

BUDDHA-DHAMMA

(A Higher Affirmation)

by

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1959

KITAB MAHAL, ALLAHABAD

235, Hornby Road, Bombay : 28, Faiz Bazar Delhi

FIRST EDITION, 1959

Published by—Kitab Mahal, Zero Road, Allahabad

Printed for free distribution by

The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation

11F., 55 Hang Chow South Road Sec 1, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.

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DEDICATION

This book is a single effort and those that I love are many. I therefore dedicate it;

To the inspiring memory of the Great Leader who lived to make us free and died a martyr to redeem us as a Nation ;

To the noble memory of my great grandfather, the story of whose life has been my pride and inspiration ;

To the sweet memory of my grand-parents, who bestowed much love and affection on me during my early childhood ;

To the sacred memory of my dear and revered father who initiated me in Dhamma and died young and gave me no opportunity to serve him in any way ;

To the ever-green and fragrant memory of my three children, two of whom died young and one the sweetest, noblest and the fairest of all in the full bloom of her youth. Trials, tribulation and unhappiness came early in the life of the fair one, her death has made me learn what sorrow is and has given me a deeper understanding of Dhamma ;

To the loving memory of the sisters and brothers whom I lost so early ;

To the affectionate memory of my father-in-law and mother-in-law who raised and reared the noble lady who has shared her life with me ;

To my blessed mother whose life of purity is such a great blessing ;

To my sisters and brothers for all their acts of service and love ;

To my dearly beloved wife, the ever-loving, forbearing, affectionate and hard-working companion who has shared her joys and happiness with me and cheerfully borne the burden of my toils, sufferings, sorrows and ever-present poverty. Without her incomparable companionship and assistance I would have been like unto a rudderless ship on this ocean of life ;

To my dearly loved children, big and small, whose innocence, joys, happiness as also trials and tribulations have made me persevere in the right effort and love humanity a little better ;

To my sweet grand-children whose innocent smiles I steal every morning and wear on my face for the day ;

To my numerous friends, colleagues and assistants who have helped me in divers ways ;

To all those who have worked ill to me and have caused me petty annoyance or grievous hurt, for they have made me sink a shaft into my heart each time I felt hurt, so that the waters of forgiveness may sprout forth. Every bath in these waters has made me clean and whole.

To all those who suffer sorrow and toil as I am one with them ;

To all those that are happy as I wish them evermore of it. May their company be ever on the increase !

To all those against whom I have transgressed in any way, as without their forgiveness, I must ever remain a fugitive from Bliss.

PREFACE

This book is not one more addition to the literature that has grown round Lord Buddha and His teachings.

It is the reverent study of a man who has clung to Buddha and His teachings for a period of over thirty years and who suddenly came to a new turning on the path, where a new vista opened before his eyes and all that he had learnt acquired a new meaning and significance for him.

With this new experience also came the certitude that at long last the true teachings, which lay hidden under many philosophical expositions have been discovered.

The same are now being presented in a spirit of humility and with a sincere desire to help humanity.

May these teachings which pulsate with the throb of Lord Buddha's heart bring peace and happiness to all.

I need acknowledge my debt to the numerous authors of Buddhist books who have enriched the English literature with their labour of love. But for their efforts I would have remained a stranger to the rich heritage of Buddhist thought. I am also extremely grateful to my friends, Rev. Okata of Burma,

Rev. Sangharakshita of Kalimpong and Shri Devapriyawali Sinha, General Secretary of the Mahabodhi Society for having read through the M. S. and for their valuable suggestions for its improvement. My revered friend Rev. Sangharakshita really took very great pains over the book. Rev. Okata has encouraged me materially in many ways, as there has been a communion in thought and identity of views with him on most matters, especially in regard to the social aspect of the teachings. My thanks are also due to my dear friend and colleague Shri S. S. Varma, Joint Director, Railway Board, who was kind enough to read through the M. S. and discuss various aspects of the teachings with me. His criticism has been of much value.

I need thank a few of my assistants who have helped me in the preparation of the MS. for the Press, as also to the kind publishers and printers for their unfailing courtesy, and patience and for the pains that they have taken over the book.

G. C. Lall

22. 7. 59.

Uruvella

Bishop Rockey Street,

Lucknow.

AN APOLOGY

To my numerous orthodox friends in the Buddhist world I offer my humble apologies for giving a presentation of the Dhamma which may not be in full accord with their understanding of it.

I seek their indulgence for this transgression. I could not, however, resist the effort; for once I came to be seized of the new teaching, the desire to give expression to it has been unabated. Truth is an authority unto itself, but to those of my friends who may be inclined to seek authority for every expression of truth I quote a passage from the Lord's sermon to Kalamas :

'Now, Kalamas, do not ye go by hearsay, not by what is handed down by others, nor by what people say, nor what is stated on the authority of your traditional teachings. Do not go by reasoning, nor by inference, nor by argument as to method, nor from reflection on and approval of an opinion, nor out of respect, thinking a recluse must be deferred to'. I confess that in many places what has been stated in these pages can only be said to be an extension of the Lord's teachings. I submit, however, that growth is the law of life both in the physical and spiritual world and too rigid an adherence to an expressed teaching is a sign of spiritual decadence. Each age

has to meet the challenge of its own times and tackle its problems with the same courage and insight with which the Lord tackled the problems of His own times. In this matter also I do abide by the message that He gave to His most beloved disciple.

“Wherefor, Ananda, do ye abide islands unto yourselves, refuges unto yourselves, taking refuge in none other, islanded by the Norm, taking refuge in the Norm, seeking refuge in none other.”

To those brethren who have been caught in the net of words or have come to acquire preference for certain patterns of the Dhamma, I make the humble submission that the teachings of the Lord are far too dynamic to get confined to these limitations. They have the surge of a vast ocean in them.

It was acute awareness to world's suffering that had started the Lord's quest for the meaning. It is this acute awareness to suffering that He brought home to all who came to listen to Him and we need have this acute awareness towards the ills in our own times and a sincere quest for a way out, if we seek to have a true vision of the 'DHAMMA'.

INTRODUCTION

Every teaching has its three well-known aspects and the Lord's teachings are no exception to it.

The Exoteric

One is called the exoteric aspect of a teaching. This is the aspect which is made manifest at the time the teachings are delivered. It becomes easily comprehensible to the common mass of humanity, as it contains just those essentials of the new teachings which the people of that time can easily comprehend and which meets some of its most urgent requirements. After some time these teachings grow static and fail to carry their old appeal, as humanity gets advanced still further on its upward path and outgrows the exoteric part of the new teachings.

The Esoteric

Every great teaching, however, is also pregnant with a message which unfolds itself, afresh and anew with a meaning and significance which varies with each age. This message is not manifest and has to be discovered each time and made manifest for the benefit of humanity. This is the dynamic or the esoteric aspect of a great teaching.

The Exotic

The third is the exotic aspect of a teaching. These represent beliefs and practices which are actually foreign to the teachings but which gather round it, as the teaching spreads amongst the masses. This exotic growth does much harm, but no teaching can take root amongst the people without this intermingling of the old and new. The earnest seeker after truth has to be liberal in his outlook and he need discriminate carefully between the exoteric, esoteric and exotic teachings.

Lessons of History

There is sufficient evidence now available in the pages of history to enable us to intelligently reconstruct the history of man's progress on earth. We should now rely more on this reconstructed history than on ancient myths and fables, beautiful though many of them may be and rich in meaning. This reconstructed history tells us that man is just like other animals in most things. He has the animal's hair and lungs, reptilian bones and fish-like blood. Man's life, like the animal's, is made of many acts and passions. Like them we struggle for power, like them we organise ourselves into social groups. Like many of them we also build, fight for our existence and collect wealth. Like them we also love, procreate and display cunning and skill in games. Animals also share with us the gift of a vivid though restricted memory and a shallow and temporary curiosity.

The Main Difference

But unlike all animals we have a limitless field of activity which is administered by the power of our will, under whose directions we learn, know, remember, think, acquire knowledge and change not only the pattern of our life and existence, but also the very inner core and texture of our being. The essential history of mankind is the story of its learning, thinking and deliberately willing itself to be better and nobler. Apart from mankind all changes in the world have been slow and gradual, though the world in which we all live is always in a state of flux.

Man, however, in his brief history on this earth has transformed himself and the world round him beyond all recognition. It is man's specific quality to bring a purposeful change through 'thought' not only in himself and others of his own species but also in the universe in which he lives, which is neither good, nor bad, neither just nor unjust. It is, however, grand and full of such wonders and mysteries that it has taken a whole millennium for man to unravel them, and the task is not yet complete.

The Two Gifted Races of India

When Lord Buddha came to this earth to deliver a new teaching, India was peopled by two highly gifted races and each had its own civilization and its way of life. The present Hindu way of life has actually its roots in the ways of life of these two gifted people, although

other races who came and settled in India, during different periods have also made significant contributions to it. Unfortunately the common man in India is not aware of this synthesis and fondly believes that he has inherited all his religious beliefs and customs from the 'Vedas' which are considered by him as revealed literature. Be what it may, we have to hold fast to the truth.

The Vedic Aryans

The Vedic Aryans entered India from the Kabul valley and were originally a pastoral people. They had their stronghold in the western tract of India, which they had fully conquered and overrun, driving out the more highly civilized people who had inhabited it before. These people believed in the divine origin of their Vedic songs, in the supremacy of their priests, who claimed birth from Brahma's mouth, and in the existence of innumerable gods and goddesses who inhabited their countless heavens and interfered in the affairs of mankind in many ways, both for its good and evil. These gods were propitiated and worshipped by the Vedic Aryans at the sacrificial altars raised in their honour, with magic chants and rituals recited by the Brahmanical priests. At these altars they offered sacrifice of men and animals, also of Soma, clarified butter, milk and holy waters, to the various gods whom they worshipped, to ensure happiness and prosperity for themselves and their

children in this world and in the world hereafter.

The Non-Vedic People

This vigorous race of Aryans led by its priests was spreading fast towards the east and establishing its supremacy amongst a more highly civilized people, who had settled in India a few centuries earlier and had developed a highly organised civilization.

These people had greater faith in the virtues of an ascetic life and it was the custom amongst these people that the more earnest and sincere of them renounced the household life and took themselves to some quiet retreat where they subjected their body to all sorts of physical tortures, penances and mortifications of the flesh. It was believed by these people that through such penances and mortifications a man was able to rise above his animal nature and acquire superhuman and divine powers. A few of these men, however followed a more rational way of life. They simply retired to some pleasant forest retreat and there lived a life of silent contemplation and meditation, either alone or in the company of an elect few.

The Synthesis

It was the Blessed One's mission to deliver to the young humanity in India and through it to a much wider world a message which would wean it from the errors of the two paths that it followed and place before it the ideal of a man who, fully conscious of his divine destiny

as man the thinker, would will himself to something much better and nobler than he was and thereby enter truly into his divine inheritance. It was also His mission to effect a reconciliation between the two hostile races and to complete the work of synthesis in religious thought which had actually begun in the later Vedic period and had been carried on in the Upanishadic literature.

The Three Layers of Teachings

This teaching has come down to us in our sacred texts and lies there in three layers. The outer layer consists of teachings which are exotic and have gathered round it due to the superstitious beliefs of the young humanity to which these were delivered. These consist of beliefs in numerous gods and goddesses, in the efficacy of asceticism, in rituals, ceremonies and in supernormal psychic powers, etc. The second layer consists of the exoteric teachings which are found in the ethical code and its rule of morality, etc. The inner core of the teachings consists of the Lord's esoteric message to humanity which concerns itself with the task of uplifting the individual and humanity to a new height and making it conscious of its divine destiny. This part of His teaching has to be carefully discerned and caught hold of, in its essentials and reinterpreted according to the need of the times and in the light of the knowledge, that dawns on humanity as it ascends higher and higher on its pilgrimage to the summit of the Niravanic state.

The esoteric message is, however, difficult to discern. It is even more difficult to wisely reinterpret it. It is necessary sometimes to seek light from the Blessed One's own life and at other times to seek for the truth in some of His fragmentary sayings. It will be our task in this book to catch the real spirit of His message and seek inspiration from it. Let us all join in this noble endeavour.

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LIFE SUBLIME

Birth & Nativity

Ashoka's pillar at Lumbini in the Nepal Tarai near the borders of Basti and Gorakhpur districts marks the birthplace of Lord Buddha.

It has been stated in ancient Buddhist texts that Lumbini was a pleasant grove situated midway between Kapilvastu, the Sakyan capital, and Devadaha the capital city of the Koliyan clan. Mother Mahamaya was on her way from Kapilvastu to Devadaha, her parents' place, when pains seized her at the "Lumbini" grove and our Lord was born as the mother caught hold of a hanging bough to support her body. The newly born child with the blessed mother was taken back to Kapilvastu where the fond father king Shuddhodhan and his loyal subjects celebrated the happy occurrence in a right royal manner. Unfortunately in the very midst of these celebrations the blessed mother breathed her last and the responsibility of bringing up the divine child devolved on Maha Prajapati Gautami, the younger sister of the mother, who was also a co-wife of the Lord's father.

"Coming events cast their shadows"

All accounts testify to the remarkable handsomeness of the child, who also had some auspicious marks of future greatness on His person.

The astrologers and holy men who gathered round the court of the king also prophesied a great future for the child.

It has been mentioned that the child was as intelligent as He was handsome and soon acquired much learning. He also distinguished himself in all manly games of skill, and was known to be a fast rider, a cool and clever charioteer and an accurate marksman. However, in spite of all these accomplishments and the loving care that was bestowed on Him the Lord was known to be a very well-behaved child, respectful to His teachers and elders and considerate to all those who attended on Him. Above all He had a most winsome personality and manners.

Compassion for all life

Two remarkable incidents of His early childhood gave an early indication of His future career as Buddha the compassionate. The first incident happened when He was still a child. He rescued a swan which had been mortally wounded by Devadutta's arrow and lovingly nursed it back to health. The other incident mentioned is in respect of His horses. It is mentioned that while taking part in races He often permitted the prize to slip by Him, whenever He felt that any effort to win the prize will involve undue strain on His hard-pressed steeds. This love of animals and compassion for all life was a very marked characteristic of the Lord. It was also one of the main planks of His teachings.

He not only preached against the sacrifice of

animal on altars but also prohibited hunting and meat-eating. He also wished that animals be treated with kindness and sympathy and relieved, as much as possible, of the grinding burden of hard physical labour that had been of necessity imposed on them in the past by mankind. Any account that creates a contrary impression does not correctly represent Him and does him gross injustice.

The Teachings on Ahimsa

The following sutra gives a clear exposition of His views :—

“Creatures without feet have my love and likewise those that have two feet and those that have four feet I love, and those too that have many feet.”

A true and sincere Buddhist therefore cannot but cultivate boundless love and compassion for all creatures. Any other attitude is incompatible with the meditation of Maitri which all Buddhists need cultivate.

A Buddhist therefore cannot offer an animal in sacrifice, he cannot kill one for sport or for meat. Nor can he take meat diet, even though it be offered to him as a gift as this would indirectly encourage the act of killing. He cannot also participate in a war, for that is even a greater sin or crime. The Lord's teachings on this point, a few of which are reproduced here, admit of no doubt or compromise on this most important issue :

“Thou shall not kill, nor shall ye injure”.

“The adherent of the teaching does not kill or cause to be killed any living thing, neither does he approve of killing in others.”

“He refuses to hurt or harm any creature whatsoever, those that are strong as well as those that are weak.”

“Whoso belongs to the Order of the Buddha, being a member thereof, will avoid taking life of any creature, were it only an ant or a worm.”

It is abundantly clear from all His teachings that he exhorted humanity to recognise its kinship as an elder brother to lower animals. Nothing could be more emphatic than the following :

“ As I am so are these. As these are so am I. Thus identifying himself with others the wise man neither kills nor causes to be killed”.

The Lessons of a Gay Festival

Another incident of Lord Buddha's early youth clearly indicates that He had sincerely wished and desired that as humanity progresses on its upward path, it should relieve the domestic animals, from the present grinding burden of the hard physical toil that has been imposed on them by mankind for its own benefit. It is narrated that when the Blessed One was growing into a youth He was taken by the king to witness the royal ploughing festival in which the king and his ministers and nobles participated with the common man, in ploughing the green fields amidst great rejoicing. The Lord was still too young to actively participate in this colourful

festival, and was therefore left in the care of some attendants under the shade of a rose, apple tree.

This was perhaps the Lord's first opportunity to witness a vast congregation of His people, who were busy in their toil and grim struggle for existence. The opportunity also came at a time when He was fast growing into wisdom. The Lord was gripped with the spectacle of colour, noise and movement, but His quick mind and keen penetrating insight soon discovered that much avoidable pain, sorrow, suffering and cruelty lay hidden beneath the apparent gaiety and colour of a popular festival.

He discovered that the struggle for existence for mankind and specially those that were poor, backward and weak, in a competitive social order, was as cruel and selfish as it was in the animal kingdom. He also noticed that domestic animals carried much of the burden of man's own toil on their back. In fact these creatures were actually being ground down under this burden. His kind heart sympathised with the down-trodden serf and the labourer and He pitied the lot of the kine which carried the cruel yoke on their shoulders and toiled without respite for the benefit of man.

Foretaste of Ecstasy

The Blessed One was soon lost in the contemplation of the new knowledge that so vividly dawned on Him, in a flash, and perhaps had His first foretaste of the ecstasy that comes through

deep contemplation. The Lord's reaction to the colourful festival has been very movingly portrayed by Sir Edwin Arnold in his immortal work, *The Light of Asia*. This vivid poetical description correctly portrays the compassionate feelings of our Lord.

“All things spoke peace and plenty, and the prince.

