

THE RELIGION
OF
THE BUDDHA
AND
Its Relation to Upanisadic Thought

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M.A.

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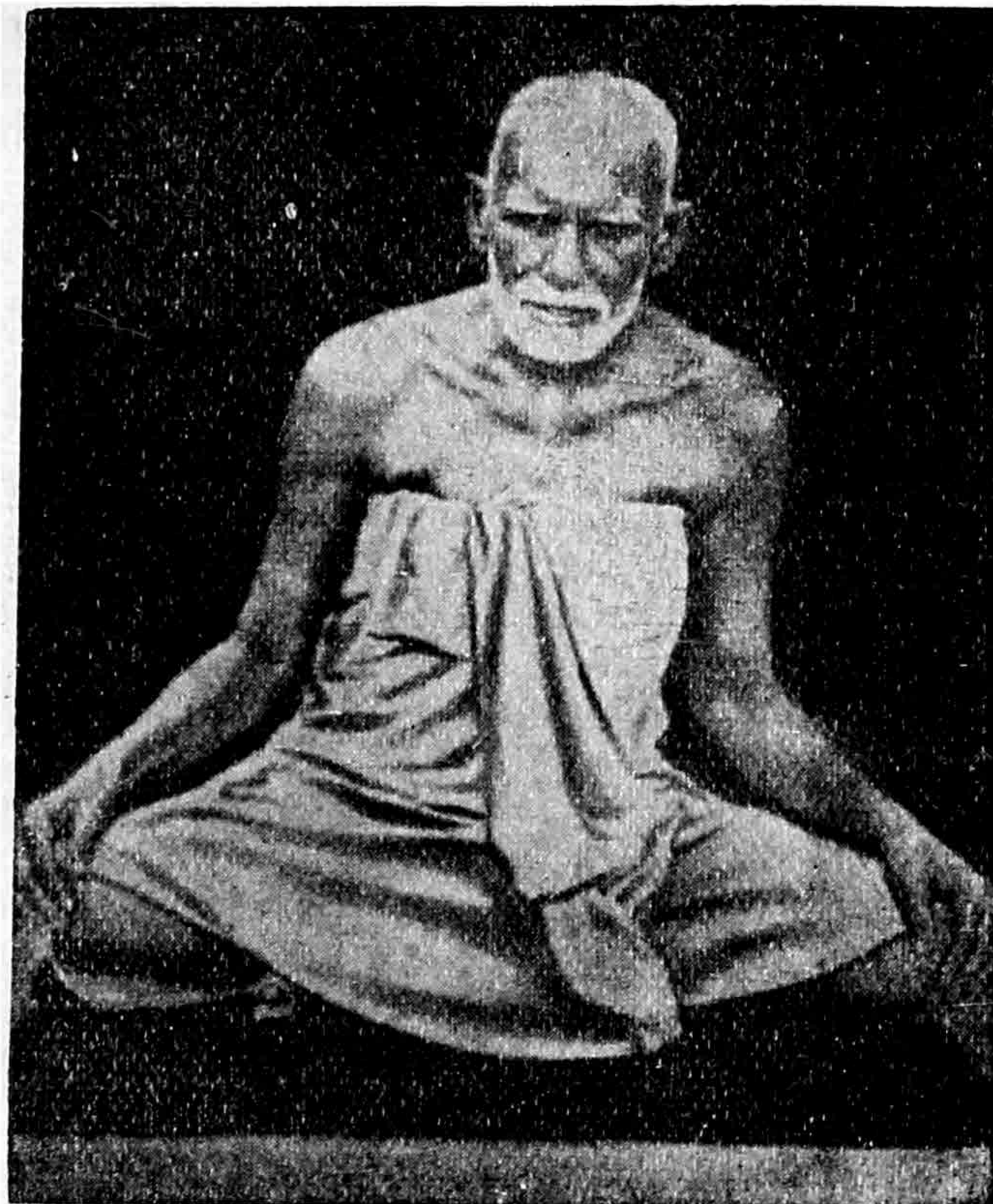
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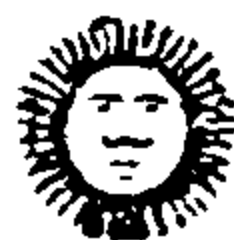
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By

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The General Editor's Note

1. Svāmī Sarvadānandajī

Svāmī Sarvadānandjī to whose sacred memory the present series is dedicated, was born in 1859 at Bari Basi, a small town near Hoshiarpur in the Panjāb. He came of a family that had already produced a number of learned scholars and able physicians. He received his school-education at Hariāna, being another small town at some distance from his birth-place. From his early life, he felt great interest in religious observances and a strong urge for associating himself with saintly persons, devoted to religion. He married, but his household life was cut short, soon after, by the death of his wife. He did not marry a second time, for the keen interest in the pursuit of religion led him, instead, to leave his hearth and home for good so that he might be able to move about freely in search of true saints who could guide him on that path. It was in the course of those wanderings that he once came into contact with a follower of Svāmī Dayānandjī and had from him the gift of a copy of *Satyārtha-Prakāśa* (Light of Truth), being the masterpiece from the pen of the said master mind. Through the study of that classic, he was moved to the innermost recesses of his heart and; under that inspiration, set out on a lifelong mission of selfless service of humanity. For full forty-six years, right up to the end of his earthly sojourn which he reached in 1942, he moved on from place to place, preaching,

Preface

This book is the outcome of a desire to understand the place of Buddhism in the ever-flowing stream of Indian culture. This great religious thought is sometimes looked upon as a new creation on the part of its founder, unconnected with the phases of culture which preceded it or were contemporary with it. It does not seem to be a correct view. To the writer of this book, the religion of the Buddha appears to embody in itself the main elements of the religious thought of the Upanishads, which of course received a new shape at the hands of this master architect. While the elements in the main Upanishadic thought and in Buddhism are mostly the same, they are combined, in the two systems, in different ways resulting in different synthetic wholes. We find, for instance, in both the systems the following common elements : suffering and evil, Trishṇā (desire) and Avidyā (ignorance) as the cause of suffering, Moksha or Nirvāṇa, which means liberation from ignorance and so from evil and suffering, the theory of karma and transmigration, the doctrine of the ego as a transient and composite entity, concentration and meditation, the attitude of non-attachment to the things of the world, and the importance of moral life. According to the Upanishads, the self or the ego on attaining Moksha is absorbed into Brahman, the ultimate reality, but in the original doctrine of the Buddha there is no clear and unequivocal reference to ultimate reality, though it came to be recognised in]

later Mahāyānā Buddhism. It would, however, be wrong to assert that the Buddha had no conception of ultimate reality. In the first place, the Buddha nowhere denied the ultimate reality and, secondly, there are isolated utterances, here and there, which make it probable that he had such a conception in his mind, though he did not think it necessary to make it the topic of his discourses and allow it thereby to become a subject of never-ending controversy. He left it to his disciples to realise it in their own experience after they had successfully traversed the eight-fold path of spiritual enlightenment. Nirvāṇa in Buddhism is not a negative conception. It is a condition of profound wisdom and blissfulness, more or less akin to the realisation of Brahman in the Upanishads. In later Buddhist schools, the connection of Buddhism to the Upanishads and later Hindu religious thought in this respect becomes unmistakably obvious.

If the author succeeds in convincing his readers of the correctness of the position adopted in the book, namely that there is an intimate relation between Buddhism and the preceding and subsequent Hindu thought, he will be amply repaid for the time and energy spent over the writing of the book. While Buddhism owes its main ideas to Hinduism as it existed before the time of the Buddha, Hinduism itself assimilated many features from Buddhism in later times. It is necessary to have a clear idea of Buddhism in order to understand Hinduism as it took shape in subsequent centuries.

There is no dearth of material on Buddhism.

Almost all the important works of various Buddhist schools are now available in English, thanks to the life-long labours of many eminent scholars of the East and the West. My concern in writing this book is to present, as accurately as possible, on the basis of materials thus made accessible to us, the main doctrines of Buddhism in its earlier and later forms, but above all to indicate the interaction of Hinduism and Buddhism upon each other. This idea will be found appearing throughout the book at various places.

I am indebted to Shri Dev Datt Shastri and to Shri Ram Nath B.A., LL.B. for minutely going through the proofs and for carefully seeing the book through the press. Shri Dev Datt took upon himself the task of ensuring the correctness of Sanskrit and Pali words and of their rendering into English equivalents. Shri Ram Nath, an erudite scholar of English, went through the text very carefully, and suggested a number of improvements. I am grateful to both these gentlemen for the deep interest they have taken in the printing of the book.

I also want to express my deep thanks to Shri Vishva Bandhu, General Editor of the Sarvadanand Universal Series for kindly accepting this book for publication in that series. His constant encouragement throughout has been an important factor in the writing and completion of this work.

The Hindus, as a rule, do not look upon Buddhism as an essential part of the culture to which they themselves belong. I shall feel happy, if this book dispels this misunderstanding and brings home to its

6. Social and Political Conditions	...	51
(a) Social Conditions—Caste System	...	51
(b) Condition of Women	...	53
(c) Education	...	54
(d) Political Conditions	...	56
(e) Economic Conditions	...	57

PART I

59—198

CHAPTER I—A Short Biography of Gautama Buddha	...	59

CHAPTER II—The Teachings of the Buddha	...	83
(i) The Existence of Suffering	...	84
(ii) The Doctrine of Impermanence	...	89
(iii) Is there a Soul	...	96
(iv) Buddha and Ultimate Reality	...	101

CHAPTER III—The Second Noble Truth :	
Suffering has a Cause	... 106
Rebirth and Karman	... 116

CHAPTER IV—The Third Noble Truth :	
(i) The Cessation of Suffering—Nirvāṇa	... 120
(ii) The Status of an Arhat after Death	... 130

CHAPTER V—The Fourth Noble Truth : The	
Way to Salvation	... 136
(1) Samyag-Dṛṣṭi	... 138
(2) Samyak-Sankalpa	... 138
(3) Samyak-Vāk	... 140
(4) Samyak-Karmānta	... 140
(5) Samyag-Ajīva	... 141
(6) Samyag-Vyāyāma	... 141

(7) Samyag-Smṛti	... 142
(8) Samyak-Samādhi	... 145
CHAPTER VI— Bodhi Pakṣya-Dharmah or Qualities and Practices Constituting Enlightenment	... 149
CHAPTER VII— The Sangha or Order of Monks : A Call to Renunciation	... 156
CHAPTER VIII— Buddhism and the Upanishads :	... 165
(i) Karman, Transmigration and Soul	... 173
(ii) Nirvāṇa or Mokṣha	... 181
(iii) The Supreme Reality	... 185
(iv) Path to Spiritual Attainment	... 192
(v) General Remarks	... 195
PART II	199—274
CHAPTER I— Development of Buddhism : Mahāyāna	... 199
(i) Mahāyāna as Religion	... 202
Evolution in the Idea of Buddhahood	... 202
(ii) The Boddhi-Sattva Ideal	... 209
(iii) Bodhi-Sattvas as Objects of Worship	... 212
CHAPTER II— Pāramitās (Spiritual and Moral Perfections)	... 218
CHAPTER III— Mahāyāna Philosophy	... 241
Mādhyamika Philosophy	... 244
Vijnānavāda or Yogāchāra School	... 251
Mahāyāna Conception of Nirvāṇa	... 256
CHAPTER IV— Miracle, Superstition and Mythology in Buddhism	... 262

PART III	275—303
CHAPTER I—Buddhism Travels Abroad	... 275
CHAPTER II--Buddhism Disappears from India	... 282
(i) Causes of the Decline of Buddhism	... 283
(ii) The Influence of Buddhism on Hinduism	... 287
(iii) Revival of Buddhism in India	... 291
(iv) Buddhism in the West	... 292
CHAPTER III—Concluding Remarks	... 294
Future Prospects.	... 301

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Equivalence Table of Roman-Sanskrit Alphabet

$a = \text{अ}$	$\bar{a} = \text{आ}$	$i = \text{इ}$	$\bar{i} = \text{ई}$
$u = \text{उ}$	$\bar{u} = \text{ऊ}$	$r = \text{ऋ}$	$\bar{r} = \text{ॠ}$
$e = \text{ए}$	$ai = \text{ऐ}$	$o = \text{ओ}$	$au = \text{औ}$
	$am = \text{अं}$	$ah = \text{अः}$	

$k = \text{क्}$	$kh = \text{ख्}$	$g = \text{ग्}$	$gh = \text{घ्}$	$\dot{n} = \text{ङ्}$
$c = \text{च्}$	$ch = \text{छ्}$	$j = \text{ज्}$	$jh = \text{झ्}$	$\ddot{n} = \text{ञ्}$
$\dot{t} = \text{ट्}$	$\dot{th} = \text{ठ्}$	$\dot{d} = \text{ड्}$	$\dot{dh} = \text{ढ्}$	$\dot{n} = \text{ण्}$
$t = \text{त्}$	$th = \text{थ्}$	$d = \text{द्}$	$dh = \text{ध्}$	$n = \text{न्}$
$p = \text{प्}$	$ph = \text{फ्}$	$b = \text{ब्}$	$bh = \text{भ्}$	$m = \text{म्}$
$y = \text{य्}$	$r = \text{र्}$	$l = \text{ल्}$	$v = \text{व्}$	
$\acute{s} = \text{श्}$	$\acute{s}$ (or) $sh = \text{ष्}$	$s = \text{स्}$	$h = \text{ह्}$	
$k\acute{s} = \text{क्ष्}$	$tr = \text{त्र्}$	$j\ddot{n} = \text{ज्ञ्}$		

INTRODUCTION

Religious and Philosophical beliefs in pre-Buddhist India

Gautama Buddha is the founder of one of the great living religions of the world. Twenty-five hundred years ago, his spiritual message was hailed with delight in the country of his birth, and in succeeding centuries, it found a ready welcome in many countries outside India. Even at the present time Buddhism has the largest following of all the living religions. About one fifth of the total population of the world today profess the Buddhist faith.

Every great religious teacher is, in many ways, the product of his age. He does not altogether make a fresh start but derives his clue mostly from the ideas and practices of the people among whom he is born. When these ideas and practices get out of tune with the needs of the time, and there is a general unrest all around, some one amongst the people, the greatest of them of all, gives a vocal expression to the general state of dissatisfaction and suggests a better way of facing the problems of life. The ideas and teachings of Buddha arose out of the already existing thought systems and religious practices, both as a protest against some of them and as a fulfilment of some of the others.

Before we take up the teachings of the Buddha himself, we shall give a brief account of the various

religious beliefs and practices prevalent in India, when Gautama Buddha appeared on the scene.

1. Brāhmanical Religion

Long before the Buddha began his teachings, the simple religion of the Vedic Āryans had practically given place to sacrificial religion as depicted in the Brāhmaṇas. In the Ṛgveda, sacrifices were the material accompaniments of prayer and were simple in character. In the Brāhmaṇas they became all in all. The Brāhmaṇas are the sacrificial treatises and deal, at length, with the intricate art of sacrifice. It was believed that by means of sacrifice properly performed, the sacrificer could achieve all objectives of life in this world as well as in the next. As one reads the Brāhmaṇas, one gets the impression, as Sir Elliot says, that "The one occupation of all Indians was the offering of sacrifices."¹ It is really strange that the intellect of India should have, for a number of centuries, remained occupied with the task of elaborating the sacrificial cult at the cost of true religion. Possibly, the idea arose from the Ṛgvedic conception that Prajāpati created the world by means of sacrifice. Later on, it was declared that even the gods attained to their positions of eminence with the help of sacrifice. To the writers of the Brāhmaṇas, "the sacrifice if only rigidly carried out in each of its details, is a source of all profit and advantage. The gods.....are utterly unable to counteract the effects of such a sacrifice. Indeed, they owe their supremacy, their

1. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I, p. 64.

own positions in heaven to sacrifices which they themselves had carried out to older gods.”¹ Sacrifice was supposed to generate a mysterious force, which could be used for good as well as for evil purpose, and the secret of releasing this force lay in the hands of trained Brāhmanas. Hence, with the growth of the cult of sacrifice, the importance of priestly class also grew, till it came to be ranked along with the gods. So great was the potency of the use of words or formulæ used in the sacrificial performance that even the gods were powerless against them. The priests thus arrogated to themselves the power to compel the gods to bestow all sorts of blessings on the sacrificer.

It must be conceded that the priestly class had a deep faith in the magical effects of sacrifices. It would be totally wrong to assert that it was a conscious, deliberate fraud which the priests practised upon the gullible and simple-minded masses. As a matter of fact, the Brāhmaṇa priest submitted himself to a very rigorous discipline in order to train himself for the sacrificial cult. “The days of the Brāhmaṇa passed in solemn routine. He passed his youth in hearing and learning the sacred word, for a true Brāhmaṇa is he alone who has heard. And if he acquired the reputation of having heard, his adult life passed in teaching in the village or out in the solitude of the forests in the consecrated circle,.....or he was to be found at the place of sacrifice, performing for himself and for others the sacred office which, with its countless observances, demanded the most painful

1. Rhys Davids : *Buddhist India*, p. 241.

minuteness and the most laborious proficiency, or he fulfilled the life-long duty of Brahma-offering, that is the daily prayer from the sacred Vedas. Well might riches flow into his hands by the remuneration for the sacrifice which kings and nobles gave to the Brāhmaṇas, but he passed as most worthy, who lived not by offerings of others, but by the gleanings of the field, which he gathered or by alms for which he had not asked or such charity as he had not begged as a favour. Still, living even as a beggar he looked on himself as exalted above earthly potentates and subjects, made of other stuff than they."¹ It is obvious the Brāhmaṇa priest took his duties most seriously and performed them in a spirit of faith and devotion.

While in the sacrifices of Ṛgvedic times, there were made simple offerings of cakes, soma juice, clarified butter, and other similarly harmless things, in the Brāhmaṇical times, animal sacrifices became the order of the day. A large number of animals were sometimes slaughtered at a single sacrifice. When, Gautama Buddha began his work, these bloody sacrifices were looked upon as a part of the Brāhmaṇical religion. We are told in the Saṃyutta Nikāya (III, 1, 9) that at one time a great sacrifice was arranged for Prasenaṇjit, the Kośala king. More than five hundred animals of all descriptions were brought for sacrifice. When Buddha came to know of it, he made a strong protest against the slaughter of those animals. At his protest, it is said, the lives of all the animals were spared.

1. H. Oldenberg : *Buddha*, pp. 13-14.

Brāhmanical religion was not the only religion, prevalent at that time. There were many other cults and schools of thought, as we shall presently see. But the cult of sacrifice had an important place in the religious life of the people, specially of the well-to-do people.

2. Religion of the masses

The religion of the masses consisted in the worship of various gods and goddesses. Even in the hey-day of R̥gvedic culture, there existed, side by side with the Āryan gods, the gods of the non-Āryans. When the non-Āryan tribes were assimilated into the Āryan fold in a large number, they brought with them their peculiar beliefs and modes of worship. In course of time, many of these beliefs and practices were incorporated into the Āryan religion. The process of selective assimilation of non-Āryan beliefs had been adopted at a very early age. "Most of the population" says E. W. Hopkins, "were not Āryan at all, but all, who could call themselves so, had invented pedigrees which Āryanised them. At the same time they clung to their own gods. So these gods were Brāhmanised and called forms of this or that great recognised god, a process still going on in India."¹ Whenever the need arises, a god of a wild tribe is declared to be a form of Shiva or of Vishnu and brought within the pale of Hindu pantheon.

When Buddhism arose in the fifth century, many non-Vedic beliefs and practices were current both among the Āryans and the non-Āryans. We have

1. *The History of Religions*, p. 179.

evidence of this phase of religious development in the Epics as well as in early Buddhist works. In fact, when the Brāhmaṇa priests found that some of the non-Vedic cults and beliefs had become popular, they gave formal recognition to them and placed them side by side with the old Vedic cult and mode of worship. These new cults and beliefs which are, as a rule, absent in Vedic literature, find expression in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. There is no doubt that these beliefs and practices in course of time, became a part and parcel of the religious life of the population of India.

This conclusion is further corroborated by the Buddhist scriptures. We are given, in some of them, a long list of various animistic practices current in those times. We find all sorts of superstitious practices such as palmistry, divination, interpretation of dreams, repetition of charms, oblation to gods, the practice of laying ghosts, faith in astrology, incantations, oracles and charms to cause virility or impotence and many other similar practices.¹

In the Mahā-Samaya *Suttan* in the Dīgha-Nikāya, it is stated that all the gods of the people came to pay respects to Siddhārtha at Kapilavastu. Among these gods are mentioned the spirits of the earth and the mountains, the guardians of the four quarters, the Gandarvas and the Nāgas, the Garuḍas and a large number of non-Vedic gods. We have also evidence in the Jātaka tales of the wide-spread cult of the worship of the tree spirits or gods.² In Manu (III,88), we are told of the custom of presenting offerings to the tree spirits.

1. *Buddhist India*, pp. 215-17.

• 2. *Jātakas* 5, 109, 307, 474 etc.

There is not the slightest doubt that the worship of tree spirits and serpents was "an important part of the religion of the peoples of Northern India at the time of the rise of Buddha."¹

We also find from these texts, that though a number of Vedic gods such as Indra, Prajāpati, Brahman, Agni, Varuṇa, Vāyu etc. were still worshipped, their power was declining and giving way to the worship of various other gods and deities. Many old Vedic gods such as Dyaus, Pūṣan, the Ādityas, the Aśvins and the Maruts, Aditi and Diti and Urvaśī had gone out of the picture altogether.

It thus becomes clear that while the Brāhmanical religion of sacrifices was still prevalent, specially among the well-to-do classes, the common people had taken to various new cults and practices, and to the worship of gods and goddesses new as well as old.

3. Religious thought of the Upaniṣads

As the importance of sacrifices gradually dwindled in the eyes of the people, a new trend of thought appeared on the horizon. This new trend is found in the well-known treatises known as the Upanishads. They are the source from which all later systems of thought in Indian Philosophy and religion have mostly taken their rise.

The Upaniṣads are spoken of as dealing with jñāna or knowledge. But the word jñāna, as used in the Upaniṣads, does not mean mere intellectual

1. *Buddhist India*, p. 32.

activity. Besides philosophical thinking on the highest truth, it includes the practice of self-control and mental concentration, of non-attachment and purity, all of them culminating in the experience of self-realization. "The knowledge of Brahman" says Sir Charles Elliot, "is not an understanding of pantheistic doctrines such as may be obtained by reading the sacred books of the East in an easy chair, but a realization (in all senses) of personal identity with the universal spirit, in the light of which all material attachments and fetters fall away."¹

The early Upaniṣads are attached to the Brāhmaṇas. It thus appears that even the exponents of ritualism realised the value of jñāna as "The crown of the life of ceremonial observances." In course of time, the path of jñāna came to be regarded as a superior road to the attainment of ultimate goal of life.

It is not easy to give any exact date to the Upaniṣads. It is generally supposed that the earlier ones were composed as early as 1000 B. C. or even earlier. The composition of later Upaniṣads went on up to the time of the rise of Buddhism. Some of them were written even in the post-Buddhist period. We may say that the end of the Upaniṣadic period and the beginning of the period of Buddhism fall together, so that one is imperceptibly carried over into the other. There is, therefore, no doubt that when Buddha began his work, the teachings of Upaniṣads were actively pursued by many learned

1. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I, p. 75.

people of the land. Rhys Davids says, "This very able and beautiful monistic philosophy was the dominant factor in Indian thought when Gautama the Buddha appeared. Many centuries afterwards it was elaborated and systematized, more especially by Śankara, into the Vedantic Philosophy now quite supreme in India."¹ The doctrines of the Upaniṣads, taught as they were, by many preceptors in the time of Gautama Buddha, must have undoubtedly exercised a great influence upon him in the final shaping of his thought.

The Upaniṣads do not all propound the same view. We find here a large number of thinkers giving divergent views on most important philosophical problems. We meet philosophers like Budila, Raikava and Sārkarākṣya, who held, respectively, the views that water, air and space were the ultimate substances from which the various phenomena took their rise. We come across thinkers interested in psychological, metaphysical or mystical problems. It is no wonder, therefore, if, later on, the Upaniṣads became the fountain head from which the various systematic philosophies of India got their inspiration. Yet in spite of the variety of views which we come across in the Upaniṣads, we should not forget that the dominant thought which finds expression in the Upaniṣads and which forms their central core as it were, is the monistic point of view, according to which the ultimate reality is spiritual in nature and gives rise to the various

1. *Buddhism*, Cornell University Lectures, p. 23.

phenomena of the world. Whenever reference is made to the main doctrine of the Upaniṣads, it is always the spiritual doctrine of the Universal Self, which is meant. We shall, therefore, in the following account confine ourselves to those ideas of the Upaniṣads which are generally regarded as their main teachings.

We are giving here a somewhat detailed account of the basic doctrines of the Upaniṣads, because in our view, the teachings of the Buddha bear a close resemblance to those of the Upaniṣads. It would, therefore, be useful if we acquaint ourselves with these teachings before we take up the exposition of the great religion of Gautama Buddha.

Evil and Suffering—The Upaniṣads recognised the existence of evil and suffering on the empirical level. We are told in one of the Upaniṣads; “As the sun, the eye of the universe, remains far off and unaffected by all sickness that meets the eye, so also the one, the Ātma, who dwells in all creatures, remains afar and untouched by the sorrows of the world.” The Upaniṣadic thinkers were, undoubtedly, keenly alive to the presence of sorrow and suffering in the world. They also knew that the mere possession of earthly pleasures cannot relieve a man of unhappiness and the ultimate fear of death. We meet in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad the cry of humanity put into the mouth of Naciketas; namely that every thing in the world is full of suffering and sorrow, very much reminiscent of what the Buddha later declared as the first noble truth of his philosophy of life. “That life is suffering and the objects of the world only lures and torments,” says Prof.

Radhakrishnan, "seemed to be the heritage from the Upaniṣads. Witness the question of Naciketas to, Yama, "Shall we be happy with maidens, houses, wealth and royalty when we see thee O Death. The wheel of rebirth is an elaboration of the doctrine of suffering."¹

In the Kāṭha-Upaniṣad, the god of Death tries to dissuade Naciketas from asking questions about life and death by offering all sorts of temptations to him ; but Naciketas persists in his desire to know the great secret of life after death and does not allow himself to be led astray by the pleasures of the world. He says addressing the god of Death,

"The whole life swiftly passes away ;
 . Song and dance, chariot and horse, thine are they.
 Riches cannot give contentment to man ;
 What is wealth to us when we have beheld thee ?
 For we shall live as long as thou biddest us ;
 Still this wish alone is that which I choose."²

There is also a reference in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad (IV, 4, 22) to the state of mind of men, who becoming disgusted with the world, give up the desire for progeny and wealth and take to the life of a Sannyāsin.

We also come across the same pessimistic view of life in the Maitrāyaṇī-Upaniṣad. (I,2,7) "What is the

1. *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 277.

2. H. Oldenberg : *Buddha*, p. 56.

good of satisfying one's desires in a body which is subject to lust, greed, fear, depression, envy, deprivation of the desired object and union with the undesired one, hunger, thirst, old age, death, disease and grief. Truly, all this world is doomed to destruction. The flies, the gnats, the grass and the trees will perish. The great oceans dry up, the mountains crumble and the very gods have to give up their positions" (I 2-7) Such is the depressing outlook of phenomenal existence described in the Maitrāyaṇī-Upaniṣad.

The Upaniṣads do not shut their eyes to the fact of evil and suffering ; but they do not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by it into a mood of pessimism. Even while recognizing that the path to salvation is like the sharp edge of a razor, difficult to cross and hard to tread, they are sure that, by dint of persistent endeavour, man can cross this ocean of Samsāra i.e. the world of good and evil, and reach the blessed region of spiritual realisation. When we succeed in displacing egoistic consciousness by god-consciousness, evil and suffering find their natural termination. The road to perfection lies through pain and suffering.

Tṛṣṇā and Avidyā, the cause of suffering—As long as the soul remains bound within the limits of impermanence in the world of joys and sorrows, it is said to be in a state of bondage. It is held in captivity by the various attractions of the world. In Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad, (IV, 55) kāma or desire is described as the first stage of voluntary action (IV. 5.5.). From desire, volition takes its rise and from volition the action itself. As long as desire is there, action, both good

and bad, will follow sooner or later. Craving is the root cause of sufferings and joys, which the jīva experiences in various lives. The joys are transient in nature and so they too fail to give an abiding satisfaction to the individual soul. Desire is, therefore, the main factor in determining the individual's course of life. "Man's nature depends on desire. As his desires, so his aspiration; as his aspiration so is the course of action; whatever be the course of action which he pursues, he passes to a corresponding state of being." It is only when a person sets himself free from every desire of the heart excepting the desire for the attainment of Ātman, that he can attain the highest end of life. "When the desires," says Brhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad (IV, 4, 7,) "which cling to the human heart are abandoned, then the mortal man becomes the immortal and attains Brahman here below."

The craving for temporal joys is said to be the result of Avidyā or ignorance. It is Avidyā which is ultimately responsible for the miseries or sorrows of life. On account of ignorance, the soul forgets its divine origin and identifies itself with body and mind. It is only when the bonds of Avidyā are loosened that one is delivered from the sorrows of mundane existence and acquires his divine status.

The path of realisation prescribed in the Upaniṣads is known as jñāna or knowledge. The underlying idea is that when ignorance gives place to jñāna and the individual jīva dissociates himself from the not-self, he gets rid of all limitations and attains to Brahmic consciousness. All the Indian philosophies are agreed

in regarding ignorance as the cause of suffering, the great enemy to be fought against and conquered. "According to the Vedāntists, an insight into the pregnant fact, that the soul of man is identical with the Great Soul, the first cause of all, will lead to a union between the God and the soul, which has only been temporarily interrupted and obscured by the conditions of individuality."¹

Mokṣa or freedom from suffering—A finite self is subject to all kinds of sorrows and limitations, but he can, according to the Upaniṣads, get rid of them and attain to Mokṣa or liberation. This it can do, when it has made itself completely free of all craving and ignorance. An enlightened sage is characterised by a state of bliss and uninterrupted joy. In the Taittirīya and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads, we are told that the bliss enjoyed by an enlightened soul is a million times greater than the happiness of the happiest man of the world.

The liberated sage becomes immortal in the truest sense. The state of immortality is different from that of mere survival after death. It consists in constant and eternal dwelling in Brahman and in permanent release from the process of transmigration. "In the world of Brahman, the liberated soul remains happily for ever, for him there is no coming back in the world, no transmigration Bṛh. (VI, 2, 15). The same idea is repeated in Chānd. (VIII, 6, 5). Muṇḍ. (III, 2-6) Ait. (II, 4, 6) and in a number of other Upaniṣads as well.

1. Ruys Davids : *Buddhism*, p. 163.

The liberated soul is, again and again, described as living and having its being in the Brahman. We are told in the Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣads. (II, 7) "He sees the immortal Brahman in front and behind, to the right and to the left, above and below." '*Brahmaiva bhavati*,' that he becomes one with Brāhman, is the theme of many a passage in the Upaniṣads. After liberation, the soul becomes one with the whole and gets rid of egoistic isolation. "He becomes merged in the supreme, undecaying Ātman." Muṇḍ; (III, 2,7). In the Taitirīya-Upaniṣad, (III, 10, 6) we come across a rapturous outburst of a sage who has realized his oneness with every thing in the universe. "I am the food, I am the food-eater. I am the subject, I am the object. I am the two together. I am the first-born, and the destroyer of the world as well. I am the light. I am the centre of the world and of immortal gods." The same sense of complete unity transcending all dualism is conveyed in the teachings of Yājñavalkya in the Brhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad, "When there is duality of existence, one can see the other but when every thing has turned into his Ātman, by whom shall he be seen and whom shall he see....."

Such a man, who abolishes the sense of egoism in this life and achieves perfection, is known as jīvan-mukta. In some other places, the enlightened soul is described as having become like Brahman, and so there is a little vagueness in the Upaniṣads as regards the ultimate fate of the soul after the attainment of liberation; that is, whether it is completely absorbed into Brahman or retains some sort of self-feeling even after emancipation.

Professor Radhakrishnan has beautifully summed the whole position in the following manner. "The self is not annihilated any more than the ray of the sun is lost in the sun, the wave of the sea in the ocean, the notes of music in the one harmony. The song of the individual is not lost in the music of the world march. It is the same for ever and yet not the same."¹

The Doctrine of Transmigration—We find in the Upaniṣads, for the first time in the history of Indian Culture, a clear enunciation of the doctrine of transmigration. The Upaniṣadic thinkers perceived that it was not possible for a human being to win deliverance from sin and imperfection in a single lifetime, and so they propounded the theory of a succession of births and deaths in order to enable the soul to throw off all its imperfections and achieve salvation. This is a recurrent thought in the Upaniṣads and later Hindu religious literature.

The Upaniṣads try to explain the mechanism of re-birth in different ways. According to the Bṛhad-āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad (IV.4,4). "As the sculptor takes the material from a statue and chisels therefrom another newer and fairer form, so this soul also, after it has taken leave of the body and rid itself from ignorance, creates for itself another newer, fairer form whether of the fathers, or the Gandharvas, or the gods or Prajāpati, of Brahmā or other beings." At another place in the same Upaniṣad, Yājñavalkya explains the mechanism thus ; "As a caterpillar which has wriggled

1. *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 241.

to the top of a blade of grass, draws itself over to a new blade, so the man after he has put aside his body draws himself over to a new existence.”¹ It is believed that the departing soul takes the vital and mental powers of its previous existence into its new existence. “As the soul moves out, life moves after it, and as the life moves, the various vital airs depart after it. Him follow his knowledge, his works and his former consciousness.”² We are told that he “Whose works have been good becomes good, he whose works have been evil becomes evil. By holy works he becomes holy, by sinful works sinful. It is for this reason, that they say that a person merely consists of desires; as is his desire, so is his will, as his will, so is his work, and as is his work, so is his evolution.”³ The question of mechanism, however, is not as important as the fact, that belief in transmigration was practically shared by all the Upaniṣadic thinkers. They found, in this belief, the possibility of explaining the existence of suffering, and the apparent inequality between man and man. This was done with the help of the law of karman, according to which the actual position of the individual in the world is determined by his own deeds in the previous lives as well as in the present one.

The Law of Karman: It is the counter-part of the natural law of causation in the moral domain. The doctrine of karman brings the whole life of man under the dominion of law. There is no room for any caprice or arbitrary fiat of an irresponsible deity. The successive lives of the soul are bound together by the chain

1. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, IV, 4. 3.

2. *Ibid.*, IV, 4. 2.

3. *Ibid.*, IV, 4. 5.

of the law of karman. "What a man sows that shall he reap, not in this earth-life only, but also in the lives that are yet to be." All actions voluntarily performed by us necessarily lead to certain consequences in the form of alterations in character as well as changes in the external world. Action may take effect in this life or in a successive life. Rebirth is a necessary part of the law of karman. A person is liable to be born again and again till the effects of his previous karmans have been exhausted and the seeds of fresh karmans have ceased to be sown.

In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (IV,5,5), four stages are distinguished in every voluntary action. The stage of desire (*kāma*), the stage of volition, (*kratu*), the stage of action (*kārya*); and lastly the more or less abiding change wrought in the individual's constitution and character (*karman*). The most important stage is the stage of volition or intention, and even after that if the action is not performed on account of certain unforeseen obstructions, the effect of the volition on character remains. "A man becomes good by performing good deeds and bad by bad deeds" so says the *Bṛha.-Upa.* in III, 2, 13. The same idea is repeated in *Chān.-Upa.* III, 14, 1 and III, 1, 10. The law of karman is universally accepted by all thinkers of the *Upaniṣads*.

We are told in the *Īśa-Upaniṣad*, that there is no other way to get rid of the effects of karman except by the performance of the karman itself. So it is selfish karmans that lead to rebirth, and not karman performed in a disinterested manner. The doctrine of karman presupposes freedom of will on the part of

man. It is wrong to equate it with fatalism as some writers seem inclined to do. According to this doctrine man is the master of his destiny. He fetters himself by himself like a bird by its nest.¹ He is free to shape his destiny in the light of the knowledge that he possesses.

Jīva or Self—Different views are advanced in regard to the Upaniṣadic doctrine of Ātman. According to the Advaita view, Ātman and Brahman are identical. The Dvaita view accepts the plurality of finite selves along with Brahman. The holders of Viśiṣṭa-Advaita are of the opinion, that the souls, though they form an organic part of the body of Brahman, are yet distinct from it. The texts of the Upaniṣads have been interpreted differently to suit the doctrines of different schools of vedāntic thought. If, however, we read these texts apart from their interpretations, we shall find, that leaving some texts here or there, the main position of the Upaniṣads consists in differentiating the ego, which consists of the flow of mental states from the Ātman which illumines the mental states with the light of consciousness. We cannot know the Ātman as an object apart from the conscious states which it illumines, nor yet can we equate it with the mental states themselves. What we call the individual soul is really the ego, composed of the senses, mind, intelligence and life. The Ātman itself, apart from the physical and psychical adjuncts, is identical in all living beings. The conception of an individual soul is the result of avidyā, which regards

1. *Maitrāyani-Upaniṣad*, III 2.

the conscious self manifested in a body, as different from a similar conscious self appearing in another physical body. As a matter of fact, the same universal self manifests itself in all places, the individual self being only its reflection under the limitations of space and time.

Individuality means separate existence. The claim to such an existence is due to the ego-sense. The ego regards itself as conscious. As a matter of fact, this consciousness is not its own, but a minute fraction of the consciousness which is the Universal Self, just as the light of the image of the sun, seen in a mirror, is "a minute fraction of the sun's own light." There are clear statements in the Upaniṣads declaring the absence of difference in the Ultimate Reality. "There is no multiplicity at all here."¹ We are told further in the same Upaniṣad (IV, 2), that the person who regards difference to be real will meet death again and again. "He that imagines any difference between himself and the Ultimate Reality, shall subject himself to fear."² The author of the Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad (III, 8), very clearly points out that "As the rivers flowing into the ocean become one with it, losing name and form; so does the illumined one, losing name and form become one with the Supreme Being."

When it is declared in the Chāndogya-Upaniṣad "Thou art that," it is not meant that the ego is the Brahman. The correct meaning of this saying is that "Thou" or the real self in a person, is not the body, the

1. *Kaṭha-Upa.* IV, 2.

2. *Taitt-Upa.* II, 7, 1.

senses, the mind, the prāṇa or the ego, but the light of the Universal Consciousness which shines everywhere.

It is, of course, declared in many places that the individual self passes through innumerable lives till it is eventually reabsorbed into the universal soul, just as the waters of the rivers rise from the oceans to be reabsorbed into it once again. In the Maitrāyaṇī-Upaniṣad, a distinction is made between the noumenal self and the phenomenal self. It is the latter, which is influenced by good and bad actions, and goes through the process of transmigration.

The phenomenal self or the Jīva-Ātman proper is subject to the limitations of the waking state and the dreaming state. When it goes into deep sleep, it throws off its various adjuncts excepting the causal body or ānandamaya koṣa. In deep sleep, it enjoys a stage of bliss. There is also a fourth stage in which the Jīva attains complete union with Brahman, having thrown off all limitations. This is the real self and the real self is the Universal Self present in all beings.

In the Upaniṣads, the Ātman or Puruṣa is distinguished from the mind and the senses. They are its instruments, rather than its intrinsic parts. When it is declared that the Jīva migrates to another body, what is meant is that the whole baggage of mind, senses and vital powers, vivified by the light of Universal Consciousness, finds a new vehicle for further evolution or refinement. The Ātman or the Ultimate Reality in itself is pure consciousness and cannot be broken up into separate permanent consciousness-blocks, to inhabit different bodies. It is only the

5576

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upādhis such as mind, buddhi etc. which cause the phenomenon of plurality of souls.

Ultimate Reality—In our every-day experience, we are confined to phenomena both physical and mental. These phenomena are constantly changing. There is no stability about them and so it is not possible to ascribe to any of them, the attribute of permanence or absolute existence. The question which generally occurs to a thinking person is, whether these phenomena are all in all or there is some underlying reality out of which they take their rise, and in which they ultimately disappear. Phenomena are necessarily infected with relativity and, therefore, cannot claim any absolute status of their own.

The Upaniṣads accept the existence of Ultimate Reality, and speak of it as Brahman, when looked at objectively, and Ātman, when looked at from the subjective point of view. The creation of the world, in all its forms, by Brahman is taught in all the Upaniṣads. "In the beginning Sat (Being) alone existed, one without a second. It expressed a desire to become many, to propagate itself. Thereupon it created heat, from heat was produced water and from water food. Then that being said "I shall now enter all these three with my soul, and give rise to names and forms."¹

Brahman is also regarded as the ruler and preserver of the whole world. He dwells in all beings, though they know it not. He is the Immortal Self of man as well." At the command of the imperishable

1. *Chān.-Upa.* IV, 2, 3.

Brahman, O Gārgī, the sun and the moon are kept in their place ; heaven and hell are kept in their place. At the command of this imperishable Brahman, O Gārgī, the minutes and hours are kept apart, the days and nights, the months and seasons are kept apart. At the command of this imperishable Brahman, the streams run from the mountains, some to the east and some to the west.”¹ In Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad, (II,1, 1) all beings are described as issuing from Brahman and being absorbed into it again. The same idea occurs in Śveta-Upa. (IV, 1) and (IV, 11), where it is said that the whole world rises out of Brahman and goes back into it. Brahman is thus spoken as the fundamental reality on which depend all names and forms for their existence. Whether these names and forms and beings come into being or cease to exist, it makes no difference to Reality itself, which always remains the same. The world of space, time and causality is conditioned by Brahman but Brahman is self-sufficient unto itself and independent of all phenomenal existence.

In some way, which it is beyond the power of man to comprehend, material and living beings are all contained in the Brahman. They emerge out of it and are absorbed into it again. Matter is sometimes described as the śakti or māyā of God. Śakti may be translated as energy or force. All material phenomena, therefore, may be regarded as the manifestations of the śakti or force inherent in God. The individual units of consciousness or Jīvas are spoken of, in the Upaniṣads, as sparks issuing from a big fire.² Potentially

1. *Bṛiha.-Upa.* III, 8, 9.

2. See *Bṛiha.-Upa.* II, 1, 20. and *Muṇḍaka-Upa.* I, 1, 7 and II, 1, 1.

all existents remain merged in the Brahman, but when the energy of Brahman becomes active or kinetic, they become individualised in various forms of manifestations. This dynamic character of divine Śakti is described in the above texts of Upaniṣads.

The other name of the ultimate reality in the Upaniṣads is the Ātman. The Brahman in the man and the Brahman in the sun are the same. As Deussen says, the key to the understanding of the ultimate nature of things, if it can be found anywhere, it is in the innermost self of man. "It was here that for the first time, the original thinkers of the Upaniṣads, to their immortal honour, found it when they recognised our Ātman, our inmost individual being as the Brahman, the inmost being of universal nature and of all her phenomena."¹ In the Chān.-Upa., Uddālaka Āruṇi ends his instruction to his son Śvetaketu with the words "Thou art That" meaning thereby that the real essence of man is identical with the universal self.

As regards the character of Ultimate Reality, we are sometimes simply told that it exists (Tat Sat). At another place it is characterised as Sat-Cit-Ānanda (Existence, Consciousness and Bliss).² According to Bradley "The Perfect means the identity of idea and existence attended also by pleasure."³ This view of the Perfect very much corresponds to the conception of Sat-Cit-Ānanda in the Upaniṣads. The whole trend of the Upaniṣads is to insist that it is beyond the

1. *Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, page 40.

2. *Bṛha. Upa.* III, 7, 23, *Tait.* II, 1, 9.

3. *Appearance and Reality*, p. 244.

power of thought to make any predications about Ultimate Reality. We are told in the Kena-Upaniṣad; "That which cannot be thought by the mind, but that by which the mind is made to think, know that alone to be the Brahman." The senses can only grasp the sense-data and the intellect draws inferences about the objects known to the senses and to the mind. The Brahman, being the ground of all experiences, cannot be known either by the senses or the mind. Whatever concepts may be formed about the ultimate reality are human concepts and are, therefore, hopelessly inadequate. They are useful so far as they fulfil the desire of a devout person to worship the Supreme Being. We meet, for instance, in the Śveta-Up. the idea of a deity with attributes of omnipotence, holiness, omniscience, before whom the worshipper can bow and pour out his fervent prayers. This is the idea of Īśvara or Saṁgha Brahman as distinct from the idea of Nirṁgha Brahman, propounded in numerous places in the Upaniṣads. "For that Ātman for which it is said 'That art Thou' is neither the body nor the individual soul. It is not an object of knowledge but.....it lies on the other side of the experience, invisible, unutterable and unfathomable. That the Brahman cannot be known is again and again affirmed by the Upaniṣads."¹ We are told in the Br̥ha. Up. (III,7,23) "That by whom every thing is known, how could he himself be known? It is impossible to know the knower," and again, "He is the Eternal Seer without Himself being seen, He is the eternal hearer without Himself being

1. Anand Kumar Swamy : *Buddha and Gospel of Buddhism*, p. 202.

heard.....beyond Him there is no seer, beyond Him there is no hearer, beyond Him there is no thinker and beyond Him there is no one who comprehends." The Ultimate Reality thus transcends both the subject and the object and is beyond human comprehension.

In most of the texts, the words Brahman and Ātman are so impersonal that they cannot be replaced by God. "In other passages the conception of the deity is more personal. The universe is often said to have been emitted or breathed forth by Brahman..... by emphasizing the origin and the result of this process separately, we reach the idea of the maker and master of the universe commonly expressed by the word Īśvara, God." (Elliot, Vol. I, page 85)

The Absolute of the Upaniṣads cannot be known by thought but it can be known intuitively, by meditational exercises. "As the intuition matures, the aspirant comes to realise with the intensity of direct experience, that the Absolute and his true self are identical and he gradually comes to realise that everything that we see in the world, mind and nature, the self and the not-self, equally constitute the Absolute.... The Brahman according to the Chān-Upaniṣad is verily the all."¹ Ultimately the Upaniṣadic spiritual monism is based on mystical realisation and not on intellectual apprehension. The Ātman is unknowable intellectually, because he is the eternal subject who knows and, therefore, cannot become its own object.

1. Ranade: *Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy*, p. 278.

Upaniṣadic Mysticism and Yōga—The concept of the Upaniṣadic Absolute contains a number of implications. In the first place it leads to the conception of unity underlying the manifoldness of the world. One gets rid of all sorrow, hatred and illusion, according to Iśa-Upaniṣad, when one realises one's unity with all beings, sees the same Self in all beings and all beings in the same Self. When we are told that the ultimate end of life is to get into union with Brahman, it is meant, that we should realise our oneness with the whole, or that we should develop into ourselves what is sometimes called Cosmic Consciousness. We are, ordinarily, so much obsessed with our separate individuality that we fail to realise our organic relation to the Whole, as that of a limb to the rest of the body. Each cell in the body is intimately united with the rest of the cells through the whole, though it does not know it, just as a leaf does not know that it is united to each of the other leaves through the life of the tree.

The Upaniṣads lay down a discipline for the realisation of Brahmic or Cosmic consciousness. It is known as jñāna mārḡa, and consists of a number of successive steps. The spiritual discipline pre-supposes thorough acquaintance with philosophic truth, as expounded in the Upaniṣads, accompanied by profound contemplation (śravaṇa and manana), but it goes beyond them in so far as it involves a radical change in our consciousness, and that requires certain meditational or yogic exercises. The ultimate stage of spiritual discipline is known as nididhyāsaṇa or deep meditation on Brahman. According to the Śāṇḍilya Vidyā in the Chāṇ.-Upa. the Ultimate Reality is to be meditated upon, as pervading the whole universe, as the Creator, Preserver and

Destroyer of the world (*sarvam khalvidam Brahma Taijjalān*), whereas in the *Bhūman Vidyā* in the same Upaniṣad, Nārada is instructed by Sanat Kumāra to meditate upon Brahman as the blissful Infinite or *Bhūman*. In other Upaniṣads some other forms of meditations are given. All meditations are believed to lead to the same goal of Cosmic Consciousness or union with Brahman. Meditation leads to *samādhi* or absorption. In the state of *samādhi*, the light of Reality is said to flash upon the purified understanding of the aspirant and fills him entirely with the splendour of Divine Consciousness. "When one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, knows nothing else, that is the Infinite (*Bhūman*). When one see something, knows something and hears something, that is the finite (*Alpam*)"¹ In *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad*, (III. 2,6.), we are told that as rivers merge into sea losing their names and forms, so does a delivered soul, giving up name and form, enters into the Highest Divine."

The spiritual discipline, which we find mentioned in the Upaniṣads, came to be known as yoga. We find the word probably used for the first time in the *Taitti.-Upa.* (II, 4). In the *Kaṭha*, *Śvetāśvatara* and *Maitrāyani-Upaniṣads* there are detailed references to the yogic discipline and the idea of the Yoga is frequently discussed. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣads* also, a number of references to yogic exercises occur. In *Bṛha.-Upa.* IV, for instance, there is a mention of *śama* (control of mind), *dama* (control of outer sense organs), *uparati* (non-attachment to

1. *Chān.-Upa.* VII, 24, 1.

worldly things), *titikṣā* (endurance of unpleasant experiences) and *samādhi* (absorption) as necessary processes of spiritual discipline.

In *Kaṭha.-Upa.* (II,24,) along with restraint of the senses, control of mind and concentration, purity of life and abstention from immoral acts are also insisted upon.

