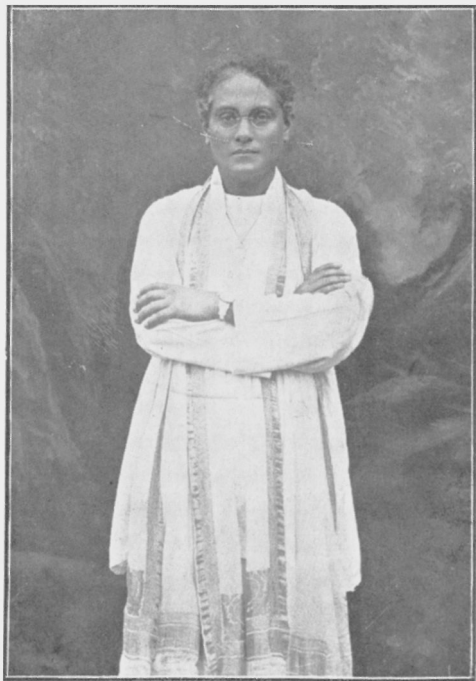


THE REIGN OF LAW IN BUDDHISM

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

ADYAR

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in 1921

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(BUDDHIST ESSAYS)

BY

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

President of the Theosophical Society

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FOREWORD

THIS little work does not attempt to give an exposition of Buddhism from the standpoint of a deep student of Buddhism. It is, on the other hand, an exposition of the religion as it has affected one individual, to whom one of the greatest forces in his life has been the personality of the Lord Buddha. It is in the light of His personality that I have always regarded each Buddhist doctrine which I have studied. The value of the essays will be solely because they reflect the experiences of a Buddhist who has tried, however humbly, to mould his life on the life of the great Lord.

Such an attempt has only been possible to me because of my studies in Theosophy. It is Theosophy that has vivified and illuminated for me, in a way that no tradition in Buddhism nor any living exponent of it has done, the ancient truths as to the Way preached by the Lord. I am perfectly aware how my fellow-Buddhists in Ceylon look askance at all Theosophical ideas as heretical. This little work is a testimony to such among them as may be drawn to inquire into Theosophy, but are held back by popular misconceptions. I for one, to whom the Lord Buddha is the greatest Ideal in life, have found in Theosophy what I have not found in any existing Buddhist book or tradition, that is, a never-failing source of inspiration in understanding the Dhamma as the most beneficent power in the

universe, and the Sangha as the ever-watchful and compassionate Guardians of mankind. I have sought to make the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha a living power in my life, and it is Theosophy and Theosophy alone which has wrought for me this miracle.

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THE REIGN OF LAW

OF all the great changes which have come about during the last hundred years in modern thought, there is none so profound as the conception of the reign of universal law. Wherever we look, whether with the microscope or the telescope, we find laws. The tiniest electron as the mightiest solar system obeys laws which the mind of man can tabulate.

All the discoveries of modern science, which have given us this conception, have profoundly shaken Western theologies. So much is this the case, that a cynic has declared that to-day, "God exists only in the

gaps of the cosmic order ". One of the hardest problems for thoughtful Christians is to harmonise the facts of evolution and the doctrines of theology.

The latest conclusions of modern science are after all nothing more than the proclamations of the Lord Buddha. When we understand what the Lord meant by the word *Dhamma* or Law, we realize that it is Law absolute, which brings under its sway all things great and small. It has been said that a scientific law is only a statement of the conditions under which certain results will follow. This is exactly true of the *Dhamma*. For all the teachings of the Lord Buddha are based upon the inevitability of law. He does not proclaim a moral law as having any value from His sanction, but that it brings its own

sanction with it. In science we do not say that one particle of matter attracts another because of some divine decree, but because it is the nature of matter to attract each other in a particular way. Similarly, the whole conception of life offered by the Lord Buddha is based upon a scientific conception of the universe.

One of the most wonderful conceptions which the Lord Buddha gave is that moral law is exactly the same as any physical law. When He proclaimed that "hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love," He was not uttering a beautiful ideal, but was giving a scientific statement of the laws of the universe, visible and invisible.

Of late many Western thinkers, who are profoundly influenced by scientific conceptions,

are beginning to realize that in Buddhism is a statement of life which is in thorough accord with science. There are, of course, some who consider Buddhism a cold religion, because there is little scope in its practice for emotionalism. But there is little scope for emotion in science. Yet all the great changes in material civilization which we have now are due to the application of scientific truths. Similarly, when the great precepts of morality are thoroughly understood as expressions of natural law, we shall all try to live more moral lives. The world has failed to be more moral than it is largely because of its false conception of morality. If morality is only the statement of a Personal God who can be appeased, then there is a natural tendency not to be absolutely

rigid in adherence to morality. But if we realize that to break a moral law is exactly like breaking any physical law, then we are on our guard in a new way. If I were to walk carelessly over a precipice, I know what will happen, and so I take care to be circumspect when nearing the edge of precipices. In exactly the same way, if I thoroughly believe that to tell a lie is to put in operation natural forces whose reaction on me will be pain, I refrain from telling lies.

Of course, a man must not be truthful because he is afraid of pain if he tells a lie; he must be truthful, because truth is his ideal, and the more true we are to life and to fact, the more true we are to ourselves.

When we have the conception that the precepts of morality are precepts of natural

law, there is a quicker response to morality. In theory, Buddhist lands should be ideal lands of moral life ; but if in practice they are not so very much better than non-Buddhist countries, it is simply due to the fact that Buddhists have not yet awakened to the priceless value of the teachings which the Lord Buddha gave them.

Such is the inherent nature of the Dhamma, that practically every man, who adheres to the teachings of science, whether he is Hindu or Christian or Zoroastrian or Mussalman, cannot help being in one part of his mind a Buddhist. For his scientific leanings will impel him to consider not only physical nature, but also the invisible nature of men's hearts and minds, from the same scientific standpoint of natural law. This, of course, is pure

Buddhism. Hence we have an interesting psychological fact that there are many Buddhists by practice who are not so by name, all over the world. For true Buddhism is not something in sacred books, but a universal teaching disseminated all over the world where the laws of nature are in operation.

THE INNER RULER IMMORTAL

THESE are the days of Democracy. The world is trying the experiment of aiming at the co-operation of each citizen in the administration of the State. Hitherto the individual has been a dormant factor as a citizen, and the welfare of a country has been administered by those who have considered themselves its natural leaders. But there is a great change to-day, and a nation's leaders hold their position only as representatives of its citizens.

Whether Democracy will be a success or failure, time alone can tell. Hitherto its failures, which are many, have all been due

to the fact that, while State *institutions* have been changed, there has been no change in the conception of the *individual*. For instance, in a typical democratic country like France, a new era began with the French Revolution which proclaimed, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity". But this new era was only new in the method of administration. Before the law, a peasant became the same as a titled nobleman; legal, not social, privilege disappeared. But Republican institutions have practically made no attempt to equalize the peasant and the nobleman, so far as their mental and emotional natures are concerned. The failures in democracy are largely due to the lack of a change in the conception of the individual. If the individual is to be vaguely thought of as merely a

“citizen”, without any clear idea as to what that individual really is, there is going to be little change by giving him a mere vote.

Everything in the future hinges upon the development of the individual. One might say even more truly, everything hinges on the *self-development* of the individual. For no amount of State legislation, with schools and parks and sanitation, is going to bring about such a radical change in the miseries of humanity. We can undoubtedly remove physical handicaps, but if men's hearts and minds are narrow, mere freedom from disease of the body is not going to bring about a Utopia. Hence, therefore, the supreme need is to convince men that they should develop themselves.

It is clear that a great future here lies for Buddhism. For pre-eminently, Buddhism emphasizes self-culture. The Lord Buddha's teaching throughout all His life is that the individual must make himself as ideal as he possibly can. He must not rely upon external aids, because they do not bring out the real spiritual nature within him. The spirit of Buddhism is intensely democratic, because it places before each individual a universal salvation. It further calls out of an individual the hidden forces within him, not by threat of punishment, or by cajoling him with promises of happiness, but simply by asking him to awake and realize the conditions of his inmost being. Each man is "an inner ruler immortal," and this is the supreme value of Buddhism.