Saw and rejoiced.” But, looking deep, he saw.
The thorns which grew upon this rose of life.
How the swart peasant sweated for his wage,
Toiling for leave to live, and how he urged
The great eyed oxen through the flaming,
hours,

Goading their velvet flanks ; then marked
He, too.

How lizard fed an ant, and snake on him,
And kite on both; and how the fish hawk
robbed.

The fish tiger of that which it had seized,
The shrike chasing the bulbul, which did
hunt.

The jewelled butterflies, till everywhere.
Each slew a slayer and in turn was slain,
Life living upon death. So the fair show
Veiled one vast savage, grim conspiracy
Of mutual murder, from the worm to man,
Who himself kills his fellow ; seeing which—
The hungry ploughman and his labouring kine
Their dewlaps blistered with bitter yoke,
Their rage to live, which makes all living to
strife—

The prince Siddhartha sighed. Is this He said,

“That happy earth, they brought me forth
to see?”

How salt with sweat the peasants bread
The oxen’s service in the brake how fierce
The war of weak and strong ; what plots ;
No refuge even in water, Go aside
A space and let me muse on what ye show.”

The True Significance

The true significance of this experience has been altogether lost on humanity. It is clear from the trends of the Lord’s teachings that He was not in favour of people leading an idle life. In fact He laid very great stress on people leading strenuous life of high endeavour. He led a very busy life Himself and encouraged all others to follow in His footsteps. Jataka tales are replete with stories which lay the greatest possible stress on a life of high endeavour and toil. His teachings to his disciples are always in the following strain :

“Awake, arise and strive unremittingly.”

“Be watchful—Have done with sloth.”

“Devote yourself to earnest efforts”

“Yield not to idleness.”

“Labour for yourself.”

“Idleness is disgrace, constant sloth is defilement.”

“With all thy strength struggle.”

One has therefore to ponder what actually was the cause of the Lord’s pity for the peasant, who ploughed the field and the oxen which carried the yoke. It is clear to me that what

He pitied was their unremitting toil and its scanty rewards. The lesson cannot be missed that He had no high opinion for striving and endeavour in a competitive social order, when its aim was self-aggrandisement. He disliked the competitive spirit and its cruelties, on the other hand, He was all in favour of a co-operative effort, which had the objective of common good for all. He was the very first amongst world's teachers who foreshadowed the idea of a co-operative commonwealth. For truly has he said :

“For lofty virtue, for high endeavour, for sublime wisdom—for these things do we wage war, therefore are we called warriors”.

Our cruelties towards animals

The Blessed One's approach to the use of domestic animal for hard toil is also very clear from the description that has come down to us in our texts, of His inner reactions, when he saw the poor creatures groaning under the yoke that man has placed on them for his own benefit. For long has man treated the domestic animal purely as an object of utility. These animals yield to man the maximum benefit in hard toil, in milk and wool and eggs, etc., but when this service has been rendered, they are without compunction offered on the sacrificial altars or killed to provide man with meat, hide, bone and sinews.

With the dawn of the machine age, man has entered into a new heritage. He easily

can, if he is progressive, wise, intelligent and truly humanitarian, make use of machinery where manual labour or animal power is being utilised. He can relieve the animals from unremitting hard toil and use them only for light work. The sight of the oxen, that are yoked for breaking land, during summer heat, panting for breath, prodded with sharp goads, receiving beating with kicks, fists and whip and abused foully, all through their period of toil, by a no less harassed peasant is not at all an edifying sight, for a truly sensitive man. The same pitiable lot is of the lone bullock, who is yoked blindfold to an oil ghanny. It cannot but arouse deep compassion in the heart of a kindly inclined man.

Is it now necessary ?

For long have we continued these cruel practices, but the time has now come, when man has to ask himself whether with his greater scientific knowledge, is it at all necessary for man's existence that the domestic animal should be put to its present unremitting hard toil when without much difficulty all this toil can easily be transferred to machinery. There is, however, no harm, if the domestic animal is used for lighter jobs, as it will keep them fit and give them a joy in living.

The Utilitarian's Argument

The utilitarians will naturally enquire about the fate that would overtake the domestic

animals when they get relieved from some of the difficult tasks which, at present, are imposed on them. The only correct and bold answer to this query would be that firstly nature has its own methods to adjust its balances. Further, enough scientific knowledge is now available through which the population of the domestic animals can be planned in such a way that it does not outstrip their actual requirements. Lastly that with his advanced scientific knowledge man is now in a position to share his plenty with domestic animals and be content with only taking light work from them.

Humanitarian Work

I have no hesitation in expressing the view, that the use of machinery in replacement of animal power, for jobs which are difficult and entail hard work for animal and man is a humanitarian work, and it is the bounden duty of every sincere Buddhist to make increasing use of machinery for such jobs. The use of machinery is also a progressive step in the emancipation of man and for providing him with leisure for higher pursuits. The co-operative commonwealth cannot be established unless an era of plenty is ushered and the era of plenty without the use of machinery is an idle dream and a mirage, say whatever we may to the contrary.

We can, however, always decide on ways and means, and a policy of graduation can always be followed, if after a careful survey, we feel con-

vinced that the switch-over from manual or animal labour to machine in certain industries, need be gradual, in the larger interest of a particular country. There can be no objection also to reserve certain industries for the field of cottage industries, if the same can be run with almost equal efficiency and economy with the assistance of small machines. The problem of industrialisation in backward countries, which have a teeming population and which have so far subsisted on a predominantly agricultural economy, is really difficult and we have need to be careful in handling this problem.

The Danger from Visionaries

We have need, however, to guard against ideological appeals that are made in the name of religion, against large-scale mechanisation. These appeals come from unrealistic visionaries, who paint beautiful pictures of self-sufficiency in primitive surroundings, in which man would discard his greater knowledge and be content with outmoded means of production. Such a false philosophy will keep the visionary and all who follow him in extreme poverty and increase considerably the sum of human suffering and sorrow. Not one of these visionaries can subsist in a modern world, without the charity of those who earn a living for themselves with the aid of the greater knowledge that science has made available to them.

Like Unto Ascetics

Such men are like unto ascetics whom the Lord

had met on the vulture peak at Rajagriha. They mortified their bodies in various ways and hoped that by doing so they will promote their own well-being and increase the fund of happiness for others. Most of these holy men were good, earnest people but none of them were wise. Excess of zeal, wrong thinking and a faulty background had led them into wrong channels. So it is with all those well-meaning people who preach against the use of machinery and decry the idea of a socialistic state in which the cruelties, meanness and selfishness which so richly thrive in a competitive social order will be eliminated.

It would be, however, not correct for me to suggest that Lord Buddha had advocated the use of machinery. This could not be as the machine age had not dawned on humanity at that period. It would be sufficient for our purpose to concede that He had pitied the lot of domestic animals who were yoked to hard toil and we will be clearly at fault if we do not at this stage of our progress switch on to machine where we can easily do so.

“The True Meaning of Four Visions”

Nothing much is known of the Lord's manhood and married life except that He won the hand of His beautiful cousin princess Yashodhara in an open competition with the youths of noble families. It goes to prove His proficiency in games of skill and valour in which the Kshattriya youths took just pride. It

is also stated that the Blessed One lived happily with the charming and noble princess till He reached His twenty-ninth year, when a son who was named Rahula was born to her. The absence of other details of the Lord's family life in monastic records can well be appreciated. Living a celibate life Himself amidst disciples who had also taken the vow of celibacy there was little occasion to talk of the experiences of a happy married life. The only incidents that have been prominently mentioned are the stories of the Lord's four visions. It is stated that it was these visions which had made Him renounce His throne, home and a dearly beloved wife and a newly born child.

Brother Channa's Tales

A very childish account of these four visions has come down to us in our records. It has been stated that due to the predictions that had been made by astrologers and holy men, about His becoming a great religious teacher, His father had built three palaces for Him and had shut Him therein and kept Him away from all knowledge of the worldly sufferings, sorrows, death, disease and poverty. He was so ignorant of all these common features of human life that when He saw an old man and a sick man in the streets and later a dead body carried to the cremation ground, it was Channa His charioteer who enlightened Him about these happenings and brought home to Him, their true significance. It would be, however, childish to believe that a highly gifted and

intelligent young man, who was so well versed in learning, who was so proficient in the arts of war, who was heir to a kingdom which had a precarious existence, who had lost His mother as an infant, who had nursed a mortally wounded swan as a child, who had as His attendants men in different stations of life, could be so ignorant as has been narrated and that of all persons Channa, a common charioteer, on whom the highest penalty of expulsion from the Sangha was imposed by the Lord on His death-bed, should have been so very wise, as to guide the man who was destined to be the wisest and noblest teacher of mankind.

This is what the Blessed One had said about Channa :

“As to the brother Channa-Ananda let the extreme penalty be applied to him when I am gone.”

“What Lord do you mean by the extreme penalty.”

“The brother Channa, Ananda, whatever he may wish or whatever he may say is not to be spoken to, not to be admonished, not to be instructed by the brethren.”

To me it is clear that brother Channa was in the habit of giving garbled versions about the Lord's early life and people used to listen to him through sheer curiosity. One of these garbled versions by Channa has come to us in the Buddhist texts. The Lord had foreseen the danger that lay for the world if brother Channa's tales got currency and hence the Lord had him expelled from the Sangha most reluctantly.

The more credible version

It would be more credible to believe that as the Blessed One grew up and began to associate Himself with the affairs of His kingdom, He came closer to the miseries, sorrows and sufferings of the common mass of His people. They toiled all their life, yet they remained so poor, that they could not provide for themselves against old age and sickness and when improvident old age and crippling sickness did come, they dragged on a miserable existence without getting much assistance and relief. He must have also noticed that there was much disease in the land, disease which assailed all and sundry. In many cases diseases were painful, loathsome and incurable. He also could not fail to notice the many early and untimely deaths which took place and which caused so much sorrow and suffering to the people.

Insoluble Problems of Humanity

He worried a good deal over these insoluble problems of a young humanity till these became in the nature of visions to Him. He saw them here, there and everywhere and no worldly joys and happiness could keep away these visions from Him, as these haunted Him day and night and robbed Him of all peace of mind. He talked on these matters with the Brahman priests who surrounded His father's court and all that they could tell Him was that true happiness in this world and hereafter

was a gift from the gods, who need to be worshipped and propitiated through magic chants and hymns and sacrificial offerings. This situation did not satisfy the young yearning soul.

He must have also taken counsel with other wise men, ministers and nobles of the court. He must have also confided to His dearly beloved wife and someone amongst these, must have mentioned to Him about holy men and silent thinkers, who resided in forest retreats and mused on some of the problems which assailed the young prince's mind. These men, it must have been told to Him, had the key to human happiness, as in spite of their poverty and hard ascetic life, they were happy beyond the measure of common men.

The Symbol of a New Humanity

These stray accounts about holy men soon got collected and He began to picture to himself the vision of a man who was in radiant health, had a clear skin, was free from want and care, was self-possessed and in full control of his faculties and enjoyed full security. This holy man in yellow robes who was unlike every man that He had seen and known became for the Lord the symbol of the man He wanted to grow into and establish others in. It became for Him the symbol of a new humanity.

Perhaps His sub-conscious mind had retained the memory of such a holy man or a Buddha, He had met in a previous incarnation. He

wanted man to be free from want and care. He wanted man to conquer disease and eliminate untimely death. At the same time He wanted man to grow in wisdom and acquire mastery over His own self, for He was clear in His own mind, that till man has inner freedom, mere plenty and greater knowledge will not bring Him happiness.

Brahmanism had nothing to offer

It is clear from the accounts that have come down to us that Brahmanism as it was preached and practised in the Blessed One's time did not appeal to Him at all. The priests' daily round of worship to gods and goddesses for the gift of sensuous pleasure and worldly happiness, their sacrifices of animals and drinking bouts of soma liquor, belief in magic rites and rituals and infallibility of the Vedas, belief in and claim of superiority based on birth, did not carry any appeal to him.

Search for a New Way

He was, however, determined to discover a way of life which would enable humanity to live a nobler, happier and fuller life. He was keenly interested in promoting the weal and welfare of the common man. He, however, felt that this task could not be accomplished while He was living the humdrum life of a prince and heir-apparent. He constantly pictured to Himself the man who had grown into a vision with Him. So great was the grip of this

vision on His imagination that, one dark night, He quietly slipped away from His palace and hid Himself in Anupiya grove which lay on the eastern border of His kingdom.

Contemplation is not enough

For a week He tarried in the Anupiya grove undecided about the future line of His action, then suddenly He turned towards east and we meet Him in the Ashramas of Alara Kalama and Udaka Ramaputta. Both these men were noted for their great piety, for their life of earnest contemplation in forest retreats, where a handful of earnest seekers after truth had gathered round them. He went to them, from one to the other, and learned from them all that they had to teach. He practised their method of contemplation and like them had a taste of ecstasy and spiritual experience. But He found their way of life incomplete and insufficient as in His own words, "It did not lead to the cessation of evil and growth of goodness". It would be well to ponder over these words and understand their true significance. Mere ecstatic experience or peep into the depths of one's own spirit was not enough for Him.

What He sought was growth into something better, nobler and wiser, so that he could better help humanity. He sought to acquire mastery over His own self, get rid of taints and asvas, become care-free, truthful, brave and fearless. Above all He wanted to live for others and cease to live for self. A life in sheltered cloisters and

forest retreats, lived amidst a few chosen disciples, did not satisfy His great altruistic urge. It did not provide for the transformation that He had sought for Himself and for His fellow beings. He was disappointed in the teachings of His masters as He found them insufficient but He retained His love and affection for them and they were the first to be remembered as being worthy to receive the new teaching when He attained enlightenment.

In the wilderness

Thwarted in His quest and suffering from keen frustration, He turned south-east and came to Rajagriha, the capital city of Magadha which was at that time ruled by the youthful Bimbisara who had overrun Anga at the young age of sixteen and had been crowned king by his loving father. So great was the impression that He created on the young and talented monarch that he invited the Blessed One to become his Prime Minister and realise His dream of bringing happiness and peace into the life of the common people.

At Rajagriha the Lord came in touch with a host of ascetics who lived on the hills which surrounded the capital city and straying to Uruvella He resolved to practise these austerities and try them out. His fame soon spread and a faithful band of five disciples gathered round Him and looked lovingly after His famished body and its few requirements during the most difficult and trying period of His life.

Austerities useless

It will serve no useful purpose to recount in these pages all the severe austerities that were practised by the Lord. It would be sufficient to state that all known forms of austerities, the most arduous and difficult and most loathsome, were undergone. These testify to His sincerity, His power of endurance, His capacity to suffer for a cause, but they do not in any way add to His stature as an enlightened man. The Lord had Himself stated that His efforts to grow in wisdom and goodness through the practice of austerities were like the vain effort of a man who tried to tie a knot in the air. No sooner did He return to a saner way He came to the conclusion that austerities and penances do not conduce to the growth of wisdom and goodness in man, then He left the austere way and began to live a normal life.

In his subsequent life as a teacher He lost no opportunity to condemn the austere and cheerless way of living and resisted all pressure from His disciples to promulgate a more rigid and austere code for the monastic order. At this critical period of His life when His disciples had also abandoned Him, a young married girl of a noble family, for Sujata was her name, ministered to the Lord's bodily requirements and provided Him with nourishing food through which He soon recovered His physical strength. The Lord had himself stated to Aggivessana, "Then I, Aggivessana, after

taking food substantial got back my strength.”

He grew into perfection

The Blessed One's quest for truth had taken Him into wrong channels but the effort had not been altogether in vain, for throughout this six years' period He had stuck fast to His ideal. The vision of the man he wanted to grow into had never left Him. He had gradually and imperceptibly grown into the picture of the man whose vision had kept on haunting Him.

Charity and Forbearance

Through the practice of charity and forbearance, sublimation of the baser qualities of nature, and by fostering virtues, ample accounts of which do exist, even during this dark period of His life, the Blessed One grew very near to a perfect man. Speaking about His efforts to practise forbearance during this period the Lord stated to Sariputra, “In a charnel field I lay down to rest and the cowherds came up to me, even spat upon me and even made water upon me, spattered me with mud, even poked straws into my ears, yet Sariputra, I cannot call to mind that a single evil thought against them arose in me. Thus far was I gone in forbearance, Sariputra.”

The Final Effort

The final battle was, however, still not won, and strengthened in body and revived in spirit, He sat down for earnest contemplation, under

the Bodhi tree to make the final effort to shake and uproot all evil and grow into perfection. With a supreme effort of will the Lord altogether eradicated the very last traces of the asavas. All evil was vanquished and ceased to be and got completely and utterly destroyed. And peace which passeth all understanding possessed Him.

The Transformation

He got all of a sudden transfigured into something which was as noble as it was divine. Such men are beyond description. They are measureless, their depths cannot be fathomed, their mode of existence cannot be predicted. Humanity is blest in their victory as they lift it to a new height of achievement. Hail Buddha—Hail a new humanity. The account that I have put forward is in strict conformity with the law of spiritual growth in man. History is replete with stories of men who were indistinguishable from others in an average group, who, however, got seized of some sublime idea and suddenly began to change for the better under the impact of their new ideal or thought. They mysteriously grew into goodness and wisdom and began to live on a new time scale in which they inhabited both time and eternity at once. In a passage in Prajnaparamitastotra the following has been said of Buddhas :

“Saviours of the world, for pity ;
So that men rightly understand.

Speak of Thee observing custom,
Yet of Thee, they do not speak.
Who is able here to praise Thee ;
Lacking signs and formless ;
Thou the range of speech transcending.
Not supported anywhere.”

Lord's Own Account

This view also tallies with the account that the Blessed One gave to His disciples.

