to understand the cause of Suffering. At last He was rewarded. The Intuition came to Him from within. The TRUTH dawned on Him. He was Enlightened. He attained NIBBĀNA.

Now He knew the answer to the riddle of life; the answer was that Ignorance and Craving were the causes of Suffering.

The Buddha did not keep this as a great secret to Himself and demand people's homage because He was Enlightened. From the time He attained this Absolute Wisdom He strained even harder to spread it amongst those who were ignorant.

During His forty-five years after Enlightenment He succeeded in making myriads and myriads of gods and men realize the same Truth. He made them enlightened and to attain Nibbāna which is the real End of Suffering, nothing less than that which He Himself had attained.

The Buddha lived only 2,500 years ago—an era which can claim authenticity in history. It is not a pre-historic or forgotten time as the Stone Age etc. He had trained His disciples in the Right Faith and they became proficient to teach His doctrine to the later generations of disciples.

And that Teaching has come down to us in its pristine purity. For that knowledge that the Buddha has given us we must pay homage to Him in gratitude, because He is our Master, He is our Guide, He is our Path-Finder. In fact the whole human race is indebted to Him.

The Buddha showed us the way to liberation from all Suffering. We should tread the Path and reach the haven of rest—NIBBĀNA

The Purpose of Life is Perfection!

Buddhaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchami

(I take refuge in the Buddha.)

### LESSON III—CARRY THE BURDEN YOU CAN LIFT

The Buddha's Teachings are very simple. There is nothing mystic in them. His doctrine can face the most rigorous and minute tests. There is nothing esoteric in them. The whole doctrine can be studied, mastered and practised by all the followers, including monks, nuns and the laity.

Although there is simplicity with all its unbidden meanings, yet its depth and profundity is immeasurable. But there is no reason for the follower to get scared at this. It is as harmless as a modern swimming pool.

In a swimming pool tiny tots can play where there is only one foot of water. Children below ten and in their early teens can go into the depth that suits them. Youngsters of full grown age can bathe at depths of five or six feet. And there are swimmers.

They can swim in the deeper sections. Those who can dive may even climb up high structures, erected for the purpose, and jump from there to the deepest spots.

Those who are trained to swim for longer periods play water-polo and other games.

Divers go and stay under water for quite a long time. Fun and play can be had according to their individual taste and capacity because the depth of the pool is gradual and there are no dangerous pot-holes in it. Moreover there is no current to pull you off your feet.

The Buddha's philosophy has even been compared to an ocean for its vastness and depth. In the ocean there are greater depths where whales of enormous size can swim without barriers; in Buddhist philosophy there is also the deeper section where only whales in intelligence would try to swim.

So we see that The Buddhist Doctrine (the DHAMMA) is suitable for understanding by one and all but according to one's own limit of understanding. The beauty of it is that none will have to be disappointed by not being able to understand it or by being unable to practise according to it. What is wanted is the adherence to the Dhamma and it will look after the adherent.

The goal to be reached by following the Dhamma is also graduated. Those who have the iron will, firm determination, erudition and wisdom, boundless compassion, great energy and strength for long endurance would try, unaided, for the highest peak overlooking all others to fix his beacon. And when he succeeds it will be useful to save the greatest number of unfortunate sailors who would be shipwrecked if not for its warning. That is the greatest service and glory by becoming a Buddha.

For those who are of medium will-power, lesser degree of determination, not full-scale energy and shorter power of endurance could try, also unaided, to fix his beacon on some medium-sized peak. But that will not be so useful to others because that is not so prominent as the first one. Still the glory and delight will be his and those few who may come in contact with him will be benefited, This requires a shorter period of training for perfection than that of the Buddhas. And they are called the Pacceka Buddhas who attain Nibbāna,—complete cessation of Suffering—by gaining Enlightenment by exercising their own effort and wisdom. This is the second way to attain the Eternal Happiness.

Then there are the weaker ones—always the majority—who are anxious to get rid of Suffering but, having no power of their own to climb a height of any size without an instructor's aid to fix their beacon. Yet, as a result of their great desire for liberation they trudge their way along cautiously until they meet a stalwart Buddha who takes compassion on them and cuts the steps to the hill top where they can climb easily and pitch their beacon.

Such beacons will be useful to themselves well as others because late comers could also feel their way up along the existing steps and be benefited. They are the Arahats, the Disciples of the Buddha. They reached the goal of Nibbāna and that is a glory of perfection which brings one to the end of Suffering.