If in all countries to-day, men could be taught to rely upon themselves, and to live moral lives because morality is the real habit of their true nature, we should have the true foundation for a real democratic régime. Democracy means the rule by Demos. But Demos is nothing more than the aggregate of individuals, and the opinion of a thousand fools can never balance the judgment of one expert. If the thousand could be made wise, then the nature of Demos changes, and with it the nature of Democracy. There are many forces at work in the world aiming at changing Demos. If only Buddhists would organise themselves to use the force which is within their religion, they would indeed be saviours of mankind.

SELF-RELIANCE

IN most religions there is some mention of God, and their conception is that all evolution is an expression of His Will. Buddhism is almost unique, because nothing is said about a Divine Will as the mainspring of evolutionary forces. It is well known that the Lord Buddha always refused to discuss the problem whether there was a Creator or not. That problem can only be really solved by each individual for himself, as his consciousness expands and he sees all the facts of evolution before him. For the moment, the solution of that problem is *not* a necessity for those of a particular temperament, and that temperament

predominates in Buddhism. Nevertheless, without having any belief in a Logos or a Creator, one can be of the fullest use in evolution.

Fundamentally, the value of an individual's creed is in his serviceability in the human scheme of evolution. I mean by the words "the human scheme of evolution" that a man's usefulness must be judged less from the abstract standpoint of a usefulness towards the Cosmos at large, and more from the direct use he is to his *fellow-men*. It is from this standpoint very largely that the Lord Buddha approached the problem, so far as one can see. He knew from personal realization that within a man's own nature were inexhaustible sources of power and happiness, and that every ideal which we postulate as characteristic of Divinity is indeed

realizable in the heart of man. Hence the Lord's continual appeal for self-reliance, and His warning not to look outside a man's own environment for the means of salvation. Indeed one might state His teaching in an aphorism, that the Divine Will is the Human Will, and that if only a man grasps hold of his Human Will, he will achieve all that others can accomplish by relying on the Divine Will.

The Lord Buddha steadily emphasizes the need of each individual to free himself from the fog of delusion which surrounds him, as he revolves on the wheel of births and deaths. His appeal is to each individual "to work out your salvation with diligence". At first sight, the Buddhist standpoint seems a very selfish one, for all the sufferings of humanity are ignored, and there is no appeal for self-sacrifice

and for altruism. But as a matter of fact, He who made this appeal was Himself the greatest of altruists. How is it that Buddhism can lay so much force on individualism, and yet at the same time be one of the noblest of religions ?

This is because, by the very nature of the Buddhist conception, the more a man relies on himself to gain wisdom direct, the more clearly he sees the problem of life. It is a significant fact that, in the Buddhist tradition, all who dominate their lower natures by the development of will-power become at the same time more and more full of compassion towards those round them. The highest will and the fullest compassion are as object and image. Everyone, therefore, who lives the life proclaimed by the Lord Buddha, and frees

himself from his fetters by the exercise of his own will, in that very process develops an intense compassion which kills out the self-centred standpoint of personal evolution. Hence comes the seeming contradiction in Buddhist ideals, that the man who has sought Nirvana, when he is actually at its threshold, renounces Nirvana, in order to help all his fellow-men to come to that threshold.

The injunction to the Buddhist then to hasten his evolution is not in reality that he may "save his own soul," but rather that he may be one more Saviour of humanity. This deep significance has been lost in the Buddhism of Ceylon, Burma and Siam, but it has been made the central theme of Buddhism in Tibet, China and Japan. It was said by a wise French woman that to understand is to pardon,

That great truth was carried many steps further by the Lord Buddha in the teaching that to understand is to love and save. That is the reason why He, who toiled through hundreds of lives to save humanity, achieved, with his Buddhahood, both Supreme Wisdom and Divinest Compassion. For he, who sees truly, sees with compassion, and to him the realization of his highest will-power is only in order to dedicate it to the service of his fellow-men. The man who has come to a true realization of his own powers cannot ever think of utilizing those powers for the purposes of his own self. For he comes to that most fascinating of mysteries that, when a man realizes his true self, he knows it as the One Self of all that lives.

GAUTAMA THE BUDDHA¹

DURING a sojourn of eighteen years in Western lands, it has been a wonder to me how little an understanding of Buddhism there is, even among learned people. Hundreds of books dealing with Buddhism exist in the chief European languages—texts and translations, essays and manuals; and yet to a Buddhist born in Buddhist traditions, how little do they give the spirit of Buddhism. In spite of the learned writings of western savants, so erudite and so painstaking, there is to a Buddhist but one book that describes his faith as he feels

¹ This article was first published in Italian in 1908, in the philosophical Quarterly *Coenobium*, published in Lugano, Switzerland.

it, and that book is a poem and not a learned professor's masterpiece of research and learning. It is to Edwin Arnold's poem, *The Light of Asia*, that the Buddhist turns as the only book in a western tongue which fittingly describes the Buddhism that he knows, not that of dry sacred scriptures in a dead language, but the real living Buddhism of to-day. Why does a Buddhist turn away impatiently from the magnificent erudition of Germany, England and France, and turn to the work of a poet?

The reason is very simple, and yet so very difficult for a scholar to understand. To the learned professor in the West, Buddhism is a system of philosophy, a religion, a morality, a splendid intellectualism; to the Buddhist reared in a Buddhist land, Buddhism is the

Buddha! How is it possible to describe the influence of His personality among us, how it is He who affects our lives, and not philosophical doctrines? None but those born in the East can even dimly realise how the personality of Gautama the Buddha has stamped itself on the imagination of the people, with what awe, reverence, love and gratitude, men and women regard Him, whose constant assertion was that He was a man, and what all men could become. Imagination has played round His personality with hymns of praise and adoration, trying to realize the sublimity and tenderness of His character.

Hundreds of names try to express the deep emotion. He is the King of Righteousness, the Master, the Blessed One, the Lord of the

World, the Teacher of Gods and men ; daily they speak of Him in Ceylon and Burma as the Omniscient Lord. Yet they believe that He was a man, as are all men, and not one to be worshipped as divine in ways which He did not share with His fellow-men. The greater the wonder, then, at this devotion to a man.

How can one, not a Buddhist, however learned he be, get to the heart of Buddhism without feeling the love and gratitude and reverence which those in Buddhist lands have to the great Master ? Can a Hindu be said to understand what is the love of Christ which made the saints and martyrs, and inspired the art of the Renaissance and the builders of the cathedrals of Europe, by mere perusal of the Gospels ? Can he get to the

spirit, with none to guide him, by merely reading the letter? Can he be said to understand the Christ, if to him the Christ is mere philosopher and theorist, like a Hegel or a Kant?

It is because Edwin Arnold imagines himself a Buddhist, and with his poetic fancy enters into a Buddhist atmosphere, that in his poem the Buddha is the central figure, and so his work is to the Buddhist a satisfactory exposition of Buddhism. Go to Ceylon, that centre of Buddhism, or to Burma, and watch what the religion is. Be present at a temple on a full-moon day and observe what takes place.

Each full-moon day is a festival, and from morn till night the temple life is busy. With the early dawn come the pious men and

women who that day dedicate themselves to devotion and meditation. They are dressed in white, and all ornaments and jewels, the vanities of the world, have been left at home. To them a yellow-robed monk repeats in Pâli the simple vows every Buddhist makes, not to kill, not to take by fraud what belongs to another, not to commit adultery, not to lie, and not to take intoxicants. They repeat the vows after the monk, but the whole ceremony begins with "Reverence to the Master, the Blessed One, the Omniscient Lord". Three times this is said, and then follows, thrice repeated, "I take my refuge in the Buddha, in His Truth, and in His Saints."