“Then, Aggivessana, I thought why am I afraid of that state of ease which is apart from sensual desires and ill conditions. Then I, Aggivessana, after taking food substantial got back my strength and remote from sensual desires, remote from ill conditions, I entered and abode in the first musing ; but in each case the blissful feelings that arose failed to lay hold of and control my mind. Then with thought subdued perfectly purified and made translucent, free from blemish, purged of taint, made supple and pliable, fit for wielding, established and immovable, I bent down my mind.”

“Then I perceived the four Aryan truths, the destruction of the Asavas and I knew this, destroyed is rebirth for me, lived is the holy life. Done is my task. For life in these conditions there is no hereafter. Thus on that night in the last watch of the night, the three-fold knowledge was attained by me. Knowledge arose, darkness was overcome, light arose as it does for him that abides earnest. Yet did not the blissful feeling that arose lay

hold of and control my mind.” I have omitted out such portions from this account which make mention of supernormal experiences as I do not consider them necessary. In a passage of great beauty in Sutta Nipata it is stated :—

“There is no measuring of man,
Won to the goal whereby that say
His measures so, that’s not for him ;
Where all conditions are removed,
All ways of telling are removed.”

THE THREE SIGNTAS

In a previous chapter I have quoted the Lord's own words about the contents of His enlightenment. He has stated that He attained the threefold knowledge and this included knowledge of the four Aryan truths of which the first three, *i. e.* the truths of Antiya, Anatta and Dukha have come in for much criticism.

The fact of the matter, however, is that these truths are self-existent and now are also so evident that no one can possibly deny them. They form the very basis of all existence. The criticism therefore is not of these truths, it is actually of the exposition that is offered to us in our records about these fundamental truths and the conclusions that are sought to be drawn from them. These three fundamental truths, however, stand apart from any exposition that may be offered of them.

Eternal Laws

These truths are in the nature of eternal laws. They are deep and incomprehensible and each individual and each age has to make the effort to unravel these truths and read their hidden meaning. With the greater knowledge that we now have about our universe and the evolution of man we cannot rest content with

the exposition that has come down to us in our ancient records about these truths. The expositions also do not truly represent the cosmic mind of Buddha, nor do these expositions conform to the Lord's main teachings about the noble eight-fold path and His main theme, in which He laid stress on the fact that man is the architect of his own destiny and the willer of his own becoming.

Anitya, the field of opportunity

It is in this context that we have to grasp the truth of Anitya. The world in which we live, move and have our being is in a state of constant flux. It is always under process of a change. There is naught in it which is changeless. We have to take note of this central fact and avail ourselves of the opportunity that is ours in so shaping the scheme of things in this ever-changing world that the change may prove not only to our good and happiness, but may also promote the good and happiness of others. If a change was not possible in the condition of our existence our lot would have been worse than that of animals. We would have been living in this world like prisoners with no will, and no chance of improvement would have been open to us. Fortunately, however, we live in a world which changes and we have been endowed with faculties through which we can bring about rapid and far-reaching changes in our surroundings and in our ourselves. The opportunities and possibilities for a change are in fact limitless, far beyond even the most extravagant dreams of the boldest

of our thinkers. All changes for the better are for ultimate good, the values that they create are eternal and abiding. It is really difficult to gauge and correctly assess the extent of the changes that have been wrought in this world of ours, through man's efforts and man's will to affect changes. The changes that are in the offing are even more daring.

Maintain Composure

We, however, live in a world in which cosmic changes on a vast scale also take place. The cosmic forces that are at work are powerful and still incomprehensible. Our progress therefore sometimes appears to be illusory, momentary and insignificant, when we see a lifetime's good work coming to naught, when disasters overtake us, when achievements of many generations get destroyed, sometimes in seconds ; we get lost, we lose our balance and feel dismayed, we lose heart and give up the battle as lost. We have to, however, persevere, we need have stout heart, maintain composure and continue with our good work.

Vast changes wrought by man

Humanity would not have made any progress if it had not tried to create conditions of comparative safety, stability, peace and plenty in this ever-changing world which is always in a state of flux. We were subject to the vagaries of weather, but gradually we provided ourselves with better and better shelters which have given us protection from the scorching heat of the sun,

wet rain and the cold winds of the winter months. Gradually these shelters once only hovels, have been improved and made ever more beautiful. They are now provided with insulation and are being made proof against lightning, fire, rust, blast and earthquake.

In the beginning we depended on the bounty of mother earth to provide us with food. We, however, gradually developed their art of cultivation and grain storage. We tamed over a thousand plants and made them grow to our liking. We were first limited by the condition of the soil and the quantity of rain from the sky but not resting content with these limitations we discovered ways and means of replenishing the fertility of mother earth and developed various means of irrigation. Our crops came to be afflicted by pests. We have now developed insecticides and pest-resistant varieties of crops.

Inner Changes

The same story is repeated in the field of medicine, art, in industry, science and in the higher and more subtle spheres which effect our well-being, *i. e.* spiritual, moral, social, political and economic. The very core of our being has also vastly changed. A man may yet be selfish and cruel in many ways, yet in most ways he is different from the primitive man in whom he has his beginnings.

Previously one whim of a blood-thirsty tyrant sent thousands of men to their doom. Armies at

his sole command and on his personal orders laid waste large tracts of thickly populated lands. Now it is no more the whim and caprice of a despot, though occasionally, one such does still rise amongst us and is able to sway us, but in a greater measure, it is now the unbridled greed of armed nations who have not fully appreciated the beauties and happiness of a peaceful way of existence that causes war.

The Fight for Peace

The fight for peace, however, goes on. Every challenge to the growing stability of humanity is met with a counter-offensive. The danger to humanity is great. Our peril is mortal but collective security of humanity, complete abandonment of war as an instrument for settling international disputes, does not any more remain the utopian dream of a few idealists. The human conscience has now been aroused and the whole world is now with the peacemakers. Whatever peril we may run and harm that we may do to ourselves through ignorance, the final triumph will be with those who work for peace.

Work for dual harmony

We have, however, to take note that conditions of peace and stability in this world can only be maintained when the inner spirit and being of man is also at peace. It is therefore of most importance that we work for inner peace in our own life and the life of our people. Outward conditions, however, do also react on the inner

condition of mind. Few can develop an inner peace of mind and heart when the world round them is in a state of turmoil. All the Arhants and Bodhisatvas left India when it was laid waste by invading hordes of barbarians from the northwest. This lesson therefore has to be taken to heart that the effort to establish conditions of peace and happiness both in our innerself, as also in the world surrounding us has to be simultaneous. The Lord had rejected the peace that the Ashramas of Alara Kalama and Udraka Ramputta had offered Him, He ventured further to obtain true insight, and when this had been won, He overcame the temptation to lead a solitary life of peace and bliss and instead He turned to the world to establish conditions of peace in it.

In a nutshell therefore the true significance of the truth of Anitya is that this universe of ours is in a constant flux. It is always in the process of becoming and we have the inherent faculties in us in a most surprising degree to change ourselves and the universe around us for the better.

Undaunted therefore by the great cosmic forces which are still largely out of control, undismayed by disasters which may overtake us and the misfortunes that may befall us, we must continue to persevere and work for a better and happier world and a nobler and more selfless existence. The Blessed One has truly said about the asvas, "Some banes must be overcome by discernment, others must be overcome by restraints. Some need be conquered by practice

and care others by patient endurance. Some can be vanquished by avoidance—others still by suppression while others by mental exercise.” We have a clear presentment of truth in this passage and we need conform to the advice tendered.

“Anatta”

The second grand truth of “Anatta” is still not universally recognised. Man clings hard to the idea of a changeless core in his innermost being and fights shy of a teaching which proclaims from the housetops that there is in truth no ‘self’; no separate soul or entity apart from life which is manifest in us all.

Vacchagotta, the true representative

Vacchagotta, the wanderer, was a true representative of our race, for none of us have the strength to bear with the truth that self does not exist. We feel bewildered by this truth. We feel safe when we are told that we have a self but when we are told that all life is one and we are all sparks of the same divine fire, we feel unsafe. But this grand truth has to be grasped and lived, for so long as the illusion of self exists with us we cannot be free.

We will continue to put in all our effort for a separate and individual existence and for a happiness, security and stability which will be confined to ourselves. This security and happiness will in the end prove an empty dream and a mirage; but in working for it we would do much ill to our ourselves and to the world at large.

Make an humble beginning

We have to therefore make a beginning, howsoever humble, with this great truth which is very hard to understand and harder still to live. We have to understand and grasp the truth that as all waters of the ocean are one water and one body of water, so is it with this universal teeming life—there can be no single separate unit or body of life in it. And as with the sea whose waters are in constant motion and through that motion have many waves and ripples on its surface, so it is with this life; it has the appearance of innumerable self-existences on its surface.

Self-naughting

Seeing therefore so far as our small power would permit us, let us all grow a little nearer to that peace which comes to those who begin to live selflessly, who cease to be tossed with the waves of their own desire. We can hardly change the world for the better, we can scarcely increase the fund of human happiness unless we cease to live for self. A man's life in its lower reaches has been lived, whatever justification did exist in working for self in those dark valleys through which we had groped, it has now ceased to be valid. A stage has now been reached when isolated existence is not possible for an individual or even for a group of men. The barriers that separated us from one another have ceased to exist and we have to either live to the truth of an unified life or we perish as phantoms of a dead past and our life

ceases to be happy.

To those who get concerned

To those, however, who are more concerned with the care of self I need state that the utter extinction of self is not an easy task. Most of us have a long road to travel as wayfarers in this world and other worlds, now shedding one body to take another and making a new beginning with every new body that is taken and to grow with it. With each such growth there is a change in the very texture of our existence as a separate entity till we reach at long last the Nirvanic state which transcends all description.

Beyond Description

It is beyond the capacity of a finite mind to describe this transcendental existence. It would be wrong to state that all existence ceases when this state is reached. It would be also not correct to state that it is a state of separate existence. What, however, can be stressed with every emphasis as being true is that if we have to reach the Nirvanic state we have to cultivate selflessness in every possible way. We have to develop an awareness to the basic truth that what we consider as our self, is just a fleeting, ever-changing and ever-growing phenomena.

No need to deny

There is no need to deny self as a data of the world as it appears to common sense. What, however, we need seek is to shed off all concern

for a personal self which we nurture in every moment of our existence, in opposition to the world of living, as something which need stand in isolation, in its own right having its own unique destiny.

This love of self has therefore to be cast off, as the pace of our progress on the spiritual path would be determined by the measure of our forgetfulness of self. We have to wrestle with this constant preoccupation of our mind, intellectually, intuitionally and meditatively and the goal will only be reached when our identification with all life had become complete.

I need state here emphatically that I do not agree with the view-point in which a total denial of the evolutionary soul is made both as Samvritti and Paramartha Truth. It would hardly fit in with the belief in the doctrine of "Karma". The whole fabric of Jataka literature would become meaningless if the evolutionary soul is given an emphatic denial in both these respects and with it would also go the lofty ideal of 'Nirvana'. Many inspiring passages of our immortal texts would also lose all their significance and meaning if the evolutionary process of the soul as a "Samvritti" truth is denied.

What was Denied

What was actually denied was the conception of the soul as a separate unchanging entity. There is no warrant, whatsoever, to extend the scope of this denial any further. What is needed

to be stressed, is that so long as we remain concerned with self, we cannot identify ourselves, with all forms of life and cannot develop a true sense of brotherhood and kinship with other forms of life, and can have no possibility of growth into the beautiful state of consciousness which we term as the Nirvanic state or the "Kingdom of God," within us all.

'Dukkha'

The third great truth of Dukkha is more universally recognised. Who can deny that there is much Dukkha in this world. Dukkha in fact is an inescapable condition of our existence. We live in a world which is in the process of change, which is in a state of flux. We ourselves are also incomplete and are also in process of changing into something better and nobler than what we are to-day. Everything around is also subject to change, *i.e.* is unstable and impermanent. The great cosmic forces that surround us are also bringing about catastrophic changes and we have no means yet available to control them.

'Inevitable'

In this state of instability, impermanency, insufficiency and incompleteness Dukkha is inevitable. There is none who can escape it altogether. A lot of Dukkha, however, also comes in our way as we have not fully grasped the truth of Anitya and Anatta. We do not realise the truth that change and separation is

inevitable and that only collective existence lived in harmony with one's surroundings and a life lived selflessly can alone bring true happiness. We remain on the contrary a prey to our own animal nature and cause much harm to ourselves and to the world around us. Sorrow to a great extent is the result of the efforts that we make to keep up a separate existence.

Deliverance from Suffering

There is much Dukkha in the world which is our own doing, we can certainly eradicate it. We can also assuage a lot of Dukkha which is other people's doing. To a world in the grip of Dukkha the Blessed One has brought the message of deliverance. The Lord had truly stated, "Just one thing do I teach, suffering and deliverance from suffering." In another immortal saying the Lord had declared "Bhikkus, as the great ocean has put one taste, the taste of salt, so, Bhikkus, this doctrine that I teach you has but one taste, the taste of deliverance (Vimuthi)." Let us therefore reverently and in full faith listen carefully to His teachings and follow Him steadfastly. For we have His assurance and more than that we hardly need. "I have found the hidden way to truth and trodden it. The truth is here before my eyes for it is the very part of me. I have proclaimed to all men how it may be found. Let those who have grown weary of illusion follow in the self-same way."

The Cry of Anguish

The problems of evil and Dukkha, however,

continue to baffle humanity. While it is recognised that Dukkha and its attendant evil does help in our spiritual growth, the bewildered humanity, whenever it is put to a severe test or undergoes a suffering, which is beyond its measure cries in anguish, "Why there need be so much evil? Why so much unnecessary suffering? Why such cruelties which debase man?" A little thought on the problem will, however, bring us the knowledge that perhaps we are not the best judge of the problem and our salvation only lies in correctly discerning the fact of Dukkha and waking up to its realisation. In a world which is so sorely unhappy and discordant we have need to work for an inner harmony within our own selves and for a harmonious relationship with the world in which we live.

"Law of Causation"

A mystic truth had been expressed when it was stated that 'Avidya' is at the root of creation. Behind all phenomenal manifestation there is kinetic energy vibrating with life. It is infinite in itself but it has continuous growth in infinity. For this growth a transformation takes place which also is a continuous process. Kinetic energy becomes inert. Through this inertia it gets transformed into potential energy and the process of creation sets in.

Paul Carus has given the following loose description of the process. It does not explain the absolute first beginning of the cosmic process or of man but can be accepted as an inter-

mediate Truth.

In the beginning there is existence blind and without knowledge and in this sea of ignorance there are stirrings, formative and organising. From this arises awareness which begets organisms that live as individualised beings. These develop the six fields, that is, the five senses and the mind. The six fields come in contact with things. Contact begets sensation which creates the thirst of individualised being. This creates a cleaving to things which produces the growth and continuation of selfhood.

Path bifurcates

I beg to submit that the path of deliverance bifurcates at the stage where cleaving to things begins in human beings. It is at this stage that a man has to make the choice whether he would live for 'self' and be prey to every wind or would live selflessly for the common good of all in which case his growth would be in the divine.

DHARAMA CHAKRA PARIVARTANA

The kernel of the Lord's teaching has come down to us in the "Dharama Chakra Parivartana Sutra." These teachings were given to the band of five Bhikkus who had ministered to the Blessed One during the dark and difficult period when under a mistaken belief He was mortifying His body. These men had deserted Him and had lost all hope in His leadership when He abandoned the ascetic ways of life and began to lead a normal life. These Bhikkus had taken residence at Sarnath near Banaras and the Lord had journeyed to distant Sarnath to give them the glad tidings of deliverance.

Two expositions stand out

Everything that Lord Buddha has said has been well said and it is perhaps blasphemous to distinguish between His teachings. I must, however, confess that there is a special freshness and forthrightness about the teachings that have come down to us in Dharma Chakra Parivartana Sutra and in the Mahaparinirvana Sutra.

I have often wondered how is it that the teachings given in both these Sutras stand out and the reason that has occurred to me is that in both these Sutras there is a sense of urgency. You see in these Sutras the earnestness and

abiding love of the great teacher and the sincerity of the disciples who had gathered round Him. There is no disputation, no idle enquiries, no philosophical and hair-splitting arguments by learned men.

Difficult task

It is not possible for me or for that matter any other human being to reproduce the great teachings in words which would in any way compare with the beauty and sweetness of His words. Divine truth can best be given from divine lips. The words that would be adequate in any way to express the great truths can only take shape in a mind which has been fully illumined. It is therefore humbly suggested that all those that read this chapter should also read the Dharama Chakra and Mahaprinirvana Sutras.

The Emphasis on Middle Path

It is perhaps necessary to emphasise the fact that the Lord took some pains in emphasising that the teaching that He was giving to the world was a middle path which avoided the extremes and perversities of the Brahmanical and the monastic creeds, which were prevalent in His time. It was also a path which offered possibilities of progress for every mortal. The Lord's own exposition of the path need be reproduced for correct guidance.

“It is neither the practice of sensuality a low and unworthy way, nor the practice of asceticism. There is a middle path, Bhikkhus, avoid-

ing these two extremes a path which bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to higher wisdom, to Nirvana. It is right views or knowledge, right aims or motives, right speech and right conduct, right means of livelihood, right effort, right mind control and right meditation.”

Again and again has the Lord emphasised on the fact that His path is a middle way. He says, “The Tathagata avoiding the two extremes, preaches his truth which is the middle way”. This emphasis on the middle path should not be treated lightly, for if we do so we will fail to grasp the true significance of the Lord’s teachings and would also fail in our efforts to tread the noble eightfold path to reach the dizzy heights of Nirvana.