Whether it be by self-enlightenment or with the instructions given by another Enlightened Being, one reaches the goal by one's own effort. The weak ones also should go up the steps. There will be none to take them bodily and leave them at the goal. And when the goal of Nibbāna is reached all are equal just as people travelling by first, second and third classes, after alighting from the train are considered as travellers and lose further distinction,

So, now, what have we to do to reach this goal? We have to study the Teachings of the Buddha, because it is in His Teachings that we find all the details of the path thoroughly described. There is no other place where one can find a better goal nor a clearer and correct path that leads to it.

Let us imagine that we all have to reach this goal. It is not advisable to run the fastest as soon as you start the race; it is too long a way. But Do start and Do run. Because if you don't start you'll be where you are. If you don't run, then it would have been better not to have entered the race. Therefore, the seeker after the goal should start as well as run until he reaches the goal and becomes first, second or third. At the end all the three would have reached the same goal and no more running would be necessary for them.

According to the Buddha's Teachings (the Dhamma) a Buddhist should face real facts and recognise that Saṃsāra is full of Suffering. There is no touch of fatalism in it; it is a stark fact. This Suffering has not been imposed on us or thrust on to us by any one else. We have procured it. We have inherited it as a result of our own deeds. The actions of our past lives had the potential power to send forth corresponding reactions.

So, what actions we had been doing in our past lives could be known by ourselves without the aid of fortune-tellers or predictions of outsiders, if only we know the Buddhist Teaching well enough. Whether they were good actions or evil actions should be judged by us according to our past circumstances.

But this does not mean that we should meekly submit to what is happening and simply keep quiet. Then that would be nothing but fatalism—belief that all events are predetermined and submission to all that happens as inevitable. Should we use our intelligence and energy we can change the course of many of these events and divert them to our advantage, here and hereafter.

For an understanding of this theory let us investigate our own nature—it is at the present moment. We have Craving, Hatred and Ignorance as the most prominent among a host of other passions or defilements of our minds. From where did they come to us? Did we inherit them from our parents? Did we imbibe them from our teachers or associates?

No, not the whole thing. We have them within ourselves somehow. And their quality and degree, we note, do vary with each individual. That is why the Buddha taught us that these defilements had been with us even in our past lives. We had nurtured them in the past and they became our character and nature of the present.

If we don't arrest their growth here and now we will have these characteristics in a stronger form in the future. Well, what are we to do to check them? The Dhamma comes to our rescue, It teaches us that there are other forces, also that can be brought forth from within us, which we have practised, not so intensively though. These forces are Charity, Morality and Wisdom.

Now let the forces recognise each other. Charity *versus* Craving; Morality *versus* Hatred; and Wisdom *versus* Ignorance! Allow these combatants to come to the arena of our minds, and

let them openly challenge each other in our everyday problems. If necessary, in every thought current that whisks across our alert minds.

Then let the mind itself be the referee. Here is a deserving case for charity—very deserving, indeed. Your craving nature will rush forward with its hideous face and that will be reflected in your charming face, and that will thrive into an ugly frown. Craving nature comes forward first because you have fed it constantly and more in quantity—hence it is stronger. And what about the nature of charity in you?

This is a critical moment. Think seriously and quickly and deliberate on the pros and cons. Are you going to be a slave to the evil nature or are you going to overcome it and replace it with the benevolent nature? The referee, the mind, can decide it either way.

Now it is a tug-of-war. Craving nature is assisted by the other two friendly evil forces i.e., Ignorance and Hatred. Charitable nature, on the other hand, is aided by its friendly forces of Morality and Wisdom. In this tug-of-war let not the evil side gain grounds. You can help it if only you have firm resolution not to allow yourself to be pulled to the evil side. Then you win the game. You win the world. You gradually gain life's purpose—perfection.

All Suffering was created by these evil forces. If you know that it is so, your duty is to strengthen the good forces to beat the evil ones. This is what the Dhamma teaches you. It explains to you in easier language, illustrating points with real and interesting stories. The Dhamma (the Teaching of the Buddha) is simple, scientific and sublime.

Buddhism is the only ethico-philosophical system without barriers for widening of knowledge.

Dhammaṃ Saranaṃ Gacchami

(I take refuge in the Dhamma.)



## WHAT IS REBORN?

*Extracts from a Letter to a Friend*

FRANCIS STORY

In your letter you asked about rebirth, and I'd better admit straight away that I can't "explain" it in so many words. Words, which are just symbols, can only deal precisely with matters of common experience, for which we have a common stock of corresponding ideas; and even then they sometimes go astray badly, because each of us draws his interpretation of their meaning from his own individual sum of knowledge and own personal way of interpreting the facts of experience. For the rest, they're just approximations to the reality they express, and that "reality" in itself is subject to various modes of cognition; it is only relative and can therefore only be "known" in the context of other assumed realities. Each of us is apt to see, or understand, things, events and situations in an entirely different way both from other people and even from ourselves at different stages of our ever-changing mental and psychic progression. For this, it's only necessary to cite the difference between the child's world and that of the adult; between that of the sane "normal" person and the psychopathic, without taking extreme cases. There is a world that is normal for the child and one that is normal for the adult, yet at the same time this normalcy is purely theoretical; it can only be known by deviations—some degree of the infinite range of which is to be found in everybody.