It is always with the thought of the Master that every ceremony begins. Then they take fresh flowers and go into the holy of holies,

where is the image of the Master. The image is often cross-legged, in the attitude of ecstasy, or standing up in the attitude of preaching or benediction, or reclining on the right side as was His custom when meditating ; but always the eyes are bent down on the pious devotee. To one side of the image of Gautama, and standing always, is the image of the next Buddha to come, the Bodhisattva Maitreya, but already, in anticipation of His next appearance, called by the people the Buddha Maitreya. The image of Gautama is brown, for He was a Hindu ; this image is white, according to tradition. In His own good time, He will come, when the world is ready for Him, once again to do what all Buddhas have ever done, to dispel ignorance and proclaim the eternal truths.

The flowers are laid on the altar, and in ancient Pâli the devotees repeat the praise and adoration of the Buddha, "perfect in knowledge, who has come the good journey which led to the Buddhahood, the Teacher of Gods and men, who has done that which was to be done, who has crossed to the other shore (Nirvana)"; of His Doctrine, the Truth, the Dhamma, "inviting all comers, to be understood by the wise for themselves"; of His Saints of the Yellow Robe, the ancient "Brotherhood of the Noble Ones," who have entered "the Path".

In the evening the temple is lit with thousands of tiny lights; crowds, dressed in white or in their best of gorgeous silks, gather now to hear the sermon, to reverence the Master, "to take refuge" in Him, "to take the vows",

to offer flowers and burn incense, all moving with eagerness in the tropical moonlight hardly less bright than the white they wear. Then at the appointed time, to the beating of drums, comes the monk, with his escort of devout attendants, to give the discourse. Following immemorial tradition, he begins chanting musically in sonorous Pâli, "Reverence to the Master, the Blessed One, the Omniscient Lord." After him the people repeat this, and then take "the three Refuges" and the five vows.

It is of the life of the Master the yellow-robed monk tells the people, how at such a place and under such circumstances He did this or said that; how in the valley of the Ganges 2,600 years ago the Master, a man, and not a God, lived a perfect life of

compassion, loving His fellow-men as a mother loves her only child, and showed the way to truth and freedom from sorrow. How can anyone think he is competent to talk about Buddhism without feeling all this? He may write much and learnedly about Buddhism as a philosophy, but unless he feels in his heart what the Buddha was, his Buddhism is of the West, and not of the East, where yet broods the spirit of the great Teacher.

In the sixth century before Christ, India was already old. Men talked even then of their ancient philosophers. Reincarnation had been for centuries a fact of the normal consciousness of the Hindu. Karma, the law of "Action," was as the air he breathed, that none questioned nor dreamed of questioning.

Philosophy was the one essential of life. The priestly Brahman, the warrior Kshattriya, the merchant Vaishya, all had for centuries taken part in philosophical speculations. Nor were women backward in contributing their share to the one and all-absorbing topic. Maitreyî dicusses philosophical problems with her husband, the sage Yàjñavalkya ; Gârgî, too, takes part in many a philosophical tournament, though vanquished in the end. Many a woman, like Gârgî, travelled about India, with her particular phase of the then "new thought," and drew many disciples round her.

Children also assert their rights to be heard, and courteously their elders listen to them, for, it may be, the child is an ancient philosopher come back to life. Nachiketas, a boy

—than whom none more famous in India—because “faith entered him,” visits King Yama, the ruler of the spirits of the dead, and questions the King of Death about what he alone could tell, what lay behind all births and deaths, the final end of evolution for the soul.¹ “Young Kavi, the son of Angiras, taught his relatives who were old enough to be his fathers, and, as he excelled them in sacred knowledge, he called them ‘Little Sons’. They, moved with resentment, asked the gods concerning that matter, and the gods, having assembled, answered, ‘The child has addressed you properly. For man destitute of sacred knowledge is indeed a child, and he who teaches him the Veda is his father ; for the sages have always said ‘child’ to an

¹ Katha-Upanishad.

ignorant man, and 'father' to a teacher of the sacred science.' ''¹

Every village and hamlet had its lecture hall, where travelling philosophers were made welcome and entertained, and much all revelled in the keen disputations. All who had any new theory to propound, men and women, old or young, were equally honoured, for on this platform they were equal as seekers of the Truth.

Many of the philosophical schools had nicknames that have come down to us; there were "the hair-splitters," "the eel-wrigglers," "the eternalists, semi-eternalists, extensionists, fortuitous-originationists," "the wanderers," "the Friends," and so on without number. There is hardly a phase of

¹ Manu, II. 151—153.

modern philosophic thought—whether of Bruno, Kant, Nietzsche, or any other philosopher you like to mention—hardly a phase of scepticism and agnosticism, which does not find its prototype in those far off days in India.

Yet all was not well in India at this time, the sixth century B. C. A restlessness was everywhere manifest in the world of thought. Orthodoxy held rigidly bound in incredibly wearisome ritual alike priest, warrior and merchant. Slowly the priestly Brahman was asserting his right, as the intermediary between Gods and men, to be higher than the other two “twice-born” castes; and many a Brahman, having little sanctity but much caste, exercised ruthlessly his priestly power to oppress those beneath him. A rigid

ecclesiasticism held men bound in caste duties and ceremonial, and originality and individual initiative had little chance under the all-powerful routine. It seemed, too, as though the sages of old had canvassed all mysteries, human and divine, and nothing more remained to be said ; and yet there was still something lacking. Philosophy after philosophy was studied, and yet there was felt the need for something, though none knew what. It was the period of travail of the soul of the nation, and the general conditions were not unlike what is found in Western lands in the twentieth century now.

Restless as were men's minds, there was something that was almost more noticeable still. Pitiabie in many ways was the condition of the non-Aryan members of the nation,

the millions who were not "twice-born" like the priest, warrior and merchant. Philosophy and the higher aspects of religion were not for the low-caste millions of men and women. The Veda could not be heard by them, nor were they taught "the Secret," that the human soul was the Divine Soul of the Universe. They could come merely to the outskirts of the sacred knowledge, the priceless possession of the Aryan Hindus. The Vedas would be polluted were they to be known by a low-caste man, a Shudra ; and as to those without any caste at all, the Pariahs, they were thought of as no part of the Hindu community at all. Hence terrible threats of reprisal against any low-caste man who should dare to put himself on an equality with the twice-born. The ears of a Shudra

who listens intentionally when the Veda is being recited are to be filled with molten lead; his tongue is to be cut out if he recite it; his body is to be split in twain if he preserves it in his memory.¹ If he assume a position equal to that of twice-born men, in sitting, in lying down, in conversation or on the road, he is to undergo corporal punishment.²

Such were the threats which held in spiritual and social subjection the men of dark colour. For as non-Aryans, who had not been Aryanized by intermarriage or by religious ceremony, they were "without caste," without Varna. The three higher castes, originally light-complexioned, invaders from beyond the Himalayas, blood-brothers

¹ Quoted in *Vedānta Sūtras*, I. 3, 39, by both Shankarāchārya and Rāmānujāchārya as valid.

² Manu, and other Law Texts.

to the Greeks and Gauls, had gradually become browned by the Indian sun ; but still they were lighter than the conquered aboriginal peoples, and called themselves " the coloured people " ; and the non-Aryan conquered people, dark, almost black, were labelled " without colour," without any Varna or caste at all.

True, a Shudra or an outcaste who chose to resign the world and dedicate himself to the life of an ascetic philosopher, became thereby a member of that chosen band of Sannyasis among whom all were equal and above all castes whatsoever. King and priest would honour such an one for what he was, forgetting what he was born. But the multitudes of the ordinary men and women, who were neither priests nor warriors nor

merchants, whatever their abilities and qualifications might be, were rigidly barred from coming into direct touch with those higher speculations and discussions that relieved the monotony of the routine of daily duty. Yet, as events later showed, these millions of the "once-born" were true Hindus after all, for whom it was more practical to die, knowing God, than to live without knowing Him.