The reasons for emphasis

Let us therefore carefully and patiently try to understand the reasons for this emphasis. The first and the obvious reason was that He had tried out all austerities and had found them wanting. He has expressed His own bitter disappointment in words which should condemn these methods for all time. “Yet by all this bitter woeful way do I not achieve the truly Aryan excellence of knowledge and insight, surpassing mortal things.”

It was on this account that the Lord turned a deaf ear to all attempts made by groups in His own Sangha to prescribe a more ascetic and rigid discipline for His monks. It caused a

schism in the Sangha but He stood firm and unbending on this issue. There were still a large number of Bhikkhus in His Sangha, who did not break away with Him but had preference for a more ascetic way of Life. The Blessed One, however, did not at any stage encourage these tendencies.

In one famous discourse He clearly stated that for Himself He preferred a saner way of Life which avoided the two extremes.

The good of many

The second obvious reason was that the Lord's main concern in life was to bring the greatest good to the largest number. The entire Buddhist literature is impregnated with the tradition that without in any way affecting the consistency of His teachings He adopted His discourses to suit His audience, for with His characteristic quality of compassion He took account of the fact that while a few daring men may follow a difficult path regardless of the hazards, but the common man could not possibly stand these hazards. His path it is clear was not only for the chosen few, it also provided good fare for all and sundry.

Growth is gradual

The third and the more important reason was that in accordance with the law of growth all progress in man is gradual. No one can possibly leap into Nirvana. The path is but a method by which pain is banished and freedom

from suffering is secured. It is a method of salvation by enlightenment, a method whose three stages are morality, mind culture and wisdom. Growth in this path has to be gradual. It cannot be otherwise. It is for this reason that Lord had admonished Sona to exercise restraint on his enthusiasm and zeal and practise graduation.

The parable of lute

In a beautiful parable of the lute which gave its best tune when it is neither strung too tight nor when it is loose, He brought in a flash the true knowledge of spiritual growth to an erring disciple. Progress on the path is gradual, and therefore let all those that are impatient and who are on the look-out of some magic formulae beware. They can seek their salvation elsewhere but possibly it will be a doom and not salvation.

The Blessed One has himself stated :

“Just as, brethren, the mighty ocean deepens and slopes gradually down hollow after hollow, not plunging by a sudden precipice, even so, brethren, in this Norm-Discipline the training is gradual, progress is gradual, it goes step by step, there is no sudden penetration to insight.”

The men who seek for salvation in a leap are in most cases not sincere in their bhavana. They also do not have a clear perception of their objective. Through their ignorance and for lack of sincere effort these men stray from the true path and for a long time remain fugitive from it. Woe, however, to the man who beguiles

them with false promises and hopes.

The danger

The belief in short cuts to what people call salvation, is so widely prevalent in India that the number of people who make extravagant claims for themselves or permit these claims to be made on their behalf, is really large. Go wherever you may, you will come across, people for whom extravagant claims are made.

It is really strange that such a large number of pseudo-divinities should flourish in a country which has such a widespread spiritual culture. It may be worthwhile to seek the reasons for such a phenomena, but here all that we need do, is to take a note of this factor and warn all well-intentioned people of their mortal danger from these saints, sages and divinities, as many of them not only waste a good deal of their time and effort on these men, which could have been utilised to some good purpose, they also come to much harm. Many people get beguiled and lose their mental equilibrium and it takes really long time for these people to come to the saner way of life.

The path of Progress

The entire progress of humanity from conditions of savagery to our present-day civilised state has been due to the poise and discipline that we have built up in our life. But for the restraints that we imposed on ourselves and the poise that we have acquired by practice of dis-

cipline in our life, we would have continued to remain in the barbaric state. We have, however, dire need of acquiring more poise, exercising more restraint on our animal propensities and imposing a better discipline on ourselves. We have also need to grow into wisdom and goodness. For all this task we need have the will and determination to grow. Unless Chetana has been born, has sprouted into Bhavana and is sustained by Sankalpa, we cannot reach the other shore.

The inner illumination comes in a split second. It comes in most cases with a suddenness which baffles all description but it comes only to those who have ceaselessly and sincerely worked for the inner transformation over a long period.

The first step

The first step on the path is right view or right understanding, "Samma Drishti." It means that unless we have a clear and correct intellectual grasp of truth about our existence we cannot make any progress in the path of holiness. These truths of our existence have been explained at some length in the previous chapter. These are the truths of Anitya, Anatta and Dukkha.

We have also explained in this chapter that the effort to obtain salvation and release from Dukkha has to be made by ourselves and this effort has to be collective in a very great measure. What is meant by collective effort is that we have to seek our happiness in the happiness of all others. We have to pull together and not to

pull against each other. We have not only to recognise but have to live up to the truth of a common kinship. At the same time we have to be self-reliant. Assistance may come to us from other men but the effort has to be ours. We cannot depend upon rituals and extraneous assistance for our growth. This is what is meant by "Samma Drishti."

In a way 'Samma Drishti' is also the last step on the path but in between the two extremes or right understanding and true insight lies the whole path of progress for the adventurous pilgrim. If a man has realised the truth that Buddhism is essentially a religion of self-culture, and that it proclaims that man's entire progress, his happiness and his salvation, have to be his own effort he will have no difficulty in appreciating the fact that unless a man is rid of "Mithya Drishti" he can make no progress on the path. A man who has wrong views about life is not yet on the path. How can he possibly traverse it? He is still amongst the 'Lost Ones.' He has to first come to the path and then be one with it before he can scale the dizzy heights of Nirvana.

The second step

Having right views or right understanding of the truth is a good first step on the path, but it would not lead us far if we do not follow it up with the second step which is 'Samma Sankalpa,' *i. e.* resolve to translate in our life and actions the truths that have dawned on us. There are many men of keen and penetrating insight on

whom the sun of truth dawns early but who come to naught, in spite of their greater knowledge, as they lack the will and determination to live up to the light that has been given to them. These are the men of little faith who are mentioned with just contempt and ridicule in the religious literature of all faiths.

Initial capital

For any progress on the path it is absolutely necessary to have a grand and indissoluble alliance of right understanding with right determination or right resolve. These two form the initial capital investment of every wayfarer on the path, having right understanding of truth and the determination to live to the truth of his inner being, man cannot but make progress on the path of virtue and grow into wisdom and goodness. There is a mystic saying of great significance and many meanings have been given to it. "Thou canst not travel on the path before thou hast become that path itself." To my mind the true significance of this mystic saying is that unless a man identifies himself completely with the task of self-improvement, unless he follows up right understanding with right determination, he can make no progress on the path. This identification of man must be so complete that he has to become one with it.

The third step

'Samma Vachna' or right speech is the third step on the path. It is a matter of some signi-

ficance that the Lord gives such a great importance to the faculty of speech. He has seen for Himself, what a great power for good or evil was the faculty of speech. His own people had made very little use of it. For the people who inhabited the eastern tracts of India made little use of the spoken word for the spread of their spiritual heritage. They were content with the task of living in accordance with the teachings they had inherited in their life and remained content with the austerities that they practised and with their systems of meditation. As against it the Aryans of the western tracts had developed vastly their religious lore and the chant of their Vedic hymns was being heard throughout the length and breadth of northern India.

The Blessed One along with a few others was the first one amongst the world teachers who had taken to the road and had begun to actively propagate their teachings. With the true insight of a Buddha, the Blessed One had truly foreseen the great influence that the spoken word and written speech were to have on human destiny as we witness it today, through press, radio, television, telephone and teleprinters, etc.

Next to thought

Speech next to thought and will has been the most potent power in the uplift of humanity. Without an articulated speech rich in its vocabulary, so as to be capable of conveying every shade of thought, abstruse, subtle and sublime, man would have continued to be in the barbaric

stage. Speech has, however, also incited people to war, whipped people to acts of lust and violence. It has been effectively used for propagating false doctrines, and ideologies. Speech does uplift, it assuages grief, it cheers, it soothes, at the same time it also hurts, it wounds and causes serious injury. It can be divine in its content and purpose, it can also be profane and blasphemous. Its power for doing good and causing harm is ever on the increase.

Need for a careful watch

There is need therefore of keeping a strict watch and constant vigil on this potent faculty. There is need of ensuring that whatever is spoken be true and kind, and increases the pool of common good. Every word that is uttered needs be courteous, considerate and scrupulously true. Idle gossip and unprofitable talk must be altogether eliminated. Men should speak only that which is true. They should, however, also avoid speaking ill of others. While all untruth must be avoided there are many occasions when an uttered word may do more harm than good, even though it may be true. It is wise and kind to observe the silence of the wise on such rare occasions. The Lord's injunctions in the matter of speech are worth pondering. His injunction against falsehood is absolute. "Let not any one speak falsely, let not any one lead another to speak falsely. Let every kind of lying and false speech be put away from among you." At the same time the Lord admonished that no one need

be spoken too harshly. Even truth when it is unpleasant has to be told in a gentle way.

“Speak not harshly to any one. Painful indeed is vindictive speech.” He laid very great value on forbearance and friendly speech and whenever He visited a monastic establishment He invariably enquired whether the Bhikkhus lived in concord with one another. He has repeatedly stated that forbearance and friendly speech is a very great blessing. Disciples were exhorted to serve each other with words of loving kindness.

Praise of Ananda

Ananda, the beloved disciple, received just praise for waiting on the Lord with kindly service which was profitable, ease-giving, undivided and unstinted. He praised Ananda also for his gift of pleasant and sweet speech. “There are four wonderful strange things about Ananda, brethren. What four? If a company of brethren comes to see Ananda they are well pleased at the sight of him. Then Ananda gives them a teaching, and so long as he is speaking they are pleased thereat but that company of brethren is displeased only when Ananda makes an end of speaking,” so much for pleasant speech. But at the same time if some wrong has been done, speech has to be used for correcting the wrongdoer’s error and the Blessed One has also shown the way how this unpleasant duty has to be discharged. “First a brother must be warned and when he has been duly warned let him again be re-

minded and when he has been reminded let him be definitely charged with wrong doing. When he has been charged with wrong doing let some discreet and able brother bring the matter before the order. A brother, Upali, who is about to admonish another must realise within himself five qualities thus :

“In due season will I speak not out of season. In truth will I speak, not in falsehood. Gently will I speak not to his loss. With kindly intent will I speak not in anger ?”

“A Passage of Rare Beauty”

In Angutra Nikaya, is a passage of rare beauty which sums up the Blessed One’s teaching on the use of speech.

“They who talk angrily, full of wrath and proud,

Carp at each others failing when they meet
And take delight in blame and finding fault
And in their rivals fall. But Ariyans
Will not follow practices like these.

If there be one, a wise man, fain of speech,
He knows the proper time, and speech concerned

With righteousness and practice of right talk.
Thus speaks a sage, not angry, well retrained.

With humble mind not laying down the law,
Not curious, but wisely speaks fair speech,
Welcomes the kindly word, rejects the cruel,
Knows no resentment, does not carp at faults,
Does not retort nor crush his rival down,

Nor from the issue speak, O true it is
That Ariyans speak, such is the Ariyan talk
And knowing this the wise should humbly
speak.”

The fourth step

Next after speech is action which uplifts a man and increases the fund of human happiness, and therefore it rightly marks the fourth step in Buddha's path of spiritual regeneration. "Samma Karma" is, however, an important midstep on the upward path, and is therefore of considerable importance for the spiritual progress of man. Action is always twofold, positive, consisting of what we do and negative, consisting of things which we refrain from doing. As the flow of life is rooted and conditioned by Avidya and our consciousness is perfumed by it, we all have evil propensities which need be first put in restraint and then uprooted. We have to therefore first, learn the art of not doing certain things and yet have an existence. This negative aspect of "Samma Karma" finds expression in panchasila, the five rules of morality which every Buddhist is expected to strictly observe.

Ahimsa

The first injunction is to abstain from all acts of killing. The injunction is absolute and does not admit of any compromise. Nothing should be killed except to sustain a higher life and that too when absolutely necessary.

Against Warfare

Resort to arms for settlement of personal or national disputes is also ruled out altogether. Lord Buddha's admonition to the warring men of His own and the Koliyan clan who had fallen out with each other over some strips of land and division of Rohini's waters should settle all doubts if any do exist in this matter. Lord Buddha's sudden appearance between two opposing armies, ready for a mortal combat, recalls to mind another more important historical parallel. How different was the sequel!

He quietly enquired, "Tell me O kings, is earth of any intrinsic value?" Of no value whatever", was the reply. "Is water of any intrinsic value? "of no value whatever." "And the blood of kings and men, is that of any intrinsic value?" "Its value is priceless". "Is it reasonable", asked the Blessed One "that, which is priceless, should be staked against that which has no value whatever?" The two warring groups saw the wisdom of the reasoning and abandoned their dispute.

Grave Peril

For long have we temporised with this divine teaching and have sought to reach different meanings in some sayings of the Lord ; but the danger from destruction through warfare has increased manifold. Humanity stands in grave peril of utter annihilation if it does not turn away from armed combat, and we need therefore strictly observe the precept of non-killing. In a previous chapter we have dealt with this

subject in greater detail and have adduced sufficient proof to establish the fact that the Lord had preached not only against the killing of human beings but also against the killing of animals, be that for sport, meat and religious sacrifice.

For Truth's sake

Let us be very frank on this vexed controversy. If we cannot desist from meat let us for truth's sake not seek sanction for it from the Blessed One's life and teaching. The precept of non-killing, however, can only be followed by those who have come to recognise the oneness of all life, who have ceased to harbour thoughts of hatred and anger and who have practised the art of keeping anger in check even if it ever gets aroused. We need therefore cultivate the Bhavana of Maitri, Karuna and Upeksha to follow even the very first precept. Truly the Lord's teaching is like unto a carpet of beautiful and variegated design in which no one thing can be separated from the other.

“Adina Dana”

The second precept not only prohibits theft, bribery and corruption, it also interdicts all forms of covetousness and greed. The injunction is that a man will not take anything which is not given to him. In the ultimate therefore it is the society which must apportion to the man the reward of his labour. No one is competent to fix the charge for his own labour and services. Now one can aggrandise and appropriate for

himself and when society has to fix the remuneration it can only be on the principle, "From each according to his measure and to each according to his need." Bhikkhus were exhorted to share their gifts with each other, even to the very last leaving in their begging bowl and for laymen also the teachings have to be in conformity with it, if not identical in all its aspects.

"Mithyachara"

The third injunction is against indulgence in unlawful sexual intercourse. It is an exhortation to refrain from secretly leading astray other people's partners and seducing young persons. It also contains the prohibition against sexual gratification by force, violence and purchase. It is also a recognition of the righteousness of the married state. Our mothers and wives are as holy and pure as our virgin sisters and daughters and our father if he has led a truly noble life as worthy of respect as any good monk.

This injunction therefore let it be clearly understood recognises the basic fact that sexual relationship cannot be altogether ruled out. It enjoins, however, that this relationship need be made the basis of correct behaviour between persons of the opposite sexes and create a bond which will join them to each other with ties of mutual love, affection and trust. The two persons joined to each other by ties of love and affection must establish a home and rear the future generation that is born to them with love and care.

Old Values

Monogamy was not enjoined in the Lord's own time. The feudal social order that was in existence was not till then ready for the great forward step but all the weight of the Lord's teaching was in favour of a life-long monogamous married life between couples who had love and respect for each other and had accepted the partnership for sunny days as also for bleak winter months. The world at that stage of its growth perhaps also needed the corrective of monasticism but since then the world has progressed far. Woman has entered into her inheritance and is a co-equal with man and a full sharer with him in all life's adventure. The whole concept of married life has to change for the better.

The New Values

The old values that were attached to the married state and monasticism have changed and are no longer valid. The Lord seems to have foreseen all this change and it was on this account that He had foretold the extinction of the Norm Discipline as was being practised in His monastic establishments. The succeeding generations of men did not correctly understand the prophesy which the Lord had made when He established the order of nuns and took the first forward step for the emancipation of the fair sex.

Reason for Initial Hesitations

The Thervada school has made much of the

initial hesitation that the Lord had disclosed when the proposal for establishing an order of nuns had come up for consideration. But if we were to look at the problem dispassionately we can well appreciate the Lord's misgivings and hesitations. Nunneries are a difficult institution to maintain at all time and that they were ever more difficult to maintain, in those feudal days when there was so much insecurity, can well be understood. The general social backwardness of the fair sex in a society which permitted polygamy, polyandry, concubinage and prostitution has also to be taken into account. When all these factors are duly considered one cannot help coming to the conclusion that the decision that the Lord took was most daring and one which had a most beneficent influence on society.

The female order never had the same popularity as the male monastic order but it provided to a very large number of true aspirants, amongst the fair sex, an opportunity for leading a higher life of freedom and spiritual aspiration which was not available to them in their sorry world. Not much stress need therefore be laid on the subordinate role that the Bhikkhuni Sangha occupied. Much of it was due to the smallness of their number and the backward social conditions of the period in which the order came to be established.

I am also inclined to think that some of the more stringent conditions came to be imposed on the Theri Sangha after the Lord's Mahapari-

nirvana by the more conservative section of the monks who came to dominate the councils. They had never forgiven Ananda for his advocacy of their cause.

Primordial Urge

While on this subject I need for the sake of clarity deal more explicitly with the vexed question of sex relationship in the married state and the question of birth control which has assumed increasing importance in the modern world. It would be just as well to understand that sex is the strongest and the most primordial of all animal urges. In the animal kingdom the urge is implanted to secure perpetuation of the species and to keep the cycle of life going. In the female of most species the urge is periodic and occurs only during period which are most favourable for the reception of the male sperm. In male the urge is more free and unfettered, and with it there is a noticeable tendency in the males to fight for their own private reserves in the sex field. Many species have their partnership for one mating season, with others it is more enduring. Most of the species have an inborn love for their progeny. It is generally more marked in the mother than in the father but both couple where they have an enduring partnership make tangible sacrifices for rearing up their children.