"*Cogito, ergo sum*" sounds very convincing, but we must define just what we mean by "I am". Right at the start, it's not a static entity. The child who says "I exist" becomes a man and continues to say "I exist" with the same confidence, but he is not talking about the same thing when he says "I". Everything that constitutes it has changed, no doubt imperceptibly and in some cases to a much lesser extent, psychically, than in others (here I make no quarrel with your observation of yourself because in some people the character of the mind does change comparatively little— "nevertheless, it

changes") and the "I" of the man of forty is by no means the "I" of the child of, say, twelve. Or of any of the innumerable stages in between. Yet it is the *result* of that former "I" without the pre-existence of which it could not have come into being; there is a causal-continuum that links them, just as there is a continuum of the bodily process that, through all the cellular changes and physical development or deteriorations, makes the body of the grown man the *result* of the body of the infant. Here, the only "reality" we can trace is the reality of a causal process, and it cannot well be anything but that process we mean when we say "I am". Now, we may call this a "life-process", and for certain purposes that is a satisfactory definition. But not for all, because the process applies equally to inanimate things, and to give it its true significance we must raise it to a cosmic level, where the words "alive" and "lifeless" cease to mean what they meant on the plane of relative reality, or on the subjective level of the individual's own self-awareness. A process of de-personalisation—something more than mere objectivity—must come into play to enable us to realise the nature of the "self" as merely a part, or a succession of momentary manifestations, or a universal principle. The impression we receive of a persisting identity throughout the unbroken succession of experiences, together with the conviction of selfhood come about through the individuality of the current of awareness and its insulation from all other currents, whether they be parallel or transverse, not through the actual persistence of any unit of personal identity such as we commonly mean when we use the word "myself". When we say, "yesterday I did so-and-so" we are speaking in conventional terms; to be more nearly precise we should say, 'yesterday the aggregate of physical and mental elements that constituted what was then called 'I', and which was the causal forerunner of what is called 'I' today, did

so-and-so”. And this introduces another important factor in the persistence of the identity-concept—that of memory. To a certain extent, varying; greatly in different people, we do have the ability to retrace our steps, as it were, through the line of the causal-continuum, marking various points at which the time-flow cuts across it; but this is also characterised by gaps, periods of which we can recall nothing because the points of intersection did not mark any significant interruption of the real current which is subconscious. (In Pāli it is called “Bhavanga”). When conscious attention is turned towards any external object or event there is an interruption of this unconscious causal current, and it is these points which, to a greater or lesser extent, according to their strength and the consequent impression they make, we remember.

Now, if we accept this view of the “personality” as we study it in ourselves or any other living being, it becomes much less important to know what it is that is reborn. The whole question takes on a different aspect, and we even begin to suspect that it is wrongly put—there ceases, in fact, to be any justification for such a question. “Not he, yet not another”, the Buddha tersely said, and the reply fits equally the case of the adult man and his causal predecessor the child, and the being that comes into existence (or rather, the re-emergence of the same causal current) after what we call “death”. All we are justified in assuming is a causal cosmic principle which connects the child with the adult, and the “self” of this existence with the “self” of the next and all subsequent ones. The actual determinant of the nature of this current is the willed activity we generate—if you like, the life-urge (which is *tanha*—craving) and the actions to which it gives rise, which form the kamma. At any given point we are subject to the results of past kamma, but our present kamma with its future results is subject to us; we cannot unmake the past, but we are continually creating the future.

Here, two further difficulties present themselves, of which I’ll deal with the simplest first. Since memory does not really bridge the gulf

between two existences (although it in fact does so much more often than is commonly supposed, and can certainly be cultivated to do so) how can it be said that there is any kind of identity between the past, present and future personalities, and even if an identity of a sort be admitted, can it be truly said that the new being is suffering or enjoying the results of his own actions? Is he not justified in saying, “since the person who suffers the results of my bad actions will not be myself, in the sense in which I understand it, why should I trouble about possible consequences?”