The work which Gautama Buddha did has been called a reformation of Hinduism. Yet there were many others before Him who led the way. Rebellion against the domination of the priestly caste, heterodoxy and heresies of all kinds existed before, and were tolerated as all somehow a part of Hinduism after all. But once again it was the personality of the Buddha which crystallized the aspirations for

freedom of centuries, and gave them the broad platform of a Universal Faith. His reformation has its two aspects, social and religious.

As a social reformer, He was the greatest "socialist" that ever could be, but different from the socialists of to-day in that He levelled up and not down. He, too, proclaimed an equality and a fraternity, but the standard of equality was not the lowest to which all could descend, but the highest to which all must ascend. His standard was the "Brahmana," the upright man of the highest caste, the "gentleman" of those days, noble in conduct, wise and serene. Up to the time of the Buddha, in order to be considered a Brahman, one had to be born into the highest caste; it was Gautama who

proclaimed that every man, even of the lowest caste, or more despised still, of no caste at all, could become a Brahman, by living the perfect life which every man born in the highest caste ought to live. To be a Brahman was a matter of conduct, of an education of the heart, of the training of the character ; it was not a matter of caste at all. All were Brahmans, " who live a holy life, who live an upright life, who live in the way of wisdom, who live a life fulfilling their duties ". " He who is tolerant with the intolerant, mild with the fault-finders, free from passion among the passionate, him I call indeed a Brahman. I do not call a man a Brahman because of his origin or of his mother. He may be called ' Sir ' ; he may be wealthy ; but the

poor who is free from evil qualities, him I called indeed a Brahman.”¹ Again and again He outlines the conduct of the true Brahman. “As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects her son, her only son, so let him cultivate goodwill without measure among all beings. Let him cultivate goodwill without measure toward the whole world, above, below, around, unstinted, unmixed with any feeling of differing or opposing interests. Let a man remain steadfastly in this state of mind all the while he is awake, whether he be standing, sitting or lying down. This state of heart is the best in the world.”² “And he lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of love,

¹ Vâsettha Sutta.

² Metta Sutta, trans. by Rhys Davids.

and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around and everywhere, does he continue to pervade with heart of love, far reaching, grown great and beyond measure." ¹

With such an ideal open to all, Gautama Buddha proclaimed a Socialism which appealed to the highest in men and not to their lower material interests. Caste still exists in India to-day, and even in Buddhist lands ; primitive ethnological instincts gained the day, and caste was stronger than the Buddha Himself. But the ideal He proclaimed of the true Brahman is still the light for nearly a third of the human race.

The religious reformation which Gautama Buddha brought about was not novel to the

¹ Mahâ Sudassana Sutta, trans. by Rhys Davids.

thinkers of His day. Many of His ideas others had proclaimed before Him. But the way He enunciated them, the commanding and tender personality that men saw in Him—these were new. He proclaimed nothing new, but enabled each hearer to see the same old facts for himself from a new dimension. He taught men to put aside speculation, and philosophical discussion, to aim first at an inner change of heart by a perfect life of harmlessness and compassion, to make perfectly calm the stormy sea of man's nature with its surging desires for pleasure or gain, so that when stilled it could reflect like a mirror the deep intuitions within them. Thus could a man be independent of priests and intercessors ; thus alone could a man be a light unto himself and tread " the Path ". " Be

ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth. Look not for refuge to any one besides yourselves.”¹

How the perfect life is to be lived is explained over and over again. First come the “Four Efforts,” 1. To do no fresh evil ; 2. To get rid of evil done ; 3. To produce goodness not previously existing ; 4. To increase goodness already existing. Ten are the meritorious acts which the devotee must perform : 1. Charity ; 2. Observing the precepts ; 3. Meditation ; 4. Giving an opportunity to others to partake in one’s good actions ; 5. Taking delight in the meritorious acts done

¹ Mahâ Parinibbâna Sutta.

by another ; 6. Attending upon others ; 7. Honouring those worthy of honour ; 8. Explaining the doctrine ; 9. Listening to explanations of the doctrine ; 10. Going for refuge to the " Three Treasures "—the Buddha, the Truth, and the Saints. The meditations are five, on love, pity, joy, the causes of impurity and serenity.

Thus living, he enters " the Path " and comes to liberation—Nirvana. Is Nirvana the cessation of all desires, the ending of existence, annihilation of being ? But the books say we can know what Nirvana is in three ways ; first, by personal experience (*pachchakkha siddhi*) ; secondly, indirectly, at second hand, by reasoning and analysis (*anumeyya siddhi*) ; and similarly, thirdly, by faith in the statements of those *who have*

experienced it (*saddheyya siddhi*). Faith in the statements of those who have been “annihilated”?

Can one truly believe that millions of men and women, of normal affections and aspirations, go before the image of Buddha, lay flowers before Him, saying, “I take my refuge in thee,” and believe that He taught the highest aim of existence was annihilation? When at a preaching in a temple, the monk in his discourse mentions merely the word Nirvana, and the audience send up a rapt and ecstatic shout of “Sadhu! Sadhu!” (Amen! Amen!)—can it be they feel Nirvana is annihilation?

What, then, is Nirvana? What did the Buddha Himself say? First, that none could know it at first hand who did not *live* the perfect life. It was not a mere question of

intellectual grasp ; you might speculate about it, without living the life, but you could not know it. There are experiences possible to the human soul which no intellect will ever analyse without proving their impossibility. And yet they *are*. How can one not steeped in the Upanishads, who does not feel what Plato meant by his noumenal World of Ideas, see anything but a negation of existence in Nirvana ? Any life that is super-personal, beyond the understanding of our senses, beyond our limited individuality, at once becomes unreal or a vague un-individual diluted unconscious existence.

Thus speak the Upanishads about the one source of existence, Brahman.

“ There, shines not sun, nor moon and stars, nor do these lightnings shine, much less this fire.

When He shines forth, all things shine after Him ; by Brahman's shining shines all here below." " Nor inwards conscious, nor outwards conscious, nor conscious yet both ways ; nor yet ingathered as to consciousness, nor even conscious nor yet unconscious ; what none can see, nor grasp nor comprehend, void of distinctive mark, unthinkable, past definition, naught but selfconsciousness alone, that ends all going out, peaceful, benign, and secondless—this men think of as Fourth¹ ; He is the Self, 'tis He who must be known.²

Surely all this seems abstraction, mere negation ? But not so to the Hindu mind, which is trying to cognize something beyond the limitations of time, space and causality. The intense reality of THAT, its influence on daily life, is seen in many a verse like

¹ The "fourth state" is Nirvana ; the other three being Jagrat, "waking" (physical and astral) ; Svapna, "sleep," (the mental plane, the heavenly world) ; Sushupti, "deep sleep," (the plane of Buddhi).

² Mundaka and Māndukya Upanishads, trans. by Mead and Chatterji.

this: "Alone within this universe He comes and goes; 'tis He who is the fire, the water He pervadeth. Him and Him only knowing, I cross over death; no other path at all is there to go."

It is the same fact which is taught to Socrates. It is through Beauty and purified Love that the THAT is to be realised. Thus Plato in the Symposium :

For he who hath thus far had intelligence of love, and hath beheld all fair things in order and aright, he drawing near to the end of things lovable shall behold a Being marvellously fair; for whose sake in truth it is that all the previous labours have been undergone: One who is from everlasting, and neither is born nor perisheth, nor can wax nor wane, nor hath change or turning or alteration of foul or fair; nor can that beauty be imagined after the fashion of face or hands or bodily parts and members, nor in any form of speech or knowledge, nor in dwelling in aught but itself; neither in beast nor man nor earth nor heaven nor any

other creature ; but Beauty only and alone and separate and eternal, which, albeit all other fair things partake thereof and grow and perish, itself without change or increase or diminution endures for everlasting.