Shri S. C. Sen mentions the following four principal methods of yogic discipline, as recommended in the *Upaniṣads* :—

1. *Prāṇāyāma* (control of breath) is recommended in *Śveta* (II,9), *Maitrāyaṇi* (IV, 4, 8) and *Bṛh.* (1,5,23) for steadying the mind and the body

2. *Pratyāhāra* or *uparati* (introversion). It consists in withdrawing the mind and the senses from outer objects or from inner thoughts.¹

3. *Purification of mind*—The aspirant is required to refrain from impure thoughts and deeds and to perform virtuous acts²

4. *Meditation*. It is the principal method of yogic discipline and has been referred to above. It proves effective when it is combined with moral and physical discipline

It is thus clear that the system of yoga was well-known before the time of Buddha, though it was expounded with fuller detail in *Pātañjal Yoga* sometime later. It has two aspects, one practical, insisting on the cultivation of moral virtues and certain physiological exercises, and the other meditative consisting of various forms of concentration.

1. *Bṛha.-Upa.* IV, 6,23, *Kaṭha.-Upa.* IV, 1, *Śveta.-Upa.* II, 8.

2. *Taitti.-Upa.* I, 2, *Bṛha.-Upa.* IV, 4, 22, *Chān.-Upa.* III, 7, *Muṇḍa.-Upa.* I. 2. I and *Kaṭha.-Upa.* I.2.24.

Practical Morality—In the Upaniṣads, there is laid a great emphasis on the cultivation of moral virtues as a necessary preparation for the divine life. Morality is, according to the Upaniṣads, an indispensable means for the realisation of spiritual ideal. An enlightened sage may ultimately reach a stage where morality as such does not exist for him. It means that, at the highest spiritual level, the doing of acts of love and charity becomes quite effortless for him. The element of struggle and conflict between good and evil tendencies, characteristic of a moral choice, is no longer present in the life of an emancipated sage. But, before one attains the stage of super-moralism as it may be called, it is absolutely necessary to lead a virtuous life. It is a necessary stage towards the attainment of enlightenment.

In the Chāndogya-Upaniṣad, (III, 17, 4) Ghora Āṅgīrasa speaks of the chief virtues as self-restraint, charity, uprightness, non-violence, truthfulness. Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (V. 2, 1-8) mentions three cardinal virtues, that is, self-control, charity and compassion (Dama, Dāna and Dayā). Similarly in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (I, 9), a number of virtues are mentioned such as truth, self-restraint, hospitality, daily sacrifice, kindness, charity and a regular study of scriptures.

Upaniṣads and Sannyāsa—According to the Upaniṣads, the chief end of life is the attainment of spiritual enlightenment. With this end in view, the life of man was divided into a number of stages, or āśramas, the culminating point being the last stage known as sannyāsa in which the individual attained the highest goal of spiritual realization. This last stage

was preceded by the three stages of brahmaçarya, gr̥hastha and vānaprastha. These three stages were preparatory to the stage of sannyāsa. At the first stage, that is the brahmaçarya, the young person was to develop his physical, mental and moral qualities, so that he could go out, completely equipped, to play his part in the social and communal life to which he belonged. After the completion of the first stage, young men and young women were expected to marry and beget children and to devote themselves to their prescribed duties in the social body-politic. The house-holder was looked upon as the backbone of society, on whom all the other āśramas depended for their existence. A very high code of morality in the form of charity, hospitality, truthfulness, regular performance of religious duties, self-restraint, respect for the parents and the elders, and kindness to animals,—was enjoined upon the householder.¹ Procreation of children for the perpetuation of the race was regarded as a religious duty and a form of sacrifice.

The stage of Gr̥hastha was also to be transcended, to give place to the next āśrama or stage known as vānaprastha āśrama. After a householder had lived, for a considerable number of years, a life dedicated to acquisition of dharma, artha and kāma, and had thereafter got disillusioned of the feverish pursuit of pleasures of life, he was expected to cut himself off from attachment to his work and his possessions, and to devote himself completely to the task of spiritual development. This stage of renunciation and austere

1. *Chān -Upa.* VIII, 15 and III, 17, 4.

living was naturally meant for those, who had already attained a considerably high level in spiritual evolution and who had got rid of all allurements of worldly desires and cravings.

Complete spiritual realization and fulfilment came in the fourth stage known as *sannyāsa*. A *sannyāsin* was free from the obligation of performing religious observances (*nitya karma*) and other duties prescribed by the *śāstras*. His main function was the acquirement of *tattva-jñāna* or knowledge of Ultimate Reality. After spiritual attainment, a *sannyāsin* generally lived the life of a wandering teacher who went about from place to place, giving instruction in religion and morals to the people at large. This stage generally came at the end, as the culmination of progress in spiritual life. Sometimes a person felt the call of renunciation at a very early age and so took to the life of a mendicant or *sannyāsin* while still young. We are told for instance, in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV, 4, 23) that some people, intent upon knowing the Brahman, did not crave for children. "What shall we do with children" they said, "When we are possessed of the self and this Brahman." "And they having risen above the desire for sons, wealth and new worlds, wandered about as ascetics and mendicants." But the usual rule was that people took to *sannyāsa* only after they had passed through the previous *āśramas* or stages of life. The theory of the *āśramas* was based upon a great psychological insight which accepted the need for the satisfaction of natural desires for a considerable period, before taking to a life of renunciation and detachment.

4. The School of Asceticism

In the Upaniṣads the word *tapas* is used in the sense of self-restraint and sometimes in the sense of energized reflection. There is seldom any reference to the practice of self-mortification or self-torture as a method of spiritual realisation. But it seems that, at the time of Upaniṣads, a cult of asceticism was developing, according to which many hermits and recluses subjected themselves to various kinds of ascetic practices under the mistaken notion that physical tortures alone would lead to the desired goal. *Tapas* or self-restraint instead of being an accessory of yogic contemplation, as was the case with the Upaniṣdic way of thinking, became, in the case of these hermits, the sole means of spiritual realisation.

The cult of sacrifice had been gradually losing its popularity. Sacrifices were the exclusive monopoly of the Brāhmaṇs, and they gave them an ascendancy over the other classes. This gave rise to feelings of jealousy and hostility, specially, amongst the Kṣatriyas. The sacrificial religion had also become a costly affair. Rhys Davids says in this connection, "The expense had been very great even for the less complicated sacrifices, and it is probable it had something to do with the fact that the way was discovered to the desired result without sacrifice."¹

As compared to the costly sacrifices the path of asceticism was easy and less expensive. It was also open to all classes of people. It appears from the

1. *Buddhist India* p. 242.

Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, and the Purāṇas that the path of tapas became more and more popular, and it was taken up even by many of the Brāhmaṇas who gradually realised the fruitlessness of sacrificial ritual. It also appears, that as the path of tapas grew in popularity, the Brāhmaṇas made it their own and resented any member of the Śūdra class resorting to asceticism. There is a story in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa to the effect that a number of Brāhmaṇas went to Mahārāja Rāma with the complaint that a certain Śambhūk of the Śūdra class had taken to the life of hard austerities. The offence was regarded so grave that death penalty was awarded to the Śūdra ascetic. It was, however, open to the Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas to take to a life of tapas or austerity, and so in this respect, they could be the equal of Brāhmaṇas. The idea has gripped Hinduism so forcefully, that while sacrifices have practically disappeared, and are performed only on rare occasions, the cult of austerity has continued to hold an important place in Indian life. A large number of Sādhus and mendicants can be seen even now performing all sorts of austerities and being looked upon, for that reason, as holy and worthy of reverence.

The underlying idea of tapas was that strict control of the senses, and exposure to physical hardships engendered concentrated energy in the person concerned, and gave him immense powers with which he could achieve miraculous results. In course of time, the idea grew that self-mortification imparted magical power so that one could accomplish super-human deeds by the power of austerity alone. "Just as sacrifice was supposed to possess the power, by which gods could be

compelled to bestow all sorts of worldly ends on the sacrificer so there was supposed to be a sort of charm in tapas by which a man could through and by himself attain to mystic and marvellous results. The distinction seems to have been, that it was rather worldly success, cattle, children and heaven that were attained by sacrifice and mystic, extraordinary, superhuman faculties that were attained by tapas.”¹ This belief in some form or other persists even now.

Speaking of the current practices in the time of Buddha, Prof. Rādhākṛiṣṇan says, “In the hermitages, the austerities mentioned in the Atharva Veda were practised for the winning of supernatural powers. Faith in the purifying power of tapas was strong. Tapas or austere asceticism displaced the processes of meditation and contemplation suggested in the Upaniṣads.”²

Self-mastery naturally appeals to all men ; so there is no wonder if those men, who had given up comforts and luxuries and taken to the life of austerity and self-mortification, came to be looked upon with awe and reverence. The transition from mere sacrifice to the idea of self-mastery and conquest of will was a real advance in thought, but like sacrifice the cult of self-mortification under-went a fantastic development. It assumed bizarre and absurd forms. The greater the hardships to which one subjected oneself, the greater was the reward expected from them. We are told by Rhys Davids that some ascetics underwent the painful

1. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India* p. 242-243.

2. *Indian Philoeophy*. Vol. I, p. 277.

process of plucking out their hair, others kept standing all the time or moved about by jumps or always remained in the crouching position or always slept on the beds of thorns or on the bare ground on the same side.¹ In the Mahābhārata, we are regaled with the accounts of still more revolting forms of self-torture. Such instances of extreme self-torture are found in some of the Christian and other saints. It may be possible to understand the practice of extreme self-mortification with the help of the concept of masochism, which modern Psychology has made familiar to us. There are some persons of masochistic temperament, who find extreme pleasure in having pain inflicted on themselves, and greater the pain the greater is the measure of satisfaction which they derive from it. Perhaps in a greater or smaller degree, this tendency is found in all human beings.

We get an idea of these ascetics from the Jātaka stories. An ideal ascetic is described as one who has abandoned all pleasures, is very abstemious in eating and drinking, one who always speaks the truth, does not bear malice to any one, has forbearance and is free from anger and is altogether unselfish. But the Jātakas make a mention of sham ascetics as well. "As hypocrisy, so lust, greed, gluttony and sundry other vices are standard qualities attributed to ascetics, monks and other religious folks in *the Jātaka* stories. We have instances of lewd ascetics, who lead a corrupted life in the darkness of night and pretend asceticism by day.... Being in theory immune to the lure of women, and

1. *Buddhist India*, p. 244.

therefore, ineligible as lovers or husbands, they are driven by their evil instincts to resort to crafty devices to obtain their end.”¹

There were two kinds of ascetics, the hermits and the wandering teachers. The former generally stayed in their simple huts, built in forests on the fringe of towns or cities, and lived mostly on fruits or other kinds of natural foods which they could procure from nearby places. They devoted themselves to a life of contemplation or to the practice of various kinds of austerities. In some Āśrams of these hermits, lessons were given on the teachings of different schools of thought. They belonged, in many cases, to the class of Vānaprasthas described in the Upaniṣads, and were devoted to intellectual and spiritual pursuits.

The other class was that of the wandering teachers known as Parivrājakas or Sannyāsins. They spent most part of the year in going from place to place giving discourses to the lay devotees or holding discussions after the fashion of the Greek Sophists, on philosophical and religious subjects. They were highly honoured by the people and lived on the alms supplied to them by the pious house-holders.

Gautama Buddha began his life of spiritual quest as an ascetic. He underwent severe austerities, so much so that he was reduced to a mere skeleton. He realized that mere fasting and a life of penance and hardship did not lead anywhere. So he took to a moderate diet and a simple routine of living. Later on,

1. Ratilal, *Pre-Buddhist India* p. 342,

after he had attained enlightenment, he spent the rest of his life as a wandering teacher, carrying his message of holiness and purity of life to the people. In Buddhist works, there is a frequent mention of many Parivrājakas of different schools of thought. They often visited the Buddha and held discussions with him on various philosophical and religious problems. We shall refer, later in this chapter, to some of the teachers whose views were subjected to severe criticism by Gautama Buddha.

As already hinted at, all ascetics were not exclusively devoted to self-mortifying exercises. Some of them led simple austere life, devoting themselves to study and contemplation. Some of them produced useful literature for the moral instruction of people. "There existed yet other religious circles in India," says Winternitz, "Which already, in early times, showed literary activity and tried partly, even more than the Brāhmaṇs, to win over the great masses of the people. These were the ascetics, forest hermits and mendicants, the founders of sects and monastic orders, which at the time of Buddha were already very numerous in India. These, too, had their own poetry, legends of saints, aphorisms, in which they preached their doctrines of renunciation and contempt of the world, of self-sacrifice and love of all beings, and also fables, parables, fairy tales and moral stories which were intended to illustrate the philosophy and ethics of the ascetics by means of examples."¹ There is no doubt that Buddhism was

1. *Indian Literature*, Vol. I, p. 320.

greatly influenced by the poetry of the ascetic orders. We find traces of this influence in the fables, fairy stories, moral tales, found in Buddhist works, specially in the *Jātaka* stories, which are in most cases old stories put in a Buddhist garb.

The ascetic poetry, dealing with the various topics mentioned above was the original source, on which the Buddhist sacred texts drew for their stories and parables teaching love towards all beings, and renunciation of the world. We find most of these stories in the Mahābhārata, which most probably utilised the same original sources of ascetic poetry. Many of the fables, parables and moral narratives, therefore, occur in the Buddhist works, in the Mahābhārata, and in later collections as well. The common source of ascetic poetry was equally at the disposal of the Brāhmaṇs, the Buddhists and other sects. Take for instance, the story of king Śivi, who tore out both of his eyes in order to give them to a beggar. Similarly there is a parable of "the man in the well" which is found in the Mahābhārata as well as in Buddhist works. A man falling into a well, catches hold of a creeper growing in the side of the well. As he looks above, he finds two rats, one white and the other black, gnawing at the root of the creeper, and on looking below he sees a big open-mouthed monster, waiting for him to fall into its mouth. There is a honey-comb at one side of the well from which honey drips on the leaves of the creeper. Even in such a dire situation, the person cannot resist the temptation of licking honey from the leaves nearby. In this parable, the two rats are the day and the night, the creeper to which the man clings

is his life-period, while the monster below is death which is waiting to destroy the man at the end of his life-period. The parable is intended to convey the idea that human beings remain attached to sensual enjoyments as represented by the honey drops, knowing fully well that they are, with the passing of days and nights, slowly but surely, travelling towards death. This parable, in course of time, travelled to the west and is now found in all important languages of the east and the west.

There is, again, the touching story of a male dove, who throws himself into a fire to be roasted so that he could serve as a meal for the hunter who had come to his nest as a guest. The faithful she-dove also follows her husband into death. The great love and self-sacrifice shown by the pair so moves the hunter, that he gives up his cruel vocation and becomes an ascetic.

The stories of self-sacrifice, renunciation, and love for all living beings found so abundantly in ascetic poetry, must have exercised some influence in shaping the thought of Gautama Buddha in the formative period of his life. As already said, they have been incorporated in Jātaka stories with suitable modifications. They are also found interspersed in most of the religious discourses of Gautama Buddha.

5. Six Independent Teachers

When Buddha began his career as a teacher, there were many other teachers who preached their own views on ultimate problems of life. As Rhys Davids says, "In no other age and country do we find, so universally diffused, among all classes of the people so earnest a

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spirit of enquiry, so impartial and deep a respect for all who posed as teachers, however, contradictory their doctrines might be.”¹ In the very first dialogue of *Dīgha Nikāya*, known as *Brahma Jala*, as many as sixty-two varieties of contemporary doctrines are given, in contrast to the Buddhist doctrine of enlightenment. Of all the various teachers of his time, six were specially selected by Buddha for criticism. The names and accounts of those teachers are found in the second dialogue of *Dīgha Nikāya*. They are given in the order in which their views were commented upon by Buddha.

1. **Purāṇa Kassapa**—He is spoken of as a venerable teacher in Buddhist records. As a matter of fact, all the teachers whose doctrines were criticised later, are praised in identical terms namely, as “The head of an order, with a great following, and the founder of the school, enjoying a great reputation as a dialectician, respected by the people, a man of experience, a recluse old and well advanced in years.”² We get an idea of the views of Purāṇa Kassapa and other teachers chiefly from Buddhist and Jaina sources. There are no extant works of these teachers themselves. We learn, from these sources, that Kassapa taught the passivity of soul. When a person performs an action, whether right or wrong, his soul has nothing to do with it. Things just happen. There is no reason why one thing should happen at one time and not another. This doctrine is also called *ahetu-vāda* or the doctrine of non-causation. It is an hypothesis of the accidental

1. *Buddhism, its History and Literature*, p. 26.

2. *Dīgha Nikāya* Vol. I, p. 47.

origin of things as contrasted to the causal origin of things propounded by the Buddha himself. According to Buddha's theory nothing comes out of nothing, while Kassapa held that something can come out of nothing. What roused the opposition of Buddha against the theory of Kassapa, was its moral implication. If this doctrine were true it would follow that there is no merit in virtue or demerit in a sinful act like murder. This anti-moral implication is clearly brought out in the following dialogue between king Ajāta-Śatru and the Buddha, as given in the Chinese version of the Samāna-Phala Sūtra

“The king said to the Buddha, I remember having once gone to Fu-ran-kashio (Purāṇa Kassapa) who answered me.....Mahārāj if any one cuts all beings into pieces, and makes a heap which will fill the world, it is not an evil deed, nor is there any requital for this crime.....nor is there reward for the righteous doer, who makes a great assembly for distributing (alms) and who gives to all equally.”¹ The Ajāta-Śatru version may be slightly exaggerated, but it leaves no doubt as to how the contemporaries of Kassapa interpreted his doctrines. In the view of Buddha, from a moral point of view, it was a subversive doctrine.

It has, of course, to be admitted that Kassapa's theory of the passivity of soul “was an important step towards the development of Sāṅkhya system from the rough outline given by Pippalāda in the Praśnopaniṣad.

1. Rockhill, *Life of the Buddha*, pp. 255-56.

2. **Makkhali Gosala**—In the *Āṅguttaranikāya*, Ānanda the favourite disciple of Buddha, confused the doctrine of Gosala with that of Kassapa, when he ascribed to him, the doctrine of non-causation or the accidental production of phenomena. This could not be the view of Gosala, whose distinctive contribution was the fatalistic conception of life and its activities. His view was, that all living beings are bound to attain perfection in course of time. Nothing can stop the inevitability of this process nor can anybody by his efforts hasten the attainment, or by the lack of effort retard his ultimate destiny. All evolution takes place according to the factors of fate (Niyati), class or species (Sanjāti) and nature (Bhava). Thus every thing was unalterably fixed beyond any possibility of the slightest change by human effort. “All forms of life, all living substances attain perfection after having gradually passed higher and higher through different types of existence which are fixed, and after having experienced pleasure and pain peculiar to each form of existence. The highest in the scale of existence is of course a Jīna (perfect man).”¹

It is said that both Mahāvīra and Buddha are indebted to Gosala in many ways. His theory of biological evolution gave many useful suggestions to both those great teachers. It is even said that Mahāvīra and Gosala lived for many years together, until they parted company on account of difference of opinion on certain matters. Gosala was a well-known

1. Dr. Bimala Charan Law, *Buddhistic Studies*, p. 78.

teacher of his time and was the founder of the order of Ājīvikas, who followed a very strict discipline of asceticism and had a great influence on the followers of both Mahāvīra and Buddha. The ascetic order of Ājīviakas continued to exist up to the twelfth century after which it disappeared altogether.

The main objection of the Buddha against Gosala's doctrine was, that fatalism exercises a paralysing influence on moral effort. If all living creatures including men are the victims of their fate, they cannot be held responsible for their actions. Belief in fate would lead to slackness of effort in moral life and obliterate all desire to choose a right course of action against the temptation to go wrong. It is doubtful, if belief in the universal sway of law in all fields does actually have the disastrous consequences in moral life as pointed out by the critics of Gosala's theory. There are many scientists and other thoughtful persons in modern times, who theoretically accept determinism, but are never-the-less very enthusiastic exponents of a good life. Belief in freedom of will does not necessarily lead to right action.

3. **Ajit Kes Kambali**—It is said that he was in his early life a slave, who ran away from his master and then became an ascetic. He used to wear a rough garment made of hair, for which reason he came to be known as Ajit Kes Kambali.

Ajit was a thorough-going materialist in his doctrine. According to him all beings, living and non-living alike, were the outcome of the varied combination of four elements; earth, water, air and fire. Conscious-

ness or Soul had no existence, apart from the body. It came into existence along with the body and was annihilated along with the annihilation of the body. The origin of consciousness from the chemical mixture of elements is compared to the coming into being of the power to intoxicate in liquor, from the proper mixture of the necessary ingredients. The individuality is completely lost after death, so there can be no expectation of either reward or retribution for good or bad actions done in this life. "When a man dies, earth returns to the earth, heat to the fire, air to the air and the sense faculties pass into space. It is a doctrine of fools, the talk of existence after death, for all alike, fools and the wise, on the dissolution of the body, are cut off, annihilated, ceasing to be after death."

His positive doctrine was, that nothing is real excepting what is corporeal and material, Form and matter exist together, so a particular object must be taken as an organic whole. The bodily and the conscious aspects of personality may be separated in thought, but there can be no such thing as a separate individual self living apart from the body. Buddha speaks of the followers of Ajit as the Annihilists. According to Buddha, the doctrine of annihilation leads, in actual practice, to undermining the distinction between right and wrong. If we are to be completely destroyed after death, a person may regard himself justified to do whatever he likes, without caring for its effects on other people. It is thus, according to Buddha, a perverse doctrine from the moral point of view.

4. **Pakudha Kaccāyana:**—He is described as the older contemporary of the Buddha and was, most pro-

bably, the same person as Kakuda Kātyāna, one of the interlocutors who approached Pippalāda with their various questions as described in Praśnopaniṣad.

By both Buddha and Mahāvīra, the epithet Eternalism is applied to the doctrine of Kātyāyana. Mahāvīra also speaks of it as pluralism. (Aneka-Vāda).

Kātyāyana tried to explain the whole of experience with the help of six or seven eternal substances. They are, according to Buddhist writers, earth, water, fire, air, pleasure, pain and soul. In the Jaina books, the number of these substances is given as six; earth, water, fire, air, space and soul. The various objects of the world were described by Kātyāyana to be the result of the combination of these substances in various ways, pleasure and pain being respectively the uniting and separating principles like the principles of love and hate of Empedocles, the Greek philosopher. The Vaiśeṣika view of categories may be traced to the doctrine of Kātyāyana as described in Buddhist and Jaina literature.

The theory of Kātyāyana, like the theories given above is called Akṛyā-Vāda or non-action. If the substances in themselves are eternal and uncaused, mechanically uniting and disuniting with one another to produce the world phenomena, they cannot account for moral distinctions of right and wrong, good and bad if it is granted, at the same time, that pleasure and pain are the only uniting and separating elements and there is no volitional activity of the soul itself. That this was the conclusion, drawn by Buddha from the doctrine of Kātyāyana, becomes clear from the following account in one of his dialogues. "When a

man with the help of a sharp sword cleaves the head in twain he does not thereby deprive any one of life; a sword has only penetrated into the interval between seven elementary substances." Thus the act of killing consists simply in separating the elements which had so long remained united in an organic whole. It is strange that such a conclusion should have been drawn. Belief in the eternity of a number of substances does not seem to have any adverse effect on the moral life of those who profess it.

5. **Sañjaya Bolāttiputta**—The name of Sañjaya is associated with the doctrine of scepticism. When speculation throws up a number of conflicting views of reality, each claiming absolute truth for itself, a wave of scepticism is bound to arise as a consequence. To a thinker of this type, all metaphysical theories appear as fruitless and vain, diverting mankind from the real objective of attaining happiness and equanimity of mind. Sañjaya found, in his time, many dogmatic philosophers carrying endless disputes about such questions as : is the world eternal or is it non-eternal ? Is the world finite or is it infinite ? Does a perfect man continue to exist after death or not ? Is there any reward or retribution for one's deeds or is there not and so on. As it was in no way possible to reconcile the conflicting views on these issues, Sañjaya and his school of thought taught the cultivation of an attitude of indifference and suspended judgement on these questions. The best thing for a man is to give his whole time and attention to finding out the ways and means to attain happiness. In this respect, Sañjaya may be

compared to Pyrrho, the great teacher of scepticism in Greece, who held similar views.

The Buddha is rather unduly harsh on Sañjaya and his disciples. He speaks of them as Amarā-vikkhepikas Eel-wrigglers. They do not take up any well-defined position, but when face to face with a difficult question they try to wriggle out of it like an eel, without committing themselves to one point or the other. This is not quite fair to Sañjaya. We know that his doctrines appealed to many thoughtful people, and he had a large body of disciples who held him in great respect. As a matter of fact, the Buddha himself held the view that it was not possible to arrive at any authoritative opinion about metaphysical questions, and so he refused to be drawn into discussion on those questions. They were mostly the same questions on which Sañjaya had advised suspension of judgement. He can, therefore, in a way, be regarded as the forerunner of the Buddha himself in making light of metaphysical speculation.

It can, however, be said that while Sañjaya's point of view was mostly negative, Buddha gave a positive approach to the discussion of important problems by enunciating the doctrine of causal genesis or Paticca-samuppāda. We may not be able to know the first cause of things, but the doctrine of causal origin helps us to understand those things about which genuine knowledge is really possible.

6. **Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta**—It is now believed, that Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta is the same person as Mahāvīra, the revered teacher of the Jaina religion and a contemporary of the Buddha. It appears from Buddhist works,

that Mahāvīra died a few years, probably five years, before the death of Buddha. The word Nigantha means, free from bonds or fetters. The followers of Mahāvīra were known as Niganthas among the Buddhists.

It seems that the Buddha regarded Mahāvīra as holding an extreme form of individualism. While the believers in fate or chance were of the view, that the weal and woe of an individual depended altogether on external factors, Mahāvīra went to the other extreme of believing, that our pleasant and unpleasant experiences were solely dependent upon ourselves. Mahāvīra's view is stated in *Sūtra Kṛtāṅga* as follows; "When I suffer, grieve, repent, grow feeble, am afflicted or experience pain, I have caused it. ...Pleasures and amusements are not able to help or save me. They are one thing and I am another; they are foreign to my real being. Even the friends and relations who are more intimately connected with me cannot experience, still less take upon themselves, the pains I actually undergo. That is to say, as an individual a man is born, as an individual he dies, as an individual again, he deceases from one state of existence to be re-born into another. The passions, consciousness, intellect, perceptions and impressions of a man belong to him exclusively."¹

The only way in which it is possible to be sure about the truth of the statement, that one's pleasures

¹ Quoted by B.N. Barua in *Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*, pp., 390-391.

and pains are exclusively the results of his own actions is by possessing the knowledge of what actions a man had done in the previous lives, because much of the pain and pleasure in this life, is said to be due to the actions done in previous lives. Buddha asks the disciples of Mahāvīra, "Do you positively know that you, as present individuals, had actually existed in the past or that you had done such and such actions, good and bad, as the case may be." On being told that they did not know, he asked them, how in that case they could maintain that the happiness and misery of an individual were solely dependent upon his own actions whether done in this life or in previous life.¹

Shri Bimal Charaṇa Law says in the Buddhist studies, that "Once a parivrājaka Timbaruka went to the Buddha and questioned him, 'Are happiness and suffering self-created or not or created by others or not? Are they neither created by oneself nor created by others?' The Buddha answered them in the negative." (page 105). It means that according to Buddha, happiness and suffering are not altogether dependent on chance nor are they altogether self-created.

In Saṃyutta Nikāya, we are told that all suffering is not due to our own acts, whether in this life or in the previous lives. "There are some sufferings, originating from phlegm, from wind, from the union of bodily humours, from changes of the seasons, from stress of untoward happenings, from attacks from without, and also from our karmans."²

1. *Devadahas Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya.*

2. Vol. IV, Chapter 36 *Pali Text Society*, p. 155.

These are some of the specimens of philosophical thinking which we meet with in the time of the Buddha. He made a special mention of them, because he thought that these views were liable to have an adverse effect on moral life. They were all, excepting the doctrine of Mahāvīra, so many illustrations of the theory of Akṛyāvāda or non-action. Instead of promoting zest in right doing, they were liable to lead a person astray, and make him unmindful of his duties as a moral individual.

6. Social and Political Conditions

(a) Social Conditions—Caste System :— We get a fairly accurate picture of the social and political conditions in pre-Buddhist India from the Jātaka tales. We find, that the caste system had not yet become rigid, as it did in later times. Castes were in a fluid condition, though the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas were looked upon as belonging to higher castes. The Brāhmaṇas are depicted as following all sorts of professions. While some of them performed sacrifices and were handsomely paid for it, the large majority of them, like the members of other castes, took to all sorts of vocations. In the literature of that period, we find them following the vocations of peasants, weavers, hunters, chariot-drivers, carpenters, shepherds, fortune-tellers or any other vocation which could bring a livelihood. No feeling of humiliation was attached to adopting any of these vocations.

In the Jātakas, as in the general Buddhist literature, the Brāhmaṇas are described as inferior to the Kṣatriyas. The latter are given a premier position

and are always mentioned first. The Kṣatriyas were also free to follow any profession besides the military one. It is not easy to explain this constantly occurring note against the Brāhmaṇas, unless it were accepted as a fact that the Brāhmaṇas had considerably deteriorated from the high level of moral and spiritual ascendancy, which they had attained and maintained during so many centuries before the rise of Buddhism.

The Jātakas do not mention any special class of the Vaiśyas, but, instead, the word Gahapati is used to cover all classes given to tilling the land, and to trade and handicrafts of all kinds. These people were generally regarded as slightly below the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas in rank; but they had possibly gained in importance, as many of the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas engaged themselves in most of the vocations which were formerly more or less, the exclusive possession of the Vaiśyas.

There were below them, the socially low professions of fishermen, hunters, drummers, musicians, jugglers, workers in leather and so on. The lowest of them were the hīna jātis of Caṇḍālas, Niṣādas etc. who followed unclean professions. There were also slaves who included captives in war or persons who became slaves for non-payment of debt or on account of poverty. Mostly, the slaves came from the non-Āryan tribes and usually worked as domestic servants in families. They were, on the whole, well-treated and could become free either by payment of a certain fixed sum or at the will of the owner.

We thus find that society was divided into upper,

middle and lower orders, mostly on economic basis, and caste, specially among the higher orders, did not command the importance which it came to possess in later times. Of course, the lower orders of people suffered all sorts of social and economic disabilities. In spite of the distinction between the high and the low, there was free social mixing, inter-dining and even inter-marriage to a very large extent.

(b) Condition of Women :— The condition of women, during this period, had considerably deteriorated as compared to that of the women of Vedic period. There was, however, as yet no early marriage; the usual age of marriage being sixteen years. In the early Vedic period, the girls could choose their own husbands, but the Jātakas, concerned as they are with Indian society preceding the Buddhist period, convey the idea that marriages were arranged by the parents, and the couple had practically no say in the matter. Monogamy was the usual rule, though the princes and well-to-do people enjoyed the privilege to practice polygamy.

The average woman did not lead a secluded life. Excepting the women of noble families, who went about in covered carriages, the rest of them could move without any veil. A daughter-in-law could freely talk to her father-in-law and other elderly male members of her husband's family.

Motherhood was the cherished ideal of every woman. We find in the Jātakas, all women, whether rich or poor, showing a great longing and desire for sons and daughters. Barrenness was looked upon as a curse. A mother was an object of great reverence in

the house, and the management of the household affairs was entirely in her hands. In relation to her husband, she was expected to be loyal and obedient like a slave. We come across in the Jātakas, pictures of loving and affectionate wives and husbands; and as is the case in all societies, there are stories in which the unfaithfulness and wickedness on the part of women are also described with a realistic touch.

There is evidence to show that the condition of widows was not good, though widow re-marriage was allowed. No stigma was attached to the remarriage of widows, if they were not grown very old.

(c) Education :— Education was imparted to both boys and girls of higher classes in local institutions. Students are spoken of as going to Taxila for higher education. The minimum age for joining the University was sixteen years. All sorts of subjects of technical and literary interest were taught, and young people aspiring for higher education in arts and sciences flocked to Taxila from all parts of the country. The tuition fees were paid in advance, though poor students were sometimes allowed, in lieu of the tuition fees, to render services. They generally worked in the day and studied at night. It is very interesting to read in one of the Jātaka stories that in all institutions, the cock served as a clock and it was specially trained for the purpose.¹

Political Conditions :—In the age preceding the rise of Buddhism, we find the growing importance of the kingdoms of Kāśī and Kośala, Aṅga and Magadhā

1. See Ratilal, *Pre-Buddhist India*.

in the east and Assatta and Kalinga in the south of India. Kāśī made itself into a most powerful kingdom by conquering the neighbouring kingdom of Kośala and reducing it to a state of vassalage. Some of the kings of Kāśī went to the south, and even to the extreme north-west of India as far as Gandhāra (Peshwar) for further conquests. They tried to capture Taxila, the capital city of Gandhāra but failed. They however succeeded in establishing their supremacy over a large part of east and south India.

The supremacy of Kāśī could not last for long. Kāśī gradually lost its strength. In the period of her decline, it was invaded many a time by the kings of Kośala till it was finally conquered by Kansa, one of the Kośalyan monarchs. This happened only a few years before the rise of Buddhism.

When Buddha began his work, there existed four kingdoms of considerable extent and power, along with a number of small aristocratic republics. The four monarchies were (a) the kingdom of Magadha (modern Bihār) with its capital at Rajagrha, which later came to be known as Pāṭali-putra (Patna), (b) the kingdom of Kośala (modern U. P.) with its capital as Sāvithi, (c) towards the south of Kośala was the kingdom of Vamsas or Vatsas, with its capital at Kośāmbī on the Yamunā and still further south there was the kingdom of Avanti with its capital at Ujjaina.

These kingdoms were often at war with one another. The prolonged state of war among the various kingdoms of northern India resulted in the gradual ascendancy of the kingdom of Magadha. The process of the assimilation of smaller tribes by the

larger ones had been going on for a very long time in the past, leading to the establishment of a few absolute monarchies in different parts of the country. So by the time Buddhism came to flourish, we find only a few independent republics or oligarchies side by side with more or less powerful kingdoms.

These kingdoms did a great deal for the development of religious and philosophical thought in India. "It was under the auspices of one or other of these princes, that the various religious orders and schools of thought flourished. The main characteristic of this period, as far as philosophy is concerned, were the freedom of thought and the general spirit of tolerance¹" Rest houses, parks and places of shelter were built by these princes, where the wandering teachers and the Bhiksus could stay in course of their peregrinations, and all sorts of facilities were provided for them. Various schools of thought arose in this period, which may be regarded as the precursors of Buddhist thought and scheme of life.

When Buddha began his work, there was peace over the land ; but this peace as B. M. Barua points out, followed upon centuries of war and so "The gloom cast over the minds of ignorant people by terrible experiences and painful recollections of the past was too deep to be so easily removed. As the contemporary literature (as for instance *Āṅguttara Nikāya* I. 159), vividly paints it, within the living memory of people, many places which were in former days populous, prosperous and closely situated, had so fallen into ruin

1. B. M. Barua, *Pre-Buddhistic Indian Philosophy*; pp. 417-418.

that now villages appeared to be no villages and cities no cities. The devastation was partly a periodical work of the hand of nature, being brought about by famine, disease and other natural causes and partly by war, tyranny, lawlessness and general immorality."¹

It appears that the general conditions in which the society lived at that time gave prominence to the problem of misery and coloured the philosophical view of the thinkers of the period. It is, therefore, natural that we should find almost all thinkers engaged with the problem of sorrow and suffering. The question how far man is responsible himself for his own weal and woe assumed great importance. Is man the architect of his own fate, good or bad, or is he merely a puppet of external causes which fix his destiny for him. Some of these thinkers were dubbed by Buddha and Mahāvīra as Akṛyāvādins or followers of the theory of non-action. Buddha himself acknowledged the supremacy of sorrow in the life of man and it became the starting-point of his own thought. But he did not accept it as insurmountable. A man can destroy sorrow and achieve happiness by his own sustained efforts.

Economic Conditions :—Economically, as Rhys Davids tells us, the people were well off. There was plenty of land to go round. There were not many rich people as we have in these days, but the great mass of people consisted of a prosperous peasantry and well-to-do handicraftsmen mostly with lands of their own. Both the peasants and the artisans were

1. *Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*, p. 369.

ruled by headmen of their own selection. We have already referred elsewhere to the various professions and vocations followed by the people. "Of want as we know in our great cities, there is no evidence in the sixth century in northern India."¹

So the suffering and sorrow, which gave rise to particular philosophical views of this period, were not due to bad economic conditions but rather to insecure political conditions and experiences of acute misery and unhappiness brought about by long continued wars and sometimes by the visitation of natural calamities.

1. *Buddhist India*, p. 101

PART I

CHAPTER I

A Short Biography of Gautama Buddha

Gautama Buddha, one of the greatest religious teachers of the world, was born in 564 B. C. in the Lumbinī royal gardens at a short distance from Kapilavastu which was the seat of king Śuddhodana, the head of the Śākya clan. Kapilavastu was the capital of a small aristocratic principality, with a population of about a million inhabitants. It was under the over-lordship of the king of Kośala, and was situated at the foot of the Himālayan mountains a few miles to the south of Nepāla.

There was a great rejoicing all over the state and the people were happy that a heir was born to their beloved king, to perpetuate the royal lineage. The infant was named as Siddhārtha. His mother Mahāmāyā died on the seventh day after the birth of her son. He was, therefore, brought up by Prajāvatī, the younger sister of his mother and the second queen of Śuddhodana. The child grew up under the loving care of his foster-mother.

The Lumbinī gardens where Gautama Buddha was born were visited at a later date by the great Buddhist monarch Aśoka, who ordered a pillar to be instituted to mark the birth-place of the Buddha. This happened only a few generations after the birth of the Buddha. The pillar still exists, and bears a legible

inscription on its face. There can, therefore, be no doubt about Lumbinī being the birth-place of Buddha. It is now one of the few sacred places of pilgrimage, and is visited by the Buddhists from all over the world.

Many astrologers were called to read the future of the new-born royal infant, and they all agreed that the princely babe had a great future before him. He would be either a great monarch, a cakravartin king or a great religious teacher of mankind. They advised the king to keep the prince from contact with unhappy and depressing spectacles. If he ever came face to face with old age, sickness and death, it might have a profound influence upon his mind and turn him from the glories of kingship to a life of renunciation and spiritual quest. The prediction, though it was conditional in nature, produced a great fear in the mind of the king and he therefore took every care, as the prince grew older, to surround him with pleasure-giving environments and young, jovial and beautiful companions. He was given an education befitting a royal scion, and he learnt all the arts of war and peace. He grew into a handsome and broad-shouldered youngman and the people were happy to have such an accomplished and gallant prince to be the future ruler of their state.

But the prince, inspite of all the gaiety and luxury by which he was surrounded, now and then, relapsed into a state of meditation and detachment from the world. It is said that even when he was a child he went into a trance under a rose-apple

tree, when all the servants were busy witnessing the ceremonial ploughing of a field by the king Śuddhodana and the nobles of the court—an annual celebration in which the king and the nobles took part. It thus appears that the prince had been born with a religious turn of mind, and had given a spontaneous exhibition of the same at a very early age.

In order to bind the prince Siddhārtha all the more strongly to the allurements of the world, the king had him married at the age of sixteen, to a most beautiful princess, Yaśodharā by name and of his own age. It seemed to have the desired effect on the prince, and both wife and husband lived happily for many years, wrapped in each other's affection. King Śuddhodana felt genuinely happy to see his son looking gay and cheerful, and participating in youthful pleasures with great éclat and abandon. He built three pleasure palaces for his son, for the three different seasons of the year. Thus the prince grew up in the midst of magnificent fragrance-giving gardens and in the company of young beautiful damsels, who danced their way into the heart of the prince and used whatever arts they possessed, to keep the prince in a state of perpetual joy and contentment. If the chronicles of this period of the life of Siddhārtha are to be believed, things were so arranged during the youthful years of the prince, that he got a most distorted view of life and its problems. Life, as he saw it, meant nothing but a mad round of pleasures, mostly of the sensuous type. The Buddha speaks of the luxurious life which he led, in the following words :—

“I was delicate, O monks, extremely delicate, excessively delicate. In my father’s dwellings, lotus pools had been made, in one, blue lotuses, in another red, in another white, all for my sake. I used no sandal wood, that was not of Banāras. My dress was of Banāras cloth, my tunic, my under-robe and cloak... I had three palaces, one for the cold season, one for the hot, and one for the season of rains. Through the four rainy months in the palace for the rainy season, entertained by female minstrels, I did not come down from the palace.”¹

Up to a fairly grown-up age Siddhārtha knew nothing of old age, sickness and death and of the various sufferings and sorrows of life. He had so great a surfeit of sensual pleasures that they lost their joyous aspect, and became a source of unhappiness. In their very abundance and monotonous repetition, they created a reaction of futility and disillusionment in the sensitive mind of the young prince. If the prince had been allowed to mix freely with people of all kinds, and to face the rough and tumble of life, he would have got a balanced view of life. Pains and sorrows create in us a mood of appreciation for the pleasures of life, and so the zest for living is kept up. Both pain and pleasure are necessary ingredients, and an effort to separate one from the other is liable to produce a most unwholesome effect on the life of an individual.

It was a wrong advice that the astrologers gave to the king ; namely, that the prince should be kept away

1. *Ang. I. 45. Thomas, Life of Buddha, p. 47.*

from the painful spectacles of life. So when he, in his grown-up age, came face to face with the sights of old age, sickness and death, they produced in him a violent reaction. He was told for the first time by his charioteer Chandaṅka that all people are subject to the sorrows of life and that youth and beauty last only for a short time and then fade away. His insistence on sorrows and sufferings, later on when he assumed the role of a teacher, can be partially traced to the hot-house existence which had been imposed upon him during his early years. He had had such a surfeit of pleasures that they appeared to him quite empty and futile, and in their ultimate nature, painful and exhausting; so when the actually painful aspects of life were brought to his notice in rather an abrupt manner, they gave him a shock and engendered in him a pessimistic view of human life.

Life assumed a sombre and melancholy aspect for Siddhārtha after he had witnessed, during his drive on a number of occasions, through the city, the spectacles of wretchedness and misery. He had already seen through the hollowness and futility of the life of senseless pleasures so amply provided for him by his father, and now after these new experiences of disease and misery, they lost all charm and attractiveness, giving way to an unhappy and painful state of mind. In the meantime a son had been born to him, who was named Rāhula. For the time being, the prince felt a sense of joy and diversion on seeing his new-born son. But this joy also, after a time, lost its novelty and keenness, and the problem of general unhappiness began to haunt him again with redoubled intensity and anguish

of mind. He once saw a recluse who had given up all possessions and seemed to be leading a happy untrammelled existence. This kind of life appealed to Siddhārtha and he made up his mind to renounce the luxuries of his princely existence, and take to the ascetic life of a care-free mendicant.

So one night when the palace seemed to be in a state of complete repose, he stealthily went to the apartments of his wife who was fast asleep with the new-born babe in her arms. He cast a last lingering look at both of them and then slowly retraced his steps to his own apartments. He awakened his faithful servant Chandaṇḍa, who lay dozing outside his room and asked him to bring his horse Kanthaka for his last ride out of the palace. With a heavy heart, the servant obeyed his master's command, and so the master and the servant slowly and noiselessly rode out of the city of Kapilavastu. They rode the whole night and by dawn had covered a long distance, leaving behind the kingdom of his father by many miles. He took off his princely robe and ornaments and asked his servant to take them to the king, his father. He then cut off his luxurious hair, donned the robe of a mendicant and walked away, with a last word of cheer to his weeping servant, who with a groaning heart, made his way back to the palace to convey the sad news to the fond but unlucky father. This is spoken of as the great renunciation of the Buddha and it took place when he was 29 years of age.

After leaving the palace, the prince stayed for some time at a small town, Anupiyā, about thirty

leagues to the east of Kapilavastu. From Anupiyā, he went to Rājagṛha, the capital of the king of Magadha. His main object at this time was to find a teacher who could help him in the discovery of ultimate truth. As he was wandering in the streets of Rājagṛha, begging alms, he was seen, from his palace, by the king Bimbāsāra who was highly impressed by the noble bearing of the princely mendicant. On being informed by his officers, that the youthful monk was staying in the Pāṇḍava cave, the king went there in person and was greatly pleased with the young Sādhu's deportment and conversation. He offered him wealth and kingdom, if he only gave up his present mode of living. Gautama naturally refused the well-intentioned offer of the king, saying that he had given up the world with a view to attain spiritual enlightenment, and consequently, the things of the world had no more attraction for him. He however promised to the king that, after the attainment of spiritual enlightenment, he would once again pay a visit to him.

From Rājagṛha Gautama went to the Āśrama of Ālāra Kalāma, a great teacher of Yoga and became his disciple. Within a short time, he learnt all that the sage could teach him ; but he was not completely satisfied and so he next went to Uddālaka-Putra Rudrak. What he learnt from Uddālaka also could not entirely satisfy him. He then made up his mind to depend upon his own efforts in order to discover the path to the supreme state of peace. He, accordingly, went to Uruvelā, a town in Magadha and chose "a delightful spot with a pleasant grove, a river flowing delightfully, with clear water and good fords and round

about a place of seeking alms." It appeared to him as a most suitable place for meditation and so he settled down at that spot.

It is said that Gautama practised, for six long years, all sorts of austerities at this place, along with five other ascetics. It is worth emphasizing that, both during his sojourn with the two teachers and when he was experimenting on his own, the main object was "the discovery of the right way of mystical concentration". It was understood that enlightenment, the goal of all mystical efforts, would inevitably follow the treading of the right path of spiritual concentration. The Buddha tried all the well-known methods of mind control. He practised breath-control but not finding it of much avail, turned next to the practice of austerities. He began to take food only in small quantities, "as much as my hollowed palm would hold, juices of beans, peas or pulse." He went on with this meagre diet for forty days. His body, as a consequence, became extremely lean and emaciated. His own account of his state of emaciation at this period is very interesting.

He says, "Like dried canes now became my arms and legs, withered through this extremely scanty diet ; like the foot of a camel became my buttock ; like a string of beads became my spinal column with the vertebræ protruding. Just as the roof beams of an old house sharply protrude, so protruded my ribs. Just as a gourd freshly cut becomes empty and withered in the hot sun, so my belly reached the back of my spine and when I wished to touch my spine, I again reached to the belly—thus near had come my belly to my spinal column ! To reinforce this body I chafed the limbs

with the hands, and the badly rooted hair fell from the skin. So strangely was the pure colour of my skin affected by the scanty diet, that some said 'the ascetic Gautama is black' while others said, 'the ascetic Gautama is yellow'. Then this thought came to me "This is the uttermost ; beyond this one cannot go".

So all this self-mortification did him no good, and he decided to give it up. He now remembered how he had once, when he was yet a child, fallen into a trance in which he had experienced a state of supreme happiness. Why should he not try to induce a similar state of trance and follow out that road to the end. He felt that he could not make any effort to attain that condition, as long as his body was in a state of extreme weakness. So he took a meal of rice and milk, offered to him by a girl Sujātā by name, who had come to make that offering to the banyan tree under which Gautama was sitting, on account of the fulfilment of her wish for a son. Her joy knew no bounds, when she saw a holy man sitting under the tree, and so she placed the golden bowl of rice and milk before him.

When Gautama ate the meal, he felt strength and vitality returning to his wasted body, and he felt that he could then renew his efforts for the attainment of his heart's desires. He made a grass seat for himself under the tree and sat down cross-legged on the seat, with a firm determination that he would rise only after the attainment of complete enlightenment.

And he sat there trying to recapture the state of trance which he had experienced in his childhood. He went through, one after another, the various stages of concentration, till he felt that he had achieved the

highest wisdom, on which he had set his heart and for which he had been practising all sorts of austerities for the last six years. It is better to describe his experience in his own words. "Now having taken solid food and gained strength, without sensual desires, without evil ideas, I attained and abode in the first trance of joy and pleasure arising from seclusion and combined with reasoning and investigation. Nevertheless such pleasant feelings as arose did not over-power my mind. With the ceasing of reasoning and investigation I attained an abode in the second trance of joy and pleasure arising from concentration with the eternal serenity and fixing of the mind on one point without reasoning and investigation. With equanimity towards joy and aversion, I abode mindful and conscious, and experienced bodily pleasure, what the noble ones described as dwelling with equanimity, mindful and happy, and attained an abode in the third trance. Abandoning pleasure and abandoning pain even before the disappearance of elation and depression, I attained an abode in the fourth trance which is without pain and pleasure, and with purity of mindfulness and equanimity."¹

Gautama now became the Buddha or the Enlightened One.

Thus the spiritual enlightenment of Buddha was chiefly the result of his own efforts. Without the help of a teacher or any other external help, he forged his own way of meditation and ultimately arrived at the state of complete spiritual enlightenment. This happened in the 35th year of his life, on the night of full moon of

1. Quoted by Thomas, *Life of Buddha*, pp. 56-57.

the month of Vaiśākha (April-May). On this memorable night, under the Bodhi tree in Gayā, he became the Buddha, completely free from the trammels of delusion and desires ; from the three Asavas or taints of craving for pleasure, craving for existence and ignorant outlook on life and the world. In that state of unbroken felicity and contemplation, he rested for seven days under the great Bodhi tree.