Human sex life had no different beginning. It is, however, to the credit of man that he has sublimated this primordial urge to a very

great extent and made it the bedrock of civilisation. It would be, however, wrong to ignore the basic fact of life that sex urge pure and simple is the beginning of this new way of life of lasting friendship and high endeavour.

Bedrock of Civilisation

The third precept clearly recognises this basic fact and creates environments which would permit a healthy canalising of this urge. It sounds a clarion call to men and women to abide by the high ideal of married state and remain faithful to each other till death do part them. It would be utterly wrong to treat sex as merely a physical and a moral act for with this act is interwoven the entire fabric of our civilisation. It is this act which urges the two people of opposite sexes to come to each other and form the union of two hearts in which each will indwell in the other and work for a unity. In their very touch is the birth of the future race which partakes some spiritual and physical characteristics from both the parents, but in the alchemy of nature these characteristics through their interaction produce a new race of beings who are not the same as its parent but are also not entirely different.

Heavy Responsibility

A heavy responsibility therefore rests on people who marry. They have need to be truly devoted to each other and be utterly sincere in their dealing with each other. They need also

have the urge to set up a home and live together to rear the future race for which they will have need to toil and sacrifice. Sorrows and sufferings will come their way as surely as many a happiness and these can only be borne patiently and with composure if the married people are strengthened by each other's love and affection.

Need of Fidelity

Fidelity in married life, not only physical but also emotional and spiritual, is an essential ingredient in man's upward march towards his cherished goal of happiness. Where this ingredient is missing the very purpose of married life gets defeated. A life of unbridled lust carries with it the seeds of spiritual destruction and wherever it finds expression it creates havoc.

No child is illegitimate

It not only harms spiritually and physically all those who indulge in it but it also sets in motion a chain of suffering and misery which even the unborn generations cannot escape. These innocent children suffer in many ways for the sins of their parents. Society, however, has a duty towards these children, and has to ensure that they do not suffer in any way for the sins of their parents; for all children are innocent and deserving of every possible care whether they be born in wedlock or out of wedlock.

Need for Restraint

Almost identical conditions of unbridled

lust can be repeated in the married state if partners to the married state look upon their partners as objects for satisfying their lust. In such a union the spiritual and ennobling ingredient is entirely missing. All the stress remains on physical charm and beauty and on sensuous satisfaction.

There is no integration of the spirit and emotion, no moments of exaltation and ecstasy, no permanent basis for the union of hearts. Therefore, all the charm and grace which comes through the fact that in married state each partner is both the lover and the beloved now suffering, now joyous, but always radiant and vibrant, purposeful, and determined, gets lost.

Planned Parenthood

I have need, however, to state that while married state needs to be preserved for and cherished as being the cradle for future generations, it will not be correct to take up the attitude that the only justification for a sex relationship in the married state is for begetting children. Humanity has long outgrown this inhibition. The sex act in the married state has other values besides this divine purpose. What therefore we have to safeguard is that children are not born in the married state when parents are not prepared to receive them as their honoured and privileged guests. They should not be brought into this world as a by-product of our sex life. Children need very great care and great efforts and means are needed to bring them up in a

proper way.

It behoves therefore for every parent to ensure, now that science has provided us the means, that the sex act is separated from the act of conceiving a child. When parents do desire to have a child, and there are few parents in which this desire will not flower at one time or the other, they should so order their life that the child does come, if circumstances for it are propitious, but when they cannot afford to have a child, they need so ensure in every sex act that conception does not occur.

There is no sin whatsoever in taking this due precaution, but once conception has taken place it is the bounden duty of parents to take every possible care of it and do their very best for the child.

The problem of unhappy marriages

Linked up with the problem of marriage is the problem of separation. There can be no two opinions that divorce is a hateful process. However, much we may hate the thing one has to, however, recognise that it is always possible to make a mistake, specially by people who make the choice and live together at a very impressionable period of their life. Therefore, once the earnest effort has been made to live a common life and failed, divorce need be permitted, for it is not good prolonging the agony of two people who do not love each other but the interests of the children and of the weaker partner need be safeguarded. Divorce, however, should be allow-

ed only once lest it may turn into a licence and in every case it should be preceded by a period of separation which should give time to the separated couple for some cool thinking.

Taboos

Society in each country and nation has placed certain restrictions about the eligibility of partners. Not all of them have a reasonable basis. What, however, has always to be kept in mind, is that only that partnership has the best chance of success in which the partners love each other and are able to indwell in each other at all levels, spiritual, emotional and physical.

They must also not suffer from any disease which may prove a disability for them and their progeny. Nor should they have any temperamental idiosyncrasies which may make it difficult for the couple to live a common life. The couple should preferably be of about the same age and come from the same cultural level. Marriage, however, should not cut across any other subsisting relationship which has a sanctifying value for humanity.

Monasticism versus marriage

It is, however, not given to every person to make a success of the married state. This life has many a happiness but it has also its sorrows, sufferings, trials and tribulation. Those who cannot partake of it or have taken to a cause in which married state is likely to be a hindrance, such men can most certainly live a single life,

but let there be no hypocrisy about it, such persons must decide to live a celibate life. They must have the strength to wrestle successfully with the primordial biological urge and sublimate it to some higher purpose. However noble and determined be the man or woman, the struggle would be found hard. One has need to go through a very rigid discipline to keep to it and pour all the urges of his nature into a new channel, to preserve his single state.

Different values

The life of such a man or woman has to be entirely different from the life that a married couple lives and in many respects its values will also be different. A celibate life of utter chastity and self-denial has its obvious advantages in the higher spiritual life but it has its pitfalls also and one serious, noticed in most men who remain celibate, is their constant preoccupation with sex thoughts. Celibacy, however, is in no sense a sure sign of personal holiness and purity and does not necessarily exalt a man spiritually.

Married state

Married life has its own advantages, as the life that is lived is natural, has certain graces and charms about it and a spontaneity which is mostly lacking in the ascetic way of life. People who live a normal life in this world as householders come to acquire certain higher social and cultural virtues, they are better able to join in a common endeavour, know more of the man

and his problems, and through this knowledge are able to give better help.

They are able to save themselves the effort which is required to sublimate sex altogether, and this conservation of energy helps them to spend it in other useful directions.

Monasticism, however, became a prominent feature of Buddhism, specially of Theravada, and if I may say so with all respect its main weakness. As most of the early teachings of the Lord have come down to us through these monks, these men naturally had laid more stress on such of the Lord's teachings which had special value for them. It is necessary therefore for all those who study Buddhism to keep this central fact always in their mind. The picture of the Lord's life and His teachings that have come down to us is the picture that the monks had preserved for their use and had enlarged upon it.

The Lord, however, spent a good part of His life in preaching to the king and the commoner. For eight months in a year He was on the road, covering the entire Madhya Desa and bringing the joy of the new teachings into the lives of men. In these itineraries He received hospitality from householders in every walk of life. Many of these men became His close associates and friends in the noble cause and helped Him with their wealth and influence. He had as great a regard and affection for these men as for His monks and an equal concern for their welfare. He frequently took counsel with them and accepted their advice. Some of the most

important reforms in His own Sangha or in the practices He inculcated on His disciples were made on the advice of His lay disciples.

I am personally convinced in my own mind that but for the fact that Lord had come from a noble family which had traditions of public work to its credit and He had lived a rich married life Himself and shared fully in its joys and sorrows, His understanding of human nature would have remained incomplete and in spite of His enlightenment at Uruvalla His teachings would have suffered from some lack of proper understanding of humanity's requirements. These teachings are so sweet, so reasonable and rational in their content and lay so great an emphasis on the middle path, primarily because the Lord had the opportunity to live the life of a householder, and know it intimately. No product of cloistered life could succeed in giving to the world the teachings which have been given by Sakyamuni to it.

Preference for Monasticism

I would, however, not gloss over the fact that in the background in which the new teachings were delivered in the eastern part of India, which was at that period mostly peopled by a race who had much reverence for the ascetic way of life, the Lord did give some preference to monastic life. Perhaps with His own background of six years' severe austerities the farthest that He could go was to wean away the monki from their more austere and more ascetic practices.

My own reading of the historical evidence provided by the Theravada literature is that while the number of those people who joined Him in His new mission, renouncing all the joys and happiness that they had, in their family life, was by no means insignificant, the number of those who came to Him from sister monastic establishments or had joined the order because they had some great personal grief, were maladjusted was in the society and had suffered grievously, far more preponderant.

The short biographical sketches given in the twin books of Thera and Therigathas go to indicate that the number of those who joined the order on account of its growing popularity and the easy life one could live in the Sangha was also by no means insignificant. It was undoubtedly on this account that severe restrictions had to be imposed on admissions to the holy order.

Sangha's Debt

With all that, the Sangha has rendered good service to the Buddhist cause. It has been instrumental in taking the message of the Dharma far and wide. It has also produced great men from time to time, philosophers, poets, literary men, logicians and earnest revivalists.

All these men of noble endeavour, great piety and purity of life adorn its galaxy. These names will always shine out and humanity's debt to them will ever remain undiminished but these men are just a handful in a large mass which had remained inert and unfruitful.

Its Failures

Not all of them could ever leave their name in history but the evidence of their good work amongst the people with whom they lived should have been more tangible. The very fact that all the disputes that were taken to the councils related to minor rules of conduct for monks and none was concerned with the life of the far larger mass of people who constituted the Buddhist laity and that immediately after the passing away of the incomparable teacher, His most beloved disciple, one who had served Him so unselfishly and lovingly and who was such a great humanitarian should have been put under disgrace is a sad and sorrowful evidence of the fact that most of these men had missed the true significance of the Lord's teaching.

It has been a sad failing of all Nirgun sects in India that their main preoccupation has been with the life and discipline of the elect few who through choice or force of circumstances took to homeless life, to the utter neglect of the large mass of people who have to live their life in this world. Buddhism comprising as it does the main stem of Nirgun teaching has been no exception to it, and it has suffered on this account. Be whatever it may, I stick fast to my already stated views that a monogamous married life between two equals who are spiritually, emotionally and physically attuned to each other, who are prepared to share their life with each other in every way and establish a happy home for the rearing of children, which should normally come

in due time to most married couple and make every sacrifice for them and be happy about it, is the norm or the middle and the sensible way of life for most normal adults. It is also the most beneficent way of life for their spiritual growth.

Sermon to Anathpindika

In this connection it would be worthwhile to quote a passage from Dr. Paul Carus Cospel of Buddha reproducing the Lord's advice to Anath Pindika, the most philanthropic amongst the Lord's lay adherents :

“The bliss of a religious life is attainable by every one who walks in the noble eightfold path. He that cleaves to wealth had better cast it away than allow his heart to be poisoned by it, but he who does not cleave to wealth and possessing riches uses them rightly will be a blessing unto his fellow beings.”

“I say unto thee, remain in thy station of life and apply thyself with diligence to thy enterprises. It is not life, wealth and power that enslave men, but the cleaving to life and wealth and power. The Bhikkhu who retires from the world in order to lead a life of leisure will have no gain. For a life of indolence is an abomination and lack of energy is to be despised.”

“The Dharma of the Tathagata does not require a man to go in homelessness or to resign the world unless he feels called upon to do so ; but the Dharma of the Tathagatha, requires

every man to free himself from the illusion of self, to cleanse his heart, to give up his thirst for pleasure and lead a life of righteousness. And whatever men do whether they remain in the world as artisans, merchants and officers of the king or retire from the world and devote themselves to a life of religious meditation let them put their whole heart into their task, let them be diligent and energetic, and if they are like the lotus which although it grows in the water yet remains untouched by the waters, if they struggle in life without cherishing envy or hatred, if they live in the world not a life of self but a life of truth then surely joy, peace and bliss will dwell in their minds.”

The spiritual benefits that accrue from married life come from the fact that two persons live in intimacy with each other, ennoble and enrich each other in diverse ways, make untold sacrifices for each other and their progeny and know of the joy and happiness which transcend all sense of duality. But for all these spiritual benefits pure sex desire in itself would degrade it.

Moosavada

The fourth injunction against lying speech is used here in a restrictive sense. It is in the nature of a daily reminder to the householder as also to the monk on the need of truthfulness in speech. Absolute reliance on each other's words is the main support on which hangs the entire fabric of our civilized existence. But many occasions do come in daily life when un-

truth is the easy way for personal gain and avoidance of inconvenience. Hence this injunction is included in the daily moral precept of a Buddhist that he has need to be strictly truthful in his speech.

The curse of drink

Drink must have been a national evil during the Lord's time to have found such a prominent mention in the Lord's injunctions of good conduct and behaviour. Many passages do occur in the Buddhist texts in which the young householder is warned against the evil consequences of drink. There were, however, also other valid reasons for the Lord's prohibiting the use of drink to his disciples. Buddhism is pre-eminently the religion which lays special importance on the culture of the mind. Right mindfulness, right concentration and right meditation are the last three stages of the golden path and the Blessed One therefore could not permit the mind of His disciples to be clouded by any intoxicants.

An intoxicated mind cannot be kept wide awake and alert. It cannot also concentrate on any object or idea. Drink has other attendant evils of lust and gambling which go with it. It also loosens the tongue and gives rise to anger. Its harmful effects on morals cannot be denied. Abstinence from intoxicants therefore is a very important injunction and cannot be dispensed with by a Buddhist who claims to follow the Blessed One's path of virtue and enlightenment.

Ashta Sila

For novices training themselves for the rigours of a monastic life three further abstinences are prescribed. Even a householder is encouraged to discipline himself in them from time to time. These include complete abstinence from all sexual intercourse even in married life. Abstinence from all meals in the afternoon as it helps to keep body light and free from torpor and sloth. Abstinence from the use of high beds, soft cushions and use of perfumes, cosmetics and articles of self-adornment.

Dasa shila

For the monks two additional precepts are laid down, and these include abstinence from music, dancing, stage plays and abstinence from possessing property whether in cash or kind, except for the few possessions which are bare necessities for a monk's life. The positive aspects of Buddhist morality will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

The fifth step

The fifth step on the path is to have right means of livelihood. Its inclusion as one of the integral step in the noble eightfold path not only shows that the Buddhist way of life is primarily and largely intended for the householder who lives a work-a-day life in the world. It also indicates the need of a social order which will ensure work for all and enforce its necessity on all. The need for healthy and helpful work

which would enable men not only to earn a living but would also keep them happy, develop their mental and physical capacities, provide for their healthy growth, is of special importance in the Buddhist way of life, as it lays its entire stress on the healthy and well-balanced growth of men in wisdom and virtue. This balanced growth is only possible when men are rightly occupied.

Any calling or profession which is harmful to humanity and has the effect of debasing and brutalising the man is clearly interdicted. A true Buddhist cannot be a purveyor of drugs and intoxicants, he cannot deal in arms and ammunitions, he cannot keep a brothel, a gambling house or even a house for doubtful amusements. He cannot work as a hangman, executioner, hunter, dancer, acrobat and mimic. Even the callings of palmists, astrologers, soothsayers, diviners and dream-readers are prohibited as they are based on insufficient data and cause much worry to men who put their faith in them. It also weakens their resolve to improve themselves and their surroundings.

The sixth step

With the sixth step the path bends upward and inward as we are now enjoined to make a concentrated effort to uproot all evil propensities of our animal nature and plant in their place virtues which will make our lives truly fragrant with good. This is not an easy task, it requires a tremendous effort. It is compara-

tively easy to be good according to the standard of our times, our parents, teachers, friends, colleagues and the society as a whole, helps us in this growth. Through their assistance the pattern of our life gets shaped to a very great extent, but when we have to completely root out and eradicate all those evil propensities which are an inheritance from our dim and distant past as animals, it is really a heroic task, for one's heart literally bleeds with every root that is pulled out.

What are these evil propensities or *Asvas* from which we have need to be completely free. Only a few of them can be enumerated. These are fear, malice, lust, anger, distrust, suspicion, sloth, selfishness, hate, and self-aggrandisement. We have not only to uproot them, we have to also replace them with fearlessness, love, kindness, sympathy, patience, forbearance, purity of heart, unselfishness, trust, uprightness and truthfulness and above all with non-attachment and poise. These virtues have to be carefully planted, as they do not easily take root. We have to also make a sustained effort for their growth.

Lastly, we have to dedicate ourselves to the service of humanity. We have to renounce the fruit of our action. We must cease to work for a personal reward and learn to work for the benefit of all. Our whole life need lose all personal significance and it must become the part and parcel of the lives of people around us. It must become a harmonious chord in the

divine symphony.

The seventh step

Right mindfulness which is the seventh step in the path is the doorstep to Nirvana. The Blessed One considered this step of very special significance. The mind must be completely alert and wide awake before one can enter the Nirvanic state. The Lord has stated that if a man persisted in it with determination and energy for seven consecutive days it would bring the man who practised it to true realisation and deliver him from all bondage. Right mindfulness actually is another name for watchfulness and vigil, when it is applied with determination and without any relaxation on mind, its functioning and all its reactions so as to make the advent of any evil state altogether impossible. Having crossed the doorstep we enter into our innermost realm. We have, however, to make the final effort to completely collect ourselves before we can enter the inner realm.

The eighth step

Being wide awake and vigilant, we have now to concentrate our mind. It is claimed that the Lord had devised for the benefit of His disciples forty-two methods of mental concentration. Each disciple was required to concentrate on a particular idea or object as it was suited to his genius. It is necessary to have a clear grasp of the meaning of the words that we use before we proceed any further. When we use the

word concentration we mean that state of mind when it is fixed upon a single subject or thought to the exclusion of every other thought. Concentration therefore in brief is one-pointedness of mind, Chitta Ekagasti.