And finally thus Gautama Buddha speaks of Nirvana, the " fourth " state of consciousness of Hinduism. In Udânam, VIII, 2-3, is an extremely philosophic definition which is as follows :

There is, O Brethren, that Abode, where there is indeed no earth nor water nor air ; nor the world of the Infinity-of-Space, nor the world of the Infinity-of-Intelligence, nor the world of No-Thing-Whatsoever, nor the world of Neither-Cognition-nor-Non-Cognition ; nor this world, nor the world yonder, and neither the sun nor the moon. That I call, O Brethren, neither coming nor going nor standing, nor birth nor death. Without foundation, without origination, beyond thought is That. The destruction of sorrow verily is That.

There is, O Brethren, that which is unborn, unmanifested, uncreate and unconditioned. Unless,

O Brethren, it were not unborn, unmanifested, uncreate and unconditioned, there could not be cognized in this world the coming forth of what is born, manifested, created and conditioned. And inasmuch as there exists what is unborn, unmanifested, uncreate and unconditioned, therefore is cognized the coming forth of what is born, manifested, created and conditioned.

One of the most brilliant of modern historians of Philosophy, Professor Harald Höffding of Copenhagen, thus truly describes a Buddhist's conception of Nirvana.

Nirvana is not a state of pure nothingness. It is a form of existence of which none of the qualities presented in the constant flux of experience can be predicated, and which, therefore, appears as nothingness to us in comparison with the states with which existence has familiarized us. It is deliverance from all needs and sorrows, from hate and passion, from birth and death. It is only to be attained by the highest possible concentration of thought and will. In the mystical concept of God [of the German mystics] as well as in the Buddhist

conception of Nirvana, it is precisely the inexhaustible positivity which bursts through every conceptual form and makes every determination an impossibility.”¹

Whatever Nirvana is, one thing can be predicated of it—it is *not* annihilation. When a monk, after a long discourse on spiritual matters, gives in the end the traditional benediction, “May you all attain Nirvana,” and people say in response “Amen, Amen,” they certainly have no conception of Nirvana as nothingness, a cessation of being. In the words of a Buddhist saint, “Great King, Nirvana is”.

In the article in *Coenobium*, July-August, 1907, dealing with Buddhism, some remarks are made about its relation to Theosophy, calling the later Neo-Buddhism. How far

¹ *Philosophy of Religion*, Sect. 43, and Note 37.

Buddhism is Theosophy may be seen from the fact that certain fundamental ideas of Theosophy are looked upon and denounced as heretical by the Buddhists of Ceylon. If the impression in Europe is that Theosophy is Neo-Buddhism, the impression distinctly in Buddhist lands is that it is Neo-Christianity !

The truer statement is that Theosophy has much in common with the ideas of the early Buddhists, as it has much in common with the ideas and beliefs of every religion in the earliest period of its life. Just as Christians are suspicious of Theosophy because of the idea of Reincarnation, so similarly orthodox Buddhists dislike Theosophy for its theism and its doctrine of the Logos. Similarly, too, there is strenuous opposition on the part of the orthodox Brahmans in India to the

Theosophists, because Theosophy proclaims a common origin of all religions, and will not admit that any one religion has all the truth.

The broadening of the standpoint of truly religious men is inevitable, and the study of Theosophy is merely the outer symbol of an inner fact in the present life of civilized people. All sincere and earnest men, all impartial seekers of truth all over the world, are brought closer together by the dissemination of knowledge, possible now by means of printing and travel. As Science has made a common platform on which meet scientists of all nations, and such a platform was bound to be from the moment a great unifying ideal like Science appeared before the minds of investigators, so is there coming about slowly a platform on which are meeting

together the more spiritual minded in all religions. Whether we call this platform a Philosophy of Religion, Neo-Christianity, Neo-Buddhism, or Theosophy, matters little. It is the fact that is important, and that none who observe the signs of the times can gainsay.

BACK TO THE LORD !

THE science of Comparative Religion has progressed sufficiently for us to gain a general idea of what happens to a religion from its origin to its end. Since human nature is the same throughout the world, and religion is but an expression of that nature, we know what happens to each religion as time progresses. Briefly, there are three stages. The first is of enthusiasm, the second of elaboration, and the third of ossification and decay.

The first stage of enthusiasm is naturally due to the commanding personality of the Founder of the Religion. To all who listen to Him, the marvel is less in what He says,

and more that He should say it. For He looks to them as one of themselves, in outward garb, and yet He shows such a penetrating vision into the hearts of men. He tears the veil of unreality, and shows life and things as they are. And all this is done with such authority and tremendous force of character, that all are impressed, and those who respond to His teaching become His disciples. They pledge themselves to Him and go forth to disseminate His message. In the first stage of enthusiasm, there is a link between the disciple and his Master, and in the consciousness of the religious man of the day it is the personality of the Teacher that is supreme in all his thought and feeling.

After a few generations, when the Teacher is removed from our daily life by legend, and

even His disciples are a memory, His followers pay less attention to their Teacher as having lived a life, and more attention to His teaching as a system of theology or philosophy. This is the stage of elaboration. Men with acute minds then take up fragments of the great teaching and build systems upon it. They write commentaries, and elucidate what, to their minds, the Teacher meant to say.

It is at this stage that theological schools and colleges come into being, and slowly there arises a conception that there are aspects of religious life which are separate from the ordinary life of daily duty. When priests and monks shut themselves up in monasteries and colleges, a separation begins between the religious world and the secular, and men begin to content themselves with

some religious duties only, and not with all. They think that, encumbered as they are with their daily duties, all the high achievements of religion are not for them. So they place the complete fulfilment of them either in a heaven to come, or in lives to come. But this is never the vision of the disciple, when he lives with his Master, in the first stage of enthusiasm.

The third stage is of ossification, when all kinds of minor doctrines are erected by commentators and theologians into rigid formula, and religion becomes far more the obedience to the dictates of a church, and less the living by a Gospel. There follows soon upon this stage the inevitable decay of spirituality in the people professing the religion.

There is not a single religion to-day which is not at this third stage of ossification. This is the day when the "letter killeth". It is the hardest thing, in every religion to-day, for a man of keen spiritual longings to get away from the obstacles in his way imposed by theologies and traditions. When he desires to go direct to the teaching of his Master, the church with its priests comes forward and says, "You cannot understand the Master—except in the light of what we say." Most enthusiasts fight on for a while, and then collapse under the weight of tradition and orthodoxy. It is indeed a case, as Christ said, where "many are called, but few are chosen".

The decay in spirituality in every religion is due to the fact that men have turned from

life to doctrine. They have put the Great Teacher on a pedestal, and think that His life is so far removed from their own that it is utter presumption ever to try to imitate Him. Yet in the first stage of enthusiasm every follower tried to imitate the Master. Religion consisted then in just that, and in nothing less. While they revered Him with utmost devotion, they dared to *imitate* Him, however humbly.

Indeed in the first stage of religion, what rouses the spirit of sacrifice and dedication is the never-ending insistence by the Master that *all* can achieve even as He has achieved. We know how, throughout His Life, the Lord Buddha always emphasized that He did not stand apart from men, but was only their forerunner. It is the same with Christ, who

says, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect". The ideal given to the disciple is superhuman, but it is that call to be superhuman which is the very essence of the teaching of the Master. The greatness of the Master lies in the fact that He lifts us, in His vision of us, to where He stands, and that He does indeed call on us to be like Him, and that His call gives us mystically an assurance that we shall succeed. So St. Paul, following the teaching given to him by his Master, calls upon the Christian disciple to dare to live a life of perfection "till Christ be born in you," till each Christian attains to the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ". Who does not come across the immemorial tradition in Buddhist lands, how it is within the power of every soul, if he so

wills, to be a Buddha and a Saviour of the world?

What we lack in Buddhist lands to-day is the power of the Lord Buddha in our daily lives. Certainly we go to temples and offer praise; but we do not dare to imitate Him. If in all His life there was never one word of harshness, never a frown of hostility, it was to show that we can become like Him. But we think that all that is utterly impossible for us, instead of feeling that it *is* possible, though we fail again and again. We have no realization to-day that He lived a perfect life, only in order that He might be a pattern to us all. We have placed Him apart from us. We accept the small code of ethics given to us by theology, instead of striving to live the great code given by the Master Himself.