And now an idea arose in his mind as to whether he should lead a retired life away from the hum and bustle of deluded humanity, or share his spiritual discovery with the people of the world. A sort of tug-of-war went on in his mind. It appeared as if the idea of retirement and solitary contemplation would triumph over the comparatively feebler idea of working for the redemption of the world. It is recorded in the scriptures that just when he was in such a state of mind, Brahma appeared before him, and bowing low, in a reverential manner, spoke to the Buddha as follows “Lord, let the Blessed Lord preach the Dhamma ! May the Perfect One preach the Dhamma ! There are beings whose mental eyes are scarcely darkened by any dust ; if they do not hear the Dhamma, they will perish. There will be some who will understand”. It was possibly the inner voice which decided for the Buddha his future course of action.

His first thought was to go to his erstwhile teachers and reveal to them what he had discovered ; but he soon came to know that they were no longer in the land of the living. He then thought of his five companions who had left him in disgust after he had

given up the ascetic mode of life. So he travelled all the way from Gayā to the deer park of Rīṣipattana near Banāras, where the five ascetics were staying.

Though the ascetics were not favourably inclined towards him, they could not withhold their respect and courtesy when they saw a spiritual glow on the benign countenance of the Buddha. They stood up and did Him honour. The Blessed Lord preached to them what is known as the first sermon of the Buddha. It is a compendious statement of his great message, and so it deserves to be reproduced here in greater fullness. The Lord addressed them as follows.

“These two extremes, monks, are not to be practised by one who has gone forth from the world. What are the two? That conjoined with the passions and luxury, low, vulgar, common, ignoble and useless; and that conjoined with self-torture, painful, ignoble and useless. Avoiding these two extremes the Tathāgata has gained the enlightenment of the Middle Path, which produces insight and knowledge, and tends to calm, to higher knowledge, enlightenment, Nirvāṇa.

“And what, monks, is the Middle Path, of which the Tathāgata has gained enlightenment, which produces insight and knowledge, and tends to calm, to higher knowledge, enlightenment, Nirvāṇa? This is the Noble Eightfold way: namely, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This, monks, is the Middle Path, of which the Tathāgata has gained enlightenment, which produces insight and knowledge,

and tends to calm, to higher knowledge, enlightenment, Nirvāṇa.

“1. Now this, monks, is the noble truth of pain : birth is painful, old age is painful, sickness is painful, death is painful, sorrow, lamentation, dejection, and despair are painful. Contact with unpleasant things is painful, not getting what one wishes is painful. In short the five groups of grasping are painful.

“2. Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the cause of pain : the craving which tends to rebirth, combined with pleasure and lust, finding pleasure here and there ; namely, the craving for passion, the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence.

“3. Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of pain, the cessation without a remainder of craving, the abandonment, forsaking, release, non-attachment.

“4. Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the way that leads to the cessation of pain ; this is the Noble Eightfold Way ; namely, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

“ ‘This is the noble truth of pain’ : Thus, monks among doctrines unheard before, in me insight and knowledge arose, wisdom arose, knowledge arose, light arose.”¹

Those five ascetics were his first disciples. Gradually more and more people came under his influence. Amongst his notable disciples may be mentioned the

1. Quoted in “*Compassionate Buddha*” pp. 29,30. Edited by .E A. Burtt.

three Kassapa brothers, who had a large following of their own. They gave up the sacrificial religion and became the disciples of the Buddha. Sāriputta and Moggallāyana were the next to become converts. They are the two great figures who are mentioned with great reverence in Buddhistic works on account of their piety and nobility of life. They were endowed with great insight and penetration and are often described as instructing younger monks. Within a few months after his enlightenment, a large number of persons, some of them belonging to well-to-do families, gave up their worldly possessions and adopted the life of mendicants or Bhikṣus. When their number rose to sixty, the Buddha sent them in all directions to preach the law amongst the people. The number of monks increased so rapidly that it became impossible for the Buddha to attend to the initiation ceremony of each one of them personally. So he allowed the elder monks to perform the ceremony themselves. Thus the Saṅgha or the Order of Monks was created practically from the time when the Buddha began his mission of teaching.

A few months after the Buddha began to preach his doctrine, he set out for Kapilavastu with a large number of monks. They were all accommodated in the Nyagrodha park. Here his father, his foster-mother and other relatives came to see him and paid their respects. Only Yaśodharā, the mother of Rāhula did not come. When asked why she had not gone to see her lord, the Buddha, she said, "If I have any excellence, my master will himself come to me and I shall do him reverence" and the Buddha came to her palace with two attendants, and Yaśodharā threw herself at

his feet with great devotional fevour, and felt herself blessed to see her lord once again.

The Buddha stayed at Kapilavastu for a number of days. On the seventh day, Yaśodhrā dressed her son properly and asked him to go to the Buddha. Pointing him out to her son, she said, "That golden-coloured ascetic, who has his face like that of Brahman is your father. Go and ask him for your inheritance. Your father has four great vases of wealth and we do not know where he had kept them. Tell him, that when you will become a monarch, you will require all that wealth, and to a son rightfully belongs what is owned by the father". So Rāhula went to where the Buddha was staying and addressed him as he was instructed by his mother. Thereupon the Buddha arose from his seat and turned to go. Rāhula followed him, making the same request again and again. And Buddha thought in his mind, "The wealth, which he asks for will not make him happy. It will perish one day, like all other things. I shall give him that wealth, which I myself received under the Bodhi tree. That would be the right inheritance for him". So he asked Sāriputra to admit Rāhula into the order of monks. Śuddhodana, his father was very much pained, when he heard of the ordination of Rāhula and coming to the Buddha, he made him a request that in future no son should be admitted into the order without the permission of his parents. It is said that the Buddha accepted this suggestion and it was incorporated in the Vinaya.

Rāhula was not the only member of the royal family who was admitted into the order. Nanda, the half-brother of the Buddha, and his two cousins,

Ananda and Devadatta and many other members of the Śākya clan became Bhikṣus.

While a large number of the converts became monks, there was a larger number of lay disciples including Buddha's father Śuddhodana, Bimbāsāra the king of Magadha, Prasenjita the king of Kośala and many other rich and well-to-do men and women. Amongst the latter may be specially mentioned Sudatta, an inhabitant of Sāvattthi, who on account of his generosity came to be known as Anāthapindaka. He built many parks and stopping places in various regions for the accomodation of the Buddha and his monks, as they travelled from place to place. He was also the founder of the famous monastery of the Jaitavana at Sāvattthi. It had been built at a great expense, and was presented to the Buddha for the use of his Saṅgha. Viśākhā, a rich lady of Sāvattthi, is also mentioned in the list of eighty chief disciples. She was one of those, who had been given the title of 'Chief of alms-givers'. On one occasion, it is said, she went to hear the Buddha preach. While doing so she took off her head-dress, laid it on one side and forgot to reclaim it when she returned from the monastery. When her attention was drawn to it later, she refused to take it back and offered to sell it by auction. But it was so costly that no-body came forward to purchase it. So she herself gave the amount at which it was assessed, and with that money a huge monastery was built at Sāvattthi in the Pubbārāma park. King Bimbāsāra built another monastery at Rājagṛha, and a similar monastery was built by Śuddhodana at Kapilavastu after the Buddha had paid a visit to that place.

So great was the attraction of the noble and pure life of the Buddha and of his great message, that his lay disciples vied with one another to provide what meagre necessities the Bhiksus needed for themselves. Monasteries were built, parks and groves were laid so that the growing number of monks might not experience any difficulty in obtaining accommodation during inclement weather, and in carrying on their meditations in a free manner.

After the death of Śuddhodana, his wife Prajāvatī, the foster-mother of the Buddha expressed a desire to become a nun ; but the Buddha was not in favour of founding an order for female ascetics. There was, however, a persistent demand for it from some of the women of the royal household of Kapilavastu, and later on, Ānanda also joined his request to that of Prajāvatī and others. Much against his wish, the Buddha acceded to their request but declared at the same time, "If women, Ānanda had not been taken into the discipline, the doctrine would have had a long life. It would have lasted a thousand years, now it would last only for five hundred years". Perhaps the Buddha was right in his view against founding an order of nuns. Even the Christian experiment of establishing monasteries for both monks and nuns, in the Middle Ages, did not prove a success in the long run.

And thus the exalted teacher spent forty-five years of his life in travelling from place to place and propagating the Dhamma amongst all sections of people. No distinction was made between the rich and the poor or between one caste or another. It is said that once, Āmrapālī, a famous courtesan of Sāvattthī, invit-

ed the Buddha and his disciples to a dinner at her home. She felt very happy that the exalted one had accepted her humble request and went about, with great enthusiasm, making preparation for the great event. Immediately afterwards, the chieftain of the Lichavis of Vaiśālī went to the Buddha with a similar request. He knew that the invitation to dinner for that day had already been made and accepted. But he thought that the lord would certainly prefer him to a not much reputable courtesan, but the invitation was turned down. The compassionate heart of the Buddha could not make any distinction between one person and another on ground of high or low rank. His order was open to all castes and in the order itself, the converts from higher and lower castes were treated on equal terms. To his discourses, flocked kings and paupers, and they all did reverence to him and derived great spiritual comfort from his teachings. The message of love and compassion had an irresistible appeal for all, and so wherever the Buddha and his disciples went, they were listened to with rapt attention, and thus the creed of the Buddha spread all over the land.

The Buddha journeyed hundreds of miles every year in the region of the Ganges basin and the adjacent lands in the pursuit of his mission. In his last years Sāvattthī became his favourite resort, where he spent most of his time, residing alternatively in the Jaitavana and the Pubbārāma presented to him by Anātha Pinḍaka and Viśākhā respectively. Of course now and then he travelled to far-off places but mostly he stayed at Sāvattthī.

The Buddha had now attained the ripe old age of eighty years. The body had become weak, and the feeling grew, that he had not many days to live. He was staying at Rājagṛaha, before he undertook his last journey to Kuśīnara where he died. From Rājagṛha, passing through Nālandā, he came to Vaiśālī where he stayed at the grove of Āmrapālī, the famous courtesan of Vaiśālī. She heard his discourse and at the end of it she humbly invited the Buddha to a meal along with his monks. Āmrapālī was over-whelmed by the kindness of the Buddha and told him that she would feel highly honoured if the lord accepted the gift of the park for the use of himself and his monks. The gift was accepted and the Buddha after staying there for some time went on to the village of Velūva. Here he became seriously ill, but exercising a great control over himself he addressed the monks for the last time. It would not be proper for him, he thought to attain Nirvāṇa without taking leave of his attendants. His last address was as follows :—

“The Blessed One addressed Ānanda for the sake of the order and said :

“What, then, Ānanda, does the order expect of me ? I have preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine, for in respect of the truth, Ānanda, the Tathāgata has no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher, who keeps some things back.

“Surely, Ānanda, should there be any one who harbours the thought that It is I who will lead the brotherhood, or, the order is dependent upon me, or that I should lay down instructions in any matter

concerning the order. Now the Tathāgata, Ānanda, thinks not that it is he who should lead the brotherhood, or that the order is dependent upon him.

“Why, then, should the Tathāgata leave instructions in any matter concerning the order ?

“I am now grown old, O Ānanda, and full of years ; my journey is drawing to its close, I have reached the sum of my days. I am turning eighty years of age.

“Just as a worn-out cart can only with much difficulty be made to move along, so the body of the Tathāgata can only be kept going with much additional care.

“It is only, Ānanda, when the Tathāgata, ceasing to attend to any outward thing, becomes plunged in that devout meditation of heart which is concerned with no bodily object, it is only then that the body of the Tathāgata is at ease.

“Therefore, O Ānanda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help.

“Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Seek salvation alone in the truth. Look not for assistance to any one besides yourselves.

“And how, Ānanda, can a brother be a lamp unto himself, rely on himself only and not on any external help, holding fast to the truth as his lamp and seeking salvation in the truth alone, looking not for assistance to any one besides himself ?

“Herein, O Ānanda, let a brother, as he dwells in the body, so regard the body that he, being strenuous, thoughtful, and mindful, may, whilst in the world, overcome the grief which arises from the body's cravings.

“While subject to sensations let him continue so to regard the sensations that he, being strenuous, thoughtful, and mindful, may, whilst in the world, overcome the grief which arises from the sensations.

“And so, also when he thinks, or reasons, or feels, let him so regard his thought that being strenuous, thoughtful, and mindful he may, whilst in the world, overcome the grief which arises from the craving due to ideas, or to reasoning, or to feeling.

“Those who, either now or after I am dead, shall be a lamp unto themselves, relying upon themselves only and not relying upon any external help, but holding fast to the truth as their lamp, and seeking their salvation in the truth alone shall not look for assistance to any one besides themselves, it is they, Ānanda, among my bhikṣus, who shall reach the very topmost height ! But they must be anxious to learn.....

“My age is now full ripe, my life draws to its close ;
I leave you, I depart, relying on myself alone !

Be earnest then, O brethren, holy, full of thought !

Be steadfast in resolve ! Keep watch o’er your own hearts !

Who wearies not, but holds fast to his truth and law,

Shall cross this sea of life, shall make an end of grief.”¹

The next day, he started again, but before doing so he cast a look at the beautiful city of Vaiśālī, which he was not to see again. On reaching Pāvā which was a day’s journey from Kuśinara, he accepted the invita-

1. Taken from “*Compassionate Buddha*” edited by E. A. Burtt, pp. 48-50.

tion to dinner of Cuṇḍa, the well-to-do smith of the place. After dinner, the exalted one felt very sick. He experienced violent pain in the abdomen and passed stools with blood. He remained calm and self-controlled and in spite of the acute sickness, set out with Ānanda towards Kuśīnara. In the way he rested by the side of a river, and there he told Ānanda that people might, after his death, curse Cuṇḍa for providing him with a meal, which led to such deadly consequences. So he asked Ānanda to console Cuṇḍa and convey to him the blessings of the Tathāgata.

He then started again and reached the grove of Śāla trees at Kuśīnara. Here he asked Ānanda to prepare a bed for him under the Śāla trees with the head to the north.

"I am suffering, Ānanda", he said, "And would like to lie down". As he lay on the bed, Ānanda asked the lord to give his final instructions for the guidance of the monks. There are four places, said the Buddha, to which the faithful devotees should make pilgrimages, the place where the Tathāgata was born, the place where he attained enlightenment, the place where the wheel of Dhamma was set moving, and the place where he attained Nirvāṇa. All those persons, who would visit these shrines, would be reborn in heaven. When he was asked how the cremation was to be carried out, he replied that the lay people and the Kṣatriyas of the place would see to it, so they need not worry on that account. At this stage Ānanda broke down and began to weep at the thought of the great loss they were all going to sustain. The Buddha consoled him saying that all composite things must some-

day come to an end and the body of the Tathāgata was no exception to that rule.

While he lay on his death-bed, an ascetic, Subhadra by name, came to get his doubts resolved by the exalted teacher. Ānanda tried to dissuade him, but when Buddha came to know of it, he allowed Subhadra to freely talk about his doubts, which he did. The Buddha removed his doubts and the ascetic converted himself to Buddhism then and there and became an Arhata before long.

In the end the lord asked the monks, if any one of them had any thing to ask from him. And when every one kept silent, he spoke the following words, "Now then, monks, I address you. Subject to decay are compound things ; strive on with diligence". After saying these words, he passed into the first trance and then into the second, third and fourth trance one after the other. Then going through the further stages of concentration, he reached the stage of the cessation of consciousness and feeling. From that stage he came back to the first stage of trance, then again moved on to the fourth stage and from that stage he attained Nirvāṇa.

When the news of the passing away of the Buddha was announced, the younger monks broke into lamentations, but the elder ones maintained their composure and equanimity, because they knew that all compound things would one day be destroyed. The next day the news was conveyed to the Mallas of Kuśīnāra, who came with garlands, perfumes and robes, to pay respects to the body of the lord. Dancing, singing and the performance of various necessary rituals were gone

through. This went on for six days and on the seventh day, the body of the lord was cremated with all due honours.

After the body had been completely burnt, Ajātaśatru, king of Magadha wanted a share of the relics, so that he could erect a Stūpa for the commemoration of the lord. Similarly the Licchavīs of Vaiśālī, Śakyas of Kapilavastu, the Būlis of Ailakalpa, the Koliyas of Rāmagāma, the Mallas of Pāvā, the Mouryas of Pippalivana, asked for a share. The relics were consequently divided into equal parts and handed over to all the claimants. The Nirvāṇa took place in the month of Vaiśākha on the full moon night in 544 B. C. 2500 years ago. Thus passed away one of the noblest and gentlest of men, whose message of love and compassion moves the hearts of men in the present as it did in the past when the people heard it from the blessed one himself.

CHAPTER II

The Teachings of the Buddha

The Buddha summed up his important teachings in the very first sermon, which he gave to his five disciples at Banāras soon after his spiritual enlightenment. (pp. 70-71). It is clear from it that the Buddha had no idea of teaching any philosophical system, his main purpose being to impart to the people at large the art of living, free from sorrows and delusions of all kinds. He gave the essential doctrines of pure religion divested from extraneous elements. During his time, there were many teachers who roamed about the country holding discussions on various philosophical problems. The solution which one teacher offered for the enigmas of life was, in most cases, opposed to the solutions offered by other teachers in regard to the same problems. Gautama Buddha realised, at an early stage, the futility of depending on philosophical speculations for solving the problems of life, and so he firmly set his face against being drawn into vain discussions which as a rule led nowhere. He accepted the world as he found it, and without enquiring as to how it arose and whence it came, addressed himself, in a most earnest manner, to the task of elucidating the causes of man's unhappiness, and pointing out the practical means for attaining the blissfulness of Nirvāṇa or deliverance from sorrow. "As the vast ocean," he says, "is im-

pregnated with one taste, the taste of salt, so also my disciples, this law and doctrine is impregnated with one taste, the taste of deliverance." (Cullavagga IX. 1.4.)

The doctrine of Buddha can be discussed under four heads. 1. The existence of suffering. 2. the origin of suffering, 3. the cessation of suffering and 4. the path leading to the cessation of suffering. We shall take these four noble truths one by one.

The Existence of Suffering.

Suffering is the lot of all men, in fact of all living beings. The removal of sorrow is the primary concern of religion, and Buddha confined himself, with a single-minded devotion, to this main problem. "One thing I teach," he said, "Sorrow and the ending of sorrow." Sorrow and suffering are ubiquitous, and unless one knows the right way of living, his life would be an unending stream of suffering, relieved by brief intervals of pleasure which also inevitably end in suffering and boredom. As he pointed out, 'Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, association with the unpleasant is suffering, separation from the pleasant is suffering and not to get what one wants, is suffering.' The term suffering includes all kinds of evils and dissatisfactions, which infect the life of an average human being. The Buddha should not be understood to mean that all mankind are equally subject to the same measure of suffering, or that all kinds of sufferings are self-inflicted sufferings. There is no doubt that some sufferings are caused by physical causes, or by other living beings, and they fall upon saints and sinners.

alike. If there is an earthquake all are seemingly liable to suffer, without any discrimination, and all men irrespective of being good or bad, are liable to be attacked by wild beasts or by wild men. Of course, a saint has greater powers of endurance and patience than a common man ; so when troubles befall him, he can bear them with calm heroism and unperturbed forbearance. But it is a fact that most of the troubles from which people suffer are the creation of their own minds. They arise from worry and anxiety, from anger, malice and envy, from avarice, pride and other undesirable mental states or as the Buddha used to say, from the cravings, hatreds and infatuations of life.

It is often assumed in modern times that, with the betterment of social and economic conditions all over the world, the major causes of man's unhappiness would disappear. The underlying idea is that we are unhappy because we are poor. If mankind were provided with all necessary comforts and amenities of life, they would achieve happiness. The fact that many people, in spite of being rich, are not happy should dissipate the wrong notion which links happiness with wealth, social freedom and equality. That apart from a sense of economic security, a thorough transformation in human nature is also essential in order to achieve happiness, is a truth which every sensible person should accept. True religion aims at the radical transformation of man and it was to this task that the Buddha set himself, whole-heartedly, in his role as a teacher.

As we do not, as a rule, know the art of living, there is no wonder, if most of us are unhappy in our

lives. Of course, some persons are more happy than others. They have, most probably, picked up, consciously or unconsciously, some of the elements of right living, and for that reason their lives have greater significance and joyousness than is the case with other people. Most of us have become immunized, by frequent exposure to unhappy experiences, so that we take our daily sorrows and sufferings as a matter of course. Many of us bear our load of sorrow in the hope, that tomorrow will bring us the complete satisfaction of our heart's desire, and so we go on, without realizing that it is possible for mankind to live at a higher level of existence than the one to which they are normally accustomed. Of course we devise various expedients, in order to forget for the time being our sorrows, boredoms and dissatisfactions. The so-called pleasures of life provide a stimulating dose, and as a drunkard or a drug addict, cannot do without his daily dose of alcohol or morphia, so we all have to fall back, from time to time, upon various mechanical diversions and sensual pleasures to keep ourselves going. This, as we all know, is not, after all, a satisfying mode of living. We are soon disillusioned, but not knowing anything better, take to the same course of life again and yet again.

It may be felt that the Buddha has over-drawn the pessimistic view of life. "What think ye," he once asked his disciples, "Which is more, the water which is in the four great oceans or the tears which have flown from you and have been shed by you, while you strayed and wandered on the long pilgrimage,

and sorrowed and wept over a mother's death, a brother's death, the loss of relations, the loss of property, all this you experienced through long ages....."¹ The fear of death and decay is always there to make a person pause, while he is engrossed in all sorts of pleasures. Yet this insistence on sorrows of life is not peculiar to Buddhism. We come across this view in the Upaniṣads and in the writings of many thoughtful people in all ages. In modern times Schopenhauer is well-known for his pessimism. Before him, Kant, the great philosopher of Germany, wrote in one of his articles in a similar strain: "Would any man of sound understanding, who had lived long enough, and had meditated on the worth of human existence, care to go again through life's poor play, I do not say in the same conditions, but on any conditions whatever."²

Pessimism is a mental attitude which, like optimism, is built up in course of one's life-time as a consequence of one's peculiar experiences and his reactions to them. Congenital factors may have something to do with it, but to a large extent, it is an acquired attitude. In the case of Buddha, the tendency to lay an exaggerated emphasis on the sorrows of life may be traced to the kind of influences to which he was subjected in early years. His father tried to keep him away from contacts with the ills of life. He had so great a surfeit of sense pleasures that

1. Samyutta Nikāya quoted in Oldenberg : *Buddha*, pp. 216-17.

2. Quoted by Dr. Radhakrishnan : *Indian Philosophy* Vol. I, p. 364.

they eventually lost their charm and became for him a source of anguish and misery. The rough and tumble of life is a healthy antidote against enervating pleasures. Happy and unhappy experiences make a wholesome combination and impart a balanced view of life. No wonder if Buddha, as a consequence of the hot-house life in which he was made to live throughout childhood and youth developed a sombre and melancholy attitude towards life.

It is, however, a fact that sufferings and sorrows do loom large in the lives of most of us ; and if some people are more happy than others, it is, as already stated, mostly due to the fact that their life is rich in those factors which on the whole make for happiness. It was the aim of the Buddha to reveal for mankind, the secret of a truly happy life. In the life of all of us, optimism and pessimism go side by side, pains and pleasures rub shoulders with one another and so it is always wise to see things as they are and not simply to live in a fool's paradise, by shutting out the unpleasant aspects of life from consciousness. It would be wrong to call Buddhism a pessimistic doctrine because, while on the one hand it emphasises the omnipresence of suffering and its cause in the form of desires, it also, at the same time, points out the way to deliverance from the sorrows of life. It gives to all men the glad tidings that they can, one and all-tread the path leading to the goal of blessedness. If the starting-point in Buddhism is pessimistic and melancholy, it ends on a note of optimism. "Although the doctrine" says Humpherys Christian, "Taken by itself is an extreme view, it provides, when

considered in conjunction with the complementary doctrine of deliverance, a philosophy all-sufficient for the immediate needs of man.”¹

The Doctrine of Impermanence :—According to Buddhism, the fact of suffering is closely associated with the impermanent nature of things. There is nothing in experience which is permanent and above change. No object is the same this moment, what it was at the previous moment. All existence is momentary. On account of the limitations of our sensory apparatus we may not be able to perceive the changes which take place from moment to moment ; but the change is taking place all the time. There is no halting-place, no moment of stability in the uninterrupted stream of change. “Even the ever-lasting hills are slowly being worn away, and every particle of the human body, even the hardest is replaced every seven years. There is no finality or rest within the universe, only a ceaseless becoming and a never-ending change.”² The law of change passes through the four stages of birth, growth, decay and death. It applies to all compounded things including man-made objects, ideas and institutions. “From a granite cathedral to a China vase, from a code of laws to an empire, all things rise to their zenith and then, howsoever slowly, decay towards the inevitable end.”³ It is not only the sun, the stars and

1. *Buddhism* p. 84.

2. Humphery's Christian: *Buddhism*, p. 80.

3. *Ibid*, p. 81.

the earth and all that it contains, that are painted with the mark of impermanence. Even the elements out of which the compounded things are formed, are in perpetual flux and becoming.

Suffering is the natural consequence of creating bonds of attachment with transitory things of the world. Whatever is transitory is painful. Things do not last; the germ of dissolution is in each one of them. Our bodies, our possessions, our relations, and our experiences, both pleasant and unpleasant, are all transitory in nature. We live and behave as if they are going to last for ever, and when any one of them gives way or dissolves, we take to lamentations as if something extraordinary has happened.

It is of the utmost importance that we should clearly recognise the impermanence of every thing in the universe. What we call our self, is no less subject to the law of transitoriness. According to Buddha, a human being consists of five Skandhas or aggregates, and they are all impermanent and non-substantial. These Skandhas are as follows:—

(a) Rūpa : form, matter or the body.

(b) Vedanā : feeling or sensation or both since there can not be a feeling apart from sensation and every sensation has some feeling tone or the other.

(c) Saṃjñā : It means both perception and abstract ideas *i.e.* all objects of knowledge.

(d) Saṃskāra : This word has been translated in a number of ways such as activities, dispositions, mental aggregates, volitions. The word Saṃskāra stands for trace or effect of previous experiences.

The word Samskāra may then be understood to stand for all those mental formations, which are the result of previous experiences ; compound or complex states of mind apart from Vedanā and Sañjñā already referred to. According to Dr. Har Dayal, Samskāra may best be interpreted as 'the will' or the volitional aspect of human nature.

(e) Vijñāna : Consciousness or soul. It is the common underlying substratum of the other mental factors of Vedanā, Samjñā and Samskāra. It is through consciousness that we can have sensations, feelings, ideas, voluntary and other activities. All these form so to speak the contents of consciousness. So it has been enumerated as a separate constituent apart from its contents.

The Buddha defines consciousness as an element, 'invisible, boundless, all-penetrating' (Dīgha IV.). The objects of the world make themselves known to us, only when they enter into consciousness. "The whole world is, therefore, existent only as far as it is irradiated by this element, and it vanishes again for us as soon as this element is temporarily or for ever extinguished."¹

The five Skandhas are sometimes spoken of as Nāma-Rūpa. This word occurs in the Upaniṣads as well. Rūpa stands for the body and Nāma for the various processes such as sensations, feelings, perception, idea mental volition etc. etc. These five Skandhas or constituents of personality are regarded as impermanent

1. George Grimm : *The Doctrine of Buddha*, p. 75.

in character. We know that the body is born at a certain time, and goes through the processes of growth, decay, old age, and death. The mental processes similarly appear and disappear. As a matter of fact, changes in mental states are too rapid to pass unnoticed while changes in the body are, to all appearance, much slower. Mind is virtually a shifting phantasmagoria of various psychical states. Even consciousness does not appear to be a permanent entity. Probably the transitory character of consciousness is deduced from the fact that in the condition of deep sleep we seem to be without any experience of consciousness.

Thus it is clear that, according to Buddhism, nothing is permanent, either in nature or in the mind of man. Everything passes away. Some moments of life bring us happiness ; similarly certain things are a source of pleasure to us. We fondly wish, that they should continue as they are and should not change. And when they change or become non-existent, we find ourselves in the grip of sorrow. Our various states of consciousness arise out of the contacts of our senses with their corresponding objects. When this contact ceases, as cease it must, the particular consciousness also ceases. The various thought-processes arise as a consequence of the internal activities of the brain brought on by some internal or external stimuli.

But it is very strange that the outer vibrations, which are themselves lifeless and without any sensory quality, should, on acting on our body, give birth to the consciousness of sight, sound, smells etc. The only answer that we get to this question in Buddhism is that

Nāma and Rūpa (body and consciousness) are mutually inter-dependent. If consciousness were not there, our body would not exist for us. Its utility as human body is due to its being associated with consciousness. Moreover, if the body of an embryo, at a certain stage of its growth, did not generate consciousness, it would not be capable of having any sensation and without sensation it would not survive much longer. In the case of animal organisms some sort of sensation is necessary for their growth and continuous activity. Similarly if the body were not there, the mental processes could not come into being, as they appear only through the activities of the various sense organs located in the body. As a matter of fact, in Buddhism, the contrast between body and mind does not exist as we find in the philosophies of western thinkers. The western thinkers, after having bifurcated body and mind, have occupied themselves all the time with the problem of explaining how the two interact. What we have actually to deal with according to Buddhism, are not two separate existents some-how brought together, but a single psycho-physical organism activating itself in various modes of behaviour. The inorganic material, under the pressure of physical forces is transformed into organic bodies, and these organic bodies, at a certain stage of development, begin to manifest conscious activities. Conscious behaviour and a certain organic complexity seem to go together. Buddhism thus tries to keep close to the facts of experience as far as possible and avoids speculation as to the hidden causes of things.

So we find the Buddha telling Ānanda that the

corporeal organism depends on consciousness and consciousness depends on corporeal organism.¹ "This truth, Ānanda, that on consciousness depends the corporeal organism, is to be understood in this way. Suppose Ānand, consciousness were not to descend into the maternal womb, would the corporeal organism consolidate in the maternal womb."

Nay, verily, Revered Sir.

Suppose, Ānanda, consciousness after having descended into the maternal womb, were then to go again, pray, would the corporeal organism be born to life in this world ?

Nay, verily, Revered Sir.

Suppose, Ānanda, consciousness were to be severed from a child, either boy or girl, pray, would the corporeal organism attain to growth, increase and development ?

Nay, verily, Revered Sir.

Accordingly Ānanda, we have in consciousness that cause, the occasion, the origin and the dependence of the corporeal organism.

I have said, that on the corporeal organism depends consciousness. This truth is to be understood in this way. Suppose, Ānanda, that consciousness were to gain no foothold in this corporeal organism, pray, would in the future, be birth, old age and death and the coming into being of misery's host ?

Nay, verily, Revered Sir.

Accordingly, Ānanda, here we have in the

1. *Samyutta Nikāya* II.

corporeal organism, the cause, the occasion, the origin, and the dependence of consciousness”¹

Having thus given the components of personality, the Buddha goes on to show, that they as well as the objects grasped by them are transient and as such the cause of suffering and sorrow.

“What think ye monks? Is the body permanent, or is it transient?

It is transient, O lord.

And that which is transient, is it painful or pleasant?

It is painful, lord.

What think ye monks, is sensation, is perception, all the activities of the mind, is consciousness permanent or transient?

They are transient, lord.

But what is transient, is it painful or pleasant? It is painful, lord.”²

There is nothing which can be saved from the ravages of time. Our pleasures of yesterday have no meaning for us today, and our pleasures of today will similarly become meaningless tomorrow. This is true not only of pleasures but of all of our experiences. Not only individual activities seem to have no enduring value; even the cultures of nations built up by the efforts of countless men and women, ultimately decay giving place to newer and more vigorous cultures which in their turn, are confronted

1. Quoted in George Grimm : *The Doctrine of Buddha*, pp. 73-74.

2. *Majjhima Nikāya*, Quoted, *Ibid* pp. 85-85.

with the same fate. Many cities which were once the seats of great cultural achievements are, today heaps of ruins, of interest only to the students of archaeology. These reflections are not meant to take away from an individual, all zest for action and achievement. But they help him to maintain a proper perspective in relation to all activities of life. Action which follows from the right understanding of the world should be more effective than that which is born of ignorance and illusion. Those persons who, fight shy of disillusionment and right orientation, perhaps do so out of the erroneous notion that if the people were to become wise and see things as they really are, they would lose all relish for action. According to Buddha, there is not the slightest doubt that any action which does not proceed out of wisdom but out of senseless clinging and attachment to the objects of desire, inevitably leads to sorrow and suffering, and this process goes on from one life to another, till a person learns to outgrow attachments and to see things in their real nature.

Is there a Soul :—The question, 'what am I' engaged the attention of Gautama Buddha as it did that of the sages of the Upaniṣads. When a number of Brāhmaṇa youths came to the Buddha to enquire from him whether he had, by any chance, seen a woman who had run away from them, he replied by asking them, "Which is of greater importance young men, to search for the woman or for your I."¹ But Buddha's

1. *Mahāvagga*, I. 14.

method of enquiry about the "I" was slightly different from that of the Upaniṣadic thinkers. Instead of trying to understand the nature of the self or "I" directly, he followed the indirect method of finding out what was not the self. It is what is known as the Anattā doctrine of Buddhism. The criterion laid down by the Buddha in this regard was that, what was ephemeral and perishable could not be the self. Reasoning on this basis, the Buddha came to the conclusion that the mental aggregates (the Skandhas), taken individually or collectively could not be regarded as self or a part of self. The Buddha says in one of the discourses recorded in Majjhima Nikāya, "Wherefore, Monks, whatsoever there is of body, whatsoever there is of sensations, whatsoever there is of perception, whatsoever there is of mentation, whatsoever there is of consciousness in the past, in the future and at the present moment,..... gross or subtle, mean or exalted, remote or close at hand.....in the light of the highest wisdom, is to be regarded thus 'This belongs not to me, this am I not, this is not myself'. According to Buddha what belongs to me should be quite under my control and I should be able to do whatever I like with it. We do not possess this power over our bodies. We cannot say 'Let my body be thus, let not my body be so'. Similarly our sensations, our feelings, ideas, volitions and consciousness are not under our control. Hence they cannot singly or together be regarded as my 'Self'.

Thus Buddha simply said that whatever is subject to change and suffering cannot be the self. But it would be unwarrantable to draw from it the conclusion, that he did not believe in any reality over and above,

the various constituents of personality.

It is, however, clear from the dialogues of Buddha that he had no belief in a separate eternal soul existing in each individual. He did not subscribe to Kakuda Kātyāna's doctrine of eternal souls, just as he did not accept the annihilistic doctrine of Ajit Kes Kambali. According to the Buddha, what distinguishes one individual from another, namely, body, sensation, perception, mental aggregates and consciousness is, in its nature, transient and perishable. If these adjuncts are eliminated, there is no way left for us to distinguish one soul from another. We are parts of a whole and the same life pulsates in all of us. Though outwardly different, we are all united in the common life of the universe, just as the myriad leaves of a banyan tree, though seemingly different, do not each have a separate life, but share in the common life of the parent tree, as a whole.

That the Buddha did not believe in individual separate souls and yet had a faith in spiritual reality, becomes clear from many of his dialogues. At one place, he vehemently protests against the insinuations of those persons who accused him of teaching nihilistic doctrines. "A destroyer is this ascetic Gautam, they say, he preaches the cutting off, the destruction, the nullification of the present living beings. But for what I am not, for what I say not, for that these good ascetics and Brāhmaṇas, thus falsely, groundlessly, untruly, in defiance of fact impeach me. For O Monks, as before so also now, I preach only suffering and the cessation of suffering".

The following dialogue, which took place between the monk Yamaka and Sāriputta, the great disciple of Buddha, clears the entire misunderstanding about the attitude of Buddha towards the real self or "I" of an individual.

Yamaka had come to believe that, according to the Buddha, the monk who attains salvation is completely annihilated after the dissolution of his body. This is how many scholars of Buddhism interpret the doctrine even now. When other monks could not dislodge him from this position, they requested the venerable Sāriputta to cure Yamaka of his heretical view. Consequently Sāriputta repaired to the cell of Yamaka and put this question to him : "Is this report true, brother Yamaka, that the following wicked view has arisen in your mind. 'Thus do I understand the doctrine taught by the blessed one, that on dissolution of the body, the monk who is delivered from all influences, is annihilated, perishes and does not exist after death.'"

"Even so," said Yamaka, "Brother, do I understand the doctrine". And then follows a long discussion, at the end of which Yamaka acknowledges his error in believing that after the dissolution of the body, the liberated soul completely perishes.

There is no doubt that the Buddha had his own view of the nature of the soul. Nowhere, in any of the dialogues, does he deny the self. He only denies the doctrine of a separate eternal soul for

each individual, and belief in the existence of an eternal individual soul, separating one person from another, is not even the doctrine of most of the Upaniṣads. According to the Upaniṣads, the Ātman is the universal spirit underlying all forms of life, the absolute principle which unites all beings into a common life. "The philosophy of the Upaniṣads" says a writer, "on which the Vedānta or Brahman philosophy was based, proclaims that all life is one. At the heart of the universe is the one reality of which the universe as we know is but a periodic manifestation." This is the only supreme deity known to Indian thought, for the Upaniṣadic philosophy, like Buddhism, revolts against the deistic conception of God. "But as the finite can never return to the infinite, unless it is in essence one with infinity, so that there is behind, rather than in each man and all that lives, the divine element, which we call the beatific consciousness, the ānand state, by which at rare moments, it enters into immediate relation with the absolute."¹

According to the Buddha, when death takes place all the skandhas are destroyed excepting Vijñāna or consciousness, which remains in tact and descends into a new womb for rebirth. Vijñāna in Buddhism is equivalent to Jīva in the Upaniṣads. According to the main doctrine of the Upaniṣads, a Jīva maintains its individuality, and goes from birth to birth till the final attainment of Mokṣa, when it loses its

1. Radhakrishnan, *Philosophy of Upaniṣads*, p. 79-80.

separateness and is merged in the Brahman or the Universal consciousness out of which it had taken its rise. A similar view is held in Buddhism. The Buddha held as did the Upaniṣads, that Vijñāna or Jiva consciousness continues its peregrinations from birth to birth till it is dissolved into a state of Nirvāṇa, which is another way of saying that it attains oneness with the universal consciousness and thereafter no further birth is possible. We shall have more to say on this subject in a later chapter.

Buddha and Ultimate Reality. The Buddha nowhere denies the Ātman doctrine, as originally taught in the Upaniṣads. There is, on the other hand, every reason to believe that the Buddha held the doctrine of universal self similar to that of the Upaniṣads. Of course, apart from some scattered indications, we do not find Buddha making any positive statements about the nature of ultimate reality. And the reason is obvious. Whatever predication we make in a judgement is always in terms of what we have experienced. We cannot, in any case, rise above our experiences. And it is already pointed out that what we get by experience is transitory and impermanent and therefore, unsuitable to be predicated about the absolute reality which is above all transitory manifestations. "Verily difficult to behold," he says, "is the non-ego, for not easy to behold is truth" (Udāna VIII. 3). But in the same context he gives expression to his faith in the existence of 'the realm of freedom' where there is no suffering and 'which must be looked upon as our real home.'

It was due to the inherent unfitness of logical concepts to discover anything about trans-experiential reality, that the Buddha always maintained silence, when anybody put any question to him pertaining to the existence of God or soul. The Buddha placed before mankind a way of life which if followed faithfully, would take them to the desired goal, and then by direct experience, they would know the truth about life and the universe. Truth comes at the end of the spiritual pilgrimage, and is not the subject of intellectual discussion. This is in fact, the view of the Upaniṣads also, but the Upaniṣads contain philosophical discussions as well ; though it is pointed out at the same time, that true knowledge or wisdom comes only from direct spiritual experience.

What the Buddha constantly taught was, that the common way, which people follow, consisting in the vain pursuit of pleasures and the effort to unravel the secrets of life by philosophical discussions, does not lead to the eradication of suffering and sorrow. In place of the common way of life, he gave the new way which he had discovered. Buddhism is, therefore, really a discipline or way of life to be assiduously followed throughout life and this discipline, if practised with whole-hearted devotion, ultimately brings the liberating wisdom. With that sorrow comes to an end, and a state of unutterable bliss and peace supervenes. The Upaniṣads called it the realisation of universal Ātman. But the Buddha would not say what it was. It is to be experienced by each person for himself. For this reason, the teachings of Buddha are sometimes described as.

‘come and see doctrine’ (ehi passa ca Dhammam). The doctrine of Buddha is also sometimes described as a Yāna, or a ferry boat, which helps you to cross the ocean of Saṃsāra to the other shore. What lies at the other end, you will know, when you reach there.

Buddha’s creed is not a theistic creed. He does not believe in a God, who creates the world by his mighty powers, and is the ruler of that world. In theism, God is looked upon as an infinite personality. He sees all things without eyes, hears all things without ears, and is drawn towards his devotees by feelings of love and affection. He is believed to possess all the imaginable great and noble qualities raised to an infinite degree, and is free from all imperfections. Islam, Christianity, and some sects in Hinduism believe in such a God. We have no means of knowing such a God either by direct experience or by rational arguments. All the arguments which are advanced, from time to time, to prove the existence of God have been found to be hopelessly inadequate, and were disparaged by the early Buddhists. All that we directly perceive is the universe with its manifest and hidden powers. According to the Upaniṣads, the universe is the manifestation of an inherent spiritual principle. It is the universal spirit or Ātman in a manifest form. The Buddha did not enter into philosophical discussions about the nature of the universe. He took the universe as he found it and conceived it spiritually, as is apparent from his belief in the

objectivity of the law of Dharma or righteousness. He declared his faith in the moral government of the universe. The world is such according to the Buddha, that goodness leads to good consequences, and wickedness to just the opposite consequences, and this connection between deeds and their fruits is maintained from birth to birth. This cannot, by any means, be regarded as a materialistic interpretation of reality which regards reality as quite indifferent to the distinctions of right and wrong. On the other hand, Buddha believes that virtue and happiness, vice and sorrow always go together. The Universe from this point of view, is itself divine. The divine nature of reality is thus obvious from the law of righteousness which inheres in it.

This then is the first noble truth ; all is suffering. Nothing in the world has any permanence about it. Everything, including the ego and the objects grasped by it, is transient and that which is transient is full of suffering. The significance of the first noble truth propounded by the Buddha lies in its clear realization, that not only the painful episodes of life but even the so called pleasant experiences end in sorrow and suffering. In our ignorance of the true nature of things, we spend our life-time in the pursuit of pleasures, in the vain hope that some day we shall arrive at a state of abiding happiness. The Buddha has drawn our attention to the great truth, that pleasure is as unsatisfying in the end as pain. Experience should be a great teacher, though seldom do we learn anything from it. We have had many pleasurable moments in the past ; yet what do they

avail to us, if our present moment is full of pain. The fact is, that whatever is transient is bound to have sorrow and dissatisfaction as its concluding phase. If this fact were clearly realized, all competition for power, wealth, fame, and pleasures and comforts of life, would cease and each person, instead of feverishly pursuing things which in their very nature cannot bring an abiding satisfaction, would aim, in co-operation with other persons, at producing conditions of universal welfare. The strife and struggle between nations would disappear and a new era of international concord and co-operation would dawn upon mankind. The energies of men would be directed towards the realization of those values, which leave no bitterness behind and make for universal harmony and goodwill. Unless the profound significance of the first noble truth is clearly understood, there can be no true progress in the direction of spiritual perfection.

CHAPTER III

The Second Noble Truth : Suffering has a cause.

After having drawn attention to the omnipresence of suffering in the world, the Buddha next sets himself to the task of explaining, how suffering takes its rise in the lives of all beings. Unless we clearly grasp the cause of suffering, we shall not be able to do anything for its removal. A good doctor diagnoses a disease before he begins its treatment. We should therefore, if we are to deal effectively with the problem of suffering, try to understand, in all its implications, the cause which is responsible for its genesis.

The Buddha believes in causation as the basic law of the world-process. Experience presents to us change everywhere. Nothing is static or permanent. Even what appears to us as stable is really a flux of processes. We are so constituted that we carve out of changing events, a world of identical things. It is only reflection, which reveals to us, that at each instant changes are taking place, and even the seemingly most stable things like rocks and stones consist of an unceasing series of changes. A thing is and is not at the same time. A plant or a child, for instance, at a particular moment appears to be stationary, yet it is growing all the time, though the growth becomes appreciable only after a certain time.

has elapsed. Our consciousness presents the most clear example of incessant change. We feel one conscious state melting into another, and this goes on indefinitely. What is true of consciousness is true of all things and events. A stable thing is only a convenient name useful for practical purposes ; but in itself it is an unceasing succession of events like a flame which goes on changing from moment to moment, though to all appearance, it is the same flame all the time. This dynamic conception of reality, held by the Buddha is quite in conformity with the modern scientific conception of the nature of material things.

The Buddha is mainly interested in the human problem of suffering. He does not devote himself to elucidating the nature and origin of the material world. To him it is a world of constant change, but in which the change takes place according to a certain system. He enunciates the law of causation to account for continuity in the world-process, and to explain each event in terms of the conditions of its occurrence. "I would teach you the Dhamma", he says, "That being present, this becomes, from the arising of that this arises. That being absent, this does not become, from the cessation of that this ceases."¹ He calls this Dharma or law, *Paricca-samuppāda* or the law of dependent origination. The origin of one thing is dependent upon another. There is nothing in the world which does not depend upon something else for its existence. A depends upon

1. *Majjhima Nikāya* II. 32.

B, B upon C, and there is no end to this process of dependent origination. The Buddha does not discuss the question whether there is any original ground of things, which does not depend upon anything else. He does not deny it either. When anybody asked him about the existence of an unconditional permanent background of experience, he generally maintained silence. Though he refused to express any view as regards the ultimate reality, we can find out, from his utterances here and there, that he himself probably had no doubts about its existence.¹ But he did not regard it important, in any way, to discuss the question of ultimate reality, as far as the solution of the main problem was concerned ; — the problem of the removal of suffering and sorrow.

The law of Pariccasamuppāda or dependent origination of things is, however regarded as one of the essential doctrines of Buddhism. According to it all events are conditioned by other events. The Buddha as already stated is not interested in applying this law to the explanation of natural phenomena. The world of nature is outside his domain. His main interest is human and he makes use of the law of dependent origination to explain the origin of suffering in all its forms.

The law of causation, as Buddha enunciates it, presupposes the moral structure of the world. The world is such that good and bad actions lead to good and bad consequences respectively. The world is not indifferent to moral values. The world of the Buddha, therefore, is of a different nature

1. Udāna VIII. 3.

from that of a materialistic philosopher, according to whom the moral efforts of human beings have no significance for the world which moves on in utter disregard of the hopes of mankind. In the world of the Buddha, a person has to pass through a number of births and deaths, according to the moral qualities of his life in each of his preceding births, till he attains Nirvāṇa or complete cessation of suffering. After that there is no further rebirth for him. This cannot, by any means, be regarded as a materialistic interpretation of the world.

The Buddha makes a brief statement of his view on the origin of suffering in the following words, "This, O Monks, is the sacred truth of the origin of suffering; it is the thirst for existence, which leads from births to birth ; the thirst for pleasure, the thirst for being, the the thirst for power." It is Taṇhā or craving, which binds a man to the various things of the world, and as all things are impermanent, including the craving self, the desire for them is bound to lead to disillusionment and therefore to suffering. The word Taṇhā or thirst is used to cover all those tendencies of mind, which crave for egoistic satisfactions, and separate one individual from another. "In fact, all forms of selfishness, the essence of which is desire for self, at the expense, if necessary, of all other forms of life ; life being one, all that tends to separate one aspect from another, must needs cause suffering to the unit, which even unconsciously works against the law." Desire in itself is not bad. Desire.

for salvation, desire for helping mankind, and other similar desires are not to be deprecated. It is desire for the interests of the separate ego, the arrogant self-assertion of the individual against the universal whole ; the refusal to regard other forms of life as so many aspects of the same reality ; it is desire in all these forms that becomes a source of suffering to the individual as well as to others.

The complete law of dependent origination was formulated to place 'Taṇhā' in its proper setting and to explain how Taṇhā brings about the successive rebirths of the same individual till the achievement of Nirvāṇa. The final text of the law consists of twelve links, but it seems to be an elaboration of previous versions, in which there was a smaller number of items. For instance, in *Samyutta Nikāya* II. 86, the Buddha gives the following account of the origin of suffering. "In one, monks, who abides reflecting on the enjoyment of things, craving increases. From craving follows grasping, grasping leads to becoming or desire for existence. The desire of existence becomes the cause of rebirth. With rebirth as cause, there follow old age and death, grief, lamentation, pain, depression and despair. This is the cause of this whole mass of pain." Here we have five links of the chain of causation ; namely, craving, grasping or greed, becoming or desire to be, rebirth and suffering in various forms. The complete formula enumerates twelve links of the chain of causation and they are as follows :

Avidyā (ignorance), Saṃskāras (aggregates of mental impressions), Vijñāna, (consciousness) Nāma-

Rūpa (embodied being), Āyatana (six sense organs), Sparśa (contact), Vedanā (sensation cum feeling), Taṇhā (craving), Upādāna (grasping), Bhāva (becoming), Jāti (rebirth) and Jarā, Maraṇa (old age, death) etc. Of these twelve links, the first two Avidyā and Saṃskāra belong, according to the view of Buddhaghosa, to the past life of an individual and are put in here to explain its connection with his present life ; the next eight from consciousness to desire for existence or becoming refer to the present life, and the last two birth and old age etc. belong to the succeeding life, in which the desire for life in the previous existence, finds a concrete embodiment.