Many Devices

Many devices were said to have been employed by the Blessed One in making His disciples acquire one-pointedness of mind. Some of the things or idea which find mention in Buddhist texts are :—

1. A bowl of water.
2. An empty globe.
3. A circle of light.
4. Some coloured stuff or pieces of some coloured material.
5. A hole in a wall or in a roof.
6. A ball of earth.
7. Buddha.
8. Dhamma.
9. Sangha.
10. Sila.
11. Dana.
12. Peace.
13. Death.
14. Attentive observation of the body 'Kayagatisati'
15. Attentive observation of respiration 'Anapana'
16. The analysis of the offensiveness of material food.
17. Analysis of the elements.

18. Analysis of the various stages in the decomposition of the body.
19. The middle point between the two brows.
20. The tip of nose.
21. The beat of heart.
22. Cemetery.
23. Repetitive counting.
24. Infinity of space.
25. Infinity of consciousness.
26. Sphere of illimitable knowledge.
27. Sphere of illimitable perception.
28. Sphere where space does not exist.
29. Sphere beyond consciousness.
30. Sphere beyond knowledge.
31. Sphere beyond perception.

Every one had to concentrate on one or more of the above mentioned and a few other things, thoughts, concepts and ideas depending on one's temperament, environment and progress on the path. Some of the concentrations, as those on the decomposition of food and body were meant to overcome deeply rooted cravings, others like the concentration on Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha were meant to develop the spirit of devotion and Bhavana.

Well-tried methods

To acquire proficiency in the art of right concentration it is a great help to have rhythmical breathing, correct posture both of which are acquired by a little practice. One need have a clean and healthy body, which should be light and supple. One has also need to resort to a

quiet and secluded place and practise concentration at appointed times, with regularity preferably in the same place. Latter may not be always possible, in which case it would be an assistance if a folding 'Asan' is kept and this 'Asan' is invariably used when sitting for concentration. The real significance of all these steps lies in the fact that these are well-tried methods which have been found helpful.

Other aids

The following rules and regulations are given for further guidance :—

1. Do not tire the mind or body as tension or forced application makes meditation difficult.
2. Do not sit for meditation too soon after a meal. Let the process of digestion run out its course.
3. Keep the body and clothing scrupulously clean and have clean surroundings as well.
4. Retreat to a quiet room or place where there may be peace, solitude, pin-drop silence and a gentle cool breeze. The place should neither be dark nor flooded with light.
5. Choose a comfortable position in which it be possible to remain at ease, without causing fatigue, strain and cramps, even when you have to keep to a posture for long periods.

6. Practise mediation in the same place and at the same time, preferably in early morning and evening hours or a little after midnight.
7. Purify the respiratory system by cleaning the nostrils and rinsing the mouth thoroughly.
8. Practise rhythmical breathing. There is no need to suspend normal breathing but let it grow rhythmical.
9. Acquire concentration by repetitive counting or 'jap'.
10. Get rid of craving, ill-will, sloth, torpor, restless brooding, doubt and perplexity by concentrating on opposite qualities and virtues.

BRAHMAVIHARAS

(The four divine states)

As has been explained in the previous chapter, the Blessed One had taught His disciples many devices and many methods of acquiring concentration of mind. Amongst the practices of meditations mentioned in Buddhist literature.....I for one consider that meditation on the four divine qualities or Brahmavihars as they are called, is most helpful as by constant meditation on these four virtues man actually becomes divine. Before, however, we come to these meditations it would be desirable that we first deal with the positive aspect of Buddhist morality which consists in the cultivation of ten positive virtues which are called "Paramitas". Some Buddhist scholars consider Paramitas to be the contribution of Mahayana Buddhism. This may be true of the actual classification but any one who has read the Theravada literature with any care could have not failed to notice that the entire teachings of the Lord are impregnated with the spirit of the Paramitas.

Paramitas

Maitri and upeksha form part of the Brahmaviharas. Shila is an integral part of the noble

eightfold path, as also Dhayana and Pragya. We have to therefore concern ourselves with the five remaining paramitas in which 'Dana' occupies a very prominent place. It is expected of an earnest Buddhist that he will try to contribute to the very limit of his endeavour towards the promotion of the common weal and welfare of all beings. For the achievement of this objective he should shirk no sacrifice and should be prepared to make an offering of all that he has.

The Jataka tales recount many brave acts of 'Dana' and no opportunity is lost in bringing home the lesson that true and abiding happiness comes to those who delight in the act of giving and giving in abundance. Acquisitive tendencies, on the other hand, are held in contempt.

Besides, the act of 'Dana' has to be selfless and has to be more an offering than a charity. It must be done in a spirit of sincere humility. If 'Dana' is done with a view to gain popularity, seek renown or obtain any personal benefit, even spiritual merit, it loses all its virtue. It has to be an act of dedication for the well-being of all living beings, and therefore any merit that may accrue from the act is to be also turned over for the benefit of the world.

Nishkama

The cultivation of this Paramita is an important step in the perfection of man. Nishkama does not mean retirement from the world. It actually means renunciation of the fruits of

one's good actions. Man must endeavour to do his duty in accordance with the light that is given to him and should not concern himself with the success and failures of his efforts. Duty must be done without fear and favour and without regard to any hazards that man may run for himself.

But where others are concerned he must use its forbearance and the gift of persuasion to its very limit. He must also wisely avail of all the opportunities that come his way, should these be fair. He should plan and work for success, and for achieving it need acquire perfection in his art, but should misfortune assail him, he should remain undaunted and cheerful. He must not on any account lose heart. Nishkama presupposes a spirit of spontaneity in the man. Choice of good should become a habit with him, it must be the natural slant of his nature.

Kshema & Shanti

Kshema and Shanti are twin virtues which have very little to distinguish one from the other. Forgiveness and forbearance are two faces of the same coin. Both these virtues need be cultivated in abundance. If a man lacks these virtues he is truly a very poor and unhappy man. He not only remains miserable himself but he also brings untold misery on others. One has real need to forgive one's enemies for unless one has done it freely, and in full measure he cannot be at peace with himself and with the

world. The virtue of forbearance and patience in difficult circumstances has to be also assiduously cultivated.

Virya

Virya is another noble virtue which all men of high endeavour must zealously cultivate. Unless a man is fearless, brave and active he can never accomplish a difficult task. A man who is prey to fears, who always tries to save his skin, who is afraid of consequences, is a very poor specimen of humanity. He dies without any accomplishment to his credit. A man who is assailed by fear is a man who has no faith in Dhamma.

Adhishtana

Adhishtana can best be translated by high resolve. It is the sign of a truly great man. No man can achieve success in life unless he is devoted to the work he takes in hand. The perfect man need be a man of high resolve who is determined to achieve success and overcome all obstacles that may come his way.

Now we come to Brahmaviharas the four divine states on which daily meditation is enjoined. These are :—

1. Maitri in the sense of benevolence and loving kindness for all.
2. Karuna, compassion and pity for those who suffer.
3. Mudita, joyous sympathy with the happy.

ness of all beings and retaining a joyous attitude of mind under all circumstances.

4. Upeksha or equimindedness, *i.e.* acquiring an attitude of mind in which one has a sense of detachment and is prepared for all eventualities.

It is absolutely necessary to make these basic virtues part of one's nature. There are other virtues which are equally important as we have shown in our narration of the Paramitas but these four divine virtues are pre-eminent amongst them all, so far as their utility for meditation is concerned, as they are harmonious in their effect.

Maitri

While meditating on Maitri all thoughts of enmity, ill-will and hostility must be put away and given a final burial. It is with the object of separating the heart from enmity, the evil of which is fully recognised, and of uniting the heart with forbearance, the advantage of which is fully appreciated, that the meditation on Metta is to be begun. All beings desire happiness, and therefore we have to seek the happiness of all and cultivate the spirit of friendliness towards all. There are some people whom we love as relations, friends, comrades and neighbours. It is not difficult to have loving attitude towards them. All that we need safeguard in these relationships is that our love does not turn into infatuation. It does not become exclusive. It is also not difficult to gradually extend

the sphere of love and embrace in it the whole world, nay the entire universe.

Love your Enemies

It would be, however, found difficult to extend our love to those who had harmed us and had done us some mortal harm. We may be able to forget and forgive petty annoyances and inconveniences but some injuries are so grievous that it is really difficult for a person to command sufficient fund of generosity to forgive those who have done him mortal harm. If this difficulty besets us, we have need to pray fervently and sincerely, and we will soon discover that it would enable us to forgive even those men who have done us mortal harm.

Metta sutta

A brief resume of the Metta Sutta given here will help to cultivate the spirit of Metta. The man who is wise seeks the good of all and who has obtained peace need accomplish the following. He need be strenuous, upright, sincere, contented and joyous. He need cast off pride, greed for worldly things and riches. He must keep his senses in strict control.

Let him be wise without being conscious of it, and let him not spend all his efforts in gathering riches for himself and his family.

Let there be nothing mean in any of his actions.

May all being be happy.

May they be joyous and live in safety.

All being whether weak or strong.
In high or middle or low realms of existence.

Small or great, visible or invisible near or far

Born or to be born

May all beings be happy

Let no one deceive or despise each other or wish each other any harm.

Let there be no anger or hatred amongst people. Even as a mother at the risk of her life watches over and protects her only child so with boundless mind which has obliterated all distinction between one's self and others should one cherish all living beings, suffusing love over the entire world above, below and all around without limit. So let us cultivate an infinite good-will and love towards the entire world.

Let him always cherish thoughts while standing, walking, sitting or lying down, that the best way of living is to have love and friendliness towards all.

He who has abandoned vain discussion, has acquired a clear vision, has given away craving, he is made perfect. He will never know rebirth.

Develop and expand your love and send out your thoughts of love to the four corners of the globe and let these thoughts pervade the east, west, north and south. Envelop the whole universe and radiate your love everywhere.

Let the entire universe be suffused with your loving kindness. Meditation in this spirit when

practised sincerely and persistently will truly break down the barriers of personality. An unusual sense of contentment will be experienced which will be superseded by consciousness of joy and the body and mind would experience a happiness hitherto unknown and mind will become astonishingly clear and serene.

Men of wisdom know just a little, they cannot know in fullness unless they have the strength which comes of love. The true sage is not the seer who sees the farthest but is the man who loves the deepest, and therefore comprehends the fullest. True and sincere love for all beings is incompatible with the belief in gross inequalities. If we sincerely love all beings we must promote their material, moral, physical and spiritual well-being in the same measure as we seek our own.

Karuna

One great virtue that the Blessed One had in boundless measure, was His unbounded sympathy with the sufferings of humanity, nay with the sufferings of all creatures. As a child He was moved to pity at the sight of a wounded swan and nursed it lovingly back to life. As a grown-up boy He felt compassion for the bullocks who were yoked to plough in a hot and sultry day. As a young man it were the visions of old men in dire distress and poverty, of men suffering with all manner of diseases and of the widows grieving over their dead that haunted Him. As a path-finder, He carried a wounded

lamb in His lap and pleaded for it and other dumb animals in the court of Bimbisar.

Supreme sacrifice

Finally when He had tasted of the bliss of 'Nirvana' it was the piteous cry of the world in misery which made Him turn back to the world and work ceaselessly for promoting its happiness. Last of all and as a supreme gift and sacrifice He turned away from the doorstep of 'Mahaparinirvan' to share His grace with the suffering world till all life has been established in 'Nirvana'.

He, the Supreme Buddha, is still waiting for us till the very last being has attained to the bliss of Nirvana. As sincere and devout followers of the Blessed One we cannot but emulate Him in the cultivation of this virtue. In cultivating this virtue we have to bear in mind the cardinal truth of our Dhamma that suffering is bound up with phenomenal existence.

We need, however, never lament over this fact nor despair of the efforts that are needed to alleviate suffering. Let us think of suffering in all its varied forms, suffering which is man made which is the result of our wrong way of life, is caused by our lust, greed, ill-will, anger, sloth, selfishness, stupidity and unclean ways of living.

Then there is suffering which is due to our ignorance, due to lack of education and knowledge about the workings of the laws of nature

and the correct utility of the things that are around us. We have also much suffering which is caused by cosmic forces over which we have little or no control whatsoever, in our present stage of evolution.

We have to eradicate all causes in the first category which cause the world so much suffering. We have to promote knowledge and devote ourself ceaselessly in the pursuit of knowledge and harness it for the benefit of the world and thus help in eradicating suffering which is caused due to our lack of knowledge, our sloth and ignorance. Suffering which comes to us unsought, which is the result of cosmic forces has to be patiently borne. When we sit for our meditation let us turn our thoughts towards beings who suffer in diverse ways and let us send them thoughts of love and compassion. We should also resolve to end their sufferings so far as it lies in our power.

Mudita

We need also cultivate the spirit of sympathetic joy, with the joy and happiness of others. We have also the need to develop the spirit of joyfulness and good cheer in our own selves. Deep down in our nature, at our very base and foundation, there is a spring of unbounded joy and happiness and we have to release its life-giving waters and bathe ourselves in it daily. Unless we have the feeling of happiness in our own selves, we cannot grow infectious in this virtue and communicate it to others. To make

others happy, we have to be happy ourselves, for if the sources of happiness are dry in ourselves, we cannot radiate happiness to others. There is always some joy, some happiness abroad, in this wide world. Rejoice in the thought of this happiness. Let this sustain us in our faith and even in hours when darkness surrounds us from all sides and there be just one streak of light. Break down all barriers, suffuse the whole wide world and all beings with sympathetic joy and let them receive our radiation and be happy.

Upeksha

All life is transient as it is a vibrating current, pulsating with life but which is also on the move, and always in the process of change. There is naught in this world which is permanent. The cosmic forces are beyond us. One change of fortune, one stroke of misfortune can destroy in seconds the work of centuries. Love, compassion and joy are good emotions, they are virtues which need be cultivated, but would these stand us always in good stead if we have not cultivated Upeksha. Unless we have cultivated equanimity we cannot have serenity and our joy and happiness will not be well founded.

We must therefore cultivate the spirit of equanimity. We should keenly seek serenity for ourselves and wish it for others. We must cultivate a heart which would remain untouched by worldly things, a heart which is not swayed by sorrows and sufferings, a heart which can remain passionless and secure in all temptations

and provocations. We have need to acquire a central position towards the world, see it objectively and acquire a poise in which our inner core, the very flame of life will remain unwavering and steady whatever be the luck that befall us for good or evil.

We should be able to face both triumphs and disasters with the same poise. Without meditating on equanimity we cannot acquire serenity and without serenity we cannot taste the bliss of 'Nirvana'.

NIRVANA

Much literature has grown up on the subject of Nirvana, the state of supreme bliss, which the Lord claimed to have reached and which state He promised to all who would exert themselves and live up to His teachings. The literature that has grown up on this most subtle and difficult subject is really so vast that it is impossible for a man who is concerned only with the pith of the matter to go through this tangled mass of literature. If one was to sincerely study the life and teachings of Lord Buddha he would soon reach the conclusion that Nirvana was that state of bliss which is reached when all 'Asavas' get completely destroyed and uprooted and the goodness in man has flowered to the fullest extent.

This stage is reached by acquiring perfection in sheela which includes paramitas and developing Pragya which comes through practice of right mindfulness, concentration and meditation. This effort for perfection has to be made by man in the human body and in this world, where the law of becoming is in operation. It is not possible in any other form of existence. The effort has to be willed deliberately and pursued with unflinching courage and determination.

Here and Now

The Blessed One has stated, "Even so, nevertheless, my friend I do not say that without reaching the world's end, an end of woes cannot be made (for you can end it here and now). For, my friend; in this very body six feet in length with its sense impressions and its thoughts and ideas I declare to you are the world and the origin of the world and the ceasing of the world and likewise the way that leadeth to the ceasing thereof". Those who sincerely and earnestly try and tread the path grow into wisdom and righteousness and gain peace and happiness which no misfortune or affliction can shake. Some, however, catch only a glimpse of the new vistas that open out for the man who has acquired new insight ; but there are others, although few in number, who become fully possessed with the new vision.

It is, however, the law of life and growth in this world that, however, firmly a man may get established in wisdom and righteousness, and howsoever rich be the contents of his spiritual experience, so long as he lives in this world, in his human body he has to work and fight for retaining what he had achieved. It is for this very reason that the Blessed One who had reached the very limit of human accomplishment, who had become truly divine and had grown into perfection, continued to meticulously observe the rules of morality and spend a quite deal of His time daily in meditation. All this is very clear from the Buddhist scriptures and

there is no difficulty whatsoever in understanding it.

Seek for a foretaste

The chief difficulty with most people, however, is that men try to have a foretaste of the bliss of Nirvana while they are still tied up with their little self. Their chief worry actually is in regard to what they imagine to be their "self". They are mainly concerned to know what happens to this little "self" of their when it passes into Nirvana. What are the experiences that are in store for it in this life as laso in life hereafter, after it tastes of the bliss of Nirvana. All these matters should in fact be of no consequence to a sincere and selfless wayfarer on the path, for so long he is growing into righteousness and wisdom he has little need to worry about the future state. Virtue is truly its own reward and every step on the path brings the foretaste of the eternal bliss. It is for these men that it was said "take no thought of the morrow".

Many people and amongst these are included many mystics, confuse Nirvana with ecstatical experience and supernormal powers. Lord Buddha has, however, clearly stated that these experiences are only stages on the path and do not represent the final goal. A very vivid description of ecstatic experience is given by Lord Buddha and He has also clearly affirmed that they fall far short of the peace which comes to the man who has fully grown into wisdom and in whose life

righteousness has been fulfilled.

He has stated that a stage in meditation is reached when it becomes purely subjective, when mind ceases to depend on all external aids, and when, having become fully disciplined and completely purified, he has no use for crutches and finally abandons them all. At this stage man begins to have ecstatic experience.