For the answer to this we have to return to the concept of personal identity that we constructed from our comparison of the child and the (consequent) adult; and where concrete examples can be used it’s always best to use them. Supposing, then, the child loses an arm or leg through an accident. The man that he becomes, despite all physical and mental changes and what may be quite justly called a completely reconstructed personality, will still continue to be a person minus an arm or leg, as a direct result of what happened to the child that he once was. He will be suffering, in fact, for something that happened to A BEING THAT WAS, YET AT THE SAME TIME AND IN ANOTHER SENSE WAS NOT, himself—and that despite the fact that he may not be able to recollect any of the circumstances of the accident. Yet would one say that a child need not take any special care in crossing the road because if he loses a limb it will not be he who will suffer in the future, but another person whose existence he cannot even foresee? To carry the analogy forward in another direction, and incidentally bring in the moral considerations that are inseparable from any view of kamma, it is possible for an elderly man to be suffering the physical and mental consequences of follies committed in his youth; yet would one say to any youth about to commit such follies that he should go right ahead, since their results would be endured not by him but by another person who would be merely the result of his present existence? Obviously one wouldn’t; yet the relationship be-

tween the old man and the youth is precisely the same as that existing between the “personality” of the present life and that of the future—simply that the one is the result, in a causally-connected sequence, of the other.

There is yet another aspect to this question, with its ethical implications. With the gradual liberation from the concept of personal identity and all it implies of selfhood, and consequently of exclusive self-interest, the ego inevitably becomes merged in the wider cosmic operation, and it becomes of the first importance to avoid the propagation of suffering in any form, whether it is oneself that suffers, or any other sentient being. Long before self-identification—the real objective and purpose of compassion—is achieved, the question of whether it is oneself or another that suffers in the future recedes into insignificance, until it is finally found to have no meaning whatever. The “self” as we understand it may not be real, but suffering is real. In the widest philosophical interpretation all Vedana (sensation) is Dukkha (suffering), whether it appears in the form of pain or pleasure. This is so because it is a stimulation, an agitation, a disturbance of the mind’s tranquillity; and also because it is transitory and yields only temporary satisfaction. Pleasure, particularly physical pleasure, is only the release of a tension, the momentary gratification of a craving that is incessantly renewing itself, and which grows in intensity with what it

feeds upon. What we call pleasure and pain are so intimately associated that in certain experiences it is impossible to say at what point the one becomes the other to what extent the two are commingled and identified.

What it all comes down to is that we have to discard the old terms of reference and adopt new ones, substituting the idea of a dynamic process of causality for the conventional and grammatically-necessary “I” which means that the problem of rebirth is largely one of semantics. In any case, we have to begin, like Confucius, by examining and “rectifying” terms, finding out just how closely they can be made to correspond to the ideas they represent, before we can establish whether the ideas themselves are true.

The chief thing in the quest for understanding is to allow the ideas to sink in—neither striving to accept nor to oppose—until by a gradual readjustment the mind comes to a decision. There are some things one can understand, yet cannot express in words. It’s just this point I’ve tried to make in my articles in the Light of the Dhamma and elsewhere. Naturally people want to know about rebirth, and how the Buddhist idea differs from “reincarnation”, “transmigration” and so on. One can only say that these ideas are simplifications of it—redactions of the highly abstract truth to popular and animistic terms.

## PALI TEXT SOCIETY

### New Publications:

1. PALI TIPITAKAM CONCORDANCE, being a Concordance in Pali to the three Baskets of Buddhist Scriptures in the Indian order of letters. Listed by F. L. WOODWARD and others, arranged and edited by E. M. HARE. Part 1. fasc. 1. pp.vi. .58, paper covers, London, 1952.. £1-10-0
2. THERAGATHA COMMENTARY, VOL. II, Edited by F. L. WOODWARD, boards, P.T.S. 1952 ..£2-5-0

### Reprints:

1. PALL-ENGLISH DICTIONARY, Rhys Davids & Stede, 8 parts, sewn, London, 1952 complete £6-10-9

## PALI TEXT SOCIETY

30, Damon Place, London W. 2

## Book Reviews

# The Doctrine of No-Doctrine

**SELECTED SAYINGS FROM THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM** chosen, arranged, and translated by Edward Conze. **Buddhist Society, London. 8s. 6d.**

**THE DIAMOND SUTRA. (Second Edition)** translated by A. F. Price. **Buddhist Society London. 5 shillings.**

**THE BUDDHA** by Ronald Fussefl. **Buddhist Society, London. 7s. 6d.**

The problem of the original authorship of the Prajñāpāramitā-hridaya, Vajracchedikā and other Sanskrit Sūtras of the Mahā-Prajñāpāramitā group, as well as of the Saddharmapundarika, Lankāvatara and works belonging to the Pure Land School of Mahāyāna, is one that is not likely to be solved to everyone's satisfaction at this late date. In dealing with works so utterly impersonal, by their very nature, as those of the Prajñāpāramitā, the usual detective methods of textual examination are of no more use than is the attempt to localize them within the context of a particular intellectual movement. Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Asaṅga and others drew free inspiration from these Sūtras, using them as the basis of a metaphysical structure which was to be elaborated in the course of centuries into a vast exegetical literature, most of it revolving about the Buddha's Anattā Doctrine.