It would be helpful, in order to understand the chain of causation, if we start from the last link. We suffer from old age and other forms of ills, because we are born. 'Would there be any suffering, old age or death' asked Buddha of Ānanda. 'If there were no birth.' So birth is the cause of old age and death etc. No birth and no old age or death. The word cause here is not to be interpreted in the sense in which it is used by a modern scientist. It is used simply to imply the interdependence of the various aspects of human nature. So we are told that old age death etc. depend upon our birth in this life. The very fact of our being born carries with it the implication that old age and death will also follow in due course.

But why are we born at all ? This, according to the formula, is due to Bhāva or the desire to live, generated in the previous life as a result of the actions performed and ideas cherished in that life. If, in the previous life, an individual were to extinguish, com-

pletely, the will to live he would, naturally, not be reborn in any of the realms of being to enjoy again the various pleasures of life. It is Bhāva or the will to live again, present in the mind of a dying person, which becomes the condition or the cause of his future existence.

The Bhāva or the desire for existence, is the result of Upādāna or clinging to the objects of experience. As we enjoy the various objects of desire, our attachment to them grows still further, and we want to go on enjoying them. Moreover, many desires remain unfulfilled. As the person grows older he finds himself unable any longer to satisfy his cravings, but they continue to exist in the mind and give rise to the desire for continued existence. Thus, the process of becoming is kept alive and the person goes from birth to birth.

Clinging or attachment to the objects of enjoyment (Upādāna) is brought about by Tṛṣṇā (Pāli Tanhā). If there were no desire or craving for objects, there would be no attachment or clinging to them. Because we desire certain objects again and again, attachment grows around them in course of time, and we begin to feel that we cannot do without them. Our life as it were gets entwined around them, and so they become a part of our lives. Tṛṣṇā or Tanhā is spoken of, in Buddhistic works, along with Avidyā as the root cause of evil. "The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra declares that Avidyā is the father and Tṛṣṇā, the mother of the phenomenal world. Tṛṣṇā is also the name of a daughter of Māra, the Deva of desire and death. According to Daśa-Bhūmika Sūtra, it produces.

attachment to the objects of enjoyment. In the Tibetan pictures, it is represented by a man drinking wine."¹

Trṣṇā or desire depends upon Vedanā (sensation) produced by an object. If an object produced no sensation, pleasant or unpleasant, there would be experienced no desire either to possess it or to keep away from it. Sensation in its turn is brought about by contact or by Sparśa and contact could not take place, if there were no senses (Āyatana); the senses in their turn depend on Nāma-Rūpa. The word Rūpa stands for the body made up of four elements and Nāma for the various mental states collectively. Nāma-Rūpa therefore signifies the embodied human being. The senses, can exist only in a living organism.

Nāma-Rūpa is declared as depending on consciousness. "Suppose", asks Buddha of Ānanda, in one of the dialogues, "Consciousness were not to descend into the womb, would an embodied human being or Nāma-Rūpa take shape in the womb." "No lord." "Therefore Ānanda, consciousness is the cause, the occasion of the origin of name and form." The Buddha goes on to say, that consciousness, in its turn, depends on name and form. Thus consciousness, according to Buddha, is not an independent entity existing in itself. It is always found in a name and form. So Vijñāna and Nāma-Rūpa are inter-dependent. There can be no Nāma Rūpa without conscious-

1. Har Dayal : *The Bodhi-Sattva Doctrine*, p. 41.

ness and vice versa. "Everything that is born and dies or is reborn in another existence is name and form plus consciousness." And yet consciousness is actually and logically prior because, when death takes place, the four Skandhas i. e. Rūpa, Vedanā, Sanjñā, Saṅkhāras (Samskāras) are dissolved but Vijñāna or consciousness of the dying person descends into a womb and thus becomes the germ of a new being. In this way the continuity of personal identity between one life and another is maintained. Dr. Hardy says, "It is distinctly stated in the Pāli canon that Vijñāna is that Skandha which continues to exist after death and enters the mother's womb for the next rebirth."¹ Vijñāna is thus the connecting link between one life and another. This Vijñāna is next described as being conditioned by Saṅkhāras. The word Saṅkhāras, in this context, means the cumulative effects of the actions of a person, of body, mind and speech, throughout his life-time, as shown in the form of wishes and thoughts at the time of death. This meaning of the word Saṅkhāras is made evident from a sermon of the Buddha "on rebirth according to the Saṅkhāras" as recorded in Saṅkhāruppatti Suttānta in the Majjhima Nikāya. "It happens, my disciples, that a monk, endowed with faith, endowed with righteousness, endowed with the knowledge of the doctrine, with resignation, with wisdom, communes thus with himself, 'now then, could I, when my body dissolves in death, obtain rebirth in a powerful princely family.' He thinks this thought, develops on this thought, cherishes

1. *Bodhi-Sattva Doctrine*, p. 74,

this thought. These Saṅkhāras and internal conditions (Vihāra) which he has thus cherished within him, and fostered, lead to his rebirth in such an existence. This, disciples, is the avenue, this the path, which leads to rebirth in such an existence."

Saṅkhāras are thus the ideas and desires cherished by a person repeatedly, and which bring about a change in his consciousness. This consciousness descending into the womb determines the nature and character of the new birth.

Saṅkhāras are described as conditioned by Avidyā or ignorance. It is obvious that a completely enlightened person would not entertain the Saṅkhāras which, after all, land him into a new birth. So it is on account of ignorance that he cherishes and fosters the Saṅkhāras. By Avidyā, the Buddhists mean the ignorance of the four noble truths enunciated by the Buddha. The sage who develops a complete insight into the noble truths, annihilates all desire for worldly objects and so is not born again.

The doctrine of twelve Nidānas or links is looked upon as of great importance in Buddhism. Its importance is only second to that of the four noble truths. It is usually discussed in connection with the second noble truth concerning the origin of suffering. Taṇhā or ceaseless craving is what gives rise to suffering. The doctrine of twelve Nidānas aims at supplying connecting links to explain, how Taṇhā itself arises and how it leads to suffering from birth to birth till it is finally extinguished.

In Buddhist art the inherent working of the chain of causation is represented in the form of a turning wheel with twelve spokes. These twelve spokes represent the twelve Nidānas, which follow each other as the wheel of life (Saṃsāra) rotates around its hub. In Chinese and Tibetan art the twelve Nidānas are pictorially represented. For instance, Avidyā is represented as a blind man feeling his way with the help of a stick; Saṅkhāras as a potter working at his wheel with pots lying all around him; Vijñāna is represented as a monkey climbing a tree; Nāma Rūpa as a boat crossing a stream; the Ṣaḍāyatana or the six organs of sense by a house with six windows; Sparśa, by a man with his eyes pierced by an arrow. Vedanā is represented by a couple of lovers embracing each other (that is object and sense organ); Taṇhā or craving as a man drinking wine; Upādāna by a man who is collecting flowers and putting them in a basket; Bhāva as a married woman from whom a new life would take birth in course of time. Jāti is represented by the birth of a child and Jarā Maraṇa by a corpse being carried to the cremation ground.

Like the revolutions of a wheel, birth and death regularly follow each other and this turning of the wheel will stop only when its cause is removed i.e. when tṛṣṇā is annihilated by the complete removal of Avidyā.

Rebirth and Karman :—It should be clear from the above account that the doctrine of the twelve Nidānas implies the theory of rebirth. They are spread over three consecutive lives of an individual

i.e. his previous life, his present life and the life that is to succeed the present one. This process will go on indefinitely till the condition of the total extinction of *Taṇha* is fulfilled.

Rebirth goes along with *Karman*. Our desires find expression in *Karman*, which is the instrument for the realization of desires. The *Karman* of an individual may be physical, vocal or mental. To whatever category a *Karman* might belong, it is sure to be followed by its fruits. As, ultimately, all actions originate in the mind, Buddhism lays special stress upon keeping the mind free from evil thoughts. "One's slightest thought has vast effects, not only on the thinker, but on all that lives, hence the tremendous power of hatred and love, which man, in child-like ignorance, is pouring upon the world day and night." But it is equally important that a person should exercise control over his speech and acts as on his thoughts. Buddhism accepts freedom in the performance of one's actions. It is, therefore, wrong to equate the Buddhist theory of *Karman* with fatalism. *Karman*, unlike destiny or providence, is a natural law, the knowledge of which can enable a man to mould his future destiny by his own efforts. One is thus free to perform or not to perform a particular action; but once it has been performed, nothing can prevent its consequences from being reaped. What we are at present is the result of our past *Karman* and our *Karmans* of the present will determine what we shall become in the future. "Not in the sky, nor in the midst of the sea, nor anywhere else on earth, is there a spot where a man may

be freed from an evil deed.”¹ Again it is declared, “By oneself evil is done ; by oneself one suffers, by oneself evil is left undone, by oneself one is purified.”²

In the 135th discourse of *Mijjhima Nikāya*, a question is put to Gautama Buddha as to why there are short-lived men and long-lived men, sickly men and healthy men, people in high position and those in low position, stupid people and people with bright intellects. To this question, the Buddha answers as follows. “All beings, O Brāhmaṇa, are masters of their actions, slaves of their actions. Actions distinguish persons from one another, according to their evil nature or their excellence. Suppose, O Brāhmaṇa, some man or woman is cruel and blood-thirsty, and is given to killing and murder, without any compassion or pity for living beings, such a person after death, will go downwards and into a hell-world. Or if he is reborn a man, he will be short-lived.” And he goes on to explain further, how one’s own Karman are responsible for making a person short-lived or long-lived, healthy or sickly, happy or unhappy in various lives.

Rebirth is a necessary corollary of the doctrine of Karman. It is clear from experience that even in the case of a long-lived individual, all actions do not produce their full effects during his life-time. Disparities amongst mankind also require for their satisfactory explanation, the phenomenon of rebirth. Especially, when we come face to face with infant

1. *Dhammpada* V. 127.

2. *Ibid* V. 165.

prodigies, we cannot find any other explanation for them as satisfactory as the one based upon the possibility of previous existences. Heredity can explain the origin of the particular body with which a human being is born, but it cannot easily explain the extraordinary mental and moral aptitudes, which individuals exhibit during their lives. According to both Hindu and Buddhistic thought an individual chooses the body and the environment, which are most suitable for the expression of his particular propensities, which he brings with him in his new birth. The body is contributed by his parents, the rest is the individual's own acquisition, waiting for further development along the path of his spiritual evolution.

This, then, is the second noble truth taught by the Buddha. Suffering is not without a cause, and the cause lies in the ceaseless craving of man for worldly objects and egoistic satisfactions. As long as the craving remains, the individual has to go through a number of births enduring all sorts of sorrows and hardships. The wheel of life continues rotating under the generating impulse of an individual's actions. It comes to a stop when the moving force of desire, issuing in all sorts of actions, is extinguished for ever.

CHAPTER IV

The Third Noble Truth

The Cessation of Suffering—Nirvāṇa

In the first two noble truths, stress is laid upon the ubiquitous character of suffering and the conditions which give rise to it. Suffering is not a very correct rendering of the word *Duhkha* which, in the thought of Buddha, is used to indicate the general unsatisfactoriness of human life and its various activities. They are all of transitory character and even the feeling of pleasure, however satisfying it may appear at the moment of its experience, ends in a note of disillusionment, and this is true of all experiences which have their roots in personal craving or desire. Instead of learning a lesson, from our past experiences, of the futility of the pursuit of pleasure in various forms, we persist in the same mode of living, in the vain hope that the satisfaction denied to us so far will assuredly come to us in the future. This is a vain hope according to the Buddha and the sooner we realize this fact, the better would it be for us.

The doctrine of Buddha, however, does not end on the gloomy note of pessimism. He places before us the possibility of achieving permanent happiness and this is the theme of the third noble truth. Suffering comes to an end, when we empty ourselves of all personal desires or *tr̥ṣṇa*. In the second truth, we are told that *tr̥ṣṇa* or thirst for the joys of living creates in us an attachment to various terrestrial objects.

This leads to Bhāva or the desire to live again and thus a new birth comes into being with all its attendant miseries. As long as one continues to be born again and again, he will have to pass through various ills of life. It is only when one achieves a state of desirelessness or freedom from thirst, that cessation of suffering becomes possible. "This, Ye monks, is the most excellent truth of the extinction of sorrow; it is the entire and the complete extinction of the same thirst, its abolition, rejection, putting away, extirpation."¹ In Schopenhaur, we have 'the will to live' as the source of all evils. It is more or less an echo of Buddha's thought, which also regards desire as the main-spring of the various activities of man creating in him attachment to life and so a desire to live again, after the present body has lost its vitality. The desire to live naturally becomes the germ of a new birth, when the same cycle is repeated once again.

The idea as to how the annihilation of Tanhā or thirst leads to the annihilation of suffering is clearly expressed in the following extract from Saṃyutta Nikāya, "Suppose, Ye monks, the light of an oil lamp is burning, but no one from time to time pours in, new oil and attends to the wick; then Ye monks, according as the old fuel is used up, and no new fuel added, the lamp for want of nourishment, will go out. Even so, ye monks, in him who dwells in the insight into the transitoriness of all factors of existence, thirst is annihilated; through the annihilation of thirst, grasping is annihilated; through the annihilation of grasping,

1. *Majjhima Nikāya* III.

becoming is annihilated ; through the annihilation of becoming, birth is annihilated ; through the annihilation of birth, old age, sickness, death, pain, lamentation suffering, sorrow and despair are annihilated. Such is the annihilation of the whole chain of suffering."

The annihilation of thirst, the most important link in the chain of suffering can take place through insight into the transitory character of all objects of desire. This insight is a gradual process and dawns upon the individual after he has, with unceasing persistence, trodden the eight-fold path of enlightenment, which is the subject of the fourth and last noble truth of the Buddha's teachings.

The Arhat, who has won this insight attains Nirvāṇa. He will have no new birth. As long as he remains alive, he shows in himself all the marks of an emancipated person, and after death he gets into a state of eternal peace and bliss, which is simply indescribable in intellectual categories. As long as the saint lives, before the dissolution of his last body, he experiences various sensations, but they have no longer any power to produce in him a desire for the objects of experience. He attains perfect control over himself. He allows thoughts or outer sensations to enter his mind if he so wills, and when he no longer wills it, thoughts and sensations do not affect him at all. In a discourse in *Dīgha Nikāya*, the Buddha gives a vivid description of his withdrawn state of mind on a night of crashing thunder-storm and flashing lightning. "Now at one time, Pukkusa, I was

staying near Ātuma in a barn. Just then, in a thunderstorm, in a whirling hurricane, when the lightnings were flashing forth and the thunder-bolts were crashing, not far from the barn, two peasants were struck by the lightning, and four draught oxen. Then, Pukkusa, a great crowd of people came from Ātuma, and stood round the two peasants and the four oxen killed by the lightning. Now, Pakkusa, I had come out of the barn and was pacing up and down in front of the threshing floor under the open sky. And a man, out of this great crowd of people, came towards me, bowed and stood aside. And to the man who stood there, I spoke thus, 'why, brother, has this great crowd gathered here ?' Just now sir, in the hurricane, amidst the rain pouring down with flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder, two peasants have been killed and four oxen. Therefore this great crowd has assembled. But you, sir, where have you been ? 'Just here, brother, I have been.' Then surely sir, you have seen it 'Nothing brother have I seen.' But sir, you have surely heard the noise. 'Nothing brother, have I heard of the noise.' 'Then sir, were you sleeping ?' 'No brother, I was not asleep.' 'How now sir, were you conscious ?' 'Certainly brother, ... and at this the man began to wonder, 'O how strange, how wonderful, how deep indeed must be the peace wherein pilgrims are able to abide, since one of them being conscious and awake, here in the hurricane, amidst the rain pouring down with flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder need neither see nor yet hear the

noise.' And having thus shown his great admiration for me he turned round and went off.¹

The above quotation refers to the great powers of absorption and concentration acquired by an Arhat. When once a spiritual aspirant begins to taste of the great joys of meditation, the other joys resulting from the bodily sensations lose their power to attract, and so they can no longer bind him in ties of attachment.

In "Questions of King Malinda," the Arhat who has attained Nirvāṇic consciousness is described by Nāga Sena, as possessed of thirty great qualities, some of which are as follows. His heart is affectionate, soft and full of tender love. Evil is killed, destroyed, cast out from within him. He exhales the most excellent, unequalled, and sweet odour of righteousness. He is untainted by the love either of this world or the next. He enters into the enjoyment of the highly praised, the most desirable peace and bliss of the ecstasies of contemplation, stable and strong and undeviating is his self-confidence. He has broken and burst through the five obstacles to the highest life in this world ; lust, malice, sloth, pride, and doubt. He has seen the truth. The sure and steadfast place of refuge from all fears has he gained. The whole idea of the Nirvāṇa is summed by Nāga Sena, when he says to the king, "And if you ask, how is Nirvāṇa to be known ? It is by freedom from distress and

1, Quoted by George Grimm: *The Doctrine of the Buddha*, pp. 328-329.

danger, by confidence, by peace, by clam, by bliss, by happiness, by delicacy, by piety, by freshness and so on."

And the deep desire of Nirvāṇa rises only in the man who feels a profound discontent in the things of this life. "And in the mind of him, who thus perceives the insecurity of transitory life, of starting afresh in innumerable births, the thought arises : all on fire is this endless becoming ; burning and blazing, full of pain is it and of despair. If only one could reach a stage, in which there were no becoming, there would then be calm, that would be sweet,—the cessation of all these conditions, the getting rid of all these defects (of lusts, of evil and of Karman) the end of craving, the absence of passion, peace, Nirvāṇa. And therewith, does his mind leap forward into that state in which there is no becoming and then has he found peace, then does he exult and rejoice in the thought 'a refuge have I found at last' and he strives with might and main along that path, until gone far beyond the transitory, he gains the real, the highest fruit of Arhatship i.e. Nirvāṇa."¹

We have mentioned, above, the great qualities of an Arhat who has attained to Nirvāṇa during his lifetime. All his cravings are extinguished. He has completely destroyed the fires of lust, hatred and ignorance. The Buddha himself attained to this state of Bodhi at the age of 35, after which he spent the

1. Questions of King Malinda. Condensed from Rhys Davids : *Buddhism* (American Lectures) pp. 172-175. 176-78.

remaining period of his life in preaching the noble path of deliverance to his disciples and the people at large.

In Buddhist literature there is mention of the various stages of the path of holiness. The first is the stage of conversion. It is also known as entering upon the stream. An individual hears the noble doctrine, reflects upon it and is converted to the view of the transitoriness of all phenomena. He feels an inner urge to dedicate himself to the life of spiritual quest. At this stage, he frees himself from the three fetters; namely, those of the delusion of self, doubt in regard to the Buddha's doctrine and the efficacy of rites and ceremonies for spiritual attainment.

At the second and third stages, the converted man after having got rid of the delusion of self, belief in ritualism and doubt about the spiritual path applies himself to eradicating lust, hatred and ignorance from his mind. At the second stage only faint traces of these fetters are left and if the aspirant dies while he is at this stage, he will have to return only once again to this world. At the third stage, lust, hatred and ignorance are completely destroyed, and so the disciple after death does not return to the world.

The fourth stage represents the stage of the full-fledged Arhata, in which the saint becomes free not only from the desire to return to this world but also from the desire for all sorts of material or immaterial existences. He is not born in the Rūpa or Arūpa Lokas i.e. the celestial regions with form and without form. The Arhat at this stage is completely freed from the last taint of pride, self-righteousness and ignorance. The various qualities, which have been

described in the previous section pertain to the holy man at the highest stage of spiritual perfection. He sheds, around himself, goodness and love in abundant measure ; his compassion knows no bounds and he is possessed of the highest wisdom or insight into truth and an abiding condition of blissfulness and well-being.

The ten fetters, which the spiritual aspirant gets rid of, one after the other, as he moves forward on the path of realization are as follows :

1. Sakkaya-ditṭhi or delusion of self. This is the first obstacle which he has to get over, namely belief in a separate individuality apart from the others. This belief makes for egoism or selfishness and all the evils arising out of egoism. The belief that each man possesses a permanent self which separates him from others is regarded by Buddhism as a great delusion and the root cause of sorrow. "Men overlook the fact" says Rhys Davids, "That they are really no more separate than a bubble in the foam of an ocean wave is separate from the sea, or than a cell in a living organism is separate from the organism of which it forms a part. It is ignorance that thus leads them to think 'This is I' or 'This is mine' just as a bubble or a cell might think itself an independent being."¹ The Buddha wants us to realize our oneness with the whole of existence as it is now, as it was in the past and as it would be in the future. Nirvāṇa is definitely attained when one completely realizes his oneness or identity with the whole of reality.

1. *Buddhism* (American Lectures) p. 126.

2. Secondly, one should completely free himself from the fetter of doubt as to the truth of Buddha's doctrine. Without faith no one will be able to make a start in spiritual living. All great enterprises presuppose an element of faith ; the spiritual enterprise no less than any other enterprise of importance. The Buddha, as he told Ānand before his Pari-Nirvāṇa had taught all the necessary doctrines without keeping anything back. So he admonished him and other disciples to work out their salvation with diligence, having perfect faith in the truth (the Dhamma) which would serve as a lamp for their guidance. After that, each one was expected to be a lamp unto oneself. The Buddha, however, does not ask his disciples to have blind faith in his doctrines. All that is demanded is faith in the reliability of the path pointed out by the Buddha, and that too after thorough reflection. But one will have to tread the path by his own efforts. The second fetter is known as Vicikicchā Vicikitsā or doubt and unless one gets rid of it, one cannot make up one's mind to follow the path.

3. Thirdly, a disciple of Buddha should divest himself of any faith in the efficacy of religious ceremonies and rituals. This fetter is called *Sīlavatapārā-māsa* in Pāli. True religion implies inner transformation, and the mechanical performance of rites and ceremonials is quite futile from the point of view of inner purification and culture.

4-5. The fourth and fifth fetters are Kāma (sensuality or bodily passions) and Patigha (ill-will or hatred). The Buddha was against asceticism of the extreme type ; and so he asked his followers to observe

moderation in regard to bodily passions. Of course, in the case of monks complete celibacy and abstinence was insisted upon. It is clear that a person who is a slave to his sense desires cannot make any progress in spiritual life. All ethical and religious doctrines lay stress upon a controlled life of the senses. Similarly hatred or ill-will against others cannot have any place in religious life which requires us to get rid of separative tendencies from our minds.

6-7. After the above mentioned fetters have been broken and the disciple has thereby crossed over the second and third stages of the path of holiness, he has to cut asunder the remaining two fetters known as *Rūparāga* or attachment to the life on earth or any other world of form, and *Arūparāga* or desire to be born in formless worlds or in heaven i. e. all desire to be reborn again in any form.

8-9-10. The remaining three fetters are *Māna* (pride) *Uddhacca* (self-righteousness) *Avijjā* (ignorance). The fact that pride, self-righteousness and ignorance are included in the list shows that great importance is given in Buddhism to these states of mind as they are hindrances in the path of spiritual enlightenment. The effort to get rid of all these fetters should go on side by side with the actual treading of the eight-fold path, the fourth noble doctrine of the Buddha. Before taking up the exposition of the eight-fold path, it seems necessary to discuss the status to which an Arhat attains after the dissolution of his last body on this earth. The question is, does the saint, who has attained to Arhatship become completely annihilated after death or does he

continue to have some kind of existence after death has taken place.

The Status of an Arhat after Death.

Buddhism is clear on the point that as long as desire is not completely extinguished, man has to be born again and again. The question, however, arises in the case of an emancipated Arhat whether he, after death, is completely destroyed or continues to exist in some form. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg, two very eminent scholars of Buddhism, are of the opinion that an Arhat who has attained Nirvāṇa is completely destroyed after death. They interpret Nirvāṇa as equivalent to annihilation. After referring to the questions put by the wandering monk Vaccha-Gotta to the Buddha and the latter's silence, Oldenberg says, "If Buddha avoids the negation of the existence of the ego, he does so in order not to shock a weak-minded hearer. Through the shirking of the question as to the existence or to the non-existence of the ego, is heard the answer, to which the premises of the Buddhist teaching tended ; *the ego is not, or what is equivalent, the Nirvāṇa is annihilation.*"¹ And he says further that though the great disciples of Buddha were convinced of the truth that Nirvāṇa is annihilation, they thought it proper "to draw a well-meant veil over the picture of the truth, the sight of which threatened the destruction of the unprepared." And Oldenberg maintains with full confidence, that it was just to placate or not to injure the feelings of the unprepared

1. 'Buddha' p. 273.

that "the official teaching of the church represented that on the question, whether the ego is, whether the perfected saint lives after death or not, the exalted Buddha has taught nothing."¹

It did not strike Oldenberg and other scholars of this way of thinking that if what they said was true, it followed that the Buddha and his close associates were guilty of insincerity and dissimulation, and that they deliberately practised a fraud upon their pious and trusting followers. Apart from this unseemly accusation of falsehood, this view goes against all that is known as the Buddha's definite opinion on this subject or the opinion of his great disciples.

There are, however, other equally eminent scholars who maintain just the opposite view. Max Müller holds that Nirvāna is the completion of being and not an extinction of it. According to him the original teaching of Buddha and of the ancient order of his disciples was that Nirvāna meant the entry of the spirit upon its rest, above the joys and sorrows of the transitory world. In his view a religion which lands us at last into nothing, ceases to be a religion in the real sense of the word.

Edward J. Thomas holds a similar opinion. He writes, "We may put aside the view that it (Nirvāna) means the annihilation of the individual. This interpretation was drawn by opponents in ancient times, not as being the real Buddhist view, but was made an accusation, as being the logical conclusion, to

1. Buddha p. 276.

which the Buddhist theory of self ought to lead. In modern times, it has even been held, that it was Buddha's own view but that he disguised it for the sake of weak hearers."¹

We should, as E. J. Thomas suggests, put aside the view that Nirvāṇa means annihilation, as of no consequence in the face of a large number of facts, which definitely prove that view to be wrong and foundation-less. It is of course true that not only the opponents of the Buddha but even some of his own disciples drew the same conclusion from Buddha's theory of the individual self. The monk Yamaka to whom we have already referred is a case in point. He came to hold the view that the exalted one taught the doctrine of the annihilation of the saint after death. He was made to see the error of his view by the elderly Sāriputta. The whole dialogue between Yamaka and Sāriputta is an unmistakable refutation of the erroneous opinion held by Oldenberg, Rhys Davids and some other scholars. Similarly the answers given by the nun Khema to the questions of Prasenjit, the king of Kośala, bear no other meaning excepting that the self of the saint after death becomes immeasurable and deep like the ocean. And the Buddha himself, in very strong language, denies the charge of nihilism that was often brought against him. He says in one of the dialogues that body, sensation, perception, mental activities and consciousness being all impermanent and for that

1. *Early Buddhist Scriptures*, p. 102.

reason producer of suffering and pain one cannot say of any of them, singly or collectively, that this is mine or I am this or this is my self. A learned and noble disciple therefore turns away from body, sensation, perception etc. as not being his self and thereby becomes free from passion and being free from passion he is released. He goes on to say, "A monk whose mind is thus released cannot be followed and tracked out even by the gods including Indra, Brahman and Prajāpati, so that they could say 'there rests the consciousness of the Tathāgata or released person'. Even in this actual life, I say that a released person is not to be thoroughly known. Though I thus say and thus preach, some ascetics and Brāhmaṇs accuse me wrongly baselessly, falsely and groundlessly, saying that the ascetic Gautama is a nihilist and preaches the annihilation, destruction, and non-existence of an existent being." This is what I am not and do not affirm." After having expressed himself rather vehemently on this point, he asks the monks "Put away that which is not yours and what is not yours? The body, sensations, perceptions, mental aggregates and consciousness are not yours. Put them away as not yours. Their putting away will be to your profit and happiness. What do you think, monks, were a man in this grove to collect grass, sticks, branches and foliage and burn them or some other things, would you think the man was taking or burning you? No lord. And why? Because that is not your self nor anything belonging to your self."¹ "The

1. Condensed from *Alagadupanna Sutra* given on p. 108 by Thomas.

natural sense of this" says Sir Charles Elliot. "Seems to be that the Skandhas have no more to do with the real being of man than have the trees of the forest where he happens to be. This suggests that there is in man something real and permanent to be contrasted with the transitory Skandhas, and when the Buddha asks, whether anything which is perishable and changeable can be called the self, he seems to imply that there is some-where such a self."¹

It is thus clear that the analysis of the self into a number of Skandhas does not completely exhaust its nature. There is a permanent being, on which the changing Skandhas form themselves. As Dr. Rādhākṛṣṇan puts it, "If the self is merely impermanent, compound of body and mind, qualities and functions, then when it disappears there is nothing which is delivered. We destroy our desires, burn our karmans and are lost for ever. Freedom becomes extinction. But Nirvāṇa is a timeless existence so Buddha must admit the reality of a timeless self,"² That timeless self is always there, making possible all transient, empirical phenomena. "Of Nirvāṇa, we cannot say that it has arisen," we are told in the questions of Malinda, "Or that it has not arisen or that it can arise, or that it is past or future or present." Of course in experience, it is only the passing forms which can be experienced, and not the being on which they are based. Passing forms how-

1. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I, p. 219.

2. *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 451.

ever, without the basic reality become a meaningless and inexplicable phantasmagoria.

There is no doubt that the Buddha believed in a permanent basic reality. "There is, O disciples, something that is not born, not produced, not created, not compounded. Were there not, O disciples, this unborn, unproduced, uncreated, uncompounded, there would be no possible escape from the born, the produced, the created, the compounded."¹ This being is real. But nothing that belongs to the world of sense-experience can be predicated of it. The saint or Arhat on attaining Nirvāṇa becomes one with the timeless uncreated Being, which is ever the same above all changes of time or empirical phenomena.

As the Buddha did not give any systematic exposition of his philosophical views, we have to fall back upon his stray sayings spoken on different occasions, in order to form a more or less correct idea of his position with regard to the nature of ultimate reality. There is however no doubt, that the lack of clear systematic exposition on this matter led, in course of time even among his followers, to different interpretations of his doctrine.

1. *Udana* VIII.

CHAPTER V

The Fourth Noble Truth : The Way to Salvation.

The Buddha taught what he regarded religion to be in the real sense, and took care to keep it apart from philosophical beliefs. Most religions of the world make certain assumptions which have nothing to do with religion. They are extraneous matter illegitimately imported into religion. Most of the conflicts between religion and science, and between one religion and another are due to diverse non-religious elements found in almost all religions. The Buddha scrupulously avoided discussions on matters which had no relevance from the point of view of pure religion. When Mālun̄kyaputta asked the Buddha, why he had not explained questions of an ultimate nature, namely whether the world is eternal or non-eternal, finite or infinite, and similar other questions, he was told by the exalted teacher, that religious life did not depend upon holding one dogma or the other. Whether a person accepted one religious dogma or the other, there still remained birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, grief and despair. And the Buddha goes on to say “Accordingly Mālunkya Putta, bear always in mind what it is that I have not explained and what it is that I have explained. And what Mālun̄kyaputta have I not explained ? I have not explained, that the world is eternal. I have not explained that the world is not eternal.....I

have not explained that the soul and body are identical or that the soul is one thing or the body another. I have not explained that the saint exists after death or that he does not exist after death or that he both exists and does not exist after death or that he neither exists nor does not exist after death. And why Mālunkyaputta, have I not explained them ? Because this profits not, nor has it to do with the fundamentals of religion, nor does it tend to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, the supernatural faculties, supreme wisdom and Nirvāṇa. Therefore have I not explained it. And what, Mālunkyaputta have I explained ? Misery have I explained, the origin of misery have I explained, the cessation of misery and the path leading to the cessation of misery have I explained. And why, Mālunkyaputta have I explained this. Because, this does profit, has to do with the fundamentals of religion and tends to aversion, absence of passion and Nirvāṇa. (Summarized from Sutta 63 of *Majjhima Nikāya* : H. C. Warren's Translation). It is not that the Buddha had no beliefs of his own in regard to these matters. We have found that in spite of himself his beliefs show themselves at many places. But he did not regard them as essential parts of religion which according to him was concerned mainly with suffering and the way out of suffering.

We have already explained at some length his first three noble truths, namely (1) that the life of man is beset with suffering (2) the cause of suffering lies in thirst or craving for existence and egoistic satisfactions and (3) that suffering can be brought

to an end by the extinction of craving. We shall now take up the fourth noble truth of the way that leads to the cessation of suffering. This is the noble eight-fold path consisting of right view, right aspiration or resolution, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

(1) **Samyag-dṛṣṭi** (Pāli ; Saṃmā-diṭṭhi) 'Right View.' Originally Samyag-dṛṣṭi referred to the noble truths taught by the Buddha in his very first sermon to the five monks at Banāras. A religious aspirant is to deeply reflect on the sorrows of life, how they originate and how they can be ended by following the path prescribed by the Buddha. Constant reflection on these truths would produce in the mind of the disciple a strong desire to walk on the path of spiritual realization. In later times, the word Samyag-dṛṣṭi came to be defined in different ways. According to one view Samyag-dṛṣṭi meant faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha. By some writers it was identified with wisdom in general, or knowledge of things as they really are. It was even used to denote 'belief in the utility of alms, sacrifices, oblations, and good deeds and in the existence of other worlds and of holy saints and monks.' It would, most probably be in conformity with the intention of the Buddha, if we take this word to mean right comprehension of the truths taught by him.

(2) **Samyak-Saṅkalpa** (Pali ; Sammā-Saṃkappo) Right aspiration or right resolution. Constant reflection on the noble truths should lead to right aspira-

tion. The disciple should make a strong resolve that he would devote himself whole-heartedly to the task of spiritual realisation. He is to strengthen the resolve by dwelling upon it constantly so that it no longer remains merely a pious wish but takes on a practical shape. Mere intention or aspiration is of no avail unless it is translated into practice.

The remaining six stages of the eight-fold path represent the practical programme for transforming human nature and attaining self-awareness or enlightenment. Out of them right speech, right action, right livelihood and right effort are intended to bring about a change in the moral life of an individual. The Buddha laid, perhaps for the first time in the history of Indian culture, a very great emphasis on moral life in its two aspects of self-restraint and compassion for all living beings. The cultivation of moral values was regarded by the Buddha as an essential part of spiritual perfection. Moral life thus becomes, in Buddhism, the very core of religious life. In the Upaniṣads also moral virtues received due consideration, but they did not receive the emphasis and importance which the Buddha later on gave to them. In him, they become supreme so that nobody could claim wisdom or spirituality unless he had cultivated love and compassion towards all living beings and goodness in speech, action and mode of earning livelihood. The disciple, therefore, was required to keep a strict watch over himself, so that even in his unguarded moments he might not say anything or do anything which could cause injury or unhappiness to living beings.

(3) **Samyag-Vāk** (Pali *Sammā-Vācā*) ; 'Right Speech.' It consists in "Refraining from falsehood, from malicious speech, from harsh speech and from frivolous speech." A religious aspirant is required to exercise a great restraint upon his speech. He is not to allow untrue, slanderous or angry words to escape his lips nor should he engage in flippant or frivolous conversation during which one is likely to say things which are not exactly true or free from malice or hatred. A person who every now and then bursts into anger or makes use of unseemly words, may be a very learned man or very proficient in his special art and calling but he is, by no means, a spiritual man.

(4) **Samyak-Karmānta** (Pāli; *Sammā-Kamm-anta*). Right action. It consists in "Abstaining from taking life, from taking what is not given, from immoral sex-life." In all religions, moral rules are mostly given in the form of prohibitions rather than in positive forms. Certain actions in every civilised society strike all right-thinking people as definitely bad and antagonistic to social well-being. They are expressed in the form of 'dont's' and are easily understood that way. In Buddhism also though the idea of right action is given in the form of prohibitions, works of active benevolence and love are at the same time enjoined as a duty upon all Buddhists and have been praised so profusely in Buddhist works, that the religion of Buddha has become known as the religion of love and compassion. In the *Sutta-Nipāta* we are told, that just as a mother, regardless of her own life, watches over her only child, so should every one feel an unbounded love for all beings.

(I, 8). In the *Samyutta-Nikāya* it is said that a little love is far superior to great gifts (XX. 4). Love for parents is greatly extolled by the Buddha, (*Anguttara Nikāya* I, 2. 4). It is said that the debt which a son owed to his parents could not be repaid even if he were to give to them all the kingdoms and treasures of the world. Filial piety enjoys a place of importance in the Buddha's scale of virtues.

(5) **Samyag-Ājīva** (Pali *Sammā-Ājīva*) ; 'Right livelihood.' One should give up false or dishonest ways of earning one's livelihood or ways which cause injury or harm to others. All professions which do not come up to the standard are to be eschewed and even in otherwise useful professions, the spirit of honesty and social service should be the prevailing motive. Five occupations are specially mentioned as being harmful—those of a butcher, wine-seller, dealer in poisons, trafficker in slaves and caravan trader.

(6) **Samyag-Vyāyāma** (Pali *Sammā-Vāyāma*) 'Right effort.' While the three preceding stages are concerned with outer expressions of life, the stage of right effort aims at purity of inner life. With this end in view, the spiritual aspirant makes ceaseless effort to prevent evil states of mind from arising and to suppress those which have already arisen. He is also to try to produce in his mind states of love and compassion and other praiseworthy states and to strengthen those good states which already exist. In other words only good and pure thoughts are to be allowed to find entrance into his mind. Whenever an evil thought is going to appear it should be suppressed then and there. The individual is to foster and

nourish the noble side of his nature and by gradual effort to make it impossible for evil thoughts to find lodgement in his mind.

The next two stages are concerned with spiritual exercises in meditation and concentration. In their efforts to understand Buddhism, people sometimes ignore these spiritual exercises and lay stress only on the moral side, and so they arrive at the erroneous conclusion that Buddhism is simply an ethical religion. Spiritual exercises are as important in Buddhism as the cultivation of moral virtues.

(7) **Samyag-Smṛti** (Pali ; *Sammā Sati*) 'Right Mindfulness'. The Buddhist writers lay great emphasis on the importance of mindfulness. Nothing that we do is to be done heedlessly, no word that we speak is to be spoken without careful thoughtfulness. Even the act of walking and other similar automatic acts are to be brought within the ambit of constant watchfulness and a similar care is to be observed even in the reception of sense impressions from outside. "Nothing of what goes on in us should escape us. Neither should we miss anything which happens around us or within the range of our senses. The Buddhist scriptures tell us that one must be conscious that one gets up when one gets up, that one sits down when one sits down, and so on with all movements. We should be conscious of the feelings which arise in us and recognise them. Now there is born in me covetousness or anger, now sensual desires are arising. When the power of attention is enhanced, and one has reached the point, when one misses none of the phenomena which are occurring in and around him

one proceeds to investigate them and to search for their causes.....If he performs a charitable deed, if he accomplishes an act of devotion, he should question himself as to the motives which he obeyed, should scrutinise his feelings and their origins, just as when he has committed an action said to be evil. The result of this kind of interrogation will often result in a shifting of moral values and will show in much less favourable light the noble actions on which one was ready to pride oneself" (Madame David Neel quoted in *Diagnosis of Man* by Kenneth Walker, p. 189-190).

While discoursing to king Ajāta Satru on the great importance of mindfulness, the Buddha says "How O, king, is a monk endowed with mindfulness and self-possession ? In this case, a monk is self-possessed in advancing or with-drawing, in looking forward or looking round, in bending or stretching his limbs, in wearing his inner and outer robes, bowl in eating and drinking, masticating and tasting, in answering the calls of nature, in walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, speaking and keeping silence. Thus, O, King, is a monk endowed with mindfulness and self-possession."¹

Apart from the careful performance of sensory and habitual functions the term mindfulness is specially discussed under four heads in Buddhist works :— Kayā Upasthāna, Vedanā Upasthāna, Citta Upasthāna and Dharma Upasthāna. Under Kāyopasthāna, one is to constantly think of the body as transient and unsubstantial and as the seat of all evil passions

1. Digha 1, 47

and desires. Many Buddhist writers dwell with great minuteness on the foul and repulsive aspects of the body and its contents. Sometimes they recommend that one should now and then visit a cemetery and see for himself corpses in the process of decay in order to convince himself of the unsubstantiality of the body in which one as a rule takes so much pride. It is believed that meditation on bodily impurities will keep a man away from sensual desires. It is, however, doubtful if this treatment really serves the purpose for which it is meant. Later on, we find a wholesome attitude being displayed towards the body, by regarding it as a vehicle for the performance of noble and benevolent deeds. As such, it is to be properly fed and taken care of, and is to be regarded as an instrument of well-doing, and not as a means of securing pleasures of all kinds.

Similar meditations are to be practised in respect of Vedanā (sensory experiences), Citta (Mind) and Dharmas (things). Not only the body but our mental processes such as sensations, feelings and ideas as well as the external objects, which we regard as ours and to which we are so much attached, are all of them of a transient and unsubstantial character. The idea is that through daily meditation on the ephemeral nature of our possessions and experiences, we should gradually develop an attitude of renunciation and non-attachment towards them.

Mindfulness involves our keeping a strictly neutral attitude towards things as well as towards ideas and feelings which spring up in the mind. We are to view them as impartial spectators and thereby to deal

adequately with them. "How does a monk abide reflecting on mind? Herein, a monk, when his mind is affected by passions, understands that it is affected by passions and similarly when it is free from passions, when it is affected by hatred or by delusions or when it is composed or distracted, concentrated or not concentrated, released or not released." (Adridged from *Majjhima Nikāya* I. 55. Sattipatthāna Sūtra).

(8) Samyak Samādhi (Pāli; Semma-Samādhi) 'Right-concentration.' This last stage of the noble eightfold path, consists of exercises in concentration. These "Disciplines of attention and abstraction are almost identical with those, which are better known as belonging to yoga."¹ A Buddhist monk is expected to devote a certain part of each day to these exercises in concentration, to turn the energies of his mind from 'self thinking and self willing' and to direct them to the meditation of a set object such as a circle of smooth earth or any other object or idea. Having divested the mind of all hindrances, the disciple in religion takes to contemplation, with unfailing regularity each day. As he progresses in his contemplation, his mind begins to feel joy and his body becomes calm. This helps further the abstraction of mind and a trance-like condition sets in. "Free from sensual desires, free from evil thoughts, he attains and abides in the first trance of joy and pleasure which is accompanied with reasoning and investigation and arises from seclusion." From the

1. Anand Koomār Swamy, *Buddha, and Gospel of Buddhism* P, 246.

first trance, the disciple progresses to the second trance in which a state of internal serenity is felt, and with the mind fixed at one point, reasoning and thinking which were characteristic of the first trance, come to a stop in the second trance. There is a further elevation of the disciple's mind to the third and then to the fourth trance, in which the feelings of pleasure and elation subside and an indescribable state of equanimity and peace is realised.¹ These four trances are "stages of concentration of mind resulting in more and more detachment from external impressions."² In Buddhist works, higher stages than these four trances are also mentioned. Altogether the whole series consists of eight or nine attainments. In the next stage after the fourth trance, the disciple rises to the contemplation of empty and infinite space. Then he passes to the contemplation of infinite consciousness. In the succeeding stages he rises still higher till consciousness also disappears. It implies the attainment of complete blankness of mind and the dawning of new dimensions of awareness, of which no description can be given. The account of stages of concentration given above reminds one of the various kinds of Samādhis described in Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras. In the highest stage of abstraction, all thoughts of self and external objects are stated to drop away and the true nature of reality is revealed to the spiritual seeker.

The word Samādhi used in the creed of Buddha means Citta-ekāgratā, the one-pointed state of the

1. *Dīgha* I. 47.

2. Thomas : *Early Buddhist Scriptures*, p. 69.

mind. When successfully practised, it brings about the absence of wandering or distraction of mind, resulting in the accompanying stages of calmness, serenity, ease and blankness. It is in such a state of complete detachment and freedom from distraction that wisdom dawns upon the individual. It is the state of enlightenment or *Prajñā*, the attainment of which is the ultimate goal of human life. Here we come across a remarkable similarity between Upaniṣadic and the Buddhist points of view. In both systems of thought, the knowledge of Reality or Supreme wisdom is a matter of personal realization, but while the Upaniṣdic sage in an ecstatic upsurge tries, in, however, broken a manner, to give an articulate expression to the experience, the Buddha remains silent about it and leaves it to the aspirant to know it for himself. He remains content as we have seen, with simply stating that the ultimate realization is something where there is neither this earth sun or moon, or in other words, an experience to which the categories of logical or empirical thinking are altogether inapplicable.

The eight-fold path, as described above, is sometimes divided into three parts, namely, morality, concentration and wisdom. Right speech, right action and right livelihood constitute morality. Right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration form one whole under spiritual exercises. Right view and right aspiration represent the knowledge or wisdom aspect of Buddhist teaching. Though a disciple begins his training with an initial faith in the four noble truths, full knowledge of truth dawns upon

him only after he has practised the moral' precepts and successfully undergone, for a long period, the various spiritual exercises prescribed for seekers of enlightenment.

CHAPTER VI

Bodhi Pakṣya-Dharmāḥ

or

Qualities and Practices constituting

Enlightenment.

The four noble truths to which we have alluded above, form a systematic whole and constitute the foundation of the Buddhist creed. But during his long period of ministry, the Buddha referred to various important topics in separate discourses. These important topics, later on, were brought together under the name of Bodhi Pakṣya-Dharmā (Pali : Bodhi Pakkhiya-Dhammā). As each topic was at first dealt with separately, it is not surprising, if some items appear under more than one topic. The various topics were divided into seven groups in the following manner :—

1. Four stations of mindfulness (Smṛti-Upasthānāni)	4
2. Four right efforts (Samyak Prahāṇāni)	4
3. Four bases of psychical powers (Ṛddhi Padāḥ)	4
4. Five ruling principles (Indriyāṇi)	5
5. Five powers (Balāni)	5
6. Seven factors of enlightenment (Bodhi Aṅgāni)	7
7. Eight-fold path (Āryāṣṭāṅga-mārgāḥ)	8

A very great importance is given to these thirty-seven principles and practices, because it is believed that sometime before his death, the Buddha referred to his teachings under these heads. These principles, therefore, embody the last precepts and injunctions of the master himself. They, however, do not embody anything which is quite new. They are only a different arrangement of some of the topics with which we are already familiar. The spiritual practices which the disciple has to undergo and the powers and qualities that accrue to him as a result of these practices are included in the Bodhi Pakṣya Dharmāḥ.

The Bodhi Pakṣya Dharmāḥ are, therefore, the principles which came to be regarded as conducive to enlightenment. In some later works, a different number than that of thirty-seven is given. Aśvaghoṣa, for example, enumerates only twenty-eight principles in his *Saundarānanda-Kāvya*, while in the Pāli *Netti-Pakaraṇa*, forty-three Bodhi Pakkhiya Dhammās are mentioned.

The final form of the formula came to include the thirty-seven Dharmas referred to above. A short time before his death the Buddha as already said, referred to these thirty-seven principles of enlightenment and exhorted his disciples to practise them, meditate upon them and spread them in order that pure religion may last long and continue to minister to the good and happiness of people. In the words of the Buddha, it was to be done, "Out of pity for the world, to the good and the gain and the weal of gods and men." A mention is made of these principles in the *Mahā Pari Nirvāṇa Sūtra* in the *Dīgha Nikāya*.

1. The four Smṛti Upasthānāni (four earnest meditations), are the same as have already been discussed under the head of mindfulness, the seventh stage of the noble eight-fold path, and so need not be repeated here.

2. Four Samyak Prahāṇāni (four right efforts) have similarly been dealt with under the sixth stage of the eight-fold path.

3. Four Ṛddhi Padāḥ (bases of psychic powers) are the four means, by which miraculous powers are attained by a person who is endeavouring to acquire sainthood. The word Ṛddhi is translated in "*The Tibetan English Dictionary*" by S. C. Das as "A miracle, a magical illusion, an apparent marvel, the power to cause which is considered the highest manifestation of moral acquisition". It is the wonder-working power, said to be possessed by a saint on the attainment of spiritual perfection. It is believed that he can see things happening in all places with his divine eyes ; he can also hear all kinds of human and divine sounds by means of his ears ; he can read the thoughts of others, he can remember his own past life and those of others and can see the death and birth of all beings about him. He can make himself small or big according to his desire and perform many other miracles. In modern times some of these powers are spoken of as clairvoyance, telepathy, fore-knowledge of events etc. It reminds one of the Siddhis, which are enumerated in the third section of Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras.

The means for acquiring these powers consist in (a) creating a strong will to acquire Ṛddhi, and

uniting it with the right type of concentration, while making the four right efforts all the time. (b) Along-with a strong will, necessary exertion or energetic endeavour is to be made. (c) At the same time the aspirant is to unite his one-pointed thought to the object of the Rddhi and (d) a continual investigation has to be carried on in the object which is sought to be acquired. Along with each of these four means, earnest concentration exercises and the right efforts to cherish noble thoughts and to keep the mind away from sinful thoughts have to be continuously maintained. In other words the aspirant should deeply concentrate or in the words of Yoga Sutras, perform a Samyama on the object of the Rddhi by uniting his will, thought, energy and understanding with the forces of concentration and right efforts.