Rupa Dhyana

In the first stage of Rupa Dhyana mind gets suffused with JOY. A sense of physical and mental well-being and ecstatic happiness is experienced by him which beggars all description. The five hindrances of craving, ill-will, sloth or torpor, brooding and doubt are cast away. The man, however, retains the faculties of analysis, reflection, joy, happiness and one pointedness. In the second stage of Rupa-Dhyana the faculties of analysis and reflection also get dropped, and only joy, happiness and concentration remain as the contents of the inner spirit. In the third stage of Rupa-Dhyana joy also gets abandoned and the spirit is only suffused with happiness and concentration. In the fourth Rupa-dhyana even happiness and concentration vanish and is replaced by serenity.

Arupa Dhayana

Getting established in serenity the wayfarer transcends all stages of Rupadhyana and gets into Arupa Dhyana where he is able to visualise and comprehend the infinity of space, infinity of

consciousness, the knowledge of void, and reaches a stage when even sense of perception and non-perception also ceases. As a by-product the Dhyani acquires some powers which are still out of the ordinary. These include clairvoyance, clairaudience, memory of previous births, knowledge of the rising and destruction of the asavas and of the universe.

Nirvana is Beyond

Nirvana, however, is a step beyond all these mystic experiences, and it is not gained till the very last fetters and 'Asavas' have been destroyed. The Blessed One had to conquer them all and the final victory was won with one supreme feat of the will on the Vaisakha night. The fetters and Asavas that bind man to the wheel of life have been listed as under :

1. Illusion of self.
2. Scepticism.
3. Attachment to ethics and vows.
4. Craving for sensual lust.
5. Ill-will, aversion, hate and cruelty.
6. Craving for life in the world of pure form.
7. Craving for life in the higher world.
8. Pride.
9. Agitation.
10. Ignorance.

The list is by no means exhaustive. It is only indicative of the effort that is required to be made.

Aids

Suggestions are also made in respect of aids which may be available to those who are sincere in their desire to tread the path. These are all in actual fact various elaborations of the noble eightfold path, and one list which has appealed to me is given below :

1. Cultivate non-attachment.
2. Have faith and reverence for people who have lived a noble life and have realised truth.
3. Be an earnest enquirer after truth.
4. Practise the spiritual exercises of concentration and meditation.
5. Be perfect in sheela and cultivate paramitas.
6. Avoid the company of evil-minded persons.
7. Study religious books with reverence.
8. Avoid injury to every living creature.
9. Acquire control on senses.
10. Cultivate truthfulness and selflessness.
11. Speak not ill of anybody.
12. Cultivate the company of good people.
13. Bear patiently with the opposites of life.
14. Speak not ill of any Dharma.
15. Meditate constantly on four divine states.
16. Be self-reliant and cheerful.
17. Have faith in your divine potentialities.

Sotapanna

When the first three fetters of illusion of self-scepticism, and attachment to ethics and vows are broken the man becomes Sotapanna or

stream winner, which means that he is now set firmly on the path.

Sakadagamin

When the fourth and fifth fetters of craving or lust, aversion and ill-will, are got over, he becomes sakadagamin. Such a man only takes one more human birth to attain Nirvana.

Anagamin

When a man gets over all desires for life in the Rupa and Arupa world and gets over his pride he becomes Anagamin. He need not be reborn on this earth as he can complete his perfection in other worlds where he can obtain serenity and can also get rid of whatever traces of Avidya that may have been left in him. When all the ten fetters get destroyed a man truly becomes enlightened.

A Positive Experience

From the aforesaid account it should be amply clear that Nirvana is a positive mystic experience, beyond all stages of ecstasy. It is a growth and flowering in which all evil has ceased to be and only positive good finds its fullest expression. It is in no case a vacuum or void as many people mistakenly believe. Lord Buddha's emphatic words contradict any such supposition.

He has said, "There is brethren, a condition where there is neither earth nor water nor fire

nor air, nor the sphere of infinite space, nor the sphere of infinite consciousness, nor the sphere of void, nor the sphere of neither perception, nor of non-perception, where there is no this world and no world beyond, where there is no moon and no sun. That condition brethren, do I call neither a coming nor a going nor a standing still, nor a falling away nor a rising up. It has no fixity, it has also no mobility. It is without basis and is the end of woe."

He has stated further, "There is brethren an unborn, a not become, a not made, a not compounded. If brethren there was not that which is not unborn, which does not become, which is not made, which is not compounded, there could be no escape from what is born, what becomes, what is made and what is compounded."

"But since brethren there is this unborn therefore has been made known a way of escape, from what is born, becomes, is made and compounded."

There are many positive descriptions of the Nirvanic state whose significance cannot be missed.

These are "Cool cave, the place of bliss, the supreme and transcendent, the tranquil, the immaterial and imperishable, the abiding, the further shore, the unending, the bliss of effort, the supreme joy and the ineffable, the harbour of refuge, island amidst floods, emancipation, liberation, safety, the home of ease, the calm,

the end of suffering, the medicine for all evil, the unshaken, the ambrosia, the detachment, the holy city. In a passage in Sutta Nipata the Lord tells Kappa that for those who stand in mid-stream, in fearsome flood and are likely to be overwhelmed by decay and death, He can tell of an island where no such fears exist. It is the state of Nirvana which is reached by possessing naught and cleaving unto naught. In one of His sermons Lord Buddha referred to the charge that was frequently laid against Him that He preached Nihilism and repudiating this charge the Lord had said :

“In this respect only one may rightly say of me that I teach annihilation, that I propound my doctrine for the purpose of annihilation, and that I train my disciples for it”.

“For certainly I teach annihilation of greed, anger, delusion, ill-will and the manifold evil and demerit. I say that blessedness consists in bringing the end of self-seeking”.

In yet another discourse Lord had affirmed. “If lust, anger and delusion are given up and man aims neither at his own ruin nor at the ruin of both parties and he experiences no mental pain and grief, this is Nirvana, immediate, visible in this life, inviting, attractive and comprehensible to the wise.” Speaking about the way to realise Nirvana the Lord stated, “Purity of morals cultivates the purity of mind, purity of mind gives rise to the purity of views, purity of views brings certitude, with certitude comes right knowledge, with right knowledge comes

right insight, with right insight one enters the bliss of Nirvana”.

Here it will be noted that the very first step on the noble eightfold path begins with purity of morals. This reversal is made for the man of faith, who accepts the teachings in a spirit of faith and humility and have not the need to begin with right views.

Other Descriptions

On another occasion the Lord had stated that mindfulness, investigation of the doctrine, energy, joy, concentration and equanimity are the seven parts of enlightenment. This classification suits a mentally developed man. It is a discipline eminently suited to his genius. Two other stray descriptions would be sufficient to establish us in the correct view about Nirvana.

“The disciple who has put away lust and craving, being filled with wisdom, now in this present life has attained to deliverance, to Nirvana, to deathlessness. Whoso is replete with all good, the Bhikkhu who holds to the teaching of the Awakened One, let him turn to the land of peace where impermanency finds no place, let him turn towards blessedness.”

Nirvana inseparable from Sansara

It will be seen that this Nirvanic state was not anything separate from this world. In fact it has been stated in more than one place that Nirvana is inseparable from the universe. The effort for reaching the Nirvanic state has to be

made by the individual for himself. He has to also make this effort for the world in which he lives, for being part of all, He cannot be free without bringing freedom to others.

The main difference

The main difference between the contents of the bliss of Buddha and others consists in the fact the whole universe shares in the bliss of Buddha. Due to His great altruistic urge, His keen desire to help all, His infinite capacity and competence acquired over a period of several lives and His great wisdom He is able to bring vast changes in the world for its good and help a very large number of people to taste the bliss of Nirvana. He is in fact able to identify Himself with the entire universe and through this identification He becomes one with it. The great changes that He brings and the forces that He releases transform the whole world and the world grows nearer to Nirvana on that account.

He thus truly establishes the kingdom of heaven on this earth and this kingdom lasts for a very long time. In fact much of the gain remains for ever and is of lasting value to humanity.

The beneficent grace of Lord Gautama Buddha is available to humanity for all time, as on account of His great compassion and love for the world, He has made a voluntary sacrifice of the bliss of Nirvana and all those who sincerely identify themselves with Him share in this grace.

The role of Bodhisatva

Next to Buddha is the role of Bodhisatva. As a candidate for the high office of Buddha he also identifies himself closely with the cause of the suffering humanity and the world at large. Like unto Buddha his compassion is also great. He also like Buddha acquires special competence for his great task, and is therefore able to influence the world for good and bring it nearer to the Nirvanic state. Every time he comes to earth he ushers in an era of peace, prosperity and happiness for humanity and the world. He reinterprets the Dhamma according to the requirement of his time and discovers the hidden meaning of the esoteric teachings. A Bodhisatva even though he may not be fully enlightened is in a way superior of the Arhant and Partek Buddha as the sphere of their beneficent influence is limited

Reinterprets the teachings

But as the Bodhisatva does not assume the great office of Buddha, he only reinterprets the teachings of the previous Buddha and does not declare a new teaching. He refrains from doing so, as the new teachings more helpful than the previous ones can only be given when he has acquired the penetrating insight of Buddha.

One pre-eminence

One thing which is most pre-eminent in Buddha's teaching is that due to His complete identification with the universe and inner harmony

with it He is able to declare a new teaching without arousing any bitter controversies. He is able to transform the world for the better without causing any bloodshed.

The era that follows Buddha's accession to Nirvana is invariably an era of great peace, prosperity, cultural and spiritual advancement for the country in which He is born, as also for the world at large.

CONDITIONED CO-PRODUCTION

In Buddhist literature insight into the true nature of phenomena is considered as the very essence of Buddhi. Assajis verse, which led to the conversion of Sariputra, the Lord's chief disciple has become famous all over the Buddhist world. This verse has been translated as under :—

“Tathagata has explained the origin of those things which proceed from a cause. Their cessation too He has explained. This is the doctrine of the great Sramana.”

Another equally famous verse in the Pali literature gives expression to the following sentiments :—

“This being, that becomes, from the arising of this, that arises, this not becoming, that does not become, from the ceasing of this, that ceases.”

An Autobiographical account

In an autobiographical account in Majjhima Nikaya the Lord had stated, “Then Monks, I thought now I have gained the Doctrine, profound, hard to perceive, hard to know, tranquil, transcendent, beyond the sphere of reasoning, subtle, to be known only by the wise.....For mankind intent on its attachments is hard to see

this principle, namely, conditionedness, origination by way of cause "Pratitya Samuppada". This principle too is hard to see, namely, the cessation of all compound things, the renunciation of all clinging to rebirth, the extinction of craving, absence of passion, cessation, Nirvana.

In another passage in Samyuk Nikaya, it is stated, "Aryan Disciple knows the Law of Causation thus, knows the arising of Causal relation thus, knows the Ceasing of Causal relation thus, this one is called, brethern, the Aryan Disciple who has attained vision, who has attained insight, who has reached the Norm, who sees this good Norm "True Reality", who has attained the current of Reality, who is an Aryan, fastidious in his wisdom, who stands having reached the threshold of Deathless "Amata Nirvana." The passages quoted above are from the most ancient of our texts and seem to suggest that Lord Buddha had considered the knowledge of Conditioned Co-production, the very essence of His enlightenment.

"A Popular Saying"

This is supported by another popular saying from our Literature "whosoever perceives the real nature of Pratitya Samuppada perceives the Dharam, whosoever perceives the Dharma, perceives the Buddha." It is not surprising therefore that this formulae of Conditioned Co-production has come to be considered as the most important and pivotal contribution of Buddhism towards the emancipation of man.

In the passages quoted above, the Lord, had stated that one who truly understands the Law of "Conditioned Co-production" has attained vision, and insight and has entered the current of Reality and reached the threshold of the Deathless "Amata Nirvana".

It is further stated that this truth of Conditioned Co-production is difficult to grasp for mankind which is intent on its attachments and takes delight and pleasure in them. Holy life and non-attachment therefore are considered a prerequisite for a correct understanding of this Law. Even the well-beloved disciple, Ananda was mildly and lovingly rebuked when he thought that the Knowledge of this Universal Law could be easily grasped. He told Ananda in ringing words which have come down to us through the corridor of time, "Say not Ananda, Say not so, Deep indeed is the Causal Law. It is by not knowing, by not understanding, by not penetrating this doctrine, that this world of men is unable to pass beyond, the doom of the waste, the way of woe, the woe, the Fall, and the ceaseless Round of rebirth." It is clear from this passage that the Lord had not only emphasised the fact that this Law is most difficult to comprehend, He also considered that there can be no end of the doom, the waste, the way of woe and the ceaseless round of rebirth, till a clear insight into this Law is attained. The present state of man in which he does not have insight into this Law was considered a "state of fall".

A Spiritual Attainment

It need be emphasised, however, that insight into the Law of Conditioned Co-production is purely insight or Bodhi. It is a spiritual attainment, and is something quite apart from the conceptual description of this casual Law, which has been given to it in our religious Literature, even though some of these descriptions, may with a fair degree of certainty be traced to our Lord. What can be more correctly stated is that perhaps they are the best conceptual descriptions that the Lord could give of His insight into Reality. It will be wrong, however, to take the conceptual description as Reality. The Lord Himself had clearly stated that Reality is beyond the sphere of reasoning. All description of the Law of Reality and in fact of other undetermined questions including Nirvana-Anatta and the State of the released man should be considered inadequate. In fact every description of them only tends to falsify Truth.

A convenient description

Having given the correct background we may now examine a little closely the various descriptions of the Law of "Conditioned Co-production" that have come down to us in our Literature. To save space I am condensing a passage which is also autobiographical.

"I thought into wretchedness has this world fallen. It is born, grows old, dies, passes away and is reborn. From this pain it knows no escape. Then monks I thought Now when what

exists age and death exist and what is the cause of old age and death? And as I duly reflected there came the comprehension of full knowledge, it is when there is rebirth that there is old age and death. Then monks I thought Now when what exists does rebirth exist and what is the cause of rebirth and as I duly reflected came the comprehension of full knowledge that when there is becoming then there is rebirth.

“In the same way desire is caused by grasping, grasping by craving, craving by feeling, feeling by contact, contact by six sense organs and six sense organs by mind and body “Nama Rupa” mind and body by consciousness, consciousness by aggregates and aggregates by ignorance.

“With ignorance as cause there are the aggregates, with the aggregates as cause there is consciousness, etc., down to with rebirth as cause, there is old age and death”.

In the same order the process of cessation is described. Now the first thing to understand is that Dukkha or pain which is sought to be removed is a sensation, and old age and death therefore represent actually those states of man, in which pain is most acutely felt. It would be wrong to take this symbolic representation too literally.

Secondly we have to understand that the Law of Conditioned Co-production (Pratitya Samuppada) as formulated in its twelve links is essentially a particular or a convenient mode of formulating the principles of condi-

tionedness. It has no other specific quality except perhaps for its wide applicability to the conditions of existence.

Cover three lives

Avidya or Ignorance is enumerated as the first cause. It should not be also rigidly interpreted as the ultimate origin or the first beginning of the individual or the cosmos. It would be far more correct to conceive causation as a circle which can have its beginning anywhere. In fact it is represented as such in all Buddhist Literature.

Further the cycle of Dependent Co-production is stated to embrace three lives. Avidya representing the inert sanskaras of previous lives and which serve as a root and Sanskaras representing the sprouting in the root or violational action, which is responsible for the first moment of consciousness in a new life. To call rebirth it will be wrong, to deny it altogether as such will again be wrong. The process is more in the nature of a recreation. With conception consciousness comes into play and there arises "Nama. Rupa", then six organs of senses and through six organs of senses, sensations are produced and through these sensations arises Vedna or Trishna, with Trisha born, a man seeks to cling and this gives rise to Bhavana and Bhavana gives rise to rebirth. The last two factors give rise to life, the process of rebirth, although the tendency towards it is set in motion, when sensation gets transformed into feelings. It is stated in Pali

texts that birth is only possible when father and mother copulate, when it is the mother's season and when there is a being to be born.

A positive concept

Dr. Mrs. Rhys David, who during the later years of her life had been a bitter critic of Theravada, specially in regard to its emphasis on some of the negative aspects of the Lord's Teachings, was responsible for inviting attention to a rare passage in Nidan Vagga in which the Law of Dependent Co-production has been described in positive terms as under. Dependent on Dukkha arises Sraddha, this gives rise to Joy, this joy gets transformed into rapture, which produces serenity, through serenity rises happiness, dependent on it arises concentration, through concentration arises knowledge, through this knowledge arises repulsion, depended upon repulsion arises passionlessness, through passionlessness Liberation is gained.

The truth is that Reality being ineffable it does not lend itself to either positive or negative description. The Lord therefore followed a middle path between the extremes of affirmation and negation and formulated a principle of Universal application in which two trends are easily discernible. One cyclic working between the pair of opposites and the other progressive. In one case Nirvana becomes a static or negative conception when viewed in relation to Sansara which is a state of flux, in the other it becomes dynamic and is just the first beginning of a richer, fuller

and better life. Humanity has now reached a stage in its evolution when it will be more concerned with the latter aspect than with the former. The entire Buddhist thought has revolved on the pivot of Dependent Co-production 'Pratitya Sammupada' and it has received far more attention from Mahayana Acharyas than from the Theras of the Southern school, with whom it has remained, more or less a logical formula, which in itself is not so very difficult to understand as it has a rational basis for it. Credit, however, goes to the Madhyamika Acharyas for giving to the Law of Dependent Co-production a deeper spiritual significance. Madhyamika has tried to prove that the teachings of Dependent Co-production are of empirical validity only and that at its best, they constitute the texture of the Phenomena. But in regard to noumenon, they are mere Vikalpa. Madhyamika has further tried to show that all possible ways in which the categories forming the chain of causality, can be understood, under the terms of identity, differences or both or neither are riddled with contradiction and as such the Law enunciated has its field limited to phenomenal existence.