It is in these intellectual excursions into a realm that is admittedly beyond the reach of discursive thinking that their method differs from that of the Buddha Himself. A comparison between the Mahāyāna literature and the post-Buddhistic Upanishads shows them to belong to essentially the same category of thought, a mental climate created by the impact of a new idea upon the existing Vedic patterns. In the later Upanishads the truth of the Buddhas objective and subjective analysis is admitted up to a point; the various aspects of the phenomenal personality are seen as devoid of any constant factor, they are all transitory and unreal. Yet the final conclusion is shirked by an appeal to an indefinable Atman that is distinct from the Skandhas and independent of them, but is in some way identical with the supreme Unmanifested

(Nirguṇa) Brahman. Similarly, the Mahāyānic teachings, while elaborating and expanding the Anattā principle of Theravada, have recourse in the last analysis to a doctrine of Universal Mind that reflects the Vedāntic position with only a substitution of terms, even to the "Tat tvam asi"—"Thou art That (Brahman)" in the form of "Thou art Buddha". 'The dangers following upon an anticipation of divinity, inherent in Vedānta with its light disregard of moral obligations such as those laid down by the Buddha in the Noble Eightfold Path, are no less present in this pre-assumption of Buddhahood by those who do not as yet possess the first requisites of Enlightenment. <sup>1</sup> The Tathāgata, Who on His own showing taught that day is day and night is night, kept His terms of reference strictly within the two categories of Lokaia and Lokuttara, and there is no historical or doctrinal reason to suppose that He ever asserted an identity between Putthujana and Arahant or between Nibbāna and Saṃsāra. The concept of a "development" of a Teaching which is already complete and rounded off can only be entertained if development is synonymous with any form of change, not excluding deterioration.

If the Mahāyāna Sūtras were presented as the teachings of, say Nāgārjuna or Vasubandhu, it would be possible to consider and assess them as free exercises of the human mind in a field of speculation legitimately open to it, and as such they would stand high in the world's literature. But they are not; they are offered to us as the actual words of the Tathāgata Himself, given to a select coterie of followers, the Bodhisattvas, as an esoteric teaching. It is in this light we are asked to regard them; but the internal evidence,

far from supporting this view, points to their having originated in a sect that had long since separated from the original Sangha and was imbued with a spirit of rivalry towards it. In Conze's translation (p. 29) this is made evident:

“There is no route here for all the foolish common people, and it lies outside their sphere. There is no route here either for those who belong to the vehicle of the Disciples, or for those who, belonging to the vehicle of the Pratyeka Buddhas, course in deep Dharmas”. These words are put into the mouth of Sariputta, himself one of the Savakas (Disciples)<sup>2</sup> but later in the same section the Buddha Himself is represented as saying: “What could beggarly beings do with this store of precious dharmas, beings destitute of learning, or confused by their learning, beings who are but blind fools? . . . The heretics of other sects correspond to these ‘beggarly beings’—and that includes also the Disciples”. (“Section A: Shortcomings of the Disciples”).

By this we are asked to believe that the Buddha, in teaching His esoteric circle, the Bodhisattvas, was given to disparaging His Arahant Disciples—a claim that has little to commend it to even the most uncritical mind. Such passages are clearly more characteristic of the later schismatics who coined the derogatory word “Hinayāna” for the Sāvaka Sangha. This temper of rivalry, with its assumption of spiritual superiority by the Mahāsaṅghikas, is again shown in the following, also improbably attributed to the Buddha (p 52):

“.... ‘ Even when my life is in danger I must not get into a rage, and no frown should appear on my face’. This is the attitude which a Bodhisattva should adopt also towards persons who belong to the vehicle of the Disciples”. The picture here presented of the Buddha giving two kinds of teaching and condemning those who followed one of them is so obviously a clumsy sectarian invention that to take it as literal truth is out of the question. In significant contrast to this, Theravada canonical literature contains no suggestion of the schisms which were to follow in the wake of the Mahāsaṅghikas. As Max Muller wrote in his Introduction to the Larger

Sukhāvātī-Vyūha, “that the teaching of Sakyamuni as represented in the Hinayāna comes first in time seems to be shown by the Mahāyāna-sūtras themselves”. If anything, this is too cautious a statement. Things must have gone very far indeed if one section or the Buddha's followers went in fear of their lives from the other; and when it is remembered that the Disciples thus spoken of as possible aggressors were the Arahants the inference becomes ridiculous. If such a situation ever did arise, it was certainly not during the lifetime of the Buddha.