4-5. Five Indriyas and five Balas (five ruling principles and five powers). Strangely enough, the names of the Indriyas and the Balas are exactly the same. They are Śraddhā (faith), Vīrya (energy), Smṛti (mindfulness), Samādhi (concentration), and Prajñā (wisdom). These are the fundamental qualities and practices which are associated with the earnest seeker of Nirvāṇa. "These five Indriyas are related to moral and spiritual qualities and values" (*Pāli English Dictionary*) and are of sovereign importance. The word Indriya, in this connection, is to be regarded as derived from the same root as Indra, meaning mighty or powerful and should not be confused with any of the five sense-faculties.

Out of these five ruling principles, Smṛti, Samādhi and Vīrya (Vyāyāma or right effort) have already been

mentioned in the eight-fold path. The remaining two Śraddhā and Prajñā are equally important ; the first being the starting point for entering on the path of religion and the last Prajñā or wisdom being the realization of the goal of spiritual endeavour, the dawning of enlightenment or insight into truth.

The five Balas are exactly the same as the five Indriyas. It is difficult to understand, why this duplication of the same qualities and powers should have taken place. Perhaps the Indriyas refer to the initial stage, while the same qualities, when they are fully cultivated, no longer remain mere potentialities but become actually operating powers. As such, though the names are the same they are really distinct from each other. The Śraddhā of a novice just beginning his spiritual quest and the Śraddhā found in the enlightened sage, though nominally the same, are yet qualitatively distinct from each other. The same can be said of the other four qualities.

6. The seven Bodhi Aṅgas (seven factors of enlightenment). They are 1. Smṛti, 2. Dharma Pravīcaya (Pāli : Dhamma-Vicaya), 3. Vīrya (Pāli : Vīriya), 4. Prīti (Pāli : Pīti), 5. Praśravdhi (Pāli : Passaddhi), 6. Samādhi, 7. Upekṣā (Pāli : Upekkhā).

Out of these Smṛti, Vīrya, Samādhi have already appeared in other combinations.

Dharma Pravīcaya (study of Dharma). A disciple who wants to attain Arhatship should make a close study of Dharma or the doctrines of Buddhism. The word Dharma is meant to include all that was taught by the exalted teacher. It means the study of almost the whole of the Pāli canon. It also means receiving

oral instruction from a competent teacher in a spirit of reverence, love and faith.

Prīti :— It means “Emotion of joy, delight, zest, exuberance.”¹ It is also translated as bliss, exaltation of mind and a state of joyfulness. It is regarded as a necessary mark of a saint who always remains happy and cheerful. He experiences a state of joy or contentment under all circumstances.

Praśravdhi (Tranquility, serenity). It is closely associated with Prīti. An Arhat or a saint always remains serene and tranquil. He does not become excited or impatient or angry even when things do not happen according to his wishes. His faith and confidence do not waver when everything appears dark and sombre and all hope is lost.

Upekṣā (indifference to joy and sorrow. Equanimity). “It consists in preserving a balanced mental attitude in all circumstances, in joy and sorrow, in fame and obloquy and in gain and loss.” The virtue of Upekṣā has great importance in Buddhist thought. Samatā or equality with regard to all pairs of opposites is stressed in the Bhagvad Gītā as well. It is rightly felt that a person who is easily dislodged from an even state of mind by the impact of outer happenings is as yet far from the achievement of sainthood or Arhatship.

7. The Aṣṭāṅga Mārga or the eight-fold path. It has already been described in the previous chapter.

It is clear from both these schemes of Buddha's

1. *Pāli Dictionary*.

teachings, that Buddhism is not merely a set of doctrines to be studied and believed in. It is a way of life, that aims at achieving the spiritual goal. In this way of life we can discern three divisions : “A preliminary training in morality, then a mental training consisting of practices intended to concentrate the mind and detach it from sensual things ; leading finally to full knowledge of truth. This knowledge is called Paññā.”¹

Paññā is the Pali equivalent of Prajñā which means ‘wisdom’.

1. Thomas, *Early Buddhist Scriptures*, p. 54.

CHAPTER VII

The Saṅgha or Order of Monks.

A Call to Renunciation.

Buddhism aims at leading man to the highest goal of spiritual perfection, and this requires an attitude of complete self-consecration and renunciation of worldly attachments. One cannot have both the world and the Nirvāṇa at the same time. Spiritual life, according to the Buddha requires of the disciple ceaseless watchfulness over his thoughts and actions, however trifling and unimportant they may appear to be, and a constant effort to keep the mind pure of all undesirable ideas and selfish desires. This is a most difficult job, and becomes all the harder if one keeps oneself exposed to all sorts of temptations and worldly contacts. To attain a high degree of spiritual excellence needs a life of whole-hearted application extending over a number of years. It has been found by experience that it is a superhuman task to attain spiritual enlightenment while living a worldly life. "It is useless" says Humpherys Christian, "To assuage the fires of hatred, lust and illusion if the senses are ever providing more fuel for flames. Hence the advisability of a calm sequestered life, avoiding, for example, contact with women,...and likewise avoiding luxury of every kind in appearance, dress, possessions or modes of living. Only when the four paths had been

trodden to the end and the Arhat state attained, would it be safe to return to the life of men"¹

According to Buddhism, therefore, renunciation of the world is necessary in order to achieve Nirvāṇa. Of course there may be some noble natures, who can keep themselves untainted, even while living the life of house-holders; but such persons are rare. The Buddha himself says at one place, "Whether one lives the house-hold life or whether one goes out of home, if he is living wrongly, I do not praise him...whether one lives the life of household, O Brāhmaṇa or whether one goes out from home, if he lives rightly I praise it. On account of his right life he may affect true and real welfare."² But the Buddha has no doubt in his mind that, other circumstances remaining the same, the person who renounces the world has every chance to make much speedier progress in the spiritual path than the person who sticks on to the life of a householder. "He who lives at home is much busied, much occupied, much concerned, much harassed, not always holy and entirely given to truthfulness, not always holy and entirely restrained, chaste, devout, renouncing." Of course, a man while living in the world may lead a life of virtue, devoting himself to noble and benevolent actions; but it is extremely difficult for him to attain Nirvāṇa. When a question was put to the Buddha, whether a house-holder who has not cut off his worldly ties can after death make an end of his suffering, he is reported to have said in reply, "There

1. *Buddhism*, p. 134.

2. *Majjhima Nikāya*. quoted by Grimm in *The Doctrine of Buddha* p. 415.

is no house-holder, whatsoever, O Vaccha, who, not having left off house-hold ties, upon the dissolution of the body makes an end of suffering."

The Saṅgha or the brotherhood of the Buddhist monks was formed within a few weeks after the Buddha had attained enlightenment. It had two-fold functions. In the first place, it provided the best environment for spiritual development, and secondly it was through the Saṅgha that the Dhamma of the Buddha was propagated to mankind. Saṅgha is an inseparable part of Buddhism, and it played a most important role in the spread of this great religion to the various parts of the world. Says Sir Charles Elliot, "The great practical achievement of the Buddha was to found a religious order which has lasted to the present day. It is chiefly to this institution that the permanence of this religion is due."¹

The Saṅgha is run on democratic principles. Every monastery or Vihāra elects its own head to manage the affairs of the Vihāra. The head does not enjoy any special privileges. He is only the most respected one among equals. There is no rule that the head of the monastery is to be obeyed implicitly by the rest of the members. There are certain rules of discipline and these rules are followed in all monasteries. A monk is liable to be expelled from the Saṅgha, if he commits one of the major offences. For the minor offences he may have to undergo penances or a penalty that may be imposed upon him with the concurrence of the whole fraternity.

1. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I, p. 237.

The monk has not to take any vows on entering the order and he can leave it whenever he wills, either for a temporary period or for ever, and return to the world. Admission to the order is open to all men above the age of 20 years, provided that they are not suffering from certain diseases, have not to pay any debts and are not in the king's services. In the case of younger people, the consent of the parents is necessary.

The founding of a monastic order by the Buddha was not something quite new. There existed a number of such orders even before him. But unlike some other monastic orders, as those of the Ājīvakas and the Jains, the rules framed for the Buddhist Saṅgha were not stringent or unduly harsh. In many ascetic orders the members subjected themselves to a very harsh discipline, under the mistaken belief, that mortification of the body led to the development of supernatural powers. When Deva Datta and some other disciples advised the Buddha to make the rules of the order more rigorous and austere, he refused to do so. The Buddha laid greater emphasis on inner purity of the heart than on bodily asceticism. Thus he says to the ascetic Kassapa that "Though a man performed all manner of penances, yet if he had not attained the bliss, which comes of good conduct, a good heart and good mind, he is far from being a true monk. But when he has the heart of love that knows no anger or ill-will, when he has destroyed lust, and become emancipated even before death, then he deserves the name of a monk. Asceticism is comparatively easy, what is really hard is the conversion and emancipation

of the heart.”¹ He, therefore, took every care to see, that the ascetic and self-mortificatory practices did not run to excess or extravagance.

During his life-time, his opponents accused him of leading a comparatively easy life and of prescribing a similar easy life for his mendicant disciples. We find from the Buddhist works that many persons wanted to join the order because it afforded them a means of leading a comfortable life. (Mahāvagga I. 49). In Magadha, the members of the order enjoyed many amenities. They were not subjected to the usual penalties for wrong doing, because the idea prevailed that the members of the Saṅgha were so noble that they could not do any thing legally wrong or incorrect. “Hence robbers, debtors, slaves, soldiers anxious to escape service, and others who wished for protection against the law or merely to lead an idle life, desired to avail themselves of these amenities. This resulted in the gradual elaboration of a code of discipline which did much to secure that only those actuated by proper motive should enter the order, and only those, who conducted themselves properly could stay within it.”²

The rules of the order as they stand today, are 227 in number and it is required that every member of the order would observe them scrupulously. They are known as Prātimokha. It has been the practice from very ancient times to recite them twice every month before the entire gathering of monks living in a parti-

1. *Digha Nikaya* VIII, quoted by Sir Charles Elliot, Vol. I, p. 239-240.

2. Sir Charles Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism* Vol. I, p. 242.

cular monastery. After each rule is read out, any member, if he has violated it, is expected to confess this fact publicly. In case there is no such avowal, the next rule is read and so on, till all the rules are read out. It is felt now-a-days, that some of the rules are not suitable for modern conditions, specially to the people of western countries, and can be safely omitted.

The life of the monks cannot in any way be regarded as a comfortable life. They have to take the vows of chastity and poverty. A monk owns only three robes *i.e.* the upper, middle and lower garments, a waist cloth, a begging bowl, a razor to shave himself with, a water-strainer and a needle. Besides these he may keep an umbrella, sandals, some books and writing materials. The monasteries, of course, may own extensive lands and property; but the head of even the richest monastery lives as simply as the newest entrant into the order. In all monasteries, the daily routine is more or less the same. In the morning hours all monks excepting the sick and the aged go out for begging alms. Having collected alms they sit down for their only meal of the day at noon and spend the rest of the day in meditation and concentration exercises. In the evening there may be discussions on knotty points of the Dhamma or discourses for the benefit of lay audiences.

In many monasteries, specially in China and Japan, going about for begging is not necessary. All the needs of the monks are met by the charity of lay disciples. Of course, the monks perform all the chores and look after the garden and other tasks connected with the daily routine of the monastery.

An order of nuns was established by the Buddha on the persistent requests of his foster-mother Prajāvatī and his favourite disciple Ānanda. For some centuries the order of nuns worked very satisfactorily, but by the time of king Aśoka the order had declined, so that at the present moment, in almost all countries, the order of nuns has ceased to function. There are, of course, many devoted Buddhist women in all Buddhist countries who devote themselves wholeheartedly to acts of social service. Though there is no recognised order, some of these women lay-disciples live a simple and austere life like the nuns of former times.

Though the Saṅgha was regarded as the chief instrument for individual development and for the propagation of Dharma, Buddhism also laid down a code of morality and religious worship for the lay followers, whose number ran into tens of thousands even during the life-time of the Buddha. They expressed their faith in the teachings of the Buddha and tried to live in the light of his moral and religious precepts. Along with the practice of moral precepts, alms-giving and hearing of discourses on the Dhamma were also prescribed for them. In the Dīgha Nikāya there is a discourse known as *Sigālavāda-Sutta*, in which there is a complete exposition of the mutual duties of parents and children, pupils and teachers, husband and wife, master and servant, friends, Bhiksus and house-holders. It is a beautiful account of social ethics as taught by the Buddha for the benefit of his lay disciples. The aim of the lay disciples should be, while living the life of house-holders, to gradually approximate to the life of a monk both in thought and

action, so that they might qualify themselves to become monks either in their old age in this life or failing that, in the next life.

It is clear that only a small minority of exceptionally noble-minded people can retire from the world and devote themselves with complete dedication, to the task of self-ennoblement and spiritual perfection. Of course, the institution is liable to be abused by the entry of people who join the order for the sake of prestige which its membership makes it possible for them to enjoy, or even for the sake of comfortable existence. In course of time, thousands of monasteries were established in all parts of the country. The same thing happened in China, Japan and other countries where Buddhism found a home, and in these monasteries were lodged tens of thousands of monks. All of them naturally could not have been fired with a zeal for spiritual enlightenment. Before the advent of Buddhism, there existed ascetic orders, but their following was probably not large and was confined to a few ascetically-inclined members; but after Buddhism had been securely established in the country, the number of mendicants increased beyond all expectation and, in imitation of the Buddhist practice, the number of Sādhus and mendicants in Hinduisim also gradually increased to astonishing figures. Once the institution had caught the imagination of the people, it was simply impossible to check people from putting on saffron-coloured garments and masquerading as holy men. This was a gross abuse of the institution.

The question is worth considering, whether it is not

in the interest of mankind, that there should exist in every society a small band of people who retire from worldly life and devote themselves altogether to the quest of spiritual perfection. Unless it were assumed that the sole end of human life is to live comfortably and propagate the race, it would be highly advantageous to mankind that there should be living, amongst them, some highly-evolved individuals who, by example and percept, should beckon them on to a higher and nobler life. It is probably these noble specimens of humanity who, by their superior spiritual development and self-mastery, have kept mankind on the right path. People show the greatest reverence to them and hail them as prophets and divine teachers. These rare individuals afford to the people a glimpse of the spiritual height to which human beings can rise. They are the great exemplars and path-indicators to their fellow human beings.

Hinduism also recognised the *Āśrama* of *Saṁnyāsa* but, ordinarily, except in very rare cases, *Saṁnyāsa* was undertaken in the fourth period of life after passing the previous three stages. The Buddha allowed people in a large number to join the order of monks, even while they were still young. He himself had conquered the craving for worldly pleasures while he was yet in the prime of youth, and so he naively believed that all persons who expressed a desire for leading a life of renunciation had attained, like himself, the same measure of repugnance to sense pleasures. This indiscriminate acceptance of persons of all ages in the order of monks was bound, in course of time, to lead to all sorts of evils and abuses.

CHAPTER VIII

Buddhism and the Upaniṣads

We have, in the first chapter, dealt with the religious and philosophical thought which prevailed in India when Buddha began his life-work. On some of these religious beliefs and practices, he expressed himself in a very forcible manner. We know, for instance, that he raised his voice against bloody sacrifices which had become an inseparable part of the Brāhmaṇical religion of his time. Many a time, at his instance, the animals which had been brought together for sacrificial slaughter, were spared and released. He attached greater importance to a good life than to a mere performance of prescribed ceremonies and rituals. "Moral action is higher than even a bloodless sacrifice and still higher is the noble path." The Buddha insisted on inner purification of the heart as compared to the mechanical performance of external sacrificial rites.

The Buddha similarly deprecated harsh bodily discipline and ascetic practices as a means of religious enlightenment. He himself had trodden the path of asceticism in search of enlightenment; but it did not do him any good and so he preached the middle path of self-restraint and temperate living to his disciples. He, of course, exhorted them to exercise control over their passions but he was against self-mortification in any form—a practice which was common among the Jains and many other sects. He denounced such

asceticism as unprofitable and advised his followers to follow the middle way by avoiding the two extremes. They were to avoid excess in the satisfaction of desires as well as in the rejection of all desires.

There were many wandering teachers in Buddha's time, who went about from place to place giving an exposition of their particular doctrines and challenging their opponents to public discussions. Out of many such teachers the Buddha selected six teachers for his special attention. He criticised their doctrines in an unsparing manner. We thus come to know definitely that there were certain views which he did not accept. For instance, he was against the view held by Purāṇa Kassapa,—the doctrine of Ahetuvāda or fortuitous origin of things. In other words he did not believe that events can happen without a cause or that something can originate from nothing. If good and bad conduct happened just by chance—the soul remaining passive all the time—there was, in that case, no merit in virtue and no harm in murder. The Buddha did not accept the doctrine of complete indeterminism.

Nor did he believe in complete fatalism, as his criticism of the doctrine of Makkali Gosāla shows. According to Gosāla things happen in a predestined way and human effort cannot do anything to hasten the process. This doctrine also, according to the Buddha, frees a person of all responsibilities and has a paralysing effect on moral effort.

The Buddha similarly criticised the extreme materialism of Ajita Keskambali, according to whom all objects arise out of the combination, in different

proportions, of four material elements, the soul having no separate existence apart from them. It is born with the body and dies with the death of the body. The Buddha regards this theory of annihilationism as a perverse doctrine from a moral point of view.

He similarly criticised Sañjaya for his through-going scepticism, and Nigaṇṭha Nāta Putta for making certain definite statements about matters, on which no such statements could be made on account of the limitation of human powers.

The last of the doctrines which he criticised was that of Pakudha Kaccāyana who believed in a number of eternal substances, soul being one of them. Out of the coming together of these eternal substances under the influence of the principles of pleasure and pain, various objects and organisms in the world take their rise. While the objects appear and disappear, the elements of which they are constituted continue to exist for ever. The Buddha calls it the doctrine of eternalism and directs his criticism against it as well. According to him, there are no eternally-existing finite souls nor eternally-existing material atoms.

From these facts certain conclusions follow. We can say, for instance, that the Buddha believed in human freedom and was unmistakably against the fatalistic conception of life. But while accepting the doctrine of freedom, he did not give his consent to complete indeterminism or the accidental happenings of events whether physical or psychical. He laid down the principle of Pratītya-Samutpāda or dependent origination. Every event happens because of some

other event or events. We may not know how the world process actually began, but taking the world as it is we know that events take their rise because of other events, human volition being one of the various effective factors in bringing about a certain result on the human plane.

We also further know that the Buddha was not a materialist, *i.e.* he did not believe that matter was the ultimate reality. If it had been so, he would have not taken pains to criticise Ajita Keskambli, who presented a materialistic doctrine of the nature of ultimate reality. It would be equally wrong to call him a sceptic or an agnostic. If it were so, he would have not gone out of his way to criticise Sañjay the sceptic, and his school.

Of course it is true, that the Buddha did not believe in ever-enduring souls or material atoms but it would be wrong to infer from this, as many people have done, that he did not accept any ultimate reality of a spiritual nature. That he did not regard matter as the ultimate reality, is clear from his criticism of the materialistic philosopher Ajita Keskambali. Similarly as already shown, the criticism of the views of Pakudha Kaccāyana makes it clear that he did not accept the doctrine of the plurality of eternal souls. Among the Hindu orthodox schools of philosophy the doctrine of Vedānta, according to one of its interpretations, does not regard matter and soul as permanently existing in their own rights. They arise out of Brāhmaṇ and after a certain period of existence, are reabsorbed into the self-same reality.

On this point of Buddha's attitude towards absolute reality, we shall reserve our judgement, till we have examined some more facts bearing on the subject. Every great thinker, however original he may be, owes his main trends of thought to the epoch in which he is born. The Buddha had the whole evolution of Indian culture behind him. He repudiated some of the undesirable elements which had made their way into the social and cultural life of the people of his times. He accepted the points which struck him as wholesome and valuable, and on the basis of those conceptions as well as of the new ideas which were suggested to him, he devised a most practical system of spiritual culture, which had a powerful appeal for the thoughtful people of his age, who had begun to feel dissatisfied with most of the religious and philosophical views preached by various teachers on all sides.

We have already referred to some of the thinkers of this age, whose views came in for sharp criticism at the hands of Gautama Buddha. But there were also many sages and thinkers who followed the Upaniṣadic way of thought. We meet with many divergent views in the Upaniṣads, but there was undoubtedly present a dominant Upaniṣadic philosophy as well. It is apparent that the Buddha did not criticise the main doctrines of the Upaniṣads as he had done in the case of other contemporary thought systems; nor had he made any direct reference to them. While he was enunciating his own doctrine of spiritual enlightenment, perhaps the term Upaniṣad had not yet become as well-known as it became later on. We know that the Gītā owes much of its thought

to the Upaniṣads ; but there is no direct reference to them in it. There are, however, many points of kinship between the main doctrines of the Upaniṣads and those of the Buddha and we shall try to bring out the salient points of resemblance between these two systems of thought. We have already, in some of the previous chapters briefly referred to these similarities. We shall now, treat this subject exclusively and at greater length. There is every likelihood that the Buddha was influenced by the thought of the Upaniṣads in formulating his own system of thought. It stands to reason, that just as he had studied the views of the teachers whom he subjected to a critical examination, he had similarly studied the important Upaniṣadic thought. There must have been present, in his time, many professors of the Upaniṣads as there were those of other philosophical doctrines. The approach of the Buddha towards the religious problem is undoubtedly original ; but it is strange to find that almost all of his teachings are found in the Upaniṣads as well, though the emphasis on the various points is differently distributed in the two systems. The Upaniṣads start with a theoretical enunciation of the nature of ultimate reality. In fact, for the thinkers of the Upaniṣads, this seemed to be the main problem and the other problems of life revolved round it as the planets revolve round the sun. The approach of the Buddha was different. He started with the practical problem of suffering and how to get rid of it. Though his approach was different, his basic ideas, as we shall find, were largely similar to those of the Upaniṣads.

It can be said, without any fear of contradiction, that the elements of a religious life are the same in both the systems, but they have been mixed together in different ways, according to the temperaments of the thinkers who gave birth to these systems. Both the Upaniṣad Thinkers and the Buddha expressed their disapproval in an explicit or implicit manner, of animal sacrifices and extreme asceticism. Both of them welcomed persons of all castes to the search for spiritual enlightenment. Persons of all castes could become members of the order of monks founded by the Buddha. We find similarly in the Upaniṣads, that Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas and even low-born Śūdras being freely admitted into spiritual discipleship, and in their turn becoming sages and teachers imparting their knowledge to other aspirants. We find in both systems an emphasis on sorrow and suffering ; in both desire or *Tṛṣṇā* is regarded as the cause of bondage and sorrow, and which itself is due to *Avidyā* or ignorance. In both it is declared that the end of sorrow takes place on the dawning of true knowledge and this state of enlightenment is known as *Nirvāṇa* in Buddhism and *Mokṣa* in the Upaniṣads. In both Buddhism and Upaniṣads belief is held in the impermanence of ego, in the law of *karman* and of transmigration from birth to birth till freedom from *avidyā* and *tṛṣṇā* is attained. Both of them enjoin a life of morality and goodness and the practice of certain yogic exercises of concentration as means of spiritual enlightenment.¹ The presence of so many points of resemblance.

1. See the section on Upaniṣads in the introductory Chapter.

cannot be dismissed as merely accidental or as a happy coincidence. One can safely conclude, that of all the contemporary systems of thought, which Buddha found around himself, he was strongly impressed by the thought of the Upaniṣads. But an original and profound thinker as he was, he gave a new form to these common ingredients. The Buddha had been struck with the vanity and fruitlessness of metaphysical discussions, which were so plentiful in his time. In the Upaniṣads we, no doubt, come accross discussions as to the nature of ultimate reality ; but we also meet in them a realization that mere metaphysical speculation leads nowhere, unless the aspirant persistently and earnestly follows certain spiritual practices. The Buddha altogether refused to engage in what he regarded as futile discussions, and taking his stand on certain universally accepted assumptions of his times such as the law of karman, the theory of transmigration etc. went in for promulgating a practical course of spiritual discipline. He did not deny the existence of ultimate reality ; but he simply deprecated, from the point of view of practical realization, too much pre-occupation with metaphysical problems. Here he differed from the Upaniṣads in as much as the latter show a deep interest in philosophical discussions. The Buddha was interested in the problem of suffering. He made it the starting point of his spiritual discipline, and discussed the various questions to which we have referred above, according to the needs of the system. We shall select here for discussion some of the doctrines, which are found in common between the

Buddhistic system and the pre-Buddhistic Hindu thought, specially the thought of the Upaniṣads.

Karman, Transmigration and Soul.

The law of karman is an accepted principle in Buddhism. White deeds result in white fruits and black deeds in black fruits. Along with the law of karman goes the belief in transmigration. There is a form of literature in Buddhism known as *Avdāna*, in which the stories of present and past lives of various persons are narrated and each story is followed by a moral to illustrate the principle that the joys and sufferings of each individual depend upon the deeds which he had performed in this life or in previous lives. *Avadāna-Śataka* is a collection of hundred such stories. These are stories of men and animals who had been reborn as gods in heaven as a consequence of their pious deeds. The moral of the story is always given in the following words ; “So, O Monks, the fruit of quite black deeds is quite black, that of quite white deeds quite white, that of mixed deeds is mixed. Therefore, O monks, give up the black and the mixed deeds and take pleasure only in the quite white deeds.....”¹

Here is a specimen of the stories given in the *Dīvyāvadāna*, another collection of such stories.

A Cāṇḍāla girl, Prakṛti by name falls in love with Ānanda, the favourite disciple of the Buddha, and wants to marry him. She follows him wherever he goes. When Ānand appealed to the Buddha for help, the latter sent for Prakṛti and instructed her

1. Winternitz, *Buddhist Literature* Vol. II, p. 281.

in the noble doctrine. She became a nun and was admitted into the sacred order. A number of citizens headed by king Ajātaśatru remonstrated to the Buddha against the admission of a Cāṇḍāla girl in the sacred order: whereupon the Buddha narrated to them the story of a Cāṇḍāla king Triśaṅku who wanted to marry his learned son Sārdūla Karṇa to the daughter of a Brāhmaṇa Puṣkarsārin. At first the proud Brāhmaṇa refused the request of the Cāṇḍāla chief, but later on, on learning of the great wisdom of Triśaṅku and his son consented to the marriage. The Buddha ended the story by telling the assembled people, that Prakṛti, the Cāṇḍāla girl in this life was no other than the former daughter of the Brāhmaṇa Puṣkara Sārin, the Buddha himself was Triśaṅku in the former birth and Ānanda was his son, Sārdūla Karṇa.

The *Jātaka* tales are also a form of Avadāna literature, in which the stories all refer to the previous lives of the Buddha himself. These Avadāna stories are also sometimes known as karman stories, because they narrate the consequences of karmans performed by an individual in his previous lives. There is a collection of hundred stories known as *Karma-Śataka* written on the same lines as *Avadāna Śataka*. It is found now only in its Tibetan translation. The underlying idea of all these stories is to convey the truth that the destiny of all men is governed by the forces set in motion by their own Karman in past lives, whether they understand the law or do not understand it. A man suffers on account of his own sins and misdeeds in his previous existences. If any-body does

him an injury, and thereby causes him suffering, he does so only as an instrument of the cosmic law of Karman.

The law of Karman and transmigration as preached by the Buddha are on the same lines as expounded in the Upaniṣads.¹

The Buddhist doctrine of the impermanence of self has landed some western and eastern scholars into a difficulty mostly of their own creation. A human being, according to the Buddha, consists of five Skandhas ; Rūpa, Vedanā, Saṃjñā, Saṃskāras, and Vijñāna. They are severally and collectively impermanent and transitory as they are devoid of Ātman. It is known as the Nairātmya theory. In the second sermon given by the Buddha, he says to his disciples, what they should think in regard to each one of the Skandhas, "This is not mine, I am not this, this is not Atman."² From this it came to be inferred, that the Buddha did not believe in the existence of soul. So these authors tried to explain the Buddha's theory of karman, and transmigration in curious ways. We, however, know that wherever Buddha speaks of his own previous births or the effects of karmans performed in previous births, it is clearly mentioned that the same individual passes from one birth to another, and reaps the consequences of his own actions previously performed. There is no doubt that the

1. For the view of the Upaniṣads on these subjects see the introductory Chapter.

2. *Lalita Vistara* 419, 5.

Buddha and his followers accepted the continuity of personal identity between one life and the next. There cannot be any mistake about this fact. If the notion of personal continuity is left out, the whole idea of transmigration becomes absurd and altogether unreasonable. When Buddha describes one of his own previous lives as narrated in the *Jātaka Mālā*, he always says at the end of the story, that he himself was the hero described in the story and no other. It is difficult to explain how a Bodhi-Sattva progressed spiritually during the many previous lives, before he attained Buddha-hood, unless we believe that it was the same individual who passed on from one life to another. When, as the result of enlightenment, the previous births become known to such a person, he is directly conscious of his identity in all his previous existences. "How is this possible", asks Hardayāl, "If there is no soul, that survives death." He himself answers as follows : "This relevant question may be answered by declaring once for all, that the Buddhist Sanskrit writers teach the existence of the soul in the ordinary sense of the word....."¹ It is distinctly stated in the *Dīgha Nikāya* (II. 63, 2), that of the five skandhas, the last skandha i.e. Vijñāna or consciousness continues to exist after death and enters the mother's womb for the next rebirth."² We are told in *Samjutta Nikāya* I. 122. 10, that "Māra, the Deva of desire, and death could not find the Vijñāna of Godhika and Vakkali, after the death of those monks, though he looked for

1. *The Bodhi-Sattva Doctrine* p. 74.

2. *Ibid* p. 74.

it every where. They had attained final and complete Nirvāṇa, and their Vijñāna was not reinstated in a new embryo. Vijñāna thus corresponds to the soul as this latter word is understood by most non-Buddhist religious teachers.”¹

The following passage (a part of a dialogue between Gautama Buddha and some Brāhmaṇa youngmen) occurs in *Majjhima Nikāya* II. 156-57 :—

Do you know that there is descent into the womb?

We know this, sir, that there must be coitus of the parents, it must be the mother's season and the Gandharva must be present. If there is conjunction of three things thus, there is descent into the womb.

Do you know, good sirs, whether that Gandharva is a noble warrior or a Brāhmaṇa, or a merchant-trader, or a low-born worker ?

We do not know that, Sir.

In explaining the meaning of Gandharva, as given above, O. H. Wijesekera says in his article, *Vedic Gandharva and Pāli Gandharva*,² “Here the text is unequivocal and leaves no doubt as to the real nature of Gandharva, which clearly must refer, in the context, to the spirit of a previously dead Kṣatriya, Brāhmaṇa, Vaiśya or Śudra, a sense which the term had already assumed in the pre-Buddhist period. It is not surprising therefore, to find Buddhaghosa maintaining discrete silence for the implied identity of the

1. The Bodhi-Sattva Doctrine, p. 75.

2. Published in the *University of Ceylon Review*, Volume III, No. I April 1945, page 89.

Gandharva with any previous person cannot be palatable to him."

Thus, according to Buddhism, the last Skandha i. e. Vijñāna or consciousness migrates from birth to birth, carrying with it the traces or effects of experiences in the previous existence. This is the meaning given to Vijñāna in the Pāli dictionary, where it is explained, among other things as "The bearer of individual life, principle of conscious life, mind as transmigrant, as transforming (according to individual Karman) one's individual life, (after death) in the next."

It is clear that unless a reincarnating ego or soul is posited, the whole theory of reincarnation which may be regarded as the corner-stone of Buddhism, is reduced to non-sense. If an individual is completely annihilated after his death, the effects of his actions performed during life may remain behind him in various forms, but they can in no way appear as concentrated in a single human being who is born after him, and this is what is assumed by Buddhism in its account of the theory of reincarnation.

In modern times, various kinds of immortality are assumed. The first meaning of immortality consists in the continuance of one's life in one's descendants. A man may die, but he continues to live on in his children, grand-children, great grand-children and so on, unless he dies without leaving any descendants, in which case immortality cannot fall to his share. According to the second meaning, a man becomes immortal, if his fame continues to live on after his death. This kind of immortality is given only to a

few individuals and that too generally for a limited period. Thirdly, it may be said that each individual leaves some effects on the lives of others, and these effects continue to be perpetuated after the individual has ceased to exist as a separate living being. It should be obvious to anybody that the kind of immortality to which the law of *karman* refers does not fall into any of these categories. The law of *karman* which Buddhism propounds becomes altogether unintelligible and fantastic if the existence of a reincarnating self is denied. The denial of self would mean that the individual, who attains deliverance or *Nirvāṇa* after many lives, is a different person from the one who originally started on the enterprise, i.e., the person who reaches the goal is quite different from the one who sets out on the journey. The Buddha asked his disciples to follow the spiritual path pointed out by him, in order to reach after a succession of lives, the goal of *Nirvāṇa*. Can this promise have any meaning, if it were denied that the same person continues to maintain his personal identity in course of his wanderings through successive lives? There is not the slightest doubt, that the Buddha and his followers believed in the persistence of individuality and that when he promised deliverance to his disciples in this life or in a life to come, he meant it to be taken seriously. This fact becomes obvious when we refer to the *Jātaka* stories and other stories given in the *Avadāna* literature.

But the Buddha did not regard this enduring entity from birth to birth as unchangeable, permanent or eternally self-existent. We already know that he

was against the view of the Sāṅkhyas, the Jains and others who accepted the existence of certain eternal substances. This point of view, therefore, seems to go against the view expressed in the Upaniṣads namely that the Ātman is immortal. Such statements occur in a number of places¹ in the Upaniṣads. But as has already been pointed out in the section on the Upaniṣads in the first chapter, the terms Ātman and Brahman are used interchangeably in all important Upaniṣads. For instance, the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* speaks of “that Brahman that immortal, that Ātman, (Tad Brahma Tad Amṛtam, Sa Ātmā) It is quite possible that in some Upaniṣads the view may have been expressed like that of Pakudha Kāccāyana, namely that the individual soul is immortal and unchangeable; but the general trend of the teachings of the Upaniṣads is that the individual soul or ego is impermanent and is composed of consciousness and mental adjuncts. As long as the mental adjuncts or Upādhis remain attached to consciousness, it transmigrates from body to body, the adjuncts gradually becoming thinner and thinner till on their complete eradication, the illusion of individuality and ego-hood is destroyed and the soul realizes its identity with the universal spirit. There is, thus, practically no difference between the Buddhist doctrine of the transient and unsubstantial ego and the Upaniṣadic view of individual soul. The Buddha speaks of the components or adjuncts of ego.

1. Such as the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* II. 5. *Kaṭha Up.* I. 3. 15, I. 2. 22, *Muṇḍaka Up.* I. 1. 6 and so on.

as Rūpa, Vedanā, Smjñā, Saṃskāras, and Vijñāna. In the Upaniṣads they are described as the five Koṣas—Annamaya, Prāṇamaya, Manomaya, Vijñānamaya and Ānandamaya. The terms used are different but the meaning is more or less the same. As the ego reaches perfection the Koṣas drop off and the ego loses its separateness in the universal reality. The idea of the absorption of the individual ego into absolute reality in Buddhist thought is brought home to us in its conception of Nirvāṇa or final deliverance.

Nirvāṇa or Mokṣa

The ultimate aim of the scheme of training laid down by the Buddha is the attainment of Nirvāṇa. It corresponds to what in other religions is called salvation. In the Upaniṣads it is spoken of as Mokṣa. It consists in the destruction or cessation of craving (Tanha) and other defilements of the mind, followed by the positive experience of a state of unalloyed bliss. An Arhat can attain it during his life-time and there is no rebirth for him after the death of his present body. Some writers have wrongly drawn the conclusion that there is complete annihilation of the individual after the attainment of Nirvāṇa. According to Dr. Rhys Davids, Nirvāṇa is a state of blissful repose experienced by an Arhat, before his total annihilation after death. That this view is wrong is proved by a number of considerations. In one of the discourses, Gautma Buddha says, "A monk whose mind is thus released cannot be followed and tracked out even by the gods including Indra, Brahman and Prajāpati, so that they could say 'there rests the

consciousness of a released person and why? Even in this actual life, monks, I say, that the released person is not to be thoroughly known. Though I thus say and thus preach, some ascetics and Brāhmaṇas accuse me wrongly, baselessly, falsely and groundlessly, saying that the ascetic Gautma is a nihilist and preaches the annihilation, destruction and non-existence of an existent being. This is what I am not and do not affirm."¹ What Buddha means to say is that after release or Nirvāṇa, the Arhat no longer retains his separate individuality which may be pointed out as a distinct entity. He is merged completely in the ultimate reality whatever it may be. It is akin to the Upaniṣadic doctrine that the individual soul, after the attainment of Mokṣa, is reabsorbed in the universal self as a wave is merged again in the ocean from which it takes its rise. Though the separate individuality is lost, it does not for that reason become non-existent. This would become further apparent from the following dialogue, which took place between king Prasenjit of Kosala and the renowned nun Khemā, some time after the death of Gautma Buddha.

"Venerable lady" asked the king, "does the Exalted one exist after death?"

"The Exalted one, O great king, did not declare that he exists after death."

"Then does it mean that the Exalted one does not exist after death."

1. *Majjhima Nikāya* I. 185.

“The Exalted one did not declare either, that the Perfect one did not exist after death.”

As this answer puzzled the king, the venerable Khemā, in order to make her meaning clear, said that just as the water of the ocean is vast and unmeasurable, deep and unfathomable, and cannot be measured by human measuring vessels, similarly the Perfect One has gone to a state which is profound and unmeasurable like the ocean. Such being the case, no positive statement can be made about the perfect one. “The deep nature of the Tathāgata cannot be fathomed, even as the sands of the Gangā or the water-drops in the ocean cannot be reckoned.”

It is also worth knowing, that just as in the Upaniṣads, a distinction is made between final release (Mokṣa) and attainment of heaven, the Buddha similarly speaks to his followers of the difference between the permanently blissful condition of Nirvāṇa and the temporary though happy sojourn in the various formless heavens (Arūpa Loka). As in the Upaniṣads, so in Buddhism, Nirvāṇa is far superior to the felicity of mere heavenly existence. There is very little to doubt that the conception of Nirvāṇa is very much akin to the conception of Mokṣa as contained in the Upaniṣads.

Nirvāṇa is a positive state of consciousness though it is indescribable in logical categories. Referring to the various stages of spiritual realization, Anuruddha, a disciple of the Buddha, says in one of the dialogues in Mijjhima Nikāya that he and his fellow-disciples have attained the highest stage of

knowledge and insight beyond the common, beyond which they could not think of any other higher or more excellent stage or realization. On hearing this, the Buddha expresses satisfaction at the spiritual achievement of his disciples. (XXXI discourse) Thus beyond saying that Nirvāṇa is a state of highest wisdom, insight and blissfulness, no other positive content can be given to it. The Upaniṣads say the same thing, when they describe the Brahmic consciousness to be beyond thought and speech. Thus as a person cannot, by any combination of words, convey the sweet taste of honey to another who has never tasted sweetness in any form, a similar difficulty arises in communicating the contents of spiritual experience to a person who has had no such experience.

Speaking of this experience in one of the dialogues the Buddha says, "There is, O monks, a stage in which there is neither earth nor water, neither fire nor air, neither infinity of space nor infinity of consciousness, neither nothingness nor non-perception, neither this world nor that world, neither sun nor moon." This idea is further made clear in the following words. "In that stage, there is neither coming nor going, nor staying nor passing away, neither is this world nor that nor aught between them. It is indeed the end of sorrow."¹ The idea meant to be conveyed by this enigmatic mode of speech is that the experience of Nirvāṇa lies in quite a different dimension, and so it is not possible to describe it in the ordinary terms

1. *Udāna* VIII. 1—4.

of human speech. It should be remembered that in the Upaniṣads also, when a statement is made about union with Brahman, it is meant to convey a particular mode of divine or cosmic consciousness, resulting from spiritual illumination. Nirvāṇa is also a similar state of enlightenment or divine consciousness.

An ordinary person has to pass through a large number of births and deaths before he qualifies himself for Nirvāṇa or final release. It is only in the case of an Arhat who has attained Nirvāṇic consciousness, that a question is often asked in Buddhist works whether after death an Arhat would be completely annihilated or he would continue to exist in some form. The Buddha's point of view like that of the Upaniṣads is that after the attainment of Nirvāṇa the saint does not cease to exist, but becomes unfathomable and immeasurable like the ocean, because now he has become one with the deep ocean and partakes of its vastness and unfathomableness.

There are very few scholars, if any, at the present time, who hold the view that the ultimate ideal of Nirvāṇa, which the Buddha presented to his disciples, was that of complete annihilation or extinction. As Shri Rājagopālāchārya put it recently, Nirvāṇa does not mean going into nothingness. It is rather the disappearance of a river into a vast ocean. Needless to say, it is very much like the conception of Mokṣa as given in the Upaniṣads.

The Supreme Reality

Did the Buddha believe in the existence of God or the Supreme Reality? It should be clearly under-

stood that the Buddha gave no discourses on the existence of God. There were many teachers in the time of the Buddha who were fond of holding public discussions on metaphysical problems. Indulgence in philosophical subtleties, as Prof. Rādhākṛṣṇan points out, had become a mental disease of the times. The Buddha discouraged these discussions as so many barriers in the path of spiritual perfection. He made it his rule to remain silent, when such questions were put to him. It was clearly realized by the Upaniṣadic thinkers also, that the ultimate reality cannot be known by logical thinking but only by direct experience which comes as a result of living a certain kind of life and practising certain meditational exercises. The Upaniṣadic thinkers, however, in spite of this realization, could not resist the temptation to engage in intellectual discussions about the nature of the Supreme Reality and man's relation to it. The Buddha, unlike the teachers of the Upaniṣads, firmly refused to have anything to do with philosophical questions and confined himself strictly to his practical programme of spiritual realization. It would be wrong to infer from this, that he had reached no conclusions of his own in regard to these problems or that his knowledge was only confined to the things which he taught to his disciples. Once while staying in the Śíśu grove at Kauśāmbi, the Buddha took a few Śíśu leaves in his hands and asked his disciples, "What do you think, monks, which are the more, the few Śíśu leaves in my hand or those which are in the whole forest." On being told, that the number of leaves in the forest were far more than those in his

hands, the Buddha declared that what he had actually taught to them was like the Śiśu leaves in his hands, much less than what he himself had realized and known.

“And why monks,” he continued saying, “Have I not declared it ? Because it is not profitable, does not help the growth of religious life, does not lead to the cessation of passion, and to higher knowledge, enlightenment, Nirvāṇa : therefore have I not declared.”

The above declaration does not contradict the other declaration, which the Buddha made at the time of his death. He then said, that he had not, during his life-time, behaved like a teacher with a closed fist who holds back many things deliberately from his disciples. This statement means, that he had taught to them all those things which it was profitable for them to know ; but it would be wrong to interpret this statement to mean, that the Buddha himself did not know anything else beyond what he had taught to them.

It is thus clear that the Buddha knew many things or held many beliefs on which he did not give any discourses. The nature of the Supreme Reality was one of these subjects and when anybody put a direct question to him about the existence of God or Ultimate Reality he refused to give any answer to it and kept silent.

His silence on such occasions was significant. He did not want to repeat on every occasion, what he had once declared : namely that it would not lead

to any profit to discuss such problems. But another thing, which becomes clear from the silence of the Buddha is that he did not, at any time, make any positive denial of supreme reality. If he disbelieved in such a reality, nothing could have prevented him from making a definite declaration to this effect. Therefore the *prima facie* conclusion that can be drawn from the silence of the Buddha is that he had some sort of belief in Supreme Reality, but he forbore to express his views on it. He felt that if he, once in a weak moment, yielded to the temptation of taking sides in a controversy, there would be no end to it throughout his life-time.

Though he did not avow his faith in so many words, we have plenty of indirect evidence, which throws light on his belief in Spiritual Reality. The description of Nirvāṇic experience which the Buddha gives in a number of places and to which we have referred previously, leaves no doubt on this point. The following passage deserves to be quoted once again in order to clinch the point.

“There is, monks, an unborn, an unbecome, an un compounded; if, monks, there were not this unborn, unbecome, unmade, un compounded, there would not here be an escape from the born, the become, the made, the compounded. But because there is an unborn, an unbecome, an unmade, an un compounded, therefore there is an escape from the born, the become, the made, the compound.”¹

There are many conceptions of God or ultimate

1. *Udāna* VIII. 1—4.

Reality to be met with. We have, in the first place, the naive conception according to which God is a transcendental personality, who creates the world and keeps it going. The conception of a manlike personality, with powers raised to an infinite degree, is not found in the Upaniṣads, nor did it make any appeal to the Buddha. To a common man God is a source of solace and comfort in trouble, to whom he may look up for support and security. Sigmund Freud is perhaps right in regarding this kind of God as an expression of the parental complex in man; ... a father—substitute at the grown up stage and so a mere psychological phenomenon. To developed religious consciousness, God is a unifying principle in the universe, the evolutionary urge towards higher and higher forms, or the manifestation of law and order in the world. To the Buddha, the Supreme Reality appeared as the law of eternal righteousness. Dharma takes the place of the Upaniṣadic Brahman in Buddha's system. "In the *Aggama Suttanta* the evolution of the world and the gradation of beings in it are said to be conditioned by the principle of Dharma."¹ In *Samyutta Nikāya* II, 138, *Anguttra Nikāya* II, 20, and in some other books of the Pāli canon, there are many passages in which we are asked to pay homage to Dharma. The Buddha believed in the law of Dharma as governing the world. The world is so made that good deeds are followed by good results and bad deeds by bad results. It should be clear that the law of righteousness can operate only

1. Prof. Rādhākṛṣṇan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 689.

if the ultimate reality is spiritual. In a materialistic universe, moved solely by blind forces, there can be no scope for the law of righteousness or Dharma. This emphasis on Dharma or Rta and its identity with Reality or Satya comes right down from the Vedic times. "In the Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad, it is said that after creating the classes of Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śudras, the Supreme created a better form, the law of righteousness (Dharma). There is nothing higher than the law of righteousness (Dharmāt param Nāsti) Verily that, which is law of righteousness is Truth (Satyam). Verily both these (Satya and Dharma) are the same thing. (I. 4. 14).¹

There cannot thus be any doubt that the Buddha's conception of reality was spiritual, though he laid all the emphasis on the path to be followed. The path, which Buddha recommended was, like the path of the Upaniṣads, meant for heroic natures, for men of intellect and strength of character. But men of weaker nature cannot feel any satisfaction in an attributeless Brahman or in the law of Dharma. They require a support to lean upon, a personal God whom they can worship and whom they can trust. This need for worship was one of the causes which led to the development of the Mahāyāna from of Buddhism.

Gautama Buddha, as it has already been said, laid a rigorous ban upon himself in regard to metaphysical speculations, but the thinkers of the Mahāyāna school as we shall see in a later chapter, made free use of metaphysical thinking, which took them in the

1. Quoted from Prof. Rādhākṛṣṇan *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 684

direction of idealistic systems of thought. Ālaya-Vijñāna or Absolute consciousness became the supreme reality and God came to be worshipped in the name of Dharma Kāyā, and even as Vairochana, Amitābha etc. It would be wrong to suppose that the idealistic philosophy was an innovation of the Mahāyāna thinkers, or that they introduced into Buddhism something which was foreign to the spirit of the original founder of the religion. They only made explicit, what was already implicitly present in the teachings of the Buddha. The ban imposed by the founder upon philosophical thinking could be observed no longer and so the latent spirituality in Buddhism, which in the beginning was only hinted at as Nirvāṇa or Dharma, blossomed forth into a full-fledged idealistic system bearing a great resemblance to the Vedānta of the Upaniṣads, so much so that Śaṅkara, the great protagonist of later-day Vedānta borrowed many of his ideas from the Buddhist systems of thought.

These conceptions of spiritual metaphysics were introduced into China, Japan and other foreign countries in course of time. God became the spiritual principle of the universe, immanent as well as transcendent, and was openly acknowledged as an important part of Buddhist thought-structure. In one of his American lectures, delivered in 1905—1906, Right Reverend Soyen Shaku, a renowned Abbot of a Japanese Buddhist monastery, said that, God is immanent in the world but transcends it also at the same time. He is not to be regarded as a mere sum-total of individual existences. "God exists," he

declared, "even when all creatures have been destroyed and reduced to a state of chaotic barrenness. God exists eternally and he will create another universe out of the ruins of this one This universe cannot exist outside God, but God is more than the totality of individual existences, God is here as well as there. God is not only this but also that. As for as He is manifested in nature and mind, they glorify Him, and we can have a glimpse of his image and feel however imperfectly, His inner life. But it will be a grievous error, let us repeat, that He has exhausted his being in the manifestation of the universe, that He is absolutely identical with His creation, and that with the annihilation of the world, He vanishes into eternal emptiness.¹ No Hindu theist" could have expressed his thoughts in a more forceful or eloquent manner. And yet this view cannot be regarded as a negation of original Buddhism. As already said this development can only be regarded as an explication of the latent contents of the primitive doctrine to which we have alluded above.

Path to Spiritual Attainment.