If Buddhism is ever again to be a strong influence in Buddhist lands, without considering its possible influence in the world, it must only be by Buddhists definitely *going back* to the Lord Buddha. It matters little even if the Pitakas themselves are put aside by us, if we can come to the Lord Buddha Himself. It is not His traditional teaching that is so supremely important as Himself. There is no way of coming to Him, except by trying to live as He lived.

Is it an impossible ideal to put before men in the year 1948, that they should try to live in their daily lives as the Lord Buddha lived six centuries before Christ ? Yet Buddhism, if it presents a lesser ideal, is not the Buddhism of the Lord Buddha.

What a wonderful epoch begins in the life of the Buddhist when he brings the Lord into

his daily life, as a Friend and Teacher who lives with him, in the home, in the town, who is watching him as he works in the shop, in the field, or in the office! This is indeed Buddhism, not the offering of flowers before the altar of the Lord.

THE MYSTICISM OF BUDDHISM

WHEN one reads works by Western scholars on Buddhism, it is impossible to escape the idea that there is no Mysticism in Buddhism. These scholars, whose critical scholarship no one can question, have very largely made of Buddhism a fascinating intellectualism. But while what they say is true, it is only half the truth. For there is in Buddhism a very powerful mystical element, which any one who is born in a Buddhist land knows from tradition, if not by direct experience.

The whole background of Buddhism is that of Hinduism. This is most natural, since the Lord Buddha never said anything to suggest

to His hearers that He was making a fundamental departure in religion. He accepted whatever was true in the Hindu beliefs of the time, but He supplemented them with His own unique standpoint. In His first sermon, which pointed out the "Middle Way," there is no challenge of the fundamentals of Hinduism. The Lord Buddha merely proclaimed with authority the eternal truths which had once existed in India, but which had been forgotten.

So in His philosophy, there is full acceptance of the existence of invisible worlds and their inhabitants. The idea of Devas is an integral part of the Lord Buddha's conception of the evolutionary process. Indeed by ancient tradition, He is recognized as not only the great Teacher of all humanity, but

also of all the Devas of the Deva worlds. The fundamental change of attitude to them which He inculcated was that mankind was not to pray to the Devas, as was habitual in the Hinduism of His day. The Devas themselves are under the great Law of Causation, and while superior to mankind in possessing certain powers and in being full of bliss, they are themselves yet like men inasmuch as they too have to achieve Liberation. While then the Devas are to be honoured and respected, and their co-operation invited on certain occasions, they are not to be worshipped or prayed to, as Divinities whose aid is indispensable for man's spiritual freedom.

The very conception of Buddhahood has in it a profound mysticism. For the Lord

Buddha is not a unique personality, but one of a line of Buddhas. It is the fundamental belief in Buddhism that Humanity has always within its bosom potential Leaders to show it the "Way". These Teachers, the Buddhas, come one by one as the world progresses. In Buddhist annals, twenty-seven Buddhas before the Lord Gautama are mentioned. So integral a part of the daily religion is this idea, of a succession of Buddhas, that in most temples, in the Shrine Room or Holy of Holies, there is not only the image of the Lord Buddha, but there are also painted on the walls the images of the twenty-seven past Buddhas ; not infrequently does one also find the image of the future Buddha, the Buddha Maitreya, as He is called. All brought up in Buddhist tradition know

that one who is to achieve Buddhahood must formally take the "vow" to become a Buddha in the presence of a Buddha living on earth, and that this vow was taken æons ago by the Lord Gautama Buddha, when He lived as a man, Sumedha by name, during the Buddhahood of the fourth Buddha, Dipankara. This incident is often depicted in temple frescoes.

All the Buddhas, says Buddhist tradition, are alike in having a similar life history. In His last life, when each Bodhisattva or Buddha-to-be "attains Buddhahood," He is born with the "seven gems," thus described by Edwin Arnold :

The Chakra-ratna, disc divine ; the gem ;
 The Horse, the Aswa-ratna, that proud steed
 Which tramps the clouds ; a snow-white
 elephant,

The Hasti-ratna, born to bear his King ;
The crafty Minister, the General
Unconquered, and the wife of peerless grace,
The Istri-ratna, lovelier than the Dawn.

Each Buddha attains Buddhahood under a Bodhi Tree ; each has His " body servant," like Ânanda, the cousin of the Lord Buddha, who ministered to Him with such intense devotion. A Buddha is not a mere philosopher ; He is a spiritual authority over men and Gods. All nature obeys Him, and miraculous powers are constantly manifested by Him as He does His work. He has the " divine eye and ear," that is, He sees what happens at a distance, and hears what is inaudible to ordinary ears, and all the Deva worlds are open to his gaze. Such is His wonderful power that, when He speaks, all men, whatever their race, hear Him

speak each in his own tongue. So wonderful too is His mystical power that His presence is detected three miles away from where He is, because within a radius of three miles the aura of a Buddha flashes its six colours—blue, yellow, rose, white and orange, and the sixth colour made up of radiations in sequence of the five principal colours.

Since all the Buddhas are of one never-ending line of Teachers, the teaching or Dhamma which They give is always the same. There is but one Truth concerning existence from the beginning of time to its end, and since a Buddha discovers this, what He teaches is in essence the same as that taught by all His predecessors. And when a Buddha is on earth, there gathers round Him a band of his disciples, the Sangha. It is noteworthy that

the Buddha Gautama has carefully defined who make the Sangha or Brotherhood of His Dispensation. It is not every monk who takes the ten vows and puts on the yellow robe who is a member of the Sangha, but only that monk who "enters upon the stream," and is thenceforward swiftly hastening stage by stage to final Liberation.

The Trinity of Buddhism—the Buddha, His Dhamma, and His Order or Brotherhood—is a very powerful element in the life of every Buddhist. For he is constantly "taking refuge" in these Three Gems, as they are called. In some mystical way, this act of "taking refuge" is supposed to help him, though it is never forgotten that the Lord Buddha has passed into Nirvana. It is very curious that, while the idea that the Lord Buddha has

entered Nirvana is perfectly clear, yet there is a belief in, as it were, a "living Presence". For each day, in each monastery, before the monks take their mid-day meal, some of the food is put in a bowl and taken to the Holy of Holies, and there placed before the Image. No one imagines that the Lord Buddha requires anything whatsoever of mankind's offerings. But the act is done not only as one of gratitude and homage, but also dimly with a sense of a mystical presence in the Buddhist Dispensation of "the Buddhas of the past, of the present and of the future".

This is one of the profound elements of mysticism in the religion. The recognition exists that there are Buddhas in the making in the life to-day of humanity. In some mysterious way, the Buddha or Buddhas present on earth,

at any epoch, with those yet to come, and with the Buddhas who have been, make one chain. So we find the worshipper saying :

Ye cha Buddhâ atîtâ cha
Ye cha Buddhâ anâgatâ
Pachchuppannâ cha ye Buddhâ
Aham vandâmi sabbadâ

which translated means: "I worship always the Buddhas who have been, the Buddhas who are to be, and the Buddhas who are now." This same conception of Buddhahood as an eternal fact, and of the power of the Buddhas as inseparable from the life of humanity, is carried on into the conception of the Dhamma. For the Dhamma of the day too is recognized as being one with the Dhamma of the past and the Dhamma of the future. So the second

verse of the chant is : “ I worship always the Dhamma as it has been, as it is, and as it is to be.” The third verse of the chant carries out the same thought of an eternal Sangha, and says : “ I worship always the Brotherhood that has been, the Brotherhood that is, and the Brotherhood as it will be.” These three Eternals are considered as fundamental truths of nature.