Whoever the author of these passages may have been, the sentiments alone show clearly that it was not the Buddha Who thus criticised and denigrated that group of His original Disciples which included the great Arahants Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna. While the *dramatis personae* of the Sanskrit Sūtras, Mañjusrī, Mahāsthāna, Avalokiteshvara etc., are not mentioned in the Pāli canonical texts, Sāriputta, Ānanda, Mahā Moggallāna and others of the historical Disciples make frequent appearances in the Sūtras where the role usually allotted to them, however, is subordinate to that of the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas. The tendency throughout is to make the Bodhisattvas almost equal to Buddhas, which is doubtless the reason why in modern popular parlance, the “Incarnate Lamas” of Tibet are erroneously called “Living Buddhas” they are, in fact, considered to be the earthly manifestations of the Bodhisattvas, each of whom is “overshadowed” or mystically directed by one of the Dhyāni-Buddhas reigning in a Buddha-kshetra such as Sukhāvātī, the miraculous “Western Paradise”. The descriptions of these paradises in the Pure Land Sūtras are so fabulous and so lavish in material sense-attractions that they read very strangely as coming from the mouth of the Supreme Buddha Who taught that the delights of the senses are the great obstacles to Enlightenment and Liberation. Although it is not these particular Sūtras that are under discussion now, they are a part of that same Mahāyāna to which the metaphysical Sūtras belong, and mention of them is not out of place here.

The attribution of the Prajñāpāramitā and the other Sūtras to the Buddha, carrying as it does this peculiar flavour of spuriousness, is a difficult snag to overcome; but once it is acknowledged that the unknown authors were employing the device, common in India, of placing their own teachings in the mouth of some greater teacher of former days, it becomes possible to judge them on their own merits as independent works. How closely do they correspond to the Teaching of the historical Buddha, and how far do they depart from it?

In his Introduction Dr. Conze points the distinction between the Sāvaka Vehicle and that of the Bodhisattvas thus: “One should not aim at a private and personal Nirvāna, which would exclude others and the world, but at the full omniscience of a Buddha which somehow includes both”. Consequently, according to Mahāyāna belief, the Arahant has not arrived at perfection, nor gained release from rebirth and suffering, but must remain in Saṃsāra to fulfil the higher destiny of a Bodhisattva, who views Nirvāna and Saṃsāra as one and the same. Against this must be placed the Buddha’s own statement to the effect that there exists an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncompounded (Nibbāna); and that if there were not this Unborn, Unoriginated and Uncompounded there could be no escape from the Born, Originated and Compounded (Saṃsāra). Here there is no attempt to reconcile, much less identify, the phenomenal with the noumenal, as in Mahāyāna. Nibbāna and Saṃsāra are as light and darkness, day and night, as the waking opposed to the sleep: and although the waking state is potential in the sleeper, a potentiality is not an actuality until it is realised. It is here that the doctrine of Sūnyatā, the Void, in the hands of the Mahāyāna gurus takes a course the Buddha was careful to avoid, becoming an extreme idealism wherein philosophy and analytical investigation are finally abandoned for a dogmatic negation of a negation. The circular process of thought is completed and the mind is back at the point from which it started, still in Saṃsāra and its mazes. The Doctrine becomes No-doctrine. The possibility that this is a solution for those unwilling to renounce the

phenomenal world is one that inevitably suggests itself; the world is accepted on the understanding that it does not exist.

No one can liberate another, the Buddha asserted; the Buddhas themselves can only point the Way, which each has to tread for himself. Disregarding the Dhammapada injunction: “Attadatthan paratthena bahunā pi na hāpaye; attadattham abhiññāya: sadatthapasuto siyā”—“Neglect not one’s own welfare for that of another, however great it may be; knowing one’s own welfare one should pursue it zealously”,—the follower of the popularized version of Buddhism is urged to forgo his own “selfish personal Nirvāna” and continue in the ceaseless round of births and deaths; and this in the chimerical hope of saving countless beings who are at the same time to be regarded as “no-beings” because in the logic of the Void there is no real entity of self-existence either in the past, present or future. There is no “I” to save, and there are no “others” to be saved.

“Selfish” and “unselfish” are terms that have meaning only in the context of relative values, and it is curious that while the logic of Mahāyāna insists upon this fact as strongly as does Theravāda, the Mahāyāna uses them in a fashion completely contrary to the total import of its own negativism, giving them a value that can only be realised in terms of a real phenomenal world and real personal relationships. This, it is explained, is a transcendent mysticism, beyond the confines of mere reason; but the question raised is, Does it help man to understand his own nature and his place in the cosmic scheme? The attempt to put into words realities that lie beyond the realm of discriminating thought is one the Buddha never made; the knowledge of them must be approached by another route and apprehended by another faculty. In the ultimate phase of realisation, Dr. Conze points out, “the paradoxes are finally left behind, and one comes to a stage of Silence, where nothing at all can be said”. True: then why so many millions of words in trying to say the unsayable before this phase is reached? Theravāda lays down this truth as axiomatic from

the start, and concentrates on the practical *means* of attaining the realisation which is Silence.