We have found that Gautama Buddha started with very few assumptions, such as those of the impermanence of things, the ubiquitous nature of suffering and the principle of causation to which he gave the name of Pratitya Samutpāda. It was more a law of spiritual causation than that of natural causation. He also assumed the theory of transmigration and the possibility

1. Soyen Shaku *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*, p. 29—30.

of attaining Nirvāṇa at the end of a long journey of successive births and deaths. Man was assumed to be free to shape his own destiny. On the basis of these few simple and at that time almost universally accepted assumptions, the Buddha taught the noble eight-fold path. It can be broadly divided into three parts. 1. The cultivation of moral virtues, 2. the practice of meditation and concentration exercises and 3. the resulting wisdom and enlightenment. In the Upaniṣads also we have references to these aspects of spiritual discipline. It appears that there was a common yogic tradition and both Buddhism and Upaniṣadic teachers drew upon that tradition. The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali came later ; but the Yogic mode of discipline existed much earlier. We find a number of references to it in some of the Upaniṣads. The four Brahma Vihāras are found in the same order in Buddhism as in the Yoga Sūtras. In both of them, they bear the same names :— Maitrī (friendliness), Karuṇā (compassion), Muditā (sympathetic joy) and Upekṣā (equanimity). The first four of the five precepts of the Buddhists are the same as found in the Yoga Sūtras. They are mentioned in the same way in the much earlier text, the Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtras, as Ahimsā Satyam Asteyam Maithunasya ca Varjanam (II. 10. 18. 2).

The concentration exercises in Buddhism are on the same lines as in the yoga system. The spiritual aspirant may concentrate his attention on any one of ten objects known as Kṛtsnāyātanās. These are the four colours and the six elements. “By gazing at them, visualizing them or concentrating his

mind on them, the Bodhi-Sattva can produce that mental state of calm and quiet somnolence which is favourable to Dhyāna.¹ Various kinds of Dhyānas are mentioned but the underlying principle is the same. In Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras, God is mentioned as only one object of meditation; the seeker of spiritual knowledge can try his concentration on any suitable object besides God. The ultimate goal is the attainment of Nirvikalpa Samādhi or objectless trance in which the true nature of reality is said to manifest itself. Enlightenment or mystic trance is said to have a noetic quality. It is accepted in religious literature that mystic rapture creates a new insight into the nature of reality, which is not available by other means, intellectual or otherwise. "The person (writes Dr. Buck) who passes through this experience (of cosmic consciousness) will learn in the few minutes or even moments of its continuance, more than in months, or in years of study and he will learn much that no study ever taught or can teach. Specially does he obtain such a conception of the whole or at least of an immense whole, as dwarfs all conceptions—such a conception as makes the old attempts to mentally grasp the universe and its meaning petty and even ridiculous." In the Upaniṣads, the student is advised to meditate upon the immutable Brahman and the identity of his self with the self of the universe.

The result of spiritual discipline, in both cases, is the dawn of enlightenment or insight into the true nature of things. All fetters are broken, suffering

1. Har Dayal, *The Bodhi-Sattva Doctrine*, p. 229.

comes to an end, and unbroken happiness and peace attend upon the successful aspirant. All doubts are resolved and truth shines in its original splendour and brilliance. There is no rebirth for him and after the dissolution of the body he becomes one with the deep ocean of reality.

The order of monks in Buddhism corresponds to the order of Sannyāsis in the Upaniṣads. Sannyāsa in the Upaniṣads is the fourth stage, the first three being the Brahmacharya, the Gṛhastha and the Vānaprastha. Though the Upaniṣads did not prevent a person from adopting Sannyāsa right from the beginning, the usual rule was that a person adopted Sannyāsa only after he had successfully performed the duties pertaining to the three previous stages.

General Remarks

We thus find a fairly close resemblance between Buddhism and Upaniṣadic thought on most important points. Both of them aim at Nirvāṇa or Mokṣa as the final objective, but the approach in each case is different. Instead of starting from a belief in Supreme Reality, the Buddha takes his stand upon a few assumptions, on which there could not be much difference of opinion, and then he straight-away begins with the problem of suffering and the mode of its solution. All great religions have to face the problem of suffering in one form or another. At an earlier stage of mental development the energies of human beings are occupied with acquiring the means of living. Physical satisfactions engross their attention and they pray to the deity for an abundant supply of all the good things of life. But the realization soon dawns that even an unlimited supply of

material comforts cannot rid a human being of sorrow and suffering, and then the quest for true spiritual welfare begins. In both the Upaniṣads and Buddhism, we find a note of disillusionment in regard to the so-called pleasures of life. Naçiketas in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad disdainfully rejects the offer of the god of death for unlimited wealth and power. And the same note of the futility of worldly enjoyments is met within Buddhism.

The founder of Buddhism did not allow himself to be deflected from the main problem. When the monk Mālūkyā went to the Buddha with the complaint that the Exalted one had not enlightened his disciples on various philosophical problems, the latter asked him whether he (the Buddha) had ever asked his disciples to join his order on the understanding, that he would throw light on those problems. On receiving a negative reply, he assured Mālūkyā that he had not done so, because it did not do anybody any good to engage himself interminably with philosophical speculations. In order to prove his point he gave the instance of a person who was stricken with a poisonous arrow, but who would not allow the arrow to be extracted till he had been told whether the person, who had shot the arrow was a Brāhmaṇa, a Kṣatriya, a Vaiśya or a Śūdra or whether it had been discharged from the north, south, east or west and so on. As it was unwise on the part of that person to put these questions, it was similarly not a part of wisdom to allow oneself to be diverted from the main problem of suffering into the by-lanes of philosophical inquiries.

The Buddha enunciated his doctrines in a rationalist spirit. He did not admit any scriptural authority nor did he admit that one man was superior to another by the simple reason of his having been born in one family rather than another. In one of the dialogues the Buddha opposes the caste system on grounds derived from biology. In making caste distinctions rigid, the Brāhmanical religion according to the Buddha, had introduced new species within the same species of man.

Having cleared the atmosphere of all ecclesiastical cobwebs, the Buddha set about giving a rational account of the doctrines of what he regarded as true religion. He struck off all those things which had nothing to do with the main subject of religion; —philosophical dissertations, ceremonial rituals, sacrifices, vested interests of an hereditary priesthood and other irrelevant matters. We find in the religion of the Buddha, almost all the elements of Upaniṣadic thought; but those elements are given a new setting and a new emphasis. The doctrine which emerged out of this new synthesis cannot be called a philosophical system: it is a religion based on as few assumptions as possible and not simply a code of ethics as some people imagine. The element of Dhyāna or meditation is as important in Buddhism as the ethical element, and the two taken together constitute practical discipline.

Ethical precepts find a place in the Upaniṣads, but nowhere in pre-Buddhist thought, do we find the emphasis and importance which the Buddha gave to moral values. Instead of merely giving an intellec-

tual formulation of the one-ness of life, the Buddha made active love and benevolence a corner-stone of his teachings. We are to show our feeling of one-ness with other living beings by acts of mercy and love, and not by mere theoretical profession. The spirit of self-sacrifice, love, and disinterested service, released by Buddhism inundated all those countries which came under the influence of this great religion. Buddhism made an emphatic declaration that religion without love and charity has no meaning at all.

But the Buddha was much more than his teachings. In fact it was the radiant personality of the Buddha that made a profound impression upon the people of his time and has continued, during all the succeeding centuries, to deeply influence the people of the civilised world. The Buddha was the embodiment of wisdom, love and never-failing sweetness of temper. His compassion encompassed all living beings. His love for mankind knew no bounds. Even when he lay dying, he would not allow a monk, who had come for enlightenment, to be turned away. Though in a state of extreme weakness and exhaustion, he talked to the new-comer with great solicitude and resolved his doubts. In the Upaniṣads we come across great sages and many learned men, but they do not seem to possess the towering personality of the Buddha, expressing itself in unceasing love and compassion, and spreading beauty, joy and wisdom all around. The Buddha was a living embodiment of all that he taught, and people were drawn to him, as much by the magnetism of his personality as by the greatness of his teachings.

PART II

CHAPTER I

The Development of Buddhism : Mahāyāna

The account of Buddhism, so far given, is based upon the original teachings of its founder, as preserved in the Pālī canon. In the earlier centuries of the Christian era, a new school which came to be known as Mahāyāna, took shape, and it was this form of Buddhism that was finally adopted by China, Japan, Tibet and other northern countries. The earlier form, which was given the name of Hīnayāna by the followers of Mahāyāna, found its home in Ceylon, Burma and some other south-eastern countries, and it is still a flourishing religion in these regions. It calls itself the Sthaviravāda or Theravāda school of Buddhism.

It would be wrong to regard Mahāyāna doctrines as additions made to the original religion of the Buddha. It would be more correct to say, that the devotional and mystical implications of original Buddhism were brought into prominence by the later writers, partly, as a result of the inner urge of development and partly due to the influence of Hinduism and of some other factors. There is no doubt that Mahāyāna, in bringing to light the elements implicit in the teachings of the Buddha, gave completeness and finalism to this great religion, which otherwise would have remained an unfinished structure. The student of Buddhism, who wants to get a complete idea

of this religion, cannot afford to neglect the Mahāyānist doctrines, as most of the earlier scholars of the west seem to have done. There was a tendency, among them, to belittle the later developments as decadent forms of Buddhism—a fall from the original teachings of the master and therefore unworthy of serious attention. Happily this tendency is giving way to a more rational attitude of mind, and the works of the great teachers of Mahāyāna are being studied with the care and respect which they deserve.

It is now generally accepted that Buddhism, even at an earlier stage of its career, was divided into a number of sects, mostly, on grounds of monastic rules. The first important Buddhist council met in the reign of Aśoka in about 240 B.C. to settle certain religious disputes among the Buddhist monks. So the sectarian differences existed at that early date and even earlier than that. The number of these sects was no less than eighteen. They were, however, divided into two main schools, the Sthaviravādin or the school of the elders and the Mahāsāṅghika or the school of the great council. The chief point of difference was, that the elders looked upon the Buddha as essentially a man of an exalted nature subject to human limitations of life and death ; while the followers of Mahāsāṅghika sects looked upon him as a super-human being though clad in flesh ; a human incarnation of ultimate reality and as such an object of devotion for all men. The Mahāsāṅghikas may be regarded as the forerunners of Mahāyānism.

Gradually other ideas appeared on the horizon. A new literature of Mahāyāna Sūtras sprang up in course

of time. Some of them, it is said, were composed at the time of Kanīṣka in the first century A.D. The Mahāyāna doctrines reached a stage of stability between the 2nd century A.D. and the 5th century A.D., i.e. from the period of Nāgārjuna to that of Asaṅga. The Mahāyāna works were later translated into Chinese and Tibetan languages. These translated works are known as the Chinese and Tibetan canons. As a matter of fact many original Sanskr̥ta texts are now completely lost. We get an idea of them from these translations only. While the sacred books of Hīnayāna are all in Pālī, the Sūtras of the Mahāyāna were composed in Sanskr̥ta at a much later date than most of the Hīnayāna canon. The followers of Mahāyāna accept the sanctity of the Theravāda or Pālī canon ; but the Theravādins do not regard the Mahāyāna Sūtras as possessing any religious authority. They look upon them as innovations going against the spirit of Buddha's doctrine. The Mahāyānists, on the other hand, hold the view that the truths which are preserved in the Pālī canon were taught by the Buddha for the benefit of the uninitiated, who could not grasp the esoteric doctrines which the Buddha taught only to the really competent disciples, and which were orally transmitted from generation to generation, till they were written down in the form of Mahāyāna Sūtras. Thus, according to the Mahāyānists these Sūtras represent the esoteric or the higher teachings of the great master. While in Hīnayāna, Buddhism mostly appears as a rationalistic, ethical and monastic religion, in Mahāyāna it assumes the devotional and mystical form more suited to the deep religious needs of man.

We shall now deal with the doctrines, especially associated with the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism.

Mahāyāna as Religion

Evolution in the Idea of Buddhahood :—A great religion cannot remain static in its doctrines. The Theravāda school tried to restrict Buddhism within the bounds of the Pālī canon; but it could not be so contained, and so by about the beginning of Christian era, it began its career of development in the form of the various theological and philosophical doctrines of Mahāyānism.

The new doctrines may be regarded as the result of the growth of the spirit of Bhakti or devotion towards Lord Buddha. In the Nikāyas, the term Saddhā (Śraddhā) is used in the sense of devotion. In early Buddhism, faith in Buddha is prescribed along with faith in the Dhamma and the Saṅgha. Dr. Har Dayal says, "Even in the Pālī canon, the impression left on the reader's mind is that Gautama Buddha is the centre of the whole movement and the doctrine derived its vitality and importance from his personality."¹ In all great religions profound faith, love and devotion develop in the minds of the disciples towards their revered teacher. Bhakti generally grows around the person of a historical being who becomes, as it were, a symbol of divinity in the eyes of the faithful disciples. When Buddhism arose, Śiva and Viṣṇu had not yet come into prominence. In Buddhist works, they are referred to as secondary deities, the first rank being

1. *The Bodhi-Sattva Doctrine*, p. 32.

given to Brahmā and Indra. It is also a fact that the Buddha and his followers, while accepting the existence of the Devas, did not hold them in high esteem and, therefore, it is quite natural that the devotion of the Buddhists should centre round the personality of the Buddha. It is held by a number of writers that the development of Bhakti in Mahāyāna Buddhism is due to the influence of Hindu scriptures like the *Bhagavad Gītā*. In recent times B. G. Tilak has expressed this view in his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

As time passed, the idea of the Buddha was greatly widened. As it is but natural, all sorts of marvellous qualities began to be attributed to him and the other Buddhas who preceded him in point of time. It was declared by the Buddha himself, when he was on his death-bed, that many Buddhas had been born in the past and many would be born in the future (Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutta I. 16). All these Buddhas came to be regarded as adorned with a number of excellences. "They are endowed with the super-mundane powers of clairvoyance, clair-audience, increase and decrease in stature etc. They have power over the whole universe and over all sentient beings. They are the quintessence of holiness, wisdom, purity, mercy and all other ideal qualities."¹

In course of time, the human Buddha came to be regarded as a bodily incarnation of the idealized Buddha who resides in the ethereal region in celestial splendour. We have, in the *Lalita Vistāra* and The

1. McGovern, *Introduction of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 77.

Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, a reference to the existence of an infinity of shining Buddhas in an infinity of universes or Buddha Kṣetras. Later on, five such eternal and glorious Buddhas came into prominence. They were also called Dhyāni Buddhas, because they were supposed to have been produced by contemplation (Dhyāna) by the idealized or Ādi Buddha i. e. absolute being. This led to the doctrine of Trikaya or the three bodies of the Buddha ;—the Nirmāṇa Kāya, the Saṃbhoga Kāya and the Dharma Kāya.

Dharma Kāya is the essence or the ground of all things, the all, the body of the law or that pervading impersonal Being on which all forms appear without causing any change or modification in it. It is the universal intelligence in which all distinction between subject and object is obliterated. It is also personified as the Ādi-Buddha or the Supreme being with Prajña Paramitā as its great Śakti, like the Śakti of Brahman in Hindu thought. Other names for Dharma Kāya are *Tathatā* (suchness) Svabhāva Kāya, Samādhi Kāya and so on. It is also referred to as Śūnya or void which does not mean absolute nothingness but simply the Highest Reality beyond all logical characterisation i.e. incapable of being described in human terms. It is a similar idea as we find in the Upaniṣads, where the ultimate reality is negatively referred to as *neti neti* i.e., not so, not so ; the undetermined basis of all existences. Dharma Kāya with all its equivalent names is thus akin to the conception of Brahman in the Upaniṣads.

The Saṃbhoga Kāya is the body of bliss, or the super-human brilliant form, in which the celestial

Buddhas appear in their respective paradises, or otherwise manifest themselves in their heavenly splendour. Though every Buddha, in his ideal or celestial form, is supposed to possess the Saṃbhoga Kāya, the underlying idea, however, is that in reality there is but one great Saṃbhoga Kāya of which the Saṃbhoga Kāyas of different Buddhas, after they shed off their earthly careers, are so many illusory aspects. Really every Saṃbhoga Kāya is co-extensive with the rest, which means that all Buddhas share in the glory and splendour of the same one great body of bliss and enjoyment. The saṃbhoga Kāya may be regarded as equivalent to God in heaven. In the words of Dr. Ānand Coomār Swāmy, "Buddha in this sense is identical with the Brahmanical Īshvra, who may be worshipped under different names i. e., as Viṣṇu or as Śiva, the worshipper attaining the heaven ruled by him whom he worships, though he knows that all these forms are essentially one and the same.¹ The Saṃbhoga Kāya is the personal creative form of Dharma Kāya.

The Nirmāṇa Kāya is the material bodily form assumed by Śākyā Muni Gautama and other Buddhas before him, or may be assumed by the succeeding Buddhas in the future. Some-times the Nirmāṇa Kāya is spoken of as an illusory appearance. The celestial Buddha or the Saṃbhoga Kāya appears on the material plane in a material form, but it is only an illusion which leads people to erroneously imagine that they

1. *Buddha and Buddhism*, p. 246-47.

are actually seeing the physical form of the transcendental Buddha.

The Buddha in his Sambhoga Kāya may be compared to Īśvara or Viṣṇu residing in Vaikuṇṭha. The Nirmāṇa Kāya is analogous to the descent of Viṣṇu in the incarnated forms of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa etc. Though the Mahāyāna speaks of an infinite number of Sambhoga Kāya Buddhas in the celestial regions they are all in essence one and the same, though they appear as many in the various heavenly regions. Ultimately they all derive their substance from the Ādi Buddha or Dharma Kāya, the Absolute Reality which is also described as Tathāgata Garbha or Dharma Dhātu, the store house of all phenomena. As already said it corresponds to the idea of Brahman or the Absolute in the Upaniṣads. There is no doubt, that in the further elaboration of Buddhism after the first century A. D., we cannot ignore the influence of the Hindu scriptures of that period.

We thus find, that Buddhism in its developed form, identifies Buddha with the ultimate reality which underlies and brings into existence all things. Truth is one and absolute. It is expressed through advanced human beings, who express it by virtue of their identity with that Absolute and to that extent, are that Absolute. The Buddha had gained supreme truth, therefore, the Buddha is Supreme Truth.”¹ According to this notion, the Buddha is no other than

1. Christmas Humphreys, *Buddhism*, p. 165.

the divine in human form, a manifestation of the absolute being.

We have referred above to the five Dhyāni Buddhas, who rule over the various paradises in the north, south, east, west and the centre of the vast heavenly regions. The most popular of all of them is the Buddha known as Amitābha (Infinite light) or Amida. He rules over the heaven known as Sukhavati in the western region. It was Amitābha who was incarnated as Gautama Buddha, twenty five hundred years ago, for the edification of mankind. That explains the special importance which is accorded to Amitābha in the Mahāyāna sacred scriptures. It is said that long long ago he was a great king who renounced his throne in search of spiritual peace, and finally attained Buddhahood with the help of the human Buddha of that time. He made a number of vows, one of which was that he would devote himself to the saving of all living beings. With that object, he created a special paradise where the blessed soul might enjoy an age-long state of happiness, wisdom and purity.' "Let them concentrate their longings on a rebirth in my paradise; let them call upon my name, though it be only ten times at best; then provided only that they have not been guilty of the five heinous sins, and have not slandered or vilified the true religion, the desire of such beings to be born in my paradise will be surely fulfilled. If this be not so, may I never receive the perfect enlightenment of Buddhā-hood."¹

1. Quoted by, Christmas Humphreys, *Buddhism*, p. 247-248.

Thus, under the influence of Mahāyāna, belief in salvation by faith was developed. The path of Bakhti reached its culminating point. The strenuousness of moral endeavour, so characteristic of early Buddhism gave place, in certain sects of Mahāyāna, to the easy path of faith and devotion. Even if a person repented of his sins at the time of death, it gave him an access to the Sukhavati paradise of Amitābha.

Though, in certain sects, the efficacy of faith was greatly exaggerated, yet devotion to Buddha is the general characteristic of all Mahāyānist schools of thought. Devotion, purity of life and love for all living beings are important pillars of the scheme of life, laid down by the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism.

We thus find, that in order to serve the ends of devotion, the conception of the Buddha was elaborated till he became one with the Absolute. As long as this conception possessed enough of the human element in it, the worship of Buddha as Amitābha or Vairocana or in some other forms continued to give solace and comfort to his numerous followers. But as the idea of Buddha became more and more universal, and was completely depersonalized, it lost its power to attract the pious devotees. "As the Hindus could not love or adore the metaphysical Brahman of the Upaniṣads, but needed deities of flesh and blood for their cult, so the Buddhists too could not approach the idealized and transcendental Buddha of the Mahāyāna with prayer and worship. He had become too great, vast, nebulous

impersonal and incomprehensible for such relations"¹ It was at this stage that the worship of the Boddhi-Sattvas began in Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the well-known *Jātakas* tales, Gautama Buddha, in his previous births, is spoken of as a Boddhi-Sattva. As a Boddhi-Sattva whether as a god, a man or an animal, he performed wonderful acts of charity, love and self-sacrifice. A Boddhi-Sattva was a human and lovable personality, and so it evoked a profound feeling of devotion among the followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism. They could pray to him for wealth, health and other blessings of life with full faith and devotion. The idea of the worship of Boddhi Sattva was thus suggested from the *Jātaka* tales of Buddha's previous lives. In course of time, a large number of Boddhi-Sattavas made their appearance in the Buddhist pantheon.

The Boddhi-Sattva Ideal

The Boddhi-Sattva Ideal is an important contribution of the Mahāyāna school to Buddhism. In the Theravāda or Hīnayāna school, the ideal of spiritual endeavour was to be an Arhat. The disciples of Gautama Buddha were generally known as Arhats and in early Buddhism, the Buddha himself was also sometimes called an Arhat. But later on, the Buddha came to be regarded as a higher being than an Arhat. All persons could aspire to Arhatship but all could not achieve Buddha-hood. To be a Buddha was a rare thing, and so, naturally,

1. Har Dayal, *The Bodhi-Sattva Doctrine*, p. 34.

the number of Buddhas could not be large. In our age only one Buddha appeared to lead mankind along the path of emancipation.

An Arhat gradually came to mean a person who had rid himself of sensuality, hatred, sloth, excitement and doubt, one who followed all the ethical rules, by abstaining from killing, theft, unchastity, falsehood, slander, harsh speech, idle talk, greed, ill-will and wrong views and practised self-restraint, meditation and concentration. The Arhat practised all the thirty-seven principles of enlightenment and was absolutely free from the taints (*Āsavas*) of pleasure, love for existence, and ignorance of true doctrines. It was believed that the Arhat who lived a holy life, as described above, would not be reborn in the world of sorrows.

In the early days of Buddhism the Arhats were very zealous in preaching the holy doctrines of Buddhism for the benefit of all people. An Arhat was himself a liberated soul, and in his turn, he became the means of bringing liberation to other people. Thus, besides being concerned with his own spiritual perfection he was also a wandering teacher, intent upon helping mankind to live a pure and noble life in the light of Buddha's teachings. It, however, appears that two or three centuries after the death of the Buddha, the zeal for preaching the doctrine to the people abated and the Arhats began to lead a cloistered life, concerned mainly with their own spiritual welfare. They became self-centered, as it were, and cared only for their own salvation. This attitude of aloofness and unconcern further gave rise to the ideal of

the Pratyeka Buddha. He was supposed to be a higher being than an Arhat. The Pratyeka Buddha was the designation given to those great souls who had succeeded in attaining the condition of Buddha-hood by super-human personal effort, but who fell short of the compassion and altruism of the Buddha ; they did nothing to preach the truth for the redemption of the world. It seems that the wise men among the Buddhists, at that time, were being drawn to the temptation of attaining individual enlightenment, and cutting themselves off entirely from the life of active love and compassion for the common man.

The teachers of Mahāyāna did not like the growing tendency towards a life of self-centred contemplation and an ever-increasing indifference to missionary activity. They introduced the Bodhi-Sattva ideal of unremitting sacrifice for others, as an antidote against growing lethargy amongst the monks of the period. They got their clue for this ideal from the use of this word in the *Jātaka* tales. The Buddha had described himself as having been a Bodhi-Sattva before he attained complete enlightenment. During his career as a Bodhi-Sattva in his previous existences, he had performed wonderful deeds of benevolence and self-sacrifice. So besides trying to attain enlightenment, a Bodhi-Sattva was to dedicate himself to disinterested service to his fellow-men. This new ideal came to be set up as the objective of religious life. It was held to be superior to the ideal of an Arhat or even to that of a Pratyeka Buddha. The latter two aim only at the attainment of individual Nirvāṇa or individual Buddhahood, while

the former aims at the welfare and happiness of all beings. A Bodhi-Sattva loves and pities all creatures and is as desirous of helping them to attain liberation as he wants it for himself. The greatness of this ideal lies in the fact, that while a Bodhi-Sattva wishes all people to attain Nirvāṇa, he himself refuses to enter into this blessed state so that he could go on helping mankind for ever. His love or compassion for mankind is so great that he continues to stay on in the world of suffering, so that he could work incessantly for the welfare of all beings. He takes a vow, that he would not enter into Nirvāṇa till all persons had been redeemed from sorrow and pain. And this work of loving service and active helpfulness continues even after he has shed off his mortal coil, and is free to move about in all the worlds and universes as a free being. The ideal of the Bodhi-Sattva gripped the imagination of the people, wherever it was preached, and changed Buddhism once again, from a mere religion of asceticism and meditation which it had become two or three centuries after Buddha's death, into a religion of active love and compassion, as the Buddha had intended it to be.

Bodhi-Sattvas as objects of Worship :—There took place a parallel development in Mahāyānism in the direction of the apotheosis of the Bodhi-Sattvas. The idea gained ground that there existed numerous celestial Bodhi-Sattvas in the heavenly regions. "The Hīnayāna held that Gautama before his last birth, dwelt in the Tushita heaven enjoying the power and splendour of a god, and it looked forward to the advent of Maitreya the future Bodhi-Sattva. But it admitted

no other Bodhi-Sattvas, a consequence apparently of the doctrine that there can be only one Buddha. But the luxuriant imagination of the followers of Mahāyāna “soon broke through this restriction and fashioned for itself beautiful images of benevolent beings, who refused the bliss of Nirvāṇa that they may alleviate the sufferings of others.”¹ The Bodhi-Sattvas had become so, on account of their having practised moral and intellectual excellences in numerous lives. Later on, they came to be looked upon as emanations or sons of super-human Buddhas. These Bodhi-Sattvas enjoy the company and the discourses of the celestial Buddhas in their sambhoga Kāya in the various paradises, and whenever necessary come out in the worlds for performing benevolent actions. According to the Mahāyāna doctrines a Bodhi-Sattva is only one stage short of Buddhahood, and he has chosen this slightly lower status, by his own free will, out of benevolent considerations.

From this arose the doctrine of vicarious salvation which consists in the transfer of merit from a Bodhi-Sattva to those who had faith in him. A Bodhi-Sattva was supposed to have amassed such a fund of merit by ceaseless efforts to perfect himself and to encompass the welfare of others, that he could easily transfer a part of it to other persons. An easy path was thus found for salvation. One had only to profess his faith in a Bodhi-Sattva and repeat his name. Thereby all his troubles came to an end

1. Charles Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. II p. 12.

and his salvation became ensured. According to the original teachings of the Buddha, salvation had to be slowly worked out by a person through long-continued personal endeavour, but now mere faith and devotion could do the job. The necessity for self-effort practically disappeared. It was the emergence, on the horizon of Buddhism, of the doctrine of salvation by mere faith. According to the earliest schools of Mahāyāna, faith was the result of long-continued practice of six Pāramitās or perfections, which we shall describe at length in the next chapter. The extreme form of faith doctrine came into vogue later, specially in China and Japan, with the establishment of a school known as the Pure Land School of Buddhism.

It has already been stated that, after the identification of Buddha with the ultimate principle of the universe, he became too remote for the religious needs of mankind ; a sort of universal impersonal force inspiring all phenomenal manifestations. It naturally became very difficult to have any concrete idea of this impersonal force and so gradually the worship of Buddha gave way to the worship of the Bodhi-Sattvas who were envisaged as concrete personalities, the embodiments of love and tenderness and with whom the worshippers could have warm devotional contacts. In this way, the worship of the Buddha was followed by the worship of the Bodhi-Sattvas, amongst the Mahāyāna followers of Buddhism.

Theoretically, there is an infinite number of Bodhi-Sattvas, but in actual practice only a small

number of Bodhi-Sattvas was recognised as important and out of this small number, Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara came to be the chief objects of worship. Really these Bodhi-Sattvas are the personifications of the different virtues and attributes of Gautama Buddha. Mañjuśrī represents the wisdom and Avalokiteśvara the mercy of the Buddha. "Some other Bodhi-Sattvas owe their names to the adjectives that were first employed to describe the great teacher. The Buddha was spoken of as Samantota Bhadraka or Sāmanta-Bhadra Kāya (auspicious and excellent in all ways) in the *Avadāna Śataka* and *Lalita Vistāra*, and we find that Sāmanta-Bhadra is a name of a Bodhi-Sattva In other cases, the descriptive titles of the Hindu Devas have been transferred to the Bodhi-Sattvas."¹ The names of some of the eminent Bodhi-Sattvas, besides those of Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara, are Sāmanta Bhadra, Gagana-Ganja, Vajra Pāṇi, Vajra Garbha, Vyuha-Rāja, Indra Jāli, and Ratna Garbha. Mostly they occur as mere names. The two most important Bodhi-Sattvas, as already indicated, are Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara. In course of time, as Buddhism spread to other countries; many local deities were accepted as Bodhi-Sattvas and became a part of the Buddhist pantheon in those countries.

The worship of Bodhi-Sattvas is a conspicuous feature of Mahāyāna. The worship of Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and other Bodhi-Sattvas was most probably suggested by the worship of Śiva and Viṣṇu and other

1. Har Dayal, *The Bodhi-Sattva Doctrine*, p. 36.

deities by the Hindus of that period. This form of worship become so popular among the Hindus at about the beginning of the Christian era that it could not be ignored by the Buddhists, and so it became a universal feature of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In course of time, Avalokiteśvara became, like Kṛṣṇa, practically the most important god of the Buddhists and its worship, the most popular of all. The deification of the Buddha had come earlier. The religious emotions of the masses found ample satisfaction in the setting up of the symbols of Buddha for worship at about the beginning of the Christian era. "In the centuries after the Christian era, the erection and worship of Buddha images came into vogue, and devotees at last found a means for expressing their devotion. They covered India with temples and monasteries fitted with such images in the belief that merit accrued both to the donors and to the artists."¹ Thus the worship of Buddha by means of symbols began among the early followers of Buddhism even before the Christian era. When Mahāyāna school was securely established later, the same process led to the worship of the Bodhi-Sattvas of whom the Avalokita became the most conspicuous and popular object of worship.

Later on, when Mahāyāna came under the influence of Tantraism, many new gods were introduced into Buddhism. They were invoked by the worshippers for all kinds of perfections and Siddhis and for the fulfilment of worldly desires. The use of

1. Prof. Nalināksha Datta, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 387.

Dharnis (spells) and formulas, the invention of prayer wheels, specially in Tibet, and many other quaint modes of worship came to be devised, and the the great religion of the Buddha lost much of its original purity and simplicity.

CHAPTER II

Pāramitās (Spiritual and Moral Perfections)

We have already alluded, in a previous section, to the ethical virtues and moral rules of conduct as they were taught in Theravāda Buddhism. The Mahāyāna school accepts all those virtues and moral rules of conduct and adds its own list of moral and spiritual excellences in the form of six Pāramitās or perfections. They are : Dāna (charity, the virtue of giving), Śīla (moral conduct), Kṣānti (patience, endurance), Vīrya (zeal, courage, strenuousness, diligence), Dhyāna (contemplation, concentration) and Prajñā (wisdom). Later on, four more pāramitās were added, so that the total number of Pāramitās came to be ten, but as these four additional perfections do not possess any special importance, we omit them from the present discussion. The Mahāyāna writers attach great importance to their list of Pāramitās. They regard them as a scheme of positive spiritual development in contrast to the moral scheme of earlier Buddhism, which is mostly negative in character. The earlier scheme tells us what we should not do ; it does not formulate positive aims of moral endeavour. These writers contrast the doctrines of Pāramitās with the thirty-seven Bodhi-Pakṣya-Dharmas (constituents of enlightenment), which represent the highest ideal of the Hīnayāna school, and bring out the superiority of their own scheme to the latter, in so far as it contains the supremely important

virtues of Dāna, Śīla and Kṣānti, which are curiously, absent from the list of the thirty-seven Dharmas.

The scheme of the Pāramitās does not contain anything absolutely new. They occur in different places in the old Buddhist works, but they have been brought together in one place in the scheme and for that achievement, the Mahāyānist writers deserve commendation. Here we have, combined in a harmonious whole, the social virtues with the virtues of meditation and contemplation. "They taught that a Bodhi Sattva should not cease to practice charity and forbearance in social life even when he ascended to the higher stages of concentration and wisdom "

The Pāramitās deeply enter into the life of a Bodhi-Sattva, and are looked upon as his best friends. They are 'the teacher, the way and the light.' 'They are the refuge and the shelter, the support and sanctuary' and they are the 'father and mother of all.' It is thus clear, that the Mahāyānists thought very highly of their scheme of perfections, and the part they played in the spiritual development of a Bodhi-Sattva.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, a person is supposed to begin his life as a Bodhi-Sattva, after the thought of enlightenment has been strongly aroused in him. This is known as Bodhicittotpāda. Every man is endowed with a Bodhi-Citta, but in most persons it remains in a latent condition. In a prospective Bodhi-Sattva, the Bodhi-Citta becomes manifest and actively operative. It turns the direction of his life towards the attainment of Buddhahood for the welfare and liberation of all persons. This desire may be aroused, in such a person, by the contemplation of the transient

and impermanent character of all phenomena and the mundane objectives of life, and by the realization that all happiness ends in sorrow, and life ends in death. The thunderous clouds, the swelling rivers and stormy winds, which for the time appear to be full of terrific fury and over-whelming power, very soon shrink back to their previously innocuous condition. "Powerful monarchs, skilled archers, clever magicians, haughty Devas, furious elephants, ferocious lions and tigers..... are all powerless against death, the fierce and irresistible foe of all living beings.¹

The spectacle of misery and folly all around may be another factor inciting a thoughtful person to the pursuit of the ideal. He may feel an irresistible impulse to become a Bodhi-Sattva. Contact with a saintly person, the study of the teaching of the Buddha, the advice of a dear friend or some other similar potent influence may lead him to the choice of this auspicious mode of life.

After the strong arousal of the Bodhi Citta, the aspirant makes a great vow or Praṇidhāna, namely : that he would stick to this resolve for the whole of his life without allowing himself to be swerved from the noble path by any temptation or suffering. Praṇidhāna, according to Dr. Suzuki, means a strong wish, aspiration, prayer, or an inflexible determination to carry out one's will.² The Praṇidhāna was to be made in order to encompass one's own enlightenment and the liberation of all creatures. A strong

1. *Jataka Mālā*. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

2. *Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 307.

will and an unflinching determination are a necessary factor in spiritual evolution.

After having made the vow and betaken himself to a spiritual preceptor, the aspirant actively submits himself to the necessary discipline and daily performance of all duties marked out for a Bodhi-Sattva. This includes the practice of Bodhi-Pakṣya-Dharma and, above all, the practice of Pāramitās or spiritual perfections. The goal set before a Bodhi Sattva is so high, that it may take many lives to achieve it. He may have to pass through many successive births in order to acquire knowledge and wisdom and to cultivate the various Pāramitās or perfections. These Pāramitās may be described as follows.

1. Dāna (Charity or liberality). Dāna is benevolence in action. A Bodhi-Sattva is not only to cherish the feeling of love and compassion for others, he should actively go out to help them by means of gifts and other ways. He should help the poor and the needy, serve the sick and the afflicted, and offer hospitality to the guest, the man of renunciation and any-body else who is in need of help. He should especially offer gifts to Buddhist monks and to Brāhmaṇas.

No limit seems to have been put upon the extent of charity to be practised by a Bodhi-Sattva. He should give "all that he has, his wealth, his limbs, his life, his merit (Punya) and also his wife and children, who are evidently regarded as a man's property."¹ The gifts should be offered in a spirit of humility without

1. Har Dayal, *The Bodhi-Sattva Doctrine*, p. 174.

any show of arrogance or lack of courtsey. He should do it in a mood of joy and thankfulness, and should not brag of his deeds of charity before others. He should give to all alike without making any distinction between friend and foe or even the deserving and the undeserving. But he is to use his discretion, at the time of giving, to the extent that he should not put himself to unnecessary sufferings in espousing unimportant causes.

A great good is supposed to follow acts of charity. A man may do acts of charity in order to obtain fame or to get a reward in the next life in the form of health, prosperity or beauty. "If the living beings knew the fruits and final reward of charity and the distribution of gifts, as I know them," says Buddha in one of his discourses, "then they would not eat their food without giving to others, and sharing with others, even if it were their last morsel and mouthful."¹

Good results will follow even if charity is practised out of desire for personal reward; but the highest praise is accorded to charity in the practice of which the selfish motive is altogether absent. The best form of charity is actuated purely by the spirit of benevolence, by love, pity, mercy and compassion. *Karuṇā* or compassion holds a very high place in Buddhist ethics. "The earth with its forests, great mountains and oceans has been destroyed a hundred times by water, fire and wind at the close of the aeons ; but the great compassion of a Bodhi-Sattva abides for ever."² In

1. Quoted. Har Dayāl, *The Bodhi-Sattva Doctrine*, p. 176-77.

2. *Jātaka Mālā* of Ārya Śūra, quoted, *Ibid.*, p. 178.

later Mahāyāna literature, Karuṇā came to be regarded as higher than knowledge or even salvation. A Bodhi-Sattva need not learn many things ; Karuṇā alone is enough as it is the life and soul of religion, and the root of all virtuous conduct.

A Bodhi-Sattva, actuated by Karuṇā, aims at alleviating the pain and suffering of others and at actively promoting their happiness. In the first place, benevolence or Karuṇā helps him to get rid of the great evil of hatred which lurks in all human minds and is a great stumbling block in the path of spiritual attainment. "Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time ; hatred ceases by love. This is an eternal law."¹ Anger can be over-come by producing in the mind, an opposite state of feeling, namely that of love or compassion. Another ground for inculcating the practice of Karuṇā or compassion is that all living beings cherish the same desire for life. Life is dear to every living creature. As we do not want to die, other beings similarly do not want to die. "Going over all regions with his mind, a man will nowhere find any thing dearer than his life. The self is equally dear to others and therefore let a man who regards his own self as dear, not injure others."²

Buddhism does not restrict benevolence to human beings alone. A Bodhi-Sattva is to include all living creatures in its scope. We are told in the *Suttanipāta*, "Whatever living beings there are in existence.....may all of them live happily. Let

1. Dhammapada V.

2. Saṃyutta Nikaya I. 75.

no one cheat another, let no man wish for another's pain and suffering from anger and resentment. As the mother protects her only son with her life, let every one cultivate a boundless kindly mind towards all sentient beings." If pain is really an evil, Buddhism sees no reason why pain in the lower animal kingdom should not be regarded equally as an evil to be avoided and alleviated as far as it lies in one's power.

The universal character of love, as understood by Buddhism, is illustrated in the four-fold meditations, to be practised by every Buddhist, on the virtues of Maitrī (Love) Karuṇā (compassion), Muditā (sympathetic joy), and Upekṣā (equanimity) under all circumstances. These meditations are known as the four Brahma-Vihāras. The religious aspirant is required, by these meditations, to send thoughts of love, compassion and sympathy to all quarters of the globe. The thought of love, without any bounds or measure, ought to flow towards all creatures of the world, above, below, around and everywhere. Similarly, the aspirant is to fill his mind with the thoughts, one after the other, of compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. He thus spreads his loving heart over the whole world and thereby realises his unity and one-ness with all beings. This daily practice is recommended to all Buddhists.

Benevolence or love can manifest itself completely only, if it is followed by practical action. It explains, why the first and most important Pāramitā or perfection should have been named as Dāna, which is a practical form of love and compassion. Unless

love take the practical form of Dāna or concrete helpfulness, it cannot achieve its highest fulfilment.

The term Karuṇā, as used in Buddhist literature, covers a large variety of kindred virtues, such as love, kindness, sympathy, mercy and friendly feeling. The feeling of Karuṇā aims at alleviating the pain and suffering of both men and animals and promoting their well-being and happiness.

2. Śīla Pāramita. The earliest compendium of moral virtues appears in the form of five precepts: (a) abstinence from destroying life, (b) abstinence from taking what is not given (c) abstinence from non-chastity, (d) abstinence from falsehood and (e) abstinence from the use of intoxicating drinks. The list was, later, extended to ten moral precepts, the other five being as follows: 1. abstaining from eating at forbidden times or wrong hours, 2. abstaining from singing, dancing and seeing shows, 3. abstaining from adorning one's person by the use of garlands, perfumes and unguents, 4. not to use the high big bed and 5. not to accept silver and gold.

The Mahāyāna writers accepted all these principles. They favoured a life of simplicity and austerity, and they were against the use of alcoholic drinks which tended to make people slothful, indolent and thoughtless. The practical religion of Buddhism required the disciples to be always alert and vigilant at every moment of their lives. They, however, did not want to include in their list of virtues, the last five rules the retention of which did not, in their opinion, give dignity and seriousness to

the conception of a high moral life. So they revised the list which in the modified form reads as follows.

First four precepts were retained as previously ; the remaining ones were as follows (a) abstention from lying (b) abstention from slander (c) abstention from harsh speech (d) abstention from frivolous speech (e) abstention from covetousness (f) abstention from thoughts of malice or ill-will, and abstention from holding wrong or ignorant views. Really this list is arrived at by adding the three roots of evil (Rāga, Dveṣa and Moha) to the first four rules and at the same time increasing the rule concerning speech from one to four as described above. In the present form, the moral rules fall into a three-fold classification based on the restraint and control of body, speech and mind (Kāya, Vāc and Manas). The virtues included under the head of Śīla embody the idea of the Buddhist ideal of moral perfection. We may now take these moral rules one by one.

1. Abstention from destroying life. A Bodhi-Sattva regards all life to be as precious as his own. According to him, Ahimsā is the highest virtue and its scope extends to all living beings. In the Buddhist works Maitrī or friendliness towards animals is strongly inculcated. Most probably the Buddha and Mahāvīra were the first great religious teachers to teach humane and kindly treatment of animals. Naturally the Buddhists condemned hunting and eating of animal flesh. It was held most sinful to kill animals merely for sport or pastime or for the pleasure of the tongue. In Lankāvatāra Sutra there is a very interesting discussion on the merits of vegetarianism. Whatever

other people may do, a Bodhi-Sattva should, on no account, give pain to any living creature, and for the same reason he should not participate in war which, as a rule, has its roots in hatred, greed and love of power. The Buddhists were probably the first pacifists in the history of world culture.

The old rule, that a Bhikṣu may eat meat if it was not specially prepared for him, was no longer held valid by Mahāyāna writers and so the Buddhist aspirant is forbidden from taking flesh diet under any circumstances.

2. *Abstention* from taking what is not given. A Bodhi-Sattva has to keep himself free from the taint of avarice. He is to remain contented with what he has and should, on no account, wrongfully take what does not belong to him. He should scrupulously avoid all forms of theft, besides the usually recognised ones such as stealing, robbery, swindling, pick-pocketing etc. Infringement of other people's rights, not doing one's work honestly, evasion of responsibility, wasting of time during work hours and many other similar derelictions are all so many forms of theft and should be avoided. The precept of non-stealing should therefore be interpreted in a wide sense. A righteous man respects the right of property and would not take, without permission, even a leaf or a blade of grass.

3. *Abstention* from non-chastity. A Bodhi-Sattva does not allow any impure thought to arise in his mind in regard to other people's wives. There occurs a conversation in *Samyutta Nikāya* (IV. 110, 111) between Piṇḍola Bharadvāja, a disciple of the Buddha and king Udayana, in which the former refers

to the teaching of the Buddha on this subject. The Buddha is described in this conversation as instructing his disciples to look upon women in three different ways. They are to regard all women who are of the age of their mothers, as mothers, those who are as old as their sisters, as sisters, and those of the age of their daughters, as daughters.

4 to 7. Abstention from lying, from slander, from harsh speech and from frivolous talk. These four rules are concerned with the proper use of speech. A Bodhi-Sattva has to keep his speech untainted in all these ways. He should not tell a lie even in a dream. There should be perfect harmony between his thought, word and deed. Speech is the most important organ of inter-communication between man and man, and it is, therefore, indispensable to use it properly if harmonious social relations are to be maintained. Besides false speech, slandering and back-biting are to be avoided. A slanderer separates friends from one another and causes strife where there was harmony before. He sows the seeds of discord and hostility everywhere and is thus a great enemy of society. The habit of slandering has its roots in avarice, hatred, envy and other evil states of mind.

The use of abusive and harsh language is another evil in the domain of speech. All forms of harsh language is pleasant neither to the ear nor to the heart and are a source of pain to the person to whom they are addressed. Persons who are easily aroused to anger, who are haughty, proud, and envious are generally given to harsh speech. Such people lose friends very

rapidly and besides causing unhappiness to others remain unhappy themselves too. One should, therefore, always speak such words "as are free from blame, pleasant to the ear, lovely, reaching to the heart, urbane, pleasing to the multitude, beloved by the multitude" (Dīgha Nikāya III. 173). Idle or frivolous talk is also to be avoided as far as possible. Occasionally it may be quite innocent, but the general tendency of such a talk is that people, in their unguarded moments, descend to criticising other people or finding fault with absent persons. So from a strictly moral point of view, vain talk is liable to lead to injurious consequences. Therefore as far as speech is concerned, a Bodhi-Sattva should speak words which are truthful, urbane, sweet, concord-producing and, as far as possible, appreciative of other people.

8 to 10. The last three precepts instruct us against attachment or covetousness (Rāga) anger or malice (Dveṣa) and ignorance (Avidya). A good man should be free from avarice or attachment to sensual pleasures and things of the world. He should not covet the riches and possessions of other people. According to Buddhism, covetousness is one of the greatest evils and most difficult to get rid of. The attainment of Nirvāṇa is easy for a man, who can completely eradicate this evil. We are told that one who is free from covetousness and attachment is already a Buddha. Malice or anger should also be eradicated from one's heart. We are to entertain friendly, kind, compassionate and loving thoughts towards all creatures, and should always desire their welfare and happiness. Ignorance of the nature of righteousness and the true

doctrines of religion is another potent cause of wrong living. Knowledge is necessary to virtue and so an aspirant should always remain earnest in seeking knowledge of the great principles of the good life.

These principles of moral excellence are to be accepted unconditionally. But we find later Mahāyāna writers making statements to the effect, that if any of these rules come in the way of the happiness and welfare of other people, they can be abrogated by a Bodhi-Sattva, and he would not commit any sin by so doing. It might have been realized in course of time, that there are certain situations when the precept to always speak the truth, for instance, cannot be strictly carried out. But the attempt to wriggle out of the rigorous application of moral rules is also an indication of the growing laxity of moral tone among the Buddhist monks with the passing of time. It may also have been partially due to the increasing influence of Tantric doctrines on Buddhism. Dr. Har Dayal sums up the later Mahāyāna writers, on this subject, in the following words: "The author of the Bodhi Sattva-Bhūmi indicates the circumstances in which a Bodhi-Sattva may infringe the seven chief precepts. He may kill a person, who intends to murder a monk or his own parent. He should say: 'It does not matter if I suffer in the purgatories for this sin, but I must save this misguided creature from such a faith.' He can take what is not given, if it is necessary to deprive unjust kings and wicked robbers of their ill-gotten gains which must lead to their ruin and destruction. He may have carnal knowledge of an unmarried woman, if he can thus prevent her from harbouring thoughts of hatred and ill-will. He may tell lies for

the sake of others. He may slander some one in order to separate another Bodhi-Sattva from a bad friend. He may speak harshly to a sinner in order to warn and reproach him. He may indulge in frivolous talk in order to win over such persons as are addicted to music, dancing and gossip.....He should not be afraid of sinning now and then for the sake of others, as he has a long period of time at his disposal, before enlightenment can be attained.¹

3. Kṣānti (Patience and endurance). The perfection of Kṣānti consists in freedom from anger and resentment, in forgiving others for the injuries and insults received from them and cheerfully enduring all sorts of sufferings and hardships in the form of pain, poverty, sickness, extremes of heat and cold and so on.

The forgiveness of a Bodhi-Sattva should know no bounds. Whatever be the provocation in the form of physical injury, insult, threat, abuse and censure, he should bear everything calmly and should not think of retaliating, by bodily actions or by speech or even by harbouring ill-will in his mind. His forgiveness is to make no distinction between friend and foe or between good people and bad people. Like gentle rain it should fall upon all people without any discrimination. According to Sukavati Vyūha, his forgiveness is absolute and universal, even as mother earth suffers in silence whatever is done to her.

We are, after all, the victims of causes over which we have no control. A wicked man behaves the way he does because he cannot help it, being so consti-

1. *The Bodhi-Sattva Doctrine*, p. 208.

tuted by his heredity and external influences. Anger therefore has no meaning. It causes only pain to ourselves and to others. Instead of trying to seek vengeance, we should betake ourselves to alleviating the sufferings of others. All people, rich and poor alike, are subject to suffering and pain which are inseparable from life in the very nature of things. People therefore deserve pity and compassion, instead of harsh and uncharitable treatment, even in return of provocative behaviour.

A man of noble disposition remains calm and undisturbed in the face of all sorts of natural calamities. He endures hunger and thirst, heat and cold, pain and sickness with an equal mind and complete resignation. If his possessions are taken away from him or even when he has to suffer the loss of his near and dear ones, he does not lose the equanimity of his mind. Mental suffering in the form of dishonour, failure, and defeat have to be similarly endured with patience. Of course we should make every effort to ward off evil, but if notwithstanding that, it comes we should bear it. It is no use crying over spilt milk. This is what wisdom and common-sense would require of us. Apart from unforeseen calamities, a spiritual seeker is required to practice some amount of voluntary asceticism and to go through a life of celibacy, simplicity and poverty in the interest of his spiritual welfare. Pain and suffering, when they come, instead of depressing him, should serve as incentive for unceasing efforts.