Now comes a striking conception derived from them, that any truth concerning them is a source of power. After asserting that the Lord Buddha is of such and such a nature, possesses such powers, the devotee will make an affirmation : “ By the power of this Truth, may so and so be healed.” A similar affirmation is made with regard to the Dhamma ; after stating the intrinsic value of its teachings,

the devotee then affirms : " By the power of this Truth, may such and such a thing be done." The Sangha too is a source of affirmation, and the devotee stating what are the attributes of the Sangha affirms, " By the power of this Truth, may I perform these spiritual actions." The power of a truth dwells not only in the Three Gems ; in any spiritual fact there resides a power which can be drawn upon. An instance is quoted of a saint who cured his mother by recalling to mind all his meritorious deeds, and then saying, " By the power of this truth, may my mother be healed."

A further element of mysticism is that which relates to the Ordination of a layman as a monk. In theory, any one can take by himself the ten vows which make a monk.

But in practice, there is a most striking ceremonial about it. This is all the more strange, because the whole trend of Buddhism is steadily against ceremonial. Yet, since certain actions must be done in a stately and ritual way, ceremonial does, to a small extent, have a part in Buddhism. The first stage in becoming a monk is to be a Novice. There is a symbolic renunciation of the world by the candidate. After the Novice has kept the vows and lived in the monastery for ten or more years, then comes the full Ordination, which makes him a Bhikkhu, or a member of the yellow-robed Brotherhood, having authority to expound the Law.

It is this ceremony of Ordination, or Upasampadâ as it is termed in Pâli, which has a strong element of mysticism. The

ceremony can only take place in a spot which has certain marked characteristics. The place of Ordination must be bounded by water on all sides, and the gathering assembled to ordain has to be "tyled" in "due and antient" form, before the Devas whose presence is necessary will do their part in the ceremony. What practically amounts to a Chapter of Theras or Elders is opened according to the ancient ritual, and then the Novice is made a Bhikkhu. No layman must be present to witness the ceremony.

So strongly is it recognized that Ordination is not a casual act, but a sacramental act, that the tradition goes that, after all Buddhist monks were slain or scattered owing to invasion centuries ago in Ceylon, it was necessary to send candidates to Siam in order to

be ordained Bhikkhus. For there was no one in Ceylon who had the power to ordain. It is this mystical element in Ordination which is to-day preventing the revival in Ceylon of the ancient Order of Nuns. The Sisterhood disappeared centuries ago ; and while there are candidates now for the Sisterhood, Ordination by the Theras is incomplete, till the candidate has been disrobed by a fully ordained Sister and re clothed by her in the garments of the Buddhist nun. For, no monk can by his vows touch a woman, and there is no nun, fully ordained, to perform the investiture. There are in Burma thousands of shaven-headed nuns, and a few exist in Ceylon too. These are but Lay-Sisters, since they lack the full Ordination.

A large book will be required to describe all the mystical elements in Buddhism, even in such an unmystical Buddhist tradition as that of Ceylon, Burma and Siam. If one were to add to it the complex mysticisms of the Buddhism of Tibet, then, Buddhism will be understood in its integrity as being not a mere intellectualism, but a vitally mystical religion. The heart of Buddhism is ever throbbing with truths as to myriads of invisible facts, which, however little known to the consciousness here below, yet exist nevertheless as a part of the World-Order. Buddhism persists as a world religion just because in addition to its sun-lit philosophy it has a sacramentalism and a mysticism as well. Though the Lord Buddha has "entered Nirvana," His "living Presence" is in His religion still.

THE WAY IN BUDDHISM

THE salient fact, which distinguishes Buddhism from all the other Religions, is the constant assertion that a man must work out the problem of salvation for himself and by himself. No external aids, however beneficent and powerful, even the aid of a Supreme Deity, is considered as essential. Indeed the remarkable revolution brought about in Hinduism by the Lord Buddha consists in the new conception which He gave of what is Dharma. Up to His time, Dharma, which can be described as Duty, or Law, or the "Plan of God," was considered as a statement of the Will of a Creator or Law-giver. Men obeyed the dictates of Dharma,

because an obligation was expected of them towards the command of the law-giver ; and the breaking of Dharma or Duty implied sin, the wilful contrariness to his will. The conception of Dharma as the Will of God or of Gods was inevitable in Hinduism. But the Lord Buddha stated Dharma as an inner principle in the nature of man. This Dharma is innate in all things. If a man breaks this Law of his being, suffering comes to him *naturally*, in exactly the same way as it comes when he breaks a law of physics or chemistry. The idea of punishment or reward, of wrath or pardon, was removed by Him from the concept of Righteousness.

It is when Dharma (in Pâli Dhamma) in a man's nature is inactive that suffering pursues him all his days. Therefore, said the Lord,

the first thing that a man must do is to discover and understand the Dhamma, the Law of his being. Now in Hinduism, the constant emphasis is that no man can gain Liberation, unless he performs certain prescribed ritual actions first, and then dedicates himself to Yoga. In theory, in Hinduism, a person can find Liberation by his own solitary searching ; in practice, a very rigid ecclesiasticism imposes on him many fetters. The power of this ecclesiasticism was swept aside by the Lord Buddha, by proclaiming that the Dhamma, which gives power to an individual to free himself, resides in a man's own heart and mind.

How is the seeker after righteousness to find that strength to work out his destiny which, to the devotee of a Deity, comes from prayer and worship ? This, according

to Lord Buddha, arises in a man's own heart the moment that he rights himself, and makes his nature uncontaminated. Each of us is steeped in three great groups of forces—of Lobha, lust and greed ; Dosa, anger and resentment ; Moha, infatuation and illusion. These three fundamental elements, which are components of the world without, are not considered as the creation of man's own mind, but rather as the invisible atmosphere which surrounds him. The forces of Lobha, Dosa and Moha are innate in the universe, by the very nature of its self-manifestation. The Theosophist labels them “ elemental essence,” and since man has various bodies or vehicles, the life of each vehicle is the energy of the elemental essence of its Plane or Loka. Every individual, therefore,

who is born, gets surrounded by these three "urges". Their powerful forces are sweeping a man hither and thither on the various Lokas or Planes of existence. So long as a man is swept off his feet by them, he is a slave and bound to the Law of Caustion.

It is these three which cause in man's heart and mind the great "Thirst" (Trishna). This "thirst" is always intensifying the I-ness; it feeds all the cravings which are really no part of a man's self, but are imposed on him from without by lust, anger and illusion, which are perfectly harmless phenomena of the universe, when they do not involve man in their toils. They are all the time giving a twist or warp to man's nature.

Therefore the first and fundamental work of the Buddhist must be to stand apart from

these three great urges of Lobha, Dosa and Moha. They are continually creating in his nature "complexes," as the modern psychoanalyst calls them. But just as, in order to be properly cured of many a mental malady, the psychoanalyst brings a complex from the "Unconscious" to the conscious mind, and then as it were evaporates or explodes it, so is it with regard to the freedom to be achieved by each man for himself. The moment he stands apart, and will not be influenced by the cosmic streams of Prakriti or material nature, his vision becomes clear. To "kill out the self" is essential, because what man considers his "self" or ego is the product of these cosmic forces which play round him.

This process of freedom from the self is to be brought about, according to Buddhism, by

stilling the cravings of a man's nature. Just as, when a storm subsides, the waves of a lake disappear, and then the smooth surface can reflect the round shape of the moon, so the moment a man's nature is stilled, all cravings disappear, and he begins to see the path for himself, and to feel the power to achieve his liberation. By the observance of the strictest Sila, or right conduct, the first step is made towards the stilling of the inner nature. Slowly the inward man is trained to detach himself from all the outside impacts of the senses ; for they bring out a reaction from within of an increasing desire for more sensation, and so the weary round goes on of craving and realization, followed by craving once more.

But the stilling of the inner nature is only half the work. There must not only be the

negative work of abstinence from craving, there must also be the positive work of a great radiation of compassion. This element of compassion or pity is inseparable from the path to Liberation. So long as a man is bent upon the liberation of his self, and withdraws all his senses from sense objects as a tortoise withdraws his limbs, the work of liberation is not achieved. For, in addition to the negative work of killing out the desire for life, there must be the positive work of a great selfless love which streams from one's nature, hoping for no reward, planning for no heaven, but radiating pity because pity is of the inmost nature of the man who has killed out desire.