But words are easier to manipulate than the stubborn cravings of the mind and senses, and the metaphysicians who followed centuries after the Buddha probably derived great prestige from their paradoxes and endless repetitions of the negation of a negation. The vital question still remains: did it help them towards the extinction of the passions? One finds on the whole too much evidence of sectarian hostility to be fully assured on this point. The fact that the hostility is directed, not towards the Brahmin priesthood, naked ascetics and other *Micchādīṭṭhikas*, as one would expect, but towards the original Disciples of the Buddha, only increases the mystery. Shankarāchārya, the reactionary enemy of Buddhism, was suspected of being secretly a Buddhist: might it not be that in the sectarian confusion of the centuries that witnessed the restoration of Brahmanical supremacy there were those who adopted methods no less subtle than those of Shankarāchārya to merge the Teaching of the Buddha into the Brahmanic pattern, and that the creation of a new, Sanskrit doctrine to replace the authentic Pāli version was one of the expedients that offered themselves for this purpose? It is curious how often references to Mahādev (Siva) and other gods of the later Hindu pantheon, are found in Mahāyāna literature, in addition to the familiar Sakka of the original texts. The characteristic features of the Puranic period, the age which gave birth to the Vishnu Purana and the deification of the Buddha as the Ninth Avatar, had overlaid and almost superseded the older Vedic traditions by the time these Sūtras came into being, and Mahāyāna and Hinduism were borrowing freely from one another. Tantricism, which was common to both, completed the impure amalgam and spelt the end of Buddhism as a distinct creed in the land of its birth.

The Buddha did not encourage metaphysical constructions because He perceived that any logical pursuit of an initial premise carried far enough in the sphere of conditioned thinking is doomed to lead to contradiction and paradox.

Thus in Mahāyāna we get the conclusion that “the attaining of Buddhahood is not the attaining of anything: it is no more than the realisation of something eternally and indestructibly potential in every living creature. Thus, there is no fundamental difference between one who is and one who is not a Buddha”. (Foreword to the Diamond Sutra by Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz). Zen Buddhism places personal intuition above all, and if the Theravāda Buddhist’s own intuition tells him that this does not sound like the Teaching of the historical Buddha, his right to his opinion draws its authority from Mahāyāna itself. It is equivalent to saying that there is no fundamental difference between a lunatic and a sane man, because the lunatic has the potentiality of being cured of his madness. But in actual fact there is no self-existence of either the lunatic or the sane man; each “exists” only in his actions, and these actions are fundamentally different. It is here that Mahāyāna contradicts the doctrine of the Void by confusing *Sammuti Sacca* (relative truth) with *Paramattha Sacca* (absolute truth) and mixing up the phenomenal self which is *Anattā* with the mistaken concept of Self as something existing fundamentally and unchangeably in its own right.

Elsewhere, Dr. Evans-Wentz says, quite correctly, that the insistence on the doctrine of non-ego, of non-soul in the Diamond Sutra is in full accord with the fundamental Teaching of the Buddha; but when he goes on to say that it is thus “strictly Buddhist, despite whatever may be argued against it otherwise by Buddhists of the Theravādin or Southern School”, he is on the wrong track. In the first place, although *Anattā* is insisted upon over and over again in the Sūtras, the carrying-out of ideas relative to phenomenal personality shows that the concept of the non-existence of selfhood had never really sunk in. If it had done so, there could have been no talk of “selfishness” and “unselfishness” in comparing means to the attainment of *Nibbāna*. But it is not entirely this, but also the extra doctrines of Mahāyāna—the *Trikāya*, the *Dhyāni Buddhas*, the belief in “salvation by faith” and, above all, the insistent claim that the *Bodhisattva* is superior to the *Arahant*—which

Theravāda rejects as being foreign to the Dhamma taught by Gotama Buddha. These, and the immense structure of mythic Buddhology, an artificial theology grafted onto an essentially non-theistic doctrine, are the distinguishing marks of Mahāyāna which must ever stand in the way of a sincere attempt to return to the pristine Teaching and method of the actual historical Buddha.