The Buddha laid a great emphasis on the virtue of patience and forgiveness. "The hatred of those,"

he says, "will never be set at rest, who entertain such ideas as 'he rebuked me, he struck me, he defeated me, he robbed me.' Hatred can never be overcome by hatred in this world. It can only be overcome with love. This is an everlasting law."¹ There is a further saying of him as follows, "Whosoever, without feeling any resentment bears derision, blows and bonds, who has made patience his main support, him call I a Brahman."² The importance, which the Buddha gave to this perfection, becomes apparent from the beautiful story of Pūraṇa, a Buddhist apostle. He sought permission of the Buddha to preach The doctrine among some fierce barbarous tribes. "The people of those regions are wild and ferocious. What will you do, Pūraṇa, if they revile, abuse and annoy you?" "In that case," replied he, "I shall think that they are really good people, since they only revile and abuse me ; but do not strike me with their hands or with stones and clods of earth." "But if they actually strike you with hands and stones," asked the Buddha, "What would you then think." "I shall then think, that they are really nice people since they do not strike me with a sharp weapon and thereby kill me." "But suppose, they really go to the length of killing you, what would you think in that case." The final reply was "Even then I shall harbour thoughts of love and appreciation for them. I shall regard them as good people, since then they would have made me free from the bondage of this body which is the source of all suffering and ignorance. By killing me they

1. *Dhammpada*. III. 5.

2. *Sutta-Nipāta*, 623.

would really be doing a service to me." It is the highest illustration of the spirit of forgiveness and forbearance.

4. *Vīrya Pāramitā* (zeal and steadfastness). It consists in energetically continuing one's efforts for enlightenment without being daunted by impediments or difficulties. The path of spiritual realization is not an easy path, and is, sometimes, compared to the sharp edge of a razor. It requires persistent endeavour and unfaltering courage in pursuing the goal under all circumstances.

The Bodhi-Sattva shows his energy and firmness of purpose in three ways ; first in sustained efforts to fight against the evil tendencies of his mind such as hatred, sensuality and egoism. He does not allow indolence and despondency to come in the way of his moral development. He is never content unless he can achieve the highest level of moral excellence as attained by the ancient Bodhi-Sattvas.

Secondly the Bodhi-Sattva is equally determined to make himself conversant with the noble doctrines of his faith. He wants to acquire wisdom, and with that end in view he makes a thorough study of the Buddhist scriptures. Later Mahāyāna writers make it incumbent upon a Bodhi-Sattva to acquire learning in secular subjects of study as well in order to be able to convert the people, treat the sick and confer benefits upon all. He therefore studies the five *Vidyā Sthānas* ; Buddhist philosophy, logic, grammar, medicine and technical arts and crafts. It is the view of Dr. Har Dayal, that the new shift in favour of secular education was due to the influence of Hinduism. "Gautama

Buddha laid great stress chiefly on morality, monasticism and meditation. But the conversion of many Hindu priests to Buddhism must have led to a movement in favour of higher education among the Buddhist monks. The heroes of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* are described as well-educated and cultured men."¹ We know that the later Buddhist scholars made great contributions to philosophy, logic and arts in general.

Thirdly the Bodhi-Sattva shows even greater zeal in doing acts of benevolence and compassion for the welfare of other people. The later Mahāyāna works highly extol the practice of benevolent deeds by the Bodhi Sattvas or religious seekers. As time passed, love and compassion came to be regarded as higher than even wisdom or learning. Unstinted and ever-increasing love become the chief characteristic of a Buddhist monk.

5. Dhyāna (concentration and meditation): Regular meditation and concentration, sometimes lasting for many hours each day, are an indispensable part of Buddhist training. The four Pāramitās given above are chiefly concerned with the cultivation of moral virtues, and in themselves they present only an incomplete picture of Buddhism. We find these virtues stressed among all civilized peoples and even by persons who do not call themselves religious. The remaining two Pāramitās of Dhyāna and Prajñā are therefore very important and taken along with the others give a complete picture of Buddhism.

1. *The Bodhi Sattva Doctrine*, p. 219.

Dhyāna is held essential in Buddhism for the attainment of enlightenment. "The first meditations" says Dr. Anand Coomaraswamy, "are of an ethical character and in some respects may be compared to prayer. They consist in cherishing the moods (Bhāvanās) of loving kindness, compassion, sympathy and impartiality (Maitrī, Karuṇā, Muditā and Ūpekṣā). They are called the four illimitable sublime moods (Brahma Vihāras). The meditation on loving kindness, for example, consists in the emphasis of this feeling, the active radiation of goodwill in all directions and towards all forms of life." Such meditations carried on every day at fixed hours, would naturally bring about a great change in the life of the spiritual aspirants.

We have previously alluded to the concentration exercises to be practised by the followers of Buddhism. They are, in many respects, of the same nature as Yogic exercises and their aim is to produce the Yogi a state of abstraction, Cittāikāgratā or the one-pointed state of mind. The perfection of meditation is explained in Prajñā Pāramitā in the following words, "Whether he (i.e. a Bodhi-Sattva) walks or stands, sits or lies down, talks or remains silent, his concentration does not leave him. He does not fidget with his hands or feet, or twitch his face, he is not incoherent in his speech, confused in his senses, exalted or uplifted, fickle or idle, agitated in body or mind. Calm is his body, calm is his voice, calm is his mind. His demeanour shows contentment both in private and public.....though in a crowd, he dwells apart; ever unchanged, in gain or loss, not elated nor cast down. Thus in happiness and suffering, in praise and blame, in fame and disrepute, in life or death, he is the same, unchanged, neither

elated nor cast down. And so with foe or friend, with what is pleasant and unpleasant, with holy or unholy man, with noises or music, with forms that are dear or undear, he remains the same unchanged, neither elated nor cast down, neither gratified nor thwarted. And why ! He sees all Dharmas as empty of marks of their own, without true reality, incomplete and uncreated.¹ This is the ideal of a perfected Bodhi-Sattva, which is to be achieved by the constant practice of meditation or Dhyāna. The Mahāyāna scholars lay a very great emphasis on the practical side of religion and have, besides the exercises used in the earlier period, added many new kinds of Samadhies or concentrative exercises. In some Mahāyāna works more than 130 Samādhies are mentioned. The Lankāvatāra Sūtra mentioned the possibility of thousands of Samādhis. It only means that there are innumerable methods of concentrating the mind, and innumerable objects on which the mind can be concentrated. Out of all these, the Samādhies on Śūnyatā or emptiness, the Animitta or the unconditioned and Apranihitā or the aimless i.e. free from all desires, are held to be the most important. It is believed that these Samādhis besides causing tranquility and enlightenment can engender the power of performing miracles.

6. Prajñā Pāramitā. The result of cultivating the perfections mentioned hitherto is the production of the Pāramitā of wisdom. This Pāramitā represents the highest goal of Buddhist religion and as such is greatly extolled. "I pay homage" says Sāri-Putra, "to the perfection of wisdom. She is worthy of homage.

1. Ś'ikṣāsamuccaya, pp. 202-203, translation by Edward Conze.

She is a source of light, and from every one in the triple world she removes darkness, and leads them away from the blinding darkness caused by defilement and wrong views. In her we can find shelter. Most excellent are her works. She makes us seek the safety of the wings of enlightenment.....She disperses the gloom and darkness of delusion. She is identical with all knowldge.¹ Wisdom leads us to a state of illumination or enlightenment. As regards the nature of Prajñā or wisdom, different schools of Buddhism interpret it in their own way. According to the Vijñānavāda school, Prajñā is the knowledge of the supreme good or the supreme truth (Paramārtha-Jñāna). It depends on right investigation and concentration. It leads to the knowledge of that which exists and as it exists. Wisdom makes us realize the unreality of the world as compared to the Absolute mind, which gives rise to it. The world has no reality in itself but only appears as such. This is explained, in Vijñānavāda works such as the Lankāvatāra sūtra with the help of many illustrations. "It is as with animals who imagine in a mirage the existence of water ; scorched by the summer heat, desirous of drinking it, they run towards it. They do not understand, that it is an erroneous illusion in their own mind, and they do not comprehend that there is no water there. It is as if some man, asleep, dreams of a country, full of women and men, elephants, horses, carts, pedestrians, villages, cities and market towns, cows, buffaloes, goods, parks, and adorned with various mountains, rivers and lakes. Awake, his memory runs back over the country and women's

1. *Aṣṭa-Sahasrika*, VII, 172-71.

apartments. It would not be an intelligent thing for this man to go in his memory through the various unreal experiences which he had in his dream. In the same way, the foolish common people, bitten by false views and under the influence of the heretics, do not realize that what is seen by their own mind is like a dream and they rely on notions of oneness and otherness, of being and not-being. Just as an echo is heard, caused by the connections between a man, a river and wind, but it is not in existence, nor in non-existence, because it is heard as a voice and yet, not a voice. Just so, existence and non-existence, oneness and otherness, both-ness and non-bothness are visions, falsely constructed by the habit energy in one's own mind." In this way according to Yogācāra or Vijñānavāda school, the dawn of wisdom leads a person to realize the dream-like nature of all objects of existence and turns his mind towards the knowledge of the supreme truth which is absolute consciousness. All else is like bubbles appearing and disappearing on the vast ocean of consciousness.

According to the Mādhyamika philosophers Prajñā is understood to mean Śūnyatā or emptiness or absolute non-existence of all phenomena. In the Prajñā Pāramitā-hṛdaya, Avlokita, the holy lord and Bodhi-Sattva speaks to Sāri-Putra as follows "Here, O Sāri-Putra, form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form ; emptiness does not differ from form nor does form differ from emptiness. The same is true of feelings, preceptions, impulses and consciousness. Therefore O Sāri-Putra, where there is emptiness there is neither form nor feeling, nor preception, nor impulse, nor consciousness ; no

eye or ear or nose, or tongue or body or mind ; no form, nor sound, nor smell, nor taste, nor touch, nor object of mind. There is not ignorance, nor extinction of ignorance ; there is no decay and death, nor extinction of decay and death. There is no suffering, no origination, nor stopping nor path, there is no cognition, no attainment and no non-attainment.”¹

Wisdom or Prajña, in the words of Dwight Goddard, “is the goal of Buddhist experience. Its full realisation will not come, gradually, as the result of study and meditation as the intellectual need is satisfied, it will come suddenly, as a result of unifying one’s spirit with highest truth in right concentration. It will not come as the logical proof of a philosophical proposition ; it will come as a revelation, carrying with it a rich enhancement of life and a vision, that will satisfy beyond all question, and forever after, remain an unshakable conviction. It will be the absolute clearing away and ending of all ignorance, all egoism, all doubt.”²

1. *Translation* by Edward Conze. Abridged.

2. *The Buddha’s Golden Path*. p. 208.

CHAPTER III

Mahāyāna Philosophy

The Buddha did not attach any importance to philosophical speculations. In his opinion they led nowhere, and really stood in the way of spiritual realization. He, therefore, insisted that his followers should abstain from this fruitless enterprise and devote their whole energy in pursuing the eight-fold path of spiritual realization. It, however, seems that human nature cannot for long stand a ban on metaphysical discussions. We, therefore, find that, in course of time, philosophical thinkers appeared in the Buddhist schools, who gave a systematic expression to the undefined epistemological and metaphysical implications contained in the original teachings of the master.

On the side of the Theravādins, we have the important philosophical doctrines of the Vaibhāṣikas and the Sautrāntikas. The philosophical creed of both these schools may be characterised as Metaphysical Realism. They divided the objects of experience into a number of elements. This was done on the basis of the five Skandhas or constituents of human personality. Each Skandha was divided into a number of sub-divisions and thus the total number of elements or Dhamas, both material and mental, came to be seventy-five. This number rose to more than a hundred in the later Idealistic schools.

These Dharmas are elements of existence.

According to the law of Pratityasamutpada, some elements are found as accompanied or followed by others. These elements do not influence one another; but it so happens that when some are present, they become the occasion of others appearing simultaneously or in succession. All phenomena, material, mental or psycho-physical are the result of combination or disintegration of the various elements according to the laws of their inter-connection.

The theory of Dharmas is accepted by all schools of Buddhism. The earlier schools regarded them as external existents though each such existent is subject to change from moment to moment. The Mādhyamikas of the later Mahāyāna Buddhism regarded these Dharmas as empty and unsubstantial in themselves, but conceded to them a contingent and conditional existence. The Vijñānavādins gave them an ideal character and converted them into ideas of Alaya Vijñana (absolute consciousness). But the pluralistic conception of Dharmas remained with all the schools. Each element in itself was regarded as constantly changing; ceasing to be and the next moment respringing into existence. "Each ephemeral being is to be regarded as a flux of particles, which are themselves ephemeral. The individual is no more than a vortex of such a causal sequence."

A more or less similar view is expressed by Bertrand Russell in the following words, "My meaning in regard to the impermanence of physical entities may perhaps be made clearer by the use of Bergson's favourite illustration of the cinematograph When, in a picture palace, we see a man rolling down-

hill, or running away from the police, or falling into a river, or doing any of those other things to which men in such places are addicted, we know that there is not really only one man moving but a succession of photographs, each with a different momentary man. The illusion of persistence arises only through the approach to continuity in the series of momentary men The real man too, I believe, however, the police may swear to his identity, is really a series of momentary men, each different one from the other, and bound together, not by a numerical identity, but by continuity and certain intrinsic causal laws. And what applies to men, applies equally to tables and chairs, the sun, moon, and stars. Each of these is to be regarded, not as one single persistent entity, but as a series of entities succeeding each other in time, each lasting for a very brief period, though probably not for a mere mathematical instant."¹

While both the Vaibhāṣikas and the Sautrāntikas accepted the basic character of these real elements, they differed from each other in their epistemological points of views. According to the Vaibhāṣikas, we know the things of the world as they are by direct perception. Whatever our ideas (perceptions) present to us as external, does indeed exist. The Sautrāntikas, on the other hand, are of the view that we directly know our own ideas and on the basis of these ideas infer the existence of external objects. We have no means of knowing whether external objects correspond to our mental pictures of those objects. All that we can say is that there is an

1. *Mysticism and Logic* p. 123—124,

external series of phenomena corresponding to changing phases of the mental stream.

The schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism do not accept the assumption of the Theravādin schools that the elements, which give rise to the various phenomena, are real though transient. In fact, in course of time, there arose among the followers of the realist school a tendency to regard the elements as more or less permanent, so that in the minds of most people it took the form of a doctrine of fixed and changeless elements forming the basis of the world of phenomena. It was going away from the original doctrine of thorough-going impermanence or momentariness.

The Mahāyāna philosophers, in this respect, reverted to the spirit of primitive Buddhism. Taking their stand on the ever-changing character of all phenomena they ultimately gave an idealistic colour to their exposition of the nature of reality. The most important philosophers of Mahāyāna are Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Aśvaghoṣa lived in the first century A. D. and is said to be the writer of "Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna," a work of very great philosophical significance. Nāgārjuna, who lived in the 2nd century A. D., was a brilliant dialectician, and is regarded as the founder of the Mādhyamika school of philosophy. Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were two talented brothers, who expounded the Yogācāra or idealistic philosophy of Vijñānvāda in about the fourth century A. D.

Mādhyamika Philosophy

The central idea of the Mādhyamika school is that we can make no predication whatsoever about

Reality as such. We cannot know an object as it is apart from its phenomenal appearances which are presented to us. These phenomena are in an unceasing process of change. The essence of an object, apart from its phenomenal attributes and activities, is for ever concealed from us and is therefore absolutely indescribable. The reality is Śūnya or void. The use of the term Śūnya does not mean that the reality is non-existent in itself. It only means that, so far as we are concerned, it is above our power to know it with the help of thought-categories.

Nāgārjuna takes, one by one, the various categories of thought and shows by subtle dialectical reasoning, that none of these categories can be regarded as representing the reality of an object. Space and time, substance and attribute, rest and motion, cause and effect, and similar other categories are useful only in interpreting our empirical experiences. They break down and involve themselves into self-contradiction, if they are pressed to reveal to us the reality underlying the objects of experience. Take for instance, the category of substance. We can know substance only by means of its attributes ; but it is not possible for us to understand logically the relation of substance and its attribute. If attributes are taken away, what remains of the substance ? Can it retain its individuality apart from its attributes ? It seems that it cannot do so. But if there is no underlying substratum, where do the attributes reside ? Can they exist themselves without a support ? These two positions thus contradict each other. Similar difficulties are presented in the case of other categories. On account

of the self-contradictory character of these categories we cannot understand the nature of an object with their help, and on the intellectual plane there is no other way to understand an object. Reality or the Absolute is, therefore, beyond description by logical categories. As a writer says, "To transfer the finite categories to the infinite would be like attempting to measure the heat of the sun by the ordinary thermometer. From our point of view the absolute is nothing. We call it *Śūnyatā*, because no category is adequate to it. To call it being is wrong, because only concrete things exist, and to call it non-being is equally wrong," because it is not equivalent to absolute non-existence. So we can predicate neither being nor non-being about it.

Thus, according to the *Mādhyamika* school of *Mahāyāna*, none of the objects of the phenomenal world has any substantiality. From the point of view of reality they are equal to nothing. The reality, whatever it is, is *Śūnyatā* or emptiness and hence from the phenomenal point of view nothing can be predicated of it. Every predicate would be phenomenal and hence empty of true being.

In actual experience no object appears to have an independent existence. It has only a conditional existence, being dependent upon other existences which, in their turn, are similarly conditioned. This fact of inter-dependence of objects is brought home to us by the Buddhist theory of dependent origination or *Pratityasamutpada*. So an object can never be known as it is in itself, nor it can be known by its relations, as

relations can exist only between self-existent entities, and in experience we never come across any such self-existent entity. Moreover, if an object were supposed to possess a *Swabhāva* or a self-determined nature of its own, it would be incapable of change. A self-existing ego, for instance, would, in that case, never be able to get rid of suffering or to attain deliverance in any form. It would ever remain what it is. As we find change everywhere in nature as well as in the domain of mind, there can be no self-subsisting reality in any of these changing phenomena. Our concepts, therefore, only apply to objects of experience and have only a pragmatic value. They cannot go beyond these objects of experience whether physical or mental. Our religious concepts such as bondage and liberation, transmigration and *Karman*, suffer from the same fate of unreality. Even the teachings of the Buddha are no exception to the rule. No idea whatsoever can enter into the unreal world without becoming itself unreal. From the point of view of reality, there is, as *Nāgarjuna* says, "Neither production (*Utpāda*) nor destruction (*Uccheda*) nor annihilation (*Nirodha*), nor persistence (*Sāśvata*) nor unity (*Ekārtha*) nor many-ness (*Nānārtha*); nor coming in (*Āgamana*) nor going out (*Nirgamana*)." There is thus, in reality, no bondage and no deliverance, no good and no evil and no distinction between subject and object. "That is to say, perfect knowledge transcends all distinctions; it recognises the illusory nature of all individuality and the truth of sameness, the never-changing one behind the ever-changing many. In this sense it is said to perceive nothing."

know nothing.”¹ The Doctrine of the Buddha is spoken of as a Yāna, a vehicle or a means of conveyance. Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna are both such modes of transport from a life of limitation and suffering to Nirvāṇa or spiritual enlightenment. The various conceptions which are used in expounding the doctrine of the Buddha such as Avidyā, Bandha, Mokṣa, Nirvāṇa etc. are not meant to describe reality as it is but they are merely hints or sign-posts for the guidance of travellers on the spiritual path and “become useless for the perfect and enlightened unless to serve him in the role of a teacher.....these conceptions are without ultimate realities, merely part of a raft which is helpful for crossing the stream of ignorance, but useless when the crossing has been done.” These ideas, therefore, have only a relative value, and lose all importance after enlightenment has been obtained.

According to Nāgārjuna we cannot even say that reality is consciousness. As subject and object imply each other, there cannot be consciousness without, at the same time, there being an object of consciousness. As the reality of the object cannot be proved, the existence of consciousness, in its own right, is similarly ruled out.

The following lines from Prajñā Pāramitā-Hṛdaya Sūtra bring out the Mādhyamika point of view, “O Sāriputra, all things have the character of emptiness, they have no beginning, no end, they are faultless and not-faultless, they are not imperfect and they are not perfect, therefore O Sāriputra, here in this

1. Sir Charles Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism* Vol. II, 41.

emptiness there is no form, no perception, no name, no concept, no knowledge ; no eye, ear, nose tongue, body and mind ; no form, sound, smell, taste, touch..... there is no knowledge, no ignorance and no destruction of ignorance. There is no decay and death, no destruction of death. There are not the four noble truths, namely pain, origin of pain, stoppage of pain and the path to it. There is no knowledge, no obtaining, nor not-obtaining of Nirvāṇa.”¹ The idea of piling up these contradictions in respect of reality is to show that all the categories and concepts which we use in every-day discourse. are altogether inapplicable beyond the realm of the phenomenal. From the intellectual point of view reality is Śūnya or unknowable like the noumena of Kant.

But the Mādhyamika does not deny reality. “That Nāgārjuna admits a reality and is not caught up in absolute negation is acknowledged by all who have studied him.....By ‘empty’, Nāgārjuna really understands nothing but that which has arisen through dependence (Pratītya Samutpanna).² We find a similar concept of emptiness in Maitri Upaniṣad, (VI. 23.) ‘The ultimate reality is said to be “without sound, empty of being” (Nihśabdaḥ Śūnyabhūtaḥ). The ultimate Reality is Sunya in the sense that it is empty of all the contents of the world. And yet the contents are there. As to the relation between the ultimate reality and the contents of the world, the answer of Buddhism is that it is all a mystery and one can only pay homage to it in silence.

1. Summarised from *Sacred Books of the East Series*, Volume XLIX, p. 148.

2. Kurt F. Leidecker. *Essays*, in Honour of A. R. Wadia, p. 181.

Philosophically the doctrine of Nāgārjuna should lead to a completely negative conception of truth. But Buddhism, as we know, is a religion which lays emphasis on the Yogic practices of Dhyāna or concentration. These practices are naturally meant to bestow enlightenment and a direct experience of reality whatever it may be. The ultimate reality though philosophically indescribable and always beyond the comprehension of thought is believed to be capable of realization by mystic contemplation or by devotional self-surrender and worship. As already indicated in a previous section, various names such as Dharma Kāya, Bhūtathatā (suchness), Dharma-Dhata (Totality of things) are given to Reality as such. It is also called Tathāgatagarbha or the womb of Buddha from which all existences come into being under the law of dependent origination ; yet it is also called Śūnya, because it cannot be described as possessing any of the attributes with which we are familiar. Thus the Mādhyamikas do not deny reality. According to them also as to the Vijñānavadins, Reality is of the essence of mind. But this is known only through yogic or spiritual intuition and not through intellectual comprehension. All phenomena are really subjective or mental in nature and are the manifestations of an unchanging mental principle. Bhutathatā is also regarded as essence of mind. The phenomena and the essence of mind (Reality) are inseparable. When the necessary conditions are present, phenomena do appear in the universal mind. Universal mind is compared to the ocean of water and its phenomena to waves, but both are really one and the same. It can, therefore, be said

that all Mahāyāna schools of Buddhism are idealistic in character arriving at idealistic conclusions in different ways.

Vijñānavāda or Yogācāra School

In the theory of Vijñānavāda, we have a clear enunciation of spiritual idealism, very much like that of Vedānta in later Hindu thought. The Śūnya of the Mādhyamikas came to be identified with pure consciousness, or Vijñāna. The expounders of Vijñānavāda agree with the Sautrāntikas in the view that we are directly in touch only with our own ideas, but they do not accept the Sautrāntika position, that there are any external or physical objects as counter-parts of our ideas. We move in a world of ideas, and there is no reason to assume that there is another world of physical events corresponding to the world of ideas. The fact that we cannot create our own ideas or that they seem to be forced upon us from outside ourselves, can have another explanation besides the one that is ordinarily given. The explanation given by the Vijñānavādins follows, more or less, the pattern of modern objective idealism. "It is knowledge (Vijñāna) itself, that appears as object" says Vasubandhu in his *Viṃśakārikā Prakaraṇa*. "All this is only ideas that appear as objects which (in reality) do not exist and further on "it is the idea that appears as visible, as tangible."¹

How can a mere idea take a visible and tangible form? We see this phenomenon, says Vasubandhu, taking place every day in our dreams. In our dreams we

1. Quoted in the '*Footsteps of the Buddha*', by Grousset, p. 300.

see and touch objects which have no objective existence. Similarly "In a picture painted according to rules, there is neither a hollow nor a raised part and yet one sees them." Here modern science can come to the help of these ancient philosophers. We know from the science of physics, that form, colour, sound, taste, smell etc. have no objective existence. They come into being when certain parts of the brain are affected by outside stimuli. What exists outside may be quite different from the objects as they are perceived. Thus the perceived objects, tangible and visible as they are, may really be the creations of the mind. We have no means of knowing what the nature of objective stimuli really is. They may be, for all that we know, mere events in space-time, or ideas in the universal mind. Objective idealism, finding no means of being sure about the nature of outer events, prefers to regard them as made of mind-stuff only. These mental ideas are supposed, in Vijñānavāda, to arise out of the ocean of universal consciousness like so many waves, and to disappear again into the same ocean. All individuals, things, events, qualities and phenomena which fall within our experience, are "productions of the continuous flow of imaginings, which arise like waves from this ocean only to vanish again immediately in its infinity."

The universal consciousness is known in Vijñānavāda as Ālaya-Vijñāna or the repository or abode of all mental ideas. In its essential nature, it is pure, but when it is agitated by the wind of old accumulated Vasanas or unconscious tendencies of individual consciousnesses, various phenomena appear like waves. It appears to be divided into innumerable separate con-

sciousnesses. Distinctions of subjects and objects arise though in reality there are no such distinctions. They are the outcome of ignorance or, the principle of individuation or limitation, inherent in the *Ālaya-Vijñāna*. Ignorance is not a separate principle, but a reflex of the pure absolute consciousness itself, just as in Bergson's philosophy, matter is the backward movement of the principle of life, or just as a jewel, though in itself pure and brilliant, is found accompanied by dark un-illuminated spots here and there. So it must be admitted that there is an inherent tendency in the *Ālaya-Vijñāna* to break up into an infinite number of individual consciousnesses with their different spheres of experiences. Each individual has his own *Ālaya-Vijñāna* with unconscious tendencies separate from those of the others. But when these unconscious tendencies left behind by previous Karmans are extinguished, the individual loses his separateness and is re-absorbed into the ocean of pure consciousness.

According to Mahāyāna the essence of the divine remains the same in all its manifestations. The mode of expression may be different, but the basic nature of one manifestation is the same as that of the other. Both are equally divine though expressed differently. This idea is made clear from the analogy of pots made of clay. The shapes of pots may be different, they may be used for different purposes good or bad, but they are all made of clay. In their essence they are the same. The different phenomena of the world are sometimes, as already indicated, compared to the waves of the ocean. While no two waves are alike, yet they are all of the

same essence, which remains unchanged, whatever be the forms and shapes assumed by the waves.

Buddhism believes in the transient character of all things ; even the final basis of things, the Ālaya-Vijñāna is not free from the character of changefulness. According to Vasubandhu "The Ālaya-Vijñāna evolves in a continuous stream like the water of a river." The same idea is expressed by Hiuen-Tsang in the following words, "As the river struck by the wind, gives birth to waves without its flow being interrupted, so the Ālaya Vijñāna flows thus like a river without interruption."¹

Vijñānavāda lays a great stress on the importance of Yogic exercises for the attainment of enlightenment. For this reason it is also known as Yogācāra school. It is only by mystic or Yogic contemplation that the unique and ineffable reality can be intuited or realized. Speaking in such a mystic vein, Asaṅga exclaims, "In truth, there is nothing else but He, and the whole world does not know Him. How has then this strange folly of the world arisen, which causes man to cling to what does not exist (the ego and the non-ego) and to leave completely on one side what is." There is according to him as to Nāgārjuna, the distinction between the knowledge of the absolute or Pāramārthika Jñāna and the knowledge of the fallacious plurality with its duality of subject and object, and which may be called Vyāvahārika Jñāna. It is needless to say that the Vedāntic teachers, Gaudpāda and Śaṅkara were deeply influenced by

1. Quoted in the '*Footsteps of the Buddha*' by Grousset, p. 297.

the Mahāyāna philosophers. Many of the important concepts were borrowed by Śāṅkara from the Buddhist masters and the borrowing was so obvious that many of his opponents spoke of him as *Pari-cchanna* or disguised Buddhist.

While from one point of view *Ālaya-Vijñāna* is characterised by ceaseless and perpetual activities, from another point of view it is above change. Apart from being present in all phenomena it is also a norm or standard towards which all phenomena approach, like the pure form of Aristotle, and as such it is above change. Sometimes the unchanging aspect of *Ālaya Vijñāna* is given the name of *Tathatā* or suchness. *Tathatā* mixed with the play of *Avidyā* or the principle of individuation is the changeful *Ālaya-Vijñāna*. But the conception of *Ālaya Vijñāna*, is on the whole a dynamic conception like that of Hegel, whose Absolute constantly manifests itself in higher and higher forms of evolution. The dynamic absolute does not, as a rule, stand in need of a dual principle to explain the rise of world-phenomena. Being dynamic, it has the potentiality to evolve the universe out of itself. A changeless and static absolute such as that of Śāṅkara has to admit an active principle of *Māyā* or *Avidyā*, to account for the element of change and individuality, which somehow appears on the bosom of the changeless absolute. The absolute of the *Vijñānavādins*, being dynamic, does not stand in need of a separate principle of *Avidyā* as does the changeless Brahman of Śāṅkara's idealism.

We thus find that Buddhism starting as it did from a position of agnosticism and non-committal

ended, in its final development, as an idealistic doctrine with a belief in spiritual reality as the underlying basis of the universe. In its later development in China and Japan, it became almost a monotheistic creed tinged with a pantheistic colouring.

Mahāyāna Conception of Nirvāṇa

According to Mahāyāna Saṃsāra is the same as Nirvāṇa. Truth is as much in the world as beyond it. All distinctions between the material and the spiritual are false distinctions, brought about by our ignorance of the real truth of things. "Ignorance, the essence of which consists in believing in the distinction of subject and object is also called defilement and the highest truth passes through various stages of defilement ending with that where under the influence of egoism and passion, the external world of particulars is believed to be everything."¹ But the world of ignorance contains within itself the potentiality of truth and Nirvāṇa. If it were not so, one could never get out of it into the sunny regions of enlightenment. To a discerning eye, the world with all its imperfections, is as much the abode of truth as the pure heart of a saint. All that is required is a change in the point of view or a new outlook on life. With this changed outlook Saṃsāra becomes suffused with a glow of Nirvāṇa consciousness. "Nirvāṇa therefore is not something different from or beyond the world of experience; it does not involve annihilation of the Skandhas. Just as in the Advaita he, who has true knowledge, sees that he

1. Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. II p. 44.

'himself and everything else is Brahman: so for the Mahāyānists, all things are seen to be Nirvāṇa, to be the Dharma Kāya."¹ Nirvāṇa, a synonym of Dharma Kāya, is supposed to be present in all things. This conception of Nirvāṇa is obviously very much different from that of early Buddhism according to which worldly life was a negation of spirituality and so a person, in order to obtain the full benefits of the teachings of the Buddha, was always advised to renounce the world and become a homeless monk.

Moreover, the new concept of the Bodhi-Sattva also brought about a change in the meaning of Nirvāṇa. According to Theravāda Buddhism, one enters into a state of Nirvāṇa after he has, by self-effort, cut off all fetters which block the path to deliverance. After that the Arhat sees no further point in living in the world. For the rest of his days he simply waits patiently for the hour of death, which will transport him into an everlasting state of Nirvāṇic bliss. But a Bodhi-Sattva prefers to remain in the world on altruistic grounds, after he has attained enlightenment. If it were necessary to get out of existence in order to attain Nirvāṇa, then the great Buddhas and the Bodhi-Sattvas would always remain out of Nirvāṇa. The new meaning of Nirvāṇa, therefore, came to be understood as the true state of spiritual perfection, in which the limitations of ordinary consciousness are transcended and the perfected individual finds himself in compassionate oneness with all living beings.

Conclusion. We have given above the salient

1. Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism* Vol. II p. 45.

points of Mahāyāna. It may be regarded as the completion of Buddhist thought. We have here all those elements, which make up the essence of religion. Devotion, morality, meditation and belief in Supreme Reality are all blended together. There is in it, the ethics of love and compassion for all living beings, and the realization of one's unity with the whole universe. The new spirit introduced by Mahāyāna, and which endeared it to all countries where it was preached is set forth in the following passage by N. Anesaki, "The central idea in Buddhist teachings is the gospel of universal salvation, based on the idea of the fundamental oneness of all beings. There are in the world, Buddhism teaches, manifold existences and innumerable beings, and each of these individuals believes himself to be a separate being and behaves accordingly. But in reality they make up one family, there is one continuity throughout and this oneness is realized in the full realization of Buddhahood as the part of each and all, in the full realization of the universal communion To save oneself by saving others is the gospel of universal salvation taught by Buddhism."¹ By Buddhism, Anesaki means the Mahayana form of it as it was introduced into Japan.

Besides the Bohdi-Sattva ideal of compassion and universal love, the Mahāyāna brought into prominence the spiritual implications of early Buddhism. Gautama Buddha had only vaguely hinted at the "un-compounded and un-born being."² The Vijñānavāda or Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna unequivocally declared

1. *History of Japanese Religion*. pp. 53—54.

2. *Udāna*. VIII.

that the "uncompounded and unborn Being" was spiritual, of the nature of pure consciousness and that there was nothing else besides consciousness. It was the *Ātmavāda* or *Brahmavāda* of the Upaniṣads expressed in Buddhist terminology. As a writer puts it, "the world around us has no validity for us, save as the product of that mind, of which each mind is a partial manifestation." In all Buddhist countries which follow Mahāyāna doctrine, the Universal Mind came to be regarded as equivalent to the conception of God-head as is found in some non-Buddhist religions. In the series of lectures delivered in America by Rt. Reverend Soyem Shaku, Lord Abbot of a famous Buddhist monastery in Japan, the following remarks were made in regard to the Buddhist religion, "At the outset, let me state that Buddhism is not atheistic as the term is ordinarily understood. It has certainly a god, the highest reality and truth, through which and in which this universe exists Buddhism is not pantheistic in the sense that it identifies the universe with God. On the other hand, the Buddhist God is absolute and transcendent ; this world, being merely its manifestation, is necessarily fragmental and imperfect. To define more exactly the Buddhist notion of the highest being, it may be convenient to borrow the term very happily coined by a modern German scholar, "Panentheism," according to which God is all and one, and more than the totality of existence."¹

Early Buddhism was monastic and austere and preferred the life of renunciation and homelessness to

1. *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*, pp. 25—26.

that of a house-holder. The Māhāyāna school, while it taught meditation, Yogic concentration, and austere living for the enthusiastic and single-minded religious aspirant, proposed a simple and easy path of devotion for the common people. The worship of Bodhi-Sattvas, thus, became common and the pious Buddhist householders flocked to Buddhist temples, as the Hindus visited the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples for purposes of worship. Here Buddhism was undoubtedly influenced by the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sects of Hinduism, which had risen into prominence in the centuries immediately following the age of the Buddha. As long as the Mauryan dynasty ruled over India, Buddhism enjoyed all the advantages of royal patronage and support, but in the 2nd century B. C., with the coming into power of the Hindu Śuṅga dynasty, Buddhism had to put up a hard struggle for existence against Hinduism. It was a critical period for Buddhism, and so in order to prevent its followers from drifting away to the more attractive forms of Hindu worship, the Buddhist leaders of the time popularized the worship of Avalokiteśvara and some other Bodhi Sattvas in imitation, most probably, of the worship in the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva temples. Whatever be the causes responsible for the change, the elements of devotion, faith and worship of the Bodhi-Sattvas became henceforward an essential part of this new form of Buddhism.

Māhāyāna has been described, by certain scholars, as the flower of Buddhist thought, as the best expression and unfoldment of the essential doctrines of the Buddha. But it was soon overlaid with a rank and luxuriant overgrowth of irrational ideas and supersti-

tous practices. Theravāda Buddhism escaped, to a large extent, the debasing influences of many non-Buddhist ways of thought and practice, but even in it we have to take note of many miraculous and superstitious beliefs which, in course of time, gathered around the personality of its founder and other saints. It is, therefore, essential that in order to obtain a right idea of Buddhism in its various phases of development, we should be able to separate the chaff from the kernel of this great religion.

CHAPTER IV

Miracle, Superstition and Mythology in Buddhism

Miraculous and supernatural elements are not peculiar to Buddhism. They are to be met with in all ancient religions and are mostly due to the lack of scientific knowledge as well as to a desire to produce a sense of mystery about the personalities of the founders of those religions and the saints associated with them. The gradual increase in scientific knowledge has made available to us a number of facts, which were not known to even the most learned men of previous times. Hence their explanations of various natural phenomena appear to us as fantastic. In order to properly appreciate the really valuable contributions made by the ancient thinkers of all lands, specially in the domains of morals, religion, and philosophy, we shall have to ignore, for reasons given above, their accounts of natural phenomena, which had a great convincing force for the people of their times, but make no appeal to us now on account of the growth of scientific knowledge.

In Buddhist literature we come across many descriptions of miraculous events in connection with the life of the Buddha and other saints, the fantastic accounts of heavens and hells, the frequent interlude of gods, demons and spirits and similar other curious things. They can be considered as irrelevant to the main teachings of Buddhism. As Sir Charles Elliot says, "Buddhism is not a miraculous religion in the

sense that none of its essential doctrines depend upon miracles.”¹ We can, therefore, set aside, without any damage to the teachings of Buddhism, the fanciful exaggerations and unscientific accounts of supernatural events which we meet with frequently in the writings of both the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna schools of Buddhism.

Some of the exaggerations can be set down as poetical ways of describing great events in the life of the Buddha. They may also be regarded as an expression of profound devotion and faith in the minds of the disciples for their great master. We find it declared in many places that when the Buddha gave a wonderful discourse or performed a great deed, flowers were showered upon him from the sky; or when he sat down for rest at a particular place, the branches of trees bent down to give him shade. The gods of heavens are described as singing melodies and soothing songs in order to produce an atmosphere of peace, and the sala trees as showering scented flowers when the Buddha lay under their shade at the time of his death. The showering of flowers by the gods on divine teachers and prophets of mankind is an occurrence frequently described in Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist religious literatures.

We meet very early in the history of Buddhism, with the belief in Buddha's omniscience, sinlessness and perfection. In course of time, everything about him came to be regarded as miraculous. His birth was not like that of other human beings. He is

1. *Hinduism and Buddhism* Vol. I, p. 325,

described as directly descending into the womb of his mother from his throne in heaven. His mother undergoes a fast of seven days after which she is transported in her dream to the heavens, where the future Buddha enters into her womb from the right side in the form of a splendid white elephant. It is stated in the *Lalita Vistāra* that "at the conception of the Buddha thirty signs appear, ten thousand worlds are filled with light, the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the crooked become straight, the lame walk, the imprisoned are set free. The fires of hell are extinguished and the tortures of the damned are mitigated. During the ten months in the womb, the child is distinctly visible, sitting cross-legged, unsoiled and dignified, and he preaches to the angels who guard him, stretching his hand to do so without wounding his mother."¹

When the child was a few days old, an aged ascetic, on seeing auspicious signs in the sky, came to Kapila-Vastu to have a look at the miraculous child. When the child was brought to him, his feet themselves came to rest on the head of the saint and the saint felt himself blessed. He explained to the astonished father that the child would be a great Buddha though he himself would be no more to witness his great deeds.

On the occasion of the ploughing festival, the child Gautama was taken out to the place where the ploughing was to be done by the king and the nobles. In the general festivities they forgot all about the

1. Quoted by Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, pp. 184—185.

child, but when they eventually came to him, they found him sitting cross-legged in an attitude of deep meditation. Though with the passing of hours, the shades of all other trees had changed their positions, but the shade of the one tree under which the Buddha sat remained stationary all the time. We come across many such miraculous incidents taking place on various occasions in the life of Gautama Buddha. Similarly certain miracles are described as happening after his death. When the body was taken out for cremation, it would not burn till the venerable Kāśyapa, the head of the order of the Bhikṣus, arrived at the scene. Then the coffin took fire of itself.

In some of the Buddhist works the miracle-working powers of the great saints are described with a great gusto. Here is given a list of miracles which a Bodhi Sattva is supposed to be capable of performing. "Being one, he becomes many, having become multiple, he becomes one ; he enjoys the experience of becoming visible or invisible ; he goes unimpeded through a wall, a rampart or a mountain ; he travels cross-legged in the sky, like a winged bird; he dives up and down the earth as if it were water; he touches and feels, with his hands, the sun and the moon, which are so potent and powerful; he can reach as far as the Brahma world with his body."¹

At a certain stage of mental evolution, reference to miracles is regarded as necessary, in order to impress the common people with the greatness of a religious teacher. There are many Christian and Muslim saints,

1. Quoted by Har Dayāl, *The Bodhi Sattva Doctrine*, p. 113)

whose biographies are filled with the narration of incredible miracles supposed to have been performed by them. As regards the attitude of Buddha himself towards the performance of miracles, we find inconsistent accounts in Buddhist works. In some narratives which are probably old and authentic as for instance *Dīgha-Nikāya* XI and *Culla Vagga* V.8, the Buddha is mentioned as expressing his disapproval of miracles, but in other places we are told that the Buddha approved of the use of miracles for preparing the minds of the audience to accept his teachings. This appears to us simply the view of the writer himself ascribed to the teacher. In all early religions, however, we find a copious use made of miracles in order to impress the people with the greatness of a particular religious doctrine.

We find, in Buddhist works, a mention of various gods, demons and spirits supposed to inhabit the various spheres. Though their existence was accepted, their importance was greatly minimised. The gods inhabited various heavenly abodes, but they were liable to come back to the earth, after the expiry of their allotted period of enjoyment, and their only hope of attaining Nirvāṇa lay in accepting the noble teachings of the great master, the Buddha, who was superior to them all. Brahmā, the greatest of the gods, is depicted in Buddhist works as doing reverence to the Buddha and humbly beseeching him to work for the redemption of the world. Later on, as Buddhism came more and more under the influence of Hinduism, many of the Hindu gods were incorporated into Buddhism as so many Bodhi-Sattvas, and thus a regular pantheon of

these Bodhi-Sattvas came to be set up. They were worshipped by the followers of Buddhism, as their various gods and deities were worshipped by the Hindus. But in the original religion of the Buddha himself though the existence of the gods was assumed, they were regarded as inferior to the Buddha himself. These gods appear in certain episodes in the life of the Buddha, shower flowers upon him and sing his praises. "In fact, the gods, though freely invoked as accessories, are not taken seriously, and there are some extremely curious passages, in which Gautama seems to laugh at them much as the sceptics of the 18th century laughed at Jehovah"¹ Sir Charles Elliot. refers to one of the dialogues in *Dīgha Nikāya*, in which the Buddha speaks of a certain monk who consulted the god *Brahmā* about a problem which had perplexed him a great deal. Instead of answering the question, *Brahmā* began to talk of himself as being supreme, almighty, all-seeing, the ruler and lord of all, the creator and father of all that are and are to be. "But" remonstrated the monk, "I did not ask you, friend, about your mighty powers and who you were. I only wanted an answer to my question." Thereupon *Brahmā* took him apart from the other people present on the occasion, and confessed that he himself did not know the answer to the question. He advised the monk to go to the Buddha who would satisfy his curiosity. The fact is that Buddhism grew up in an atmosphere of mythology and animism and so it accepted many ideas from its social environment but this fact did not affect the essence of religion as preached by the Buddha. When

1. Sir Charles Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism* Vol. I, pp. 330-31.

Buddhism was taken to other countries, it incorporated the mythology which prevailed in those countries. It seems that compromise with the existing modes of worship become necessary for the spread of Buddhism in Asiatic countries.

In certain Buddhist works, in later times, we come across what are known as Dharnis or spells, Māhātmyas and Stotras. The Dharnis were used for averting evil and invoking good luck. They are magic formulas used as incantations, benedictions and magic spells. Spells and incantations were current among the Indians even before Buddhism came on the scene, and it found it difficult to do without them. In later Mahāyān literature the use of these Dharnis and other similar devices became much more frequent. "We find these exorcism formulas against the influence of ill-omened constellations, against poison, snakes and demons, spells for the healing of diseases and lengthening of lives, magic spells for bringing luck in war, others which cause a person to be reborn in the Sukhāvatī paradise, to ensure against a bad rebirth and to secure release from sin; there are also such, by which a person can conjure up a Bodhi-Sattva or protect himself from unbelief. It is not only the elements, which can be influenced by Dharnis, but they bring about the birth of a son or a daughter according to the wish of the expectant mother. The collection of five Dharnis entitled (Pañcarakṣā) is extremely popular in Nepal."¹ Winternitz is of the opinion, that these Dharnis made their way into Buddhism, when it came more and more under the influence of Hinduism. In

1. "Winternitz. *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 384-85.

this connection, he refers to a Dharni known as Gaṇapati Dharni, addressed to the God Gaṇapati of the Śaiva tradition, though it is said to have been proclaimed by the Buddha.

Later on, when Buddhism came under Tantric influence, it assimilated many other superstitious ideas and practices from the Tantras. It adopted the use of Mantras or syllables of mysterious potency, along with a number of other Sādhanaś as a means of attaining salvation as well as of obtaining Siddhis or supernatural powers, such as the power to make oneself 'small, large, or light at his own will.' "A Siddha can penetrate into other bodies, can rise and move about in the air, can converse with heavenly beings, can obtain every thing he desires, can have gods and goddesses, men and women in his power, has the power of healing diseases by merely looking at the sufferers and also obtaining omniscience and Nirvāṇa at will."¹ The Sādhana for the achievement of this objective includes the use of magic circles, magic formulas, mysterious syllables, special Mudrās, the worship of certain deities and use of erotic practices. From the 9th to the 11th centuries under the influence of Tantrism, occultism and magic became a prominent feature of Buddhism and was undoubtedly one of the causes of its downfall. Tantrism, though it was based on a mystico-philosophical background, led, in actual practice, to gross abuses and superstitious practices in Hinduism, and later on, in Buddhism as well. It is related in one of the Tantras, that the sage Vasiṣṭha could not have the

1. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, vol. II, p. 390-91..

vision of the goddess, in spite of severe austerities. He was advised by his Guru to go to China, the land of the Buddha, where he would learn the true Sādhana. He did as he was told and very soon attained his objective by the use of the Pañcatattva Ritual, which includes the enjoyment of meat, wine and sexual intercourse.

Spheres of the Universe—Various spheres of the universe, including a large number of heavens and hells are mentioned in Buddhist works. These accounts of the size of the universe and the cyclic periods are drawn from imagination. It does credit to these writers who though not having at their disposal astronomical facts which modern science has made available to us, have yet succeeded in giving us a stupendous picture of the vastness of the universe. The universe is described as consisting of numberless spheres, each of which is so vast as to be a universe in itself, consisting as it does of its own earth, heavens and hells.

Each sphere is divided into a number of realms inhabited by various kind of beings. There is for instance, the realm of human beings, which is, of course far inferior to the realm of the gods in respect of the abundance of pleasures and the length of life enjoyed by its denizens; but the distinct advantage of the realm of human beings is, that it is here alone that the goal of Bodhi-Sattva can be achieved. The birth as a human being is, therefore, regarded as a great blessing to be ardently sought after. The second realm is that of the Devas or gods, where the deserving people are born to enjoy the fruits of their good deeds. It is only a

place of enjoyment, and therefore no progress can be made in this realm towards the attainment of the Bodhi-Sattva ideal.

The third, fourth and fifth are, respectively, the realms of the Asuras or demons, the animals and the Pretas or ghosts, the sixth being the realm of the under-world, where various hells are located.

Coming back to the realm of the gods, we are told, that it includes four formless or Arūpa heavens, eighteen heavens with form or Brahma heavens as they are called, and six heavens of the world of Kāma or desire or Deva lokas. The duration of life in the Deva lokas ranges from nine million years to 9216 million years and the inhabitants of these Lokas have a stature ranging from $\frac{1}{4}$ krośa to one and one fourth krośa each. Inhabitants of the eighteen Brahma heavens similarly enjoy a marvellously long duration of life, their stature ranging from $\frac{1}{2}$ Yojanas in the first Rūpa-Loka to sixteen thousand Yojanas in the 18th Rūpa Loka. In the four Arupa Lokas or formless heavens, the inhabitants have no form, but each of them lives for thousands of Mahā-Kalpas.

Other Worlds—Men live in all the numerous spheres through-out the universe. Each world consists of four big continents, one situated on each side of the great central mountain. Various descriptions of the inhabitants of these continents are given. Similarly the worlds of the Asuras, the animals and the Pretas are also described.

The Under-World or the World of the Hells—Buddhism does not postulate one hell as does Christianity: numerous places of torment are mentioned, in

which men are born to suffer the consequences of their bad actions. Release ultimately comes when they succeed in getting rid of anger, lust and ignorance. The stay in hells is, therefore, of a temporary nature. They are rather purgatories than places of perpetual torment. As it is not easy to emancipate oneself completely from a life of greed, lust and hatred, one may have to be born again and again in the hells before the final deliverance.