When the two forces of dispassion and compassion unite in the character, then the work of liberation goes swiftly to its

culmination. This liberation must not be desired in any personal sense, but indeed most impersonally. The Buddhist must seek Nirvana not because he is tired of life, but because it is slavish to be bound, and it is right to be free, and because, by his liberation, he enables the world to come one step nearer to freedom.

THE GREAT SOUL HERESY

Aniccâ vata sankhâra
Uppâda vaya dhammino
Uppajitvâ nirujjhanti
Tesam vûpasamo sukho

*Impermament are all conditioned things ;
Their nature 'tis to rise and pass away ;
They come to pass, they cease.
Happy the mastery of them and the peace.*

THIS verse is perhaps the most famous verse in Buddhism. It is chanted at every Buddhist funeral, as the supreme consolation. It strikes that keynote of Impermanence, which is so characteristic of all Buddhist thought. Very broadly speaking, the Buddhist is taught to be on his guard, as against a source of misery, against everything which is *sankhata*,

or "aggregated". This principle applies even to his own existence as an individual entity. For, so long as he is a composite being, that, is an individual who is aggregated, made up of parts, there is no permanence in him.

According to the Lord Buddha, that which a man thinks of as his "self" is composed of five "bundles" of attributes called *Skandhas*. The individual is composed of :

1. Rûpa—material qualities.
2. Vedanâ—feelings.
3. Sannâ—perceptions or recognitions.
4. Sankhârâ—elements of consciousness or "mentals",
5. Vinnâna—cognitions.

The *skandhas* can I think be described less technically, and for practical purposes more intelligibly, as 1. Body-contacts, 2. Feelings,

3. Awarenesses, 4. Mental generalisations, 5. Intuitions.

When we analyse our self, we quickly begin to see that it is compounded of these five groups of attributes. We must then realize that there is no permanent self within us, because our self is composite, and being a mosaic cannot have any element of permanence. Our "self" is a flux. To believe otherwise is to come under the dire sway of the great "soul heresy".

So firmly does Buddhism uphold as fatal the usual conception that the individual, as he knows himself, is a permanent immortal soul, that the first of the ten great "fetters," which have to be cast off on the path to liberation, is Sakkâyaditthi, or in Sanskrit, "Svakâyadrishti," which can be translated as

“This-my-body-heresy”. Until this heresy is got rid of, it is not possible for any one, who may have entered on the Path, to come to its “fruition”, and go to the next stage.

What lies at the back of this strong opposition to the idea that man has a permanent individuality? That must be discovered by each individual for himself. But its discovery is not by sitting at a table and pouring over texts or even by mere meditation. There is only one way to discover what is the “heresy of the self,” and that is by a life of intense *suffering*, combined with very great and daring *action*. No one who is incapable of both these things, need expect to solve this mystery.

One value of suffering is that it teaches a man what he is not. As we normally live our

daily life, we little realize how we are *sankhata*, "compounded," of ideas and sentiments, which are given to us by our birth, but make no real part of ourselves. What man is there who, though quite unaware of it, is not influenced by the race into which he is born? The nature of the body in which he is, the type of subtle influences which permeate his racial brain, these create a certain atmosphere round him through which he normally looks at life. Quite unconsciously to himself, he is subtly influenced by race instincts. Similarly, but to a smaller extent, he is swayed by the class or caste tradition in which he is reared from his childhood. This too creates a distorting atmosphere round him, till his judgment becomes warped by subtle prejudices of which he is

not aware. What need to describe the powerful warp and twist which a man's religion gives him, as he surveys the world?

Hard are the lessons a man must learn in order to realize that "there is no religion higher than Truth," and that to be just to men, he must look at them apart from all his predispositions. Much acute suffering must each man endure before he realizes that the most intimate thing in him, his temperament itself, is not he, but only that lens through which he looks at life. The ideas, the beliefs, the subtle instincts which we call our "soul" are slowly discovered by those who have suffered greatly as elements extraneous to themselves. Only when a man has been utterly humiliated by his ambitions, or stripped of all that he holds dear, does he begin to

know what it is really to think clearly, feel dispassionately, and gain a vision of things as they are.

If an individual had but one life in which to achieve this purity of vision, the work could never be accomplished. But, life after life, in the process of reaping his karma, he discovers that he is not his race, nor class, nor religion nor temperament. Suffering is one way of teaching us to know what we are not.

Similar too is the result of activity, for there is a subtle element in action, especially in all activity which results from the transformation of a man's character. When a man is awake to the problem of his neighbour and of the world, one of his great joys is to transform his temperament so as to make it affect

his environment. There comes to him then a great zest in life in all that he utters, in what he does, and in all the changes which he brings about by the forcefulness of his personality. A joy in creation is one of the keenest which a man knows, as he shakes himself free from self-centredness and begins to live wholeheartedly with men.

But, as he creates, giving of himself in ways of religion, art, statecraft or social service, there come to him times of realization when what he considers his own personal self is of little value, and indeed hinders the great work of creation to which he is committed. All who are creators in the highest realms of human culture know, that their greatest contributions are not the result of their own individual creative activities. Whose then ?

They cannot tell. But they do know that the finest things which they have created have been created *through* them, and that every element of their personal self which they permitted to be involved in their work but spoilt the beauty of those gifts which came whence they know not.

Every great reformer knows, especially when his work necessitates a fight against a world of tradition, that the supreme things which he accomplishes are not accomplished by his "self". It is far more as if a Mighty Action or a mighty impersonal Work of Creation were suddenly using him as an instrument to create through him. So his greatest joy in the work done is to know that he did not do it, but that it was somehow done.

As one lives and suffers, toils and creates, and in all ways purifies the character, till shred after shred of personal longing disappears, a realization grows that the self, that thing to which one clings, is no longer necessary for living. This experience can never be described in words, and can but at best be suggested by crude similes. Suppose we draw a circle on the surface of a sphere. The circle may think itself to be a complete entity, something which has an individuality of its own. Yet to us who, from outside the two-dimensions of the circle, can look at its structure, the circle is nothing more than the temporary result of an indentation of the surface of a three-dimensional sphere. The circle exists only so long as the torn surface of the sphere is not healed. But

the moment the sphere reverts to its complete nature, without a blemish, the circle disappears. In so disappearing, the circle is not lost or extinguished, for the simple reason that what was called the circle was merely a temporary effect, a phenomenon which persisted only so long as the sphere was incomplete. Men think in terms of their little circles and not in terms of the sphere. This is the cause of all their suffering.

Take another simile. We were taught in school in our first lessons in chemistry that for combustion oxygen was necessary. Experiments were made to show us that a candle would not burn, unless air came to it from outside it. We were told that light was a form of combustion, and a candle

would burn only so long as we gave it the oxygen which it needed. But we can look now at an electrical bulb which shines brilliantly, and we find that the greater the vacuum inside the bulb, the better the light, for there is a form of light which is not the result of combustion.

How may one realize that to be without one's soul is not annihilation, but something far otherwise? It cannot be realized* by reading books, or by listening to discourses. It can only be realized by an intense life of action, and by undergoing inner and outer suffering, which is borne with a serene dispassion. The sole thing which those, who know this experience, can testify to is that not only is life possible without *skandhas* or aggregates, but that it is the only life

which is *inevitable* as a man finds out the truth about himself. To act, and yet not be the doer ; to love, and yet not be the lover ; to create with brain and imagination, and yet not be the creator ; these and other unrealities are facts to him who knows—*ya evam veda*, “who knoweth thus”. To all others, they are but words, shadows, phantasies. But there is an existence, when the aggregated soul vanishes, whose joy is indescribable. Out of darkness comes a blinding light, out of sorrow an universal joy to that soul who will die to its “self,” and cross to the “other shore.”