The Prajñāpāramitā literature is of so repetitive a nature that Dr. Conze's selections can be taken as an excellent condensation of the whole. In Mr. Price's Diamond Sūtra, however, there are instances, as in Section XXVII, where disagreements between the texts consulted leave doubt as to whether a positive or negative meaning is intended. To what extent the clarity of the teaching is obscured by these seemingly interchangeable affirmations and denials is presumably a question that can only be decided by mystical intuition. In the Doctrine of No-Doctrine there appears to be no difference between the statement that such-and-such is, and that such-and-such is not. The explanatory Biblical footnotes do not help the situation much; in Buddhism "fear of the Lord" is not the beginning of wisdom. That much can be said with complete certainty. One feels that Buddhism is best explained by elementary Buddhist doctrines, which both these books tend to overlook in their preoccupation, with mystical absolutes.

A simple introductory book on Buddhism, with explanations of the Dhamma suitable for young people and beginners, is greatly needed, and at first glance "The Buddha", by Ronald Pussell, seems to fill the gap. As it develops, however, it shows an unevenness of treatment that makes it only partially suitable. The indiscriminate mixing of Sanskrit and Pāli spellings (Kapilavastu, but Rājagaha; Sāriputta, but Ashvajit—and in some places "Sāriputra") which is always a source of confusion to the new student, seems to indicate that the material has been drawn from different sources without enough care being given to uniformity. The incidents related in the first section appear to be mostly taken from Ashvaghosha *via* the Light

of Asia. The lack of attention to details appears first in the Introduction, where the Buddha is represented as going on His alms-round clad in saffron coloured robe and *sandals*. Later on Devadatta *fires* with his bow—a remarkable feat in the days before firearms—and we are told that on the attainment of Enlightenment Prince Siddhattha became "Sammā Sambuddhassa". Minor points, perhaps, but the book would have been so much better had they been checked before publication.

After the first eight chapters the book undergoes a rather marked change, and the Noble Eightfold Path is treated from the philosophical point of view in a way that brings out those features most likely to have an immediate appeal to the Western reader. The reviewer may regret the occasional intrusions of Blavatskyism ("Voice of the Silence" and the "Wisdom Religions"! ) but these are not such as to distract attention from the more important theme. Where the book treats of Kamma and Rebirth, the Four Noble Truths and the Anattā Doctrine it is likely to be very helpful indeed to those who are trying to understand precisely in what respects Buddhism differs from the religious systems to which the West is attuned. Despite its lapses, the book contains some admirable matter, and offers on the whole a more explicit study of Buddhist principles and a more useful body of reference than the Sūtra translations. At least it does not drop the reader catastrophically straight into the Void without some preparation. All three books are cloth bound and very attractively presented.

Notes :

1 For example, the curious conduct' of certain Dalai Lamas recorded in Tibetan histories.

2 One is reminded of the later followers of Lao Tsu who, out of rivalry towards the Confucianists, invented incidents in which K'ung Fu Tse appeared at a disadvantage and was represented as repudiating his own teachings in favour of Taoist ideas. Where historical veracity was never held in very high esteem, the odium theologium frequently took this oblique form.



## GLOSSARY

FOR VOL. III—No. 2.

### A

**Adussana:** Amity in the sense of absence of defilements (of passion, lust, etc.) or guilt.

**Anupādisesa-nibbāna:** “Nibbana without the groups of existence remaining”; the “no-more-continuing”, of this physico-mental process of existence.

**Arajjana:** Disinterestedness in the sense of absence of attachment.

**Āvajjana:** Turning the mind towards the first stage in the process of consciousness.

### N

**Nipphanna:** Accomplished; perfected; trained. In philosophical sense, determined or conditioned.

### P

**Paṭigha:** Repulsion; repugnance; anger.

### S

**Sammā-Sambodhi:** It is the state of one by whom the Liberating Law (dhamma) which had become lost to the world, has again been discovered, realized and clearly proclaimed to the world.

### T

**Tathāgata:** The word “Tathāgata” conveys in various places, the following meanings:—

- (1) One who has penetrated to the Truth,
- (2) The epithet of an Arabant, and
- (3) A being.

## WANTED

A copy of the “DICTIONARY OF PALI PROPER NAMES”, by Dr. G. P. Malalasekera, in good condition. Please address replies to: THE BURMA BUDDHIST WORLD-MISSION, No. 7, East Block, Sule Pagoda (C/o Sule Pagoda Trust) Rangoon, Burma.

## THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY

16, Gordon Square,  
LONDON, W. C. 1.

The oldest and largest Buddhist movement in the West. It is sincerely hoped that Buddhists all over the world will support it generously.  
Membership of Society £1 or K 15. This includes subscription to its Quarterly Journal  
THE MIDDLE WAY.

Hon. Secretary for Burma:  
UKYAWHLA,  
Civil Lines,  
MANDALAY.