In the Piṭakas, besides Gautama Buddha, six other Buddhas are mentioned who preceded Gautama in point of time. Their teaching is represented as being identical with that of Gautama. It is quite possible that some of these preceding Buddhas may have been historical persons, and their mention may have been made to convey the idea that the teachings of Gautama Buddha are of an eternal nature, and the same truth is taught by different teachers at different times. Later on, the number of previous Buddhas was raised to twenty-five.

Besides these Buddhas, the Piṭakas also speak of Pratyeka Buddhas and the Bodhi Sattvas. The former attain enlightenment by the practice of the noble path, but they do not enlighten others and are satisfied merely with their own deliverance. They do not hold much importance in Buddhist works. The Bodhi-Sattva is the name originally given to the animals, men and angels who represent the past incarnations of the Buddha in the Jātaka tales. They were, so to speak, the earlier stages of the future Buddha. The idea of the Bodhi-Sattva became very fruitful in later Buddhism. It was applied to individuals who had earned the

right to become a Buddha, but who, out of compassion for mankind, took a vow, that they would keep out of Nirvāṇa till they had helped all men to attain it. As all mankind are ultimately destined to become Buddhas, they are, in their present state, potential Bodhi Sattvas. It came to be believed later on, that there was already an infinite number of Bodhi-Sattvas living in various heavens. After the death of the Buddha, who was believed to have completely passed away into Nirvāṇa, the devout Buddhists looked up to the Bodhi-Sattvas in the various heavens for protection and worship. To them they addressed their prayers and turned for protection. Of all the Bodhi-Sattvas, the most important, for purposes of worship, were Mañjuśrī (the symbol of wisdom) Avolokiteśvara (the symbol of love and mercy) and Vajra Pāṇi (the symbol of power). These beings were the gods before whom the pious Buddhists prayed in their temples. Their position in Buddhism was, practically, the same as that of Viṣṇu, Śiva or Indra in Hinduism.

Many other hypothetical beings were created by the Mahāyāna writers in later times. The celestial worlds which we have described above came to be divided into five groups and to each group was assigned a special Buddha or Dhyānī Buddha as he was also called. Each Dhyānī Buddha was supposed to be attended upon by a large number of Bodhi-Sattvas. From time to time, a Dhyānī Buddha takes on an earthly incarnation. Gautama Buddha was the earthly manifestation of the Dhyānī Buddha known as Amitābha (possessing limitless radiance) who occupied the highest rank among celestial Buddhas.

These Dhyānī Buddhas, later on, were described as

having been created by the Ādi Buddha, the primordial Buddha who was believed to be infinite, self-existent and all-knowing, the proto-type of Ívara or Brahman in Hinduism.

Just as there had been many Buddhas, preceding the birth of Gautama Buddha, so it is believed that a new Buddha, by the name of Metteya, will be born in the future about whom it was supposed to have been declared by the Gautama Buddha that he "will be the leader of thousands as I am of hundreds." This prophecy is still waiting to be fulfilled.

These speculations, like the miracles and mythologies referred to above, may be regarded as extraneous to the spirit of Buddhism. They can be safely laid aside or ignored in making a proper estimate of the teachings of this great religion.

PART III

CHAPTER I

Buddhism Travels Abroad

At a very early stage of his ministry, Gautama Buddha enjoined upon his disciples the task of preaching the noble doctrine for the benefit of all people. "Go ye forth, O Bhikṣus, for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, in compassion for the world. Proclaim the glorious doctrine, preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure." Such was the command of the Buddha, and his loyal Bhikṣus went in all directions, carrying the message of the master to the doors of the common people. Thus from its very inception Buddhism was a missionary religion.

Buddhism had a great pan-human appeal. It was this spirit of human brotherhood, which helped it to spread throughout the country, and even among the invading foreigners. Most of them were absorbed into Buddhism. This, in its turn, led to the rapid spread of Buddhism throughout central Asia. Recent excavations by Soviet scholars in Uzbekistan and Karikistan in Soviet Central Asia have brought to light, "numerous vestiges of a Buddhist past, remarkable frescoes, stucco images and ruins of temples and Vihāras".

The spread of Buddhism within the country as well as in foreign lands was greatly helped by two mighty kings of India, Aśoka and Kanīṣka, one after the other. Aśoka sent religious missions to a number

of countries, the most important mission being the one which he deputed to Ceylon under the leadership of his son, Mahendra, in the 3rd century B. C. Later on, Buddhism spread to Burma, Siam and other countries of South-East Asia. The form of Buddhism, which was introduced into these countries, was the Theravāda Buddhism. It was based on what came to be known as the Pāli canon, and at an early stage, it assumed a set form which has remained more or less the same throughout the succeeding centuries. It is said to be largely faithful to the original teachings of the great master.

As we have already seen, the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism developed in the 2nd century B. C., most probably in the reign of Kanishka. It was Mahāyāna Buddhism, which was introduced into China in the reign of emperor Ming Ti in the 1st century A.D. It is said, that this emperor saw the golden figure of the lord Buddha in his dream, as a consequence of which he sent messengers to India in search of Buddhist scholars. Two Buddhist monks, Kāśyapa Mātāṅga and Dharmarakṣa were brought to China, one of whom translated into Chinese the Sūtra of forty-two sections. It laid the foundations of Buddhist religion in China. From time to time other missionaries went from India to China, and tried to spread Buddhism amongst the people.

Buddhism did not meet with any notable success in the beginning. It was only from the 4th century onwards that the new religion began to spread amongst the Chinese people. The period from 618 to 907 A.D. was the period of its greatest popularity in China. The success of Buddhism was largely due to the efforts.

of Kumāra Jīva in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. His output of work in the form of translations and original writings was so great, that it roused an unparalled interest in Buddhism. As a result, permission was granted to the Chinese to become monks, if they so desired, and a Chinese branch of the order of mendicants was founded. The Śīnga dynasty, which was established in China in 908 A. D., turned its attention to Confucianism and installed it as the state religion of China. After that the fortunes of Buddhism in China rose and fell according as the reigning emperor happened to be, respectively, a Buddhist or a follower of Confucianism. It seems that, gradually, Confucianism became more popular, due mostly to the weakness of the Buddhist priesthood who did nothing to meet the growing challenge of the older religion. In recent years, interest in Buddhism has revived among the cultural people and many reforms have been made on its organizational side. ✓

Tibet came into contact with Buddhism in the 7th century, through the marriage of its king Srong-Tsan-Gampo with two Chinese princesses of Buddhist faith. A number of scholars went from India to Tibet and translated many Buddhist works into Tibetan. A new wave of Buddhism spread to Tibet across the Himalayan barrier. By the 9th and 10th centuries, the whole of Tibet was converted to Buddhism.

During this time, Mahāyāna Buddhism in India came under Tāntric influences and so naturally, Tibetan Buddhism was permeated with Tāntric rites and practices of later Indian Buddhism. From Tibet, Lamaism or the Tibetan form of Buddhism was,

in the 16th century, taken to Mongolia and to the various Himālayan states.

In 372 A.D. Buddhism reached Korea from China. From Korea it was introduced into Japan in 552 A.D. After a preliminary skirmish with Shintoism, it came out victorious and held the premier position with all sections of the Japanese people, till the beginning of the 17th century. From 1608 to 1867, Confucianism, in its revised form was made the state religion, and so it became the religion of the educated classes. In 1867 an attempt was made to restore Shintoism to a premier position in Japan at the cost of Buddhism and Confucianism ; but the experiment was not successful. At the present time, there is not much of Confucianism left in Japan and Buddhism remains firmly grounded in the minds of the people. From Japan, Buddhist missionaries have, from time to time, gone to Formosa, Manchuria, America, Canada and also to Korea and China.

A fairly large number of sects were established in the early days of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. The birth of these sects came about in a strange manner. The growth of Buddhism in these countries followed the translation of the important Buddhist works from India. When some very important book was translated into Chinese, a sect was founded on the basis of the contents of that book. As famous books went on being translated, new sects continued to be founded on their basis. A few sects, however were founded by great missionaries, who hailed from India, or by great Buddhist teachers of these countries themselves.

The Sanrom or three-Śāstra-sect for instance, was

based upon the translation by Kumāra Jīva of three important works of the Mādhyamika school, i.e. the Mādhyamika Śāstra by Nāgārjuna, Śata-Śāstra by Ārya Deva and Dvādaśa-Nikāya-Śāstra by Nāgārjuna. This sect corresponds to the Indian Mādhyamika or Śūnya school of Buddhism.

The Zen or Dhyāna school was founded in China in 527 A.D. by Bodhi-Dharma. This school laid greater emphasis on inner realization by the pursuit of practical methods, than on the mere study of scriptures. It is not in favour of accepting any doctrine as ultimate or infallible.

The Tendai sect, a very important school of Chinese Buddhism, was established in the 6th century on the basis of the well-known Mahāyāna scriptures, the Saddharma Puṇḍarīka (the lotus of the true law). It follows most of Mādhyamika doctrines with many additions of its own.

The Kegon or Avatamsaka sect was founded in the 6th century and it accepted for its religious authority, the Buddha-Vatamsaka Sūtra or Gandha-Vyūha. It is the sect modelled on the Yogācāra school of thought.

The Jodo or Shin (pure-land) sect was founded by a scholar, Bodhi-Ruci by name, and it taught the doctrine of salvation by faith in the Amitābha Buddha, which ensures, for the devotee, a birth in the Sukhavati paradise. This devotional school became very popular in China. It provides an easy path for salvation. The understanding of abstruse scriptural truths, being beyond the power of a common man, the scholars of the Pure-Land school preached a simple faith for the people to follow, which could lead a man to the desired goal without the necessity of grappling with

hard philosophical conceptions. The followers of other schools also added the worship of the Amitābha to their own particular religious practices. The Amitābha came to be regarded as the symbol of the supreme being under a personal aspect.

The Chen-Yen (Shingon school). It is also known as Mantra-Yāna. It was brought from India to China last of all in the 8th century. There is a large admixture in it of Tāntric rites and practices and an emphasis on Mantras and Mudrās. It is a sort of esoteric school and some of its practices are of a debasing nature.

There were established some other sects also, bringing the total number to thirteen, representing various phases of the development of Buddhism in China. These sects were later imported into Japan where they assumed, more or less, the same form with slight modifications. In earlier centuries Japan borrowed many features of her culture from China. Chinese Buddhism, in its various forms, was one of the forces which greatly influenced the civilization of Japan.

Of all these schools, the Shin and the Zen (Japanese word for Dhyāna) sects are at present the most influential schools in Japan. The Zen school appeals to the educated class as well as to the Japanese military class, the Samurai. The Shin sect, being mainly devotional, has a great following among the people at large. Its doctrine is very much like that of the Bhakti school of India, and akin to the principle of self-surrender in Islam or that of self-abandonment among the Christian mystics. The underlying idea is, that ultimately it is not the effort of man, which takes him to God or the Divine but the descent of grace on the faithful

devotee, which comes as a reward of pure faith. Zen on the other hand, lays a great emphasis on the self-effort of man, in order to achieve enlightenment. It is a method of disinterested dedication to work and sustained practice of daily mindfulness and concentration under the guidance of a spiritual master.

Zen Buddhism has its own technique of spiritual realization. In a Zen monastery, each moment of the waking day is devoted, with great concentration, to each task in hand, whether that of looking after the fields or performing the various menial duties in the monastery. Zen also follows a special technique of spiritual realization. Besides performing the various assigned tasks, the student of zen technique has to spend a good deal of time each day in concentration exercises or in the contemplation of various puzzles (Koans), as directed by the head of the monastery. 'The aim of the technique is to transcend the intellect, to take a leap from thinking to knowing, from second hand to direct experience.' A Zen aspirant will make use of any experience, which may serve as a bridge to take him to the other shore of direct experience. It is not only the religious student, who takes up the Zen technique of mind development. In Japan many young men, who are to take up important official or military responsibilities, think it worth while to undergo Zen training for a period in order to heighten their efficiency and their power to achieve great results. It results in the attainment of serenity and joyfulness of mind, perfect control of one's passions, and clarity of judgement. It aims at giving to the individual a sense of oneness with nature and the universe around, and ridding him of all discords and mental conflicts.

CHAPTER II

Buddhism Disappears from India

It is one of the strange phenomena of the world that while a very large number of the people of the world profess Buddhism as a religion, it should have almost completely disappeared from India, the land of its birth. Its decline began after the 6th century A.D. When It-Sing, the Chinese traveller, came to India in the 7th century, he found Buddhism in a state of decline in all places excepting Bihar, Bengal, and Orissa. There is every reason to suppose 'that in the 12th century Buddhism still flourished in Bihar, that its clergy numbered several thousands, and its learning held in esteem.'¹ It is said that Mukunda Deva, who ruled Orissa in the 16th century and was finally defeated by the Mohammadens, was a Buddhist. Barring a few traces which can still be found in some parts of Orissa, this great religion of Buddha has now practically become extinct in the land of its origin.

The final cause which led to its disappearance from India, was the wholesale destruction of the monasteries and the Buddhist monks brought about by the Muslim conquerors. In 1193, a general of Kutabuddin seized the capital of Bihar with a mere handful of men, and massacred all the monks living in its monasteries. Similarly these conquerors destroyed the religious places of the Buddhists at Sarnath and:

1. Charles Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. II, p. 112..

other places. "Whereas Hinduism was spread over the country, Buddhism was concentrated in the great monasteries, and when these were destroyed, there remained nothing outside them, capable of withstanding either the violence of the Muslims or the assimilating influence of the Brāhman. Hence Buddhism suffered far more from these invasions than Hinduism."¹

Though the Muslim invasion gave the finishing blow, Buddhism had already been greatly weakened in the preceding centuries. Some of the causes of the decadence of Buddhism are given below.

Causes of the Decline of Buddhism

Buddhism was not an institutional religion in the accepted sense of the word. The Buddha brought about radical reforms in religious conceptions, but he did not bring about any marked change in the social and religious customs of the people. He exhorted the people to lead pure lives, but other-wise they followed, without any interference, the social customs to which they had been born. The lay-followers of Buddha revered him as a great teacher, but they were practically Hindus in their social and religious observances. Their birth, death, marriage and other ceremonies continued to be performed as before. No special Buddhist ceremonies to celebrate these important occasions were devised. Jainism had been wiser in this respect. It devised a complete system of social rules for its lay adherents so that Jainism became, in every respect, a different religion from Hinduism. Buddhism was mainly confined to the Saṅgha or the corporate body of the monks ; so

1. Charles Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism* Vol. II, p. 113.

when the influence of leading religious personalities was withdrawn, and when the monasteries ceased to exercise any influence on the people at large, the latter were easily assimilated into the surrounding Hinduism. It is thus clear that the soul of Buddhism has always lived in the body of the monks concentrated in various monasteries. In China, Japan and other countries, where Buddhism has exercised its influence up to the present time, it has been mostly due to the continued existence of these monasteries at various places, and also to the absence of a strong competing religion as Hinduism in India, and Islam in Indonesia. Even in China, Confucianism has been an antagonistic force in the way of the spread of Buddhism among all people. The patronage of the ruling princes has also been a great factor in keeping it alive, apart from the moral and intellectual qualities of the Buddhist priesthood.

In India, various other factors collaborated to bring about the decline of Buddhism in course of time. Of these factors, fall in the academic and moral standards of the members of the Buddhist Sangha was an important one. They became self-centred and forgot their duty towards the spiritual and moral welfare of the people around them. The objective of social service and altruism, placed before them by the Buddha was completely lost sight of. In course of time even the zeal for personal perfection through spiritual exercises and philosophical studies abated. Formerly the monasteries were great centres of learning, but it seems that about the time when Śaṅkara came into the field i.e. in the 7th and 8th centuries, these Buddhist centres did not turn out

great scholars and religious disputants who could hold their own against the attacks of non-Buddhist dialecticians. That was the reason why Śaṅkara and Kumāṛila Bhaṭṭa could easily vanquish the Buddhists in public discussions. As a writer puts it, "In those days, defeats in controversies were serious events in the life of the Indians, bringing about the rise and fall of a religion or a sect or a teacher." It is therefore probable, that the vigorous public campaign which Śaṅkara carried on against Buddhism had a great deal to do in undermining its prestige and influence amongst the people, though it would be an exaggeration to suggest, that Śaṅkara and his followers were solely responsible for banishing Buddhism from India.

Apart from the loss of intellectual pre-eminence, the Buddhist monks suffered a fall in moral standards also. The introduction of Tāntric modes of worship, specially those of the debasing type, in Buddhism, did a great damage to its reputation. The religion of Buddhism, in its development as Tantra-Yāna, was transformed into a system of, "Magical spells, exorcisms, spirit beliefs and worship of endless demons and divinities." The adoption of Tantraism by Buddhism brought it very close to Hinduism, and many Hindu gods and goddesses were given a place, though a subordinate one, in the Buddhist pantheon. In this way the dividing line between Hinduism and Buddhism became less and less marked. So, later on, when monasteries were destroyed and the monks living in them were either killed in the general holocaust by the Muslims or fled to neighbouring countries to save their lives, the Buddhists lay-adherents got easily assimilated into Hinduism.

The introduction of Tāntric modes of worship was also a potent cause of the degradation of Buddhism. The Tāntric worship has some good features, but there is, also in Tantraism, an element which has had a most debasing influence on immature minds. It would not be wrong to suggest that the total harm wrought by the debasing Tāntric practices is, on the whole, greater than any good that might have accrued from the Tāntric modes of worship.

Under the influence of Tantraism, the Bodhi-sattvas came to be represented as accompanied by female deities. The great Bodhi-Sattva Avalokiteśvara had Tārā as the female counter-part and the bliss of Nirvāṇa came to be associated with the union of the female deity with the Buddha or the Bodhi Sattva, and so the idea gained ground, that a similar bliss can be obtained in this world by performing certain religious rites in which sex-union played an important part. Giving vent to passion was regarded as a method for overcoming passion. So, in this period, we find the Bhiksus leading, on the whole, not very reputable lives. They lost their credit with the common people who turned away from the religion of which those Bhiksus were the representatives. From the 7th century onwards Buddhism in Bihar and western Bengal had come very much under the spell of Tāntric Hinduism.

All these factors taken together led to the absorption of the erstwhile followers of Buddhism into the bosom of Hinduism. While Buddhism as a distinct creed disappeared from India, all its great points were assimilated by Hinduism. It can therefore be reasonably maintained that Buddhism lives in present - day Hinduism,

which is, in many respects, on account of Buddhist influences, different from what it was before the advent of Buddhism.

The Influence of Buddhism on Hinduism

In a previous chapter we just alluded to the influence, which Hinduism has exercised on the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism. There had arisen in India the Bhāgavata and Śaiva sects in the centuries following the advent of Buddhism. We find a reference to these sects in the Grammar of Pāṇini (400 B. C.), and in the account of Meghasthenes (300 B. C.). Patañjali also speaks of the Śaiva sect in his commentary on Pāṇini's grammar (200 B.C.). According to R. G. Bhandarkar, the Śaiva sect of the Pāśupatas existed in the 2nd century B. C., if not earlier. There is no doubt that these sects exercised a powerful influence on the Buddhism of the day. With the rise into power of the Hindu Sung dynasty in the 2nd century B. C., the position of Buddhism became very critical. It had to fight hard for survival against the powerful Hindu religion which underwent a great revival under the patronage of the Śunga emperors. The worship of the Bodhi-Sattvas was made popular as the counterpart of the worship of Viṣṇu, Siva and other Hindu deities. Later on, many Hindu deities were incorporated, under the designation of Bodhi-Sattvas, in order to make the Buddhist religion popular amongst the masses.

But the influence of Buddhism on Hinduism was no less marked. It consciously or unconsciously absorbed many of the teachings of Buddhism. It is no exaggeration to say, that the present shape of Hindu-

ism is in a large measure, due to what it took over from Buddhism. The truth therefore is that Buddhism was not expelled from India : its main features were absorbed in the current Hinduism of the day.

Buddhism was probably the first great movement in India which advocated the use of reason as against mere authority and placed philosophy on rational bases. It was for this reason, probably, that the Hindu priesthood could not accept Buddhism as a sect of Hinduism. They could tolerate any amount of free philosophical reflection, but they could not tolerate an open repudiation of Vedic scriptures or of the social system which gave an ascendancy to the Brāhmaṇas in the hierarchy of the four Varnas. The substitution of spiritual brotherhood comprising all castes on equal terms, in place of hereditary distinctions of caste, and logical reason in place of Vedic revelation, was a great offence which the Hindu priesthood could not excuse on any account.

Buddhist philosophy exercised a great influence on later-day Hindu thought, specially on the Vedāntic philosophy of Śaṅkara. The contributions to philosophy made by great Buddhist thinkers like Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Ārya Deva, Dharma Kīrti and others were of a high order. There is no doubt that the Buddhist thinkers were among the earliest writers on logic, psychology and philosophy in India. Much of the depth and development in Hindu systems of thought was due to the influence of Buddhist writers, and the criticism to which they subjected the Hindu systems of philosophy. Indian logic, specially, owes a great deal to the writings of Buddhist logicians.

As regard the influence of the thinkers of Mahayana school on the Vedānta of Śaṅkara, Dr. S. N. Das says, "I yield to none in my profound respect for the great teacher Śaṅkara, but a careful analysis of his writings demonstrates indisputably, that he largely borrowed his doctrine, his phraseology, his dialectics and his methods of approach from Buddhism. Not only Śaṅkara but many of his followers like Śrī Harṣa, Ānanda Jñāna and others, who have constructed the Vedānta into a rational system of philosophy, deliberately followed the footsteps of Nagārjuna and other Buddhist writers."¹

The doctrine of Māyā is accepted not only by the largest number of philosophically-educated Hindus, it affects the beliefs and actions of uneducated Hindus as well. There was no Māyāvada in the original Vedānta of the Upanisads. Belief in Māyāveda is the direct result of the influence of Buddhist Idealism on Hindu thought and practice.

It was not only in the domain of philosophic thought that the influence of Buddhism was chiefly felt. The Hindu mind was powerfully influenced by the ethical teachings of love, compassion and purity of life as well as by the monastic order of Bhikṣus created by the Buddha. "To Buddhist influence are due" says Sir Charles Elliot, "For instance, the rejection by most sects of animal sacrifices, the doctrine of the sanctity of animal life, monastic institutions and the ecclesiastical discipline found in the Dravidian regions."² In

1. *Mahā-Bodhi Journal*, 1931, p. 552.

2. *Hinduism and Buddhism* Vol. II. p. 131.

Manu-Smṛti, a Hindu work of the early pre-Christian era, premature renunciation or *Samnyāsa* is not looked up to with approval. According to it, the right time for adopting the life of renunciation was after one had lived through the life of a house-holder with due performance of all relevant duties. *Samnyāsa* at any stage of life became common in Hinduism in later centuries most probably as the result of the influence of Buddhism. The renunciation of the world as illusory in character and the tendency to look down upon worldly pursuits was the legacy which Buddhism left for Hinduism. The *Āryans* of the Vedic age down to the times of the *Upaniṣads* believed in the four-fold objectives of life;—*Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*—as of equal importance in the process of human evolution. Buddhism tilted the balance in favour of renunciation as a means to spiritual deliverance. As a consequence, the number of *Sādhus* and mendicants in post-Buddhist Hinduism rose to alarmingly large proportions. The cult of indiscriminate renunciation, made popular by Buddhism, continues up to the present time.

Ahiṃsā, in the form of the sanctity of the animal life, is another gift of Buddhism to Hinduism. The Hindus in the era, prior to the birth of Buddha were not, as a rule, averse to the use of meat as an article of diet. The present-day Hindus are generally known as the followers of the cult of vegetarianism. It is definitely due to the influence of Buddhism and also of Jainism upon the general body of the Hindus. “The chief *Mahāyāna* writers” says Hara Dayal, “teach that it is a sin to eat meat. They abrogate the old rule that a monk may eat

meat, if it is not specially cooked for him. The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* devotes a long chapter on this subject and several arguments are adduced in favour of vegetarianism.¹ His conclusion is that "The Mahāyāna interpretation of Ahimsā, as applied to the animal world has been accepted by the vast majority of the Indian people."

Revival of Buddhism in India

Ever since India became free, there has taken place a revival of interest in Buddhism among the educated classes. On account of the friendly relations existing between India and the neighbouring Buddhist countries like Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Cambodia, China and Japan, many notable Buddhists from these countries come to India for pilgrimage to Gayā, Sārnāth and other sacred places associated with the life and work of Gautama Buddha. Only recently the sacred ashes of the great Buddhist saints Sāriputta and Mogglāiyana were brought to India from England, and restored, with ceremonial sanctity, to the Stūpa at Sāñchī, in the presence of a vast gathering including the prime ministers of India and Burma and other notables from India and abroad. In May 1956, the 2500th Mahā-Parinirvāṇa anniversary of the Buddha was celebrated through the length and breadth of India with great zeal and enthusiasm, in which people from all communities participated. All these things are creating interest once again in the teachings of Buddhism amongst the thoughtful section of the Indian people.

1. *The Bodhi Sattva Doctrine*. p. 200.

For many years now the Mahā Bodhi Society, founded in 1891 by the late Anagarika Dharma Pala of Ceylon, has been working hard to popularise Buddhism through the length and breadth of India by means of books, periodicals and by establishing here and there, schools, libraries, temples, and book shops, for the propagation of Buddhist doctrines.

More than a year ago, many thousands of people from the depressed classes embraced Buddhism under the lead of the late Dr. Ambedkar, the redoubtable champion of the scheduled castes of India. Many more might follow suit. Though not actually professing the Buddhist faith a large number of educated people from all ranks of society are being drawn to the humane doctrines of Buddhism. The Theosophical Society in India also plays a great part in popularising the basic teachings of the Buddha among educated classes in India and abroad.

Buddhism in the West

Even in the west, interest in Buddhism is yearly growing. Though the number of its declared adherents may not be large, the Buddhist influence in the Western countries, as judged by 'literature sold, and the books mostly used in the society's libraries and the questions asked at public meetings' is very great indeed. It is being realized more and more among the educated people of the world, that if there is any religion which can stand the criticism of science, it is Buddhism. The Buddha never wanted his disciples to accept things merely on authority. He wanted them to examine all things dispassionately and objectively without any prior assumptions. Buddhism has therefore, nothing to fear from western science.

Naturally, therefore, in modern times the religion of Buddhism including its ethics and mysticism is making a wide appeal to the people of the west. Buddhist societies have been established in important cities in England, France, Germany, U. S. A. and some other western countries. These societies are doing laudable work for popularising Buddhism in their respective countries, by means of lectures and publications of books and periodicals. In some places, even Viharas (Buddhist monasteries) of modern type have also been established.

It is too early to say anything of the form which Buddhism will assume in western countries. It is quite possible that a new form of Buddhism combining the good points of Theravāda and Mahāyāna, to suit modern conditions, may come into being. Religion is a basic need of man everywhere, and Buddhism, of course in a modified form, may be found to satisfy the religious cravings of such men both in the east and west, as have so far failed to find any satisfaction in other prevailing religions.

CHEPTER III

Concluding Remarks

We have come to the end of our journey. The impression which is left on the mind, after a close study of the religion of Buddha, is that it is not a creed in the accepted sense of the word; it is rather a way of life leading to the supreme spiritual experience, such as the Buddha had and which each one of us can have, if we feel a similar urge for such an experience. The system of the Buddha presents to us a form of religion, free from philosophical entanglements which have become an inseparable part of many religions. It starts from the basic sense of dissatisfaction with life as it is usually lived, and after tracing its cause in Tanha or selfish desire points out the way which leads an individual to a state of blessedness in which all doubts and illusions are dissolved and the truth of existence shines in its naked brilliance. Enlightenment is bliss and wisdom combined together expressing itself in never-ending acts of love and compassion.

There may be a few individuals, who are born with a good nature, full of compassionate and tender feelings and taking pleasure in acts of benevolence and charity. To such persons, the sorrows and sufferings of life do not make much sense. They are born with an optimistic nature, and having been luckily endowed with robust health, good fortune and a happy mental disposition, they only look at the joyful side of life. The sorrows and sufferings of life pass by without leav-

ing an impression on their minds. But such persons, who are good at heart and completely adjusted to life, without ever having had serious contacts with the sorrows of life are very rare. Even good and happily endowed persons cannot help seeing the unhappiness and suffering of other people and thereby becoming unhappy themselves. No sensitive person can remain, for long, untouched by surrounding misery and unhappiness. It can be safely laid down that, in the case of the majority of persons, the unsatisfactory nature of life strongly impresses itself on their minds. Many of them try to assuage their suffering by having more of sensual satisfactions and what they regard as the good things of life. But very soon the momentary feelings of pleasure end and the emptiness of life once again forces itself on their attention, and this goes on from day today leaving behind a feeling of distaste and disillusionment. It is therefore a great gain to vividly realize the unsatisfactory nature of life. Instead of hugging to oneself the false hope that some day happiness will descend upon us from the skies, it is better to face the truth once for all that any hope to achieve satisfaction from material comforts or from the acquisition of fame, position and power or from any other activity proceeding from the idea of self, is a false hope which will never be fulfilled. This is the first noble truth of Buddhism, namely, that life is full of sorrow. Dissatisfaction with life is the real starting point of religious quest. We shall never turn our face towards the search for a remedy, unless we understand the disease from which we suffer. Our real problem is not to engage ourselves into futile arguments about the nature of the first cause or the final end of the world. These

discussions will have no end and in the meantime the pressing problem of how to get rid of unhappiness—will remain unsolved.

Suffering has a cause and that cause is desire. The Buddha was not against desire as such, but only against desire for the perpetuation of self or self-based desire. To the Buddha, the so-called self was a transient phenomenon like the objects, which the self desires to possess. When we desire to acquire things for ourselves alone, we set ourselves, as it were, in antagonism to the whole from which we have all arisen. It is like a leaf asserting its rights against the life of the tree as such. This desire for self keeps us away from the experience of oneness with the reality as a whole. Misery and unhappiness are the outcome of this separative tendency of the self. The desire for enlightenment or for doing deeds of compassion and love is a noble desire, and the Buddha is not against cherishing such desires with one's whole heart.

The Buddha points out the noble eight-fold path for getting rid of selfish desires and achieving the noble aim of enlightenment. The complete fulfilment of all the demands of the spiritual path may take place in this life or it may require many lives to come. But if one sets about it in right earnest, with unswerving devotion and with complete self-consecration, there is no reason why enlightenment should not dawn in one's life-time. This is to be regarded as the end of the spiritual quest, which had its beginning in the feeling of dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the so-called pleasures of life.

This supreme experience is the ultimate goal of

Dhamma as propounded by the Buddha. He himself had a similar experience under the Bo-tree, and he laid down, for spiritual aspirants, a carefully thought-out path, along which they were to travel to the goal of Nirvāṇa. Nirvāṇa is a result of intuitive illumination and is beyond the grasp of intellectual reasoning. Intellect deals with concepts and nobody can reach the heart of things by mere concepts. One can, by means of concepts, go round and round a particular object but can never penetrate its inner essence. It may even be doubted whether it can ever be possible to reach the heart of reality by any method whatsoever.

It is the objective of all great religions to lead to supreme experience or to an enlightened state of consciousness. What the nature of this supreme experience is, it is not possible to describe in intellectual categories. Of course efforts are made, now and then, to describe the spiritual experience, but it is mostly in negative terms indicating what it is not rather than what it is. Similarly, statements to the effect that it leads to complete happiness and knowledge of ultimate truth are also of not much avail. It is like trying to convey to a man, afflicted with congenital blindness, what red or yellow colour is, or the idea of sweetness to a person who has never tasted anything sweet and so the Buddha, with a consistency found in very few founders of religions, always refused to make any declaration on questions which in the nature of the case are logically indeterminate questions.

The Buddha is sometimes compared to the Greek philosopher Socrates on account of the similarity of the

: *The Religion of the Buddha*

problems to which both of them addressed themselves. Their problems were human or moral problems rather than cosmological or ontological ones, in which the pre-Socratic and pre-Buddhist thinkers were chiefly interested. In Buddha's teachings, moral precepts certainly did hold a great importance and, so, many scholars are of the view that the Buddha, like Socrates, was chiefly a moral teacher and had nothing to do with religion as such. Such scholars ignore the fact that, in the teachings of the Buddha meditation and Yogic concentration play as great a part as moral precepts, the ultimate end being the direct, intuitive experience of truth, or the attainment of cosmic consciousness. The Buddha therefore was not only an ethical teacher, he was a mystic as well:—a mystic, however, who did not make any effort to intellectualise his mystical experiences as the thinkers of the Upaniṣads had done.

Here and there, he has thrown hints, perhaps inadvertently, from which one may gather an idea as to what he thought of the spiritual experience. We have said a good deal on this aspect of the matter in the body of the book. In matters of spiritual experience all mystical religions are in agreement. The religious experience is the same everywhere, though it may differ in intensity or in fullness. But the interpretations of this experience differ and here the intellect begins to play its role with the natural result of creating differences.

The Buddha personally avoided giving any interpretation of the fact of spiritual experience; but he did not prevent his disciples from trying to describe,

if they so wished, the nature of ultimate experience. Some persons are made of sterner stuff. They can go ahead on the path of spiritual enlightenment without raising any questions of ultimate nature ; others require a preliminary reassurance as to what lies at the end of spiritual journey, before they actually embark upon it. Mahāyana Buddhism supplied the necessary answer for the benefit of such 'tender minded' spiritual aspirants. Certain beliefs, of course, cannot go along with the central concepts of Buddhism, as, for instance, belief in a personal god or a belief in an infinite number of eternal souls and eternal elements. But Buddhism can go along very well with spiritual monism as it is found in the Upanisads or other mystic works. And as we know, later Mahāyāna brought out the idealistic implications of the teachings of the Buddha so much so that practically very little difference was left between the new schools of Buddhism and the monistic doctrines of Upanisads. We have already dwelt, at some length on this aspect of the question in one of the previous chapters.

Both these points of view are therefore comprehended within the bounds of Buddhism. One may start on the eight-fold path of enlightenment without any metaphysical presuppositions, or one may start on the path with a belief in the spiritual oneness of all things. It is a matter of taste and natural inclination and does not point to any antagonism between the two stand-points. The difference between Theravāda and Mahāyāna in this respect is based on the difference of mental constitution in their respective followers. There may be some other differences too, but the essentials are the same. There are of course

The Religion of the Buddha

some sects in Buddhism, which promise to their followers a permanent abode in heavenly regions by simply professing faith in the Buddha or the Bodhi-Sattvas. They are meant for the weaker brethren and do not convey the real spirit of Buddhism which makes each individual responsible for his own salvation. The last injunction of the Buddha to his disciples was that each one of them was to seek his or her deliverance with diligence. Self-help is an important part of Buddhist discipline.

The Buddha was a spiritual teacher. He was not a social or political reformer. Of course, his order was open to people of all castes, but he did not carry on any campaign against the caste system as it then existed, nor did he do anything for the betterment of the position of women. He did not, similarly, interfere in political matters. His was a purely spiritual teaching. His main purpose was to reform individuals and it goes without saying that if the individuals were spiritually advanced, society would automatically grow into a healthier and purer organisation.

It is, therefore, true that Buddhism laid a great emphasis on the cultivation of moral virtues ; on love and compassion, on self-restraint and contentment, on truthfulness, purity and benevolence. All higher religions do the same. But probably Buddhism was the first to teach in an emphatic manner, to the conflict-ridden humanity, that hatred cannot be cured by hatred, but by love alone. This was the noble doctrine, taught 2500 years ago and it is as fresh today as it was then. Its need in modern times is equally great. The modern man may be very much averse to

the doctrine of renunciation which was an important feature of original Buddhism. But the great message of love and sympathy for all living beings, which the enlightened one gave to distressed humanity has been a never-failing source of fascination to mankind in all ages, and is equally a source of fascination to a modern educated man. It is this and many other precious elements in Buddhism which keep it vigorously alive in spite of its partiality for a life of renunciation and homelessness. As the Buddhist teaching of the equality of the entire human race spreads from country to country and as the virtues of love and compassion are propagated every where, it is bound to raise the individuals of all nations and to bring in an era of happy international relationships.

Future Prospects

Of the two schools of Buddhism, the Theravāda school is more likely to appeal to the people in the present age, specially, to people who want religion in its pure form without theological dogma. They will naturally turn to the original teachings of the master; the religion of moral precepts and meditational exercises. People of mystical temperament may find greater solace in Mahāyāna Buddhism. But while reading the books on Mahāyāna, a modern reader will have to separate the non-essential from the essential parts. In some Mahāyāna texts, the Buddha is magnified to super-human proportions. These texts abound in miraculous incidents and fantastic accounts of heavens and hells, of Bodhi-Sattvas and gods. Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka is one of the well-known scriptures of this school; but there is very little in it which can appeal

to a modern man. A large part of the book contains fabulous accounts of the deeds of the Buddha and the Bodhi-Sattvas, the miraculous results of devotion and faith in the Buddha, and fantastic predictions of the future destinies of Kassapa, Rāhula and hundreds of other monks. The figures giving the length of the life-time of emancipated and enlightened monks are simply fantastic. The relation between some of the works of Mahāyāna and the Pāli canon is more or less like that of the Purāṇas and the Upaniṣads. Many of the early Purāṇas are now believed to have been composed in the first centuries of the Christian era when important Mahāyāna texts were also written. There is a striking similarity between the Purāṇas and the early Mahāyān works. "The Lalita Vistāra not only calls itself a Purāṇa, but really has much in common with the Purāṇas. Texts like Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka, Karanda-Vyūha, and even some passages of Mahā Vastu remind us of the sectarian Purāṇas, not only by reason of the boundless exaggeration, but also on account of the extravagances in the praise of Bhakti."¹ Thus the position of at least a number of Mahāyāna texts in Buddhism is more or less the same as that of the Purāṇas in Hinduism. Both are meant to appeal to the common people by the super-human and wonderful accounts of the doings of gods on the one hand and of the Buddhas and Bodhi-Sattvas on the other. In both, philosophy, ethics and religion are submerged under the huge bulk of mythology, superstition, ritual, and accounts of innumerable heavens and hells and extravagant praises lavished on the Buddhas and the

1. Winternitz. *Indian Literature* Vol. II p. 525.

Bodhi-Sattvas, as contrasted to the life of meditation and good deeds, which we find in the Upaniṣads on the one hand and the Pāli canon on the other.

The main contribution of Mahāyāna school was its philosophy and its belief in the spiritual Absolute in whom the various beings of the universe, both living and non-living, appear and disappear, like bubbles in an ocean. People are likely to be attracted to Mahāyāna on account of its idealistic doctrines.

It thus appears that to Buddhism, most probably, would be drawn, in the present era and in the future, those people who are indifferent to dogmas in any form but are still in need of a religion. For this reason it is Buddhism as it is preserved in the Pāli canon, which may find favour with such people of the west as well as of the east who no longer find any satisfaction in the texts and the dogmas of theistic forms of religion. Those persons who cannot do without a spiritual background right from the beginning will more probably take to the religion of the Upaniṣads and the Bhagwad Gita or to the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism as represented in such works as Diamond Sūtra, the awakening of faith, and similar other works which are largely free from exaggerations and fantastic descriptions. We have already, in a previous chapter, expressed the view that miracles and mythological elements do not form an integral part of Buddhism. They may be looked upon as mere embellishments and poetic decorations or as due to lack of scientific knowledge and as such can be easily separated from the essential doctrines of Buddhism in both of its forms.

APPENDIX

Literature on Buddhism

The Pāli Canon

The oldest Buddhist scriptures are found in Pāli. They are known as the Pāli canon and represent the sacred works of the earlier Theravāda or Hīnayana school. They are said to contain the original teachings of Gautam Buddha. The Pāli canon is found in three divisions or Pitakas (Baskets).

1. **The Vinaya Pitaka**—It embodies rules for the discipline and organisation of the order of monks, and comprises three books.

(a) *The Sutta-vibhanga*, an exposition of 227 rules of conduct for the monks and a slightly larger number for the nuns. These rules are known as the Pratimokha. The Vibhanga also gives the prescribed penances for the expiation of the violations of these rules.

(b) *The Khandhakas*, They contain rules for the organisation of the order of monks, such as, rules regarding the dress to be worn, or for the admission of new entrants into the order and rules for the construction of temples and monasteries and so on.

(c) *Parivāra*, It is a small catechism on the rules of the Vinaya for the purpose of instruction or easy remembrance.

2. **The Sutta-pitaka** in five Nikāyas or books. It mostly contains the discourses and sayings of the

Buddha on the general principles and doctrines of religion and philosophy. The five Nikāyas are as follows :—

(a) *The Dīgha Nikāya*. It is a collection of 34 longer discourses of the Buddha.

(b) *The Mājjhima Nikāya*, which is a collection of 152 discourses of medium-sized length.

(c) *The Samyutta Nikāya and*

(d) *The Anguttara Nikāya*. These are collections of short suttas, the former containing 2889 and the latter 2399 short suttas. The objects of these two Nikāyas was simply to re-arrange the topics dealt with in the Dīgha and Mājjhima Nikāyas for convenience and easy reference.

(e) *The Khuddaka Nikāya*. It is a collection of varied contents, consisting of tales, songs, poems, and aphorisms of great literary value and edifying character. A greater emphasis is laid here on ethics than on more profound doctrines. Dhammpada is the most well-known Buddhist scripture in this collection.

Besides Dhammpada there are the Udāna, the Itivuttaka (Collections of the Sayings of Buddha), the Sutta-Nipāta (Collection of Four Suttas wholly in Verse), Vasetthasutta, which contains a discussion of what constitutes a Brāhmaṇa, birth or character. Thera and Theri-Gāthās (Songs of the monks and nuns respectively of great literary and human interest), the well-known Jātaka tales (Stories of the previous lives

of Gautam Buddha, about 500 or more in number) and a few other smaller works.

3. **The Abhi-Dhamma Pitaka.** It consists of seven works—the Dhamma sangani, the Vibhanga, the Kathā-Vatthu, the Puggala Paññatha, Dhatu Kathā, Yamaka and Patthana. They give a systematic and scholastic exposition of the various doctrines of the Suttapitaka, such as the nature of the self, the law of causation, the factors of existence, the points of controversy among the various sects and so on. This literature is dry, involved and scholastic in character, and, as Dr. Ānand Coomār Swami says, our knowledge of Buddhism would not be less if the Abhi dhamapitaka were ignored altogether.

This is the Pāli Canon. Besides it, there are two other works in Pāli which, though not a part of the Canon, enjoy an equal importance. They are (1) Milanda-Panha consisting of questions of the Greek King Milinda or Menander and answers by the great Buddhist monk, Nāga Sena (2) The Visuddhi Magga or Path of Purity by Buddh-Ghosh. The English translations of almost all the works mentioned above are now available.

There is also a large number of commentaries on the Nikāyas, mostly by Buddha Ghosh. The entire literature of the Pāli canon including the Milinda Panha originated in India, though it is now found only in the Pāli texts of Ceylon, Burma, and Siam (Thailand). The commentaries, on the other hand, were composed by the scholars of Ceylon or by Indian scholars like Buddha, Ghosh who took up their residence in Ceylon.

The Mahāyāna Literature

It is entirely in Sanskrit and a large part of it corresponds to the works of the Pāli canon. "They are not translations from Pāli but rather parallel texts derived from the same Indian source, the lost Māgadhi canon on which the Pāli books are based." These books embody older material along with some new ideas added on to them. Besides these works, other important early works of Mahāyāna are, the Mahāvastu (owned also by the Hīnayāna school, but it is in spirit a Mahāyāna work presenting as it does the Buddha as a Supernatural being) Lalitvistāra (on which the famous book *Light of Asia* by Sir Edwin Arnold is based), the Buddha-Carita of Aśva Ghosha, the greatest Buddhist poet who also wrote the well-known Saundrānada Kavya dealing with some aspects of the life of Buddha. He is also credited with the writing of a famous work, '*The Mahayāna Śraddhā-Utpāda*' or '*Awakening of faith in Mahāyāna*'.

The important Mahāyāna works exist in the form of Sūtras or couplets. Among them the important ones, apart from the Lalitvistara, are the Saddharma Puṇḍrīka, the Prajna Parmida, the Gandhavyūha, the Vajra chedika, the Sukhavati Vyūha, the Lankāvatāra Sutra and the Mādhyamika Sūtra of Nagārjuna. In the seventh century, Kānti Deva wrote his Śikṣā-samuccaya (A compendium of instruction) in which he shows profound learning by bringing together passages from different Buddhist works of his time on all kinds of subjects, and so this work is of very great importance to a student of Mahāyana Buddhism.

Many of the Sanskrit works on Mahāyāna are lost, but some of them exist in their Chinese and Tibetan translations. We thus know of their one-time existence from these translations. The existence of other works is known only from references to them in existing texts. There are also many original works on Buddhism in Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan languages, besides translations of almost all of the important Indian works on Buddhism.

Some Important Modern Anthologies and books on Buddhism

(a) Some of the anthologies of the Pāli canon are as follows :—

Buddhism in Translations. Henry Clarke Warren published in 1906 by Harvard University.

Buddhist Scriptures, A selection by Dr. E. J. Thomas.

Some Sayings of the Buddha, translated. by F. L. Woodward. A very popular anthology.

Buddh Charitra (in Hindi), by Rahaul. Contains extracts from the Pāli canon.

(b) Selections from Mahāyān Texts.

Buddhist Bible, by Dwight Goddard. It gives extensive extracts from a number of well-known Mahāyān Texts.

Buddhist Texts Through the Ages, by Edward Conze. It gives a connected account of Buddhism through extracts representing the doctrines of various schools of Buddhism.

The following are some of the important general books on Buddhism.

The Splendour of Asia, by Mrs. Adams Beck.

The Light of Asia, by Sir Edwin Arnold, a well-known book on the life of Gautam Buddha in verse.

The Gospel of Buddha, by Paul Carus

Buddhism (American Lectures), by T. R. David.

Buddhism, (S. P. C. K.) by T. R. David.

Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism, by Anand Coomaraswami.

Hinduism and Buddhism (3 volumes), by Sir Charles Eliot.

Buddhism, its Essence and Development, by Edward Conze.

Doctrine of the Buddha, by George Grimm.

The Creed of Buddha, by Edmond Holmes.

The Spirit of Buddhism, by Sir Hari Singh Gaur.

The Ethics of Buddhism, by S. Tachibana.

The Bodhi Sattva Doctrine, by Dr. Har Dayal.

Buddhism, by Christmas Humphreys.

Indian Philosophy, (vol. Ist) S. Radhakrishnan.

Introduction to Mahāyān Buddhism, by Mcgovern.

Outlines of Mahāyān Buddhism, by Prof. D. T. Suzuki.

Concentration and Meditation, by Buddhist Society London.

The Buddhist Path to Self Enlightenment, by Fussell Ronald and

The Buddha's Golden Path, by Goddard Dwight.

CORRIGENDA

Page and Line	As originally printed	Correction
15, 2.	Brahaman	Brahman
30, last but one line	know	known
32, 6.	know	known
50, foot-note	Majjhina Nikāya	Majjhima Nikāya
65, 26.	Uddālka	Uddālaka-Putra
70, 2.	Risipattana	Isipattana
72, last line but one	come	came
76, 6	Lichavis	Licchavis
88, last line but one	Humpherys	Christmas
	Christian	Humphreys
89, foot-note, 2	Do	Do
94, 5	Ānand	Ānanda
98, 24	Gautam	Gautama
108, 16	Pariccasamūppada	Paticcasamuppāda
118, 4	Mijjhima Nikaya	Majjhima Nikāya
124, 9	Malinda	Milinda
126, 25	Arhat	Arhata
128, 7	Ānand	Ānanda
134, 24	Malinda	Milinda
139, 12	livlihood	livelihood
145, 7	Adridged	Abridged
145, 9	Semma-Samadhi	Samma-Samādhi
156, 18	Humpherys	Christmas
	Christian	Humphreys
159, 17	led	leads
162, 27	Bhiksus	Bhikṣus
171, 12	that	to be omitted
173, 8	Avdāna	Avadāna
173, last line but one	Anand	Ānanda
175, 18	Atman	Ātman
182, 6	Gautma	Gautama
182, 23	Do	Do

Page and Line	As originally printed	Correction
182, 25, 26, 28,	one	One
183, 1	Do	Do
183, 30	Mijjhma	Majjhma
199, 3	earlier	early
200, 12	earlier	early
209, 18, 19	Boddhi-Sattva	Bodhi-Sattva
217, 1	Dharnis	Dharanis
219, 15	friands	friends
236, 18		Add the word 'in' between produce and 'the'
241, 12	episemological	epistemological
241, 23	toal	total
249, 21	Samutpanna	Samuppāda
249, 25	Sunya	Sūnya
250, 14	Dhata	Dhatu
255, 4	Paricchanna	Pracchanna
255, 6	Alaya	Ālaya
255, 14	Tathtā	Tathatā
258, 24	Mahayana	Mahāyāna
259, 13	Soyem Shaku	Soyen Shaku
268, 7-8	Dharnis	Dharanis
273, 15	Avokitesvara	Avalokiteśvara
277, 18	cultural	cultured
279, 15	scriptures	scripture
282, 23		omit 'all'
285, 13	Šaṅkra	Śaṅkara
287, 1	may	many
289, 17	Upnisads	Upaniṣads
293, 9	Viharas	Vihāras
302, 15	Mahāyān	Mahāyāna
303, 21	Bhagwad	Bhagvad