Establishes the Truth of Sunayata

“According to Madhyamaka, the Law of Dependent Co-production has not the same deep spiritual significance, when it is viewed in its temporal sequence of the origin and subsistence of momentary entities, as it has in its conception of mutual dependence, *i.e.* lack of reality and

nothingness. In brief its chief value lies in firmly establishing the Truth of "Sunayata" or void in the mind and heart of the spiritual aspirant and in helping him to reject all concepts and views about the Real and abolishing from his mind all difference between the world of phenomena and the Nirvana. Sansara is one with Nirvana even though it is not viewed, as such through Avidya. In this respect Mahayana has penetrated nearer to the spirit of the original teachings than the Theravada. It is the central teaching of all Nirgun sects that the Real is transcendental to thought. Therefore too much preoccupation with a formulae which seeks to explain phenomena may prove more of a hindrance than a help in getting a glimpse of Reality, if it is taken too literally or its particular mode of formulations are accepted as the last word. It would, however, be of real assistance to us if it helps us to get rid of our craving, our deeply rooted idea of "selfhood" and all our concepts of the Real. I will not add to the textual burden of this book by writing a separate chapter on "Dharmas" as they are in the nature of a minute analysis of the different factors classified in the teachings of Conditioned Co-production. All these Dharmas are also unsubstantial in themselves and as such lack Reality.

THE NIRGUN ASPECTS OF THE LORD'S TEACHINGS

Brahamanical literature of India contains many misstatements about Lord Buddha's life and teachings. Whatever little Brahamanism has conceded to the Lord and His teachings has been done under compulsion and most reluctantly. It has tried to cover by faint praise what it could not ignore outright. But as disciples of Lord Buddha, we have to practise equanimity, exercise patience and be liberal in our attitude. We have to seek for delightful stretches of open ground even in a thickly overgrown jungle and in this spirit have to concede that there is much in the Brahamanical literature, despite the pernicious doctrines that it persistently advocates, which is good and desirable, which is in true respect a borrowing from the Lord's own teachings and in some other respect can be stated as parallel developments of thought under the impact of Buddhist teachings. Upanishads, Geeta, Vedant, Yoga-Vashisht, Bhagwat, Ramayana, Mahabharat and the Vaishnava Literature have in them many thoughts and passages of rare beauty, charm and spiritual significance. It is, however, a difficult task indeed to separate the grain from the chaff and one is likely to get lost in the effort and waste his precious opportunity.

But we stand on different ground when we come to study the teachings of the Nirgun Saints. We discover to our great surprise and happiness that in most respects the life and teachings of these saints and sages have been in entire conformity with the life and teachings of our own Lord. One cannot therefore help regretting that all these saints and sages many of whom came from the lowly and humble stock, without any background of a rich spiritual culture behind them, continued with their life work without any awareness of their rich heritage in the ancient Buddhist literature. One can only think of the revolution in thought that could have occurred if the benefit of this heritage was available to them. Depending solely on their personal intuitions, but often ill equipped for giving even fragmentary and partial expression to their experience, these saints and sages, have with all their limitations done very good work in India. They have stood out during all the dark centuries which have followed the eclipse of the True Teachings from India as Islands of refuge, against the overwhelming floods of Brahamanical heresies.

We have need to gratefully acknowledge our deep debt of gratitude to these enlightened one's and we have need to own them and their teachings. Added to our own teachings all the imperfection of the teaching are made whole, and they find their fulfilment in every respect. Slight peculiarities and deviations vanish, blemishes get removed and inadequacies get completed. Dew-

drops merge into the shining sea and become one with it in every respect. It is greatly to the credit of late Baba Debi Sahib of revered memory that he was the first to discover the close identity and similarity in the two teachings and came with a bold proclamation that Lord Gautama Buddha was the first and still remains the foremost and most eminent of the Nirgun saints of India. Baba Debi Sahib was, however, a lone voice in the wilderness of the small town of Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh. With all that he made Panchshila, obligatory in his Satsang and Dhampada its sacred text.

“Obvious identities”

It is not possible in this small chapter to compare the Lord's teachings with the teachings of the later Nirgun saints of India. I will only be content to restate some of the Buddhist teachings as they came to be developed in Mahayana and leave the readers to discover in these statements the obvious identity between the two teachings.

In respect of Avidya it has been stated in Mahayana literature that it has two functions—one is obscurative in which it hides the Real, the other is constructive, through which it throws false appearances. Avidya is also stated to be the deeply rooted tendency in man to indulge in conceptual construction, when the Real is actually beyond all these concepts.

Avidya is stated to be without a beginning as

there is no assignable limit, before or after the existence of phenomenal world which can be given to it. Though beginningless it has an end which comes with enlightenment. A simile is given, the tree is implicit in the seed, but once the seed gets burnt there can be no sprouting in it. Avidya itself is treated as Maya, as something in the nature of castles in the air. If it were real, all its products need be real and then there could be no negation and changing of the world process and no release possible. If it were totally unreal, who could abandon the un-real. What was there to abandon in it. There was nothing to abandon. The root cause of pain and imperfection is Avidya or the tendency of the human being to conceptualise the Real. Avidya, however, in this respect serves a divine purpose, as spiritual life is born of sharp contrast felt between what is not and what should be. It is the consciousness of suffering which arouses the Bodhichita in the man and starts him on his great spiritual adventure as a "Bodhisatva".

Assurance of complete spiritual regeneration of man is given in both the teachings. In both the teachings human mind is considered as capable of being educated and trained. Mahayana firmly believes that every man is not only a potential Buddha but is sure to reach Buddhahood.

Purification of moral defilements is considered an absolute necessity but its value as accumulated treasure is discarded. It is

emphasised, however, that a person who is assailed by passions and is distracted by worldliness cannot perceive the truth. At the same time reverse of it is also held true, that it is only on perceiving the truth that one gets complete freedom from passions. Two types of Truth are recognised—Parmartha Satya and Samvarti Satya. Great emphasis is, however, laid on Parmarth Satya. It is stated by Nagarjun, that without the acceptance of Parmartha Satya (the ultimate reality) there can be no deliverance from Sansara. Parmarth Satya, however, is stated to be unutterable, unthinkable and unteachable and lacking all empirical determinations. It is the object of the innermost experience of the saints. The experience is so intimate in Parmhans, that he is not even conscious of his experience. If one was to be self-conscious, it would involve his standing aside from his experience and make him discriminate and draw contrasts. It will be then only a discursive form of apprehension and not true apprehension. Completeness of intuition precludes both the sense of progress and surprise. If the concept of progress can be at all used in a limited sense it can only mean falling of the hindrances that obscure the vision of the Real and does not in any sense involve any addition to the content of our knowledge. This aspect is emphasised again and again. Real is stated to be overlaid with the undergrowth of our notions and views. Real can only be known by uncovering it, by the removal of opacity of our ideas. When this task is accom-

plished, mind becomes pure and translucent and when this stage is reached no difference can be made between the experience and the experiencer.

Sansara and Nirvana are considered identical. Nirvana is the Reality behind Sansara and conversly Sansara is the falsity of appearance superimposed on Nirvana, or Reality. "Nirvana" is Sansara without birth and decay. The only difference if there is one is in our attitude towards life. Nagarjun has aptly stated that if the apprehension of the impermanent as permanent is considered an illusion why is the apprehension of that which is indeterminate with permanent is not considered an illusion. At one place it is stated that Absolute looked at through thought forms is phenomenon and the same freed from the superimposed thought forms is the Absolute. The same truth is stated slightly differently. Absolute is devoid of all determinates and is the inexpressible ground of all phenomena. In an other passage it is stated how can "Anakshara" be known, taught and declared. It is only known as the Reality of the appearance that they falsely stand for. Discovering and removing the superimposed character of phenomena, the true nature of the Real is revealed. There is no other means of expressing the inexpressible. The Absolute is the Reality of the apparent, it is its real nature. Phenomena are the veiled forms or false appearances of the Real.

Closer and closer identity of thought gets

developed in the description of the Real. Silence is considered the correct language to express the Real. The whole development of Mahayana is on the silence of the Buddha. It is stated if the Real was not beyond concept and speech it would cease to be that and would become identical with the empirical. It is emphasised again and again that it is free from conception and it is not open to thought. Real is undetermined and consequently inaccessible to reason. It defies all predicate. These trends of thoughts are expressed with a richness of variety. It is stated that if the categories of existence and non-existence cannot be applied, there is even less justification for applying to the Real, the categories of permanence, change, substance, modes, unity and plurality. Why not say the truth that the Real is incommensurable and inexpressible. It is utterly transcendent to thought. Real, however, is positive, as something in itself, it is self-evident and self-existent. Absolute as the unconditioned is Real, and as such cannot be conceived as existence or non-existence or both. This idea is further developed in many other statements. The Real is stated to be neither one, nor many, neither permanent nor impermanent, neither subject nor object. The Real is purely indeterminate and all attempts to identify it with being, becoming and consciousness, etc. are false views. Inadequacy of the discriminating mind as a fit instrument of apprehending the Real is repeatedly stressed. Reason understands things through distinction and relation, it is the principle of falsity, it describes and

thereby hides the Real. The categories are so many conceptual devices by which reason tries to apprehend the Real which cannot be categorised and made relative. Reason only falsifies the Real.

Real is undetermined and consequently inaccessible to Reason. It is on this account that Buddha rejected all conceptual patterns of the Real as Being, Non-Being, Affirmation and Negation. All pairs of opposites taken singly, conjunctively or disjunctively were repudiated, for He considered that it was not within the competence of reason to comprehend Reality. Reality is transcendental to thought.

This line of thought is further developed when it is stated that adoption of any ideal pattern restricts the scope and narrows down the vision. Reality eludes the grasp when the vision is not kept free. The aspirant therefore is exhorted to deconceptualise the mind, and disburden it from all notions, empirical as well as preon. He is asked to abolish all restrictions which conceptual pattern necessarily impose. Non-dual knowledge is the abolition of all particular view-points, which restrict and distort Reality. Denial of the views of the Real, however, cannot be considered denial of the Real. It is asserted that appellation ceases with the absence of thought. The Absolute as the essence of all things is not born, nor does it cease to be. Sunyata has been much misunderstood, but it has been stated that those who take Sunyata as a view are incurable. The Real is equated with Sunyata as it defies all predicates.

With Reason thrown overboard, intuition replaces it as a fitter instrument for the apprehension of the Real. Complete and effective disappearance of thought is considered the intuition of the Real, it is not a new emergence, it has been always there, it has only been obscured by thought. Negation of thought is the intuition of the Absolute, it is freedom 'Nirvana' it is perfection. In intuition, knowledge and the Real coincide.

Intuition is described as unfathomable, 'Gambhira' unmeasurable, 'Aprameya', infinite inexpressible, too deep for word, too universal of any distinction to apply. Mind when freed from impediments is perfectly diaphanous, and transparent. In this state it is not distinct from the Real. Intuition in itself is the Absolute. It will be worthwhile to reproduce a passage from Ratna Kula Sutra; the Bodhisatva desiring to adopt the spiritual discipline must cultivate the attitude of unceasing critical alertness with regard to things. What is this alertness? It is this perception of all things in their true form. What is the nature of this true perception ?

"Where there is not the viewing of things of asatman, which does not take 'Rupa', 'matter', 'Vedna Samjha', 'Sanskara', 'Vignana' as eternal or non-eternal. The things are changing; this is one end, that they are not changing is another end. That Reality is substance is one end, that it is only modal is another end. Middle between these two extremes is the unchangeable, the incomparable,

the non-appearing, not comprehensible, without any position that verily is the middle path, the vision of the Real in its true form. All categories of phenomenal existence are denied substantially, neither of these things are established as Real which can be conceived as identical or different from each other. Cause and effect, substance and attributes, whole and parts, subject and object are mutually dependent, are relative and therefore unreal. There is no entity that is not dependent. Relativity or dependence is an invariable mark of the unreal.

The same identity of thought will be found in the conception of "Nirvana" as will be clear from the chapter under this heading.

THE GRANDEUR OF BUDDHA

This book in many places mirrors my attitude towards Buddha. Even then I have felt the need of expressing myself more explicitly in respect of the Buddha's role in Buddhism. I need confess at the very outset that throughout the thirty-four years of my close association with the Buddhist movement in India, my mind and heart have been in conflict with each other on this vexed question.

All the emphasis of the Teachings as I understand it, is on self-reliance. "One has to work out his own salvation for himself, Buddhas only show the way." But despite this knowledge, I have found such a stupendous and staggering difference in my own life as an aspiring individual with the life of the great Teacher that I have always felt overwhelmed. I have studied the life and teachings of other spiritually great men also, in a spirit of faith and reverence but I have found the same difference in their case, although in some respects many of them had come closer to the life of the Lord. His pre-eminence, however, in most fields remains undiminished, as a reminder to the spirit of faith in me, that here is the great Teacher worthy of thy heart's adoration.

My reverence for the Lord therefore frankly borders my sense of worship. If it is not idola-

trous in any sense, the credit for it entirely goes to the robust quality of the Lord's own teachings in this respect. The fact, however, remains and has to be stated with candour that in Buddha I have discovered the Divine in man who is greater than all the gods that may inhabit the numerous heavens of man's imagination and all the boundless divinities in human form which have trodden this earth so far and whose accounts are available for our study. Imagination, faith and inspiration have failed to conceive of a Divinity who could in any respect compare with the Divine in this great teacher of mankind. The use of the word 'outshine' will be an impertinent blasphemy. There are other aspects of this conflict which need also be laid bare. The Reality as I apprehend it, is ineffable, it is beyond all concepts and thought constructions. It lacks all qualities which are in any sense definable. Alternatively it has a universality implicit in it which embraces the locality of all qualities. It transcends thought and its glimmering in intuition leaves no discernible mark of it behind, which would enable me to say even to myself, it is here and it is so. With Reality so transcendental I have acutely felt the need of a suitable symbol, a discernible mark which could adequately express the immanence of the Real in its form and being and radiate it to me and to the world around me. The Lord's life has been to me all these years a symbol of the Real, the inexpressible Word which became flesh to bring the Real nearer to mankind. He has been to me the gateway to the Real, its doorstep and ladder.

In many other respects the expression of divinity in Him has helped me as a wayfarer in the world willing always for the good. Despite all sincere willing the pull of Maya has been always great, and therefore equally great have been my trials and temptations in many ways. Many times I have sinned and fallen into errors, in spite of the higher knowledge that I had. Many a time the error had not been perceivable. In many other instances innocence has been traduced through evil mechanisation. In all these personal trials and tribulations—the faith in the Buddha has been my sheet-anchor in a variety of ways. I have prayed to Him for forgiveness when I had consciously erred. And when the forces round me have proved beyond my own inner strength I have instinctively turned to Him for strength and succour, and need I testify that these acts of faith had brought me help and succour in ample measure. The faith in the Buddha had in brief sanctified my heart and given me strength and consolation. It has helped me greatly in all my trials and tribulations. How can this help be discarded, how can the rich and variable experience of life be denied? The truth has therefore to be told that He who was a man became Divine. In Him the mystic marriage between the spirit and matter was consummated and found its complete fulfilment. He has become the expression of the Divine, and has consented to remain in this world of phenomena out of compassion for gods and men, so that they may see and know Him and through knowing Him, know of the Real.

When His life has such an immense potency for good, when without His manifestation the world remains in utter darkness it can well be understood that His manifestation cannot be left to the utterly inadvertitious circumstances of an aspiring human being, making a sincere effort to get enlightened. There is an inherent dynamic quality in the structure of the phenomenal world for the timely manifestation of Buddha. It is the wisdom and compassion of the Divine that it should be so. It is more the need of the Kalpa and less the fruition of the efforts of an individual which provide for the advent of Buddha. The later efforts, however, have their proper and important place in the Divine mystery. Buddha's advent in any epoch or country therefore is a matter of profound spiritual significance to mankind. It cannot be treated on the same basis, as the advent of a great social or political reformer or of an ardent ethical preacher. He transcends all these narrow concepts as He is all this and very much more, as rediscoverer of the way, unaided through His own effort, for humanity to tread on it to the offshore of Nirvana. But for His advent humanity would remain doomed.

The Teachings that Lord Buddha gives to the world cannot be treated just another teaching. His path is not one amongst the many. It is the only path and His Teachings are the basis of all Teachings. These teachings may have to be reformulated and reinterpreted in every age and country, but these would be

only different modes of expressing it to suit the changing requirement of each country and age. His basic teachings, however, have the quality of unchangeability in them, as they are one with Truth.

According to my conception therefore, Buddha is not only the inheritor of all the efforts that He had made in His successive lives for His great attainment. He is also in the true line of succession to all the Buddhas of the past and is in some way also a manifestation of the world's dynamic urge for a higher spiritual life. In this respect He becomes an Eternal principle finding its expression from time to time according to the varying need of humanity. Its sole purpose is to uplift, to accelerate and to bring happiness and bliss into the life of all creatures, be they gods, men or animals. Since His advent is more in the nature of manifestation and less of an individual rebirth, He cannot be said to have ever left His natural habitation in the world of spirit. He is always in contemplation in His Dharamkaya, a discernible mark of the Real. In this mundane world, we have need to turn to this Dharamkaya, when we seek to know the Real in perfect Bliss. Dharamkaya is the essence and reality of the universe and it is completely free from all traces of duality. It would be, however, not exactly correct to take it as an absolute metaphysical principle, for with all its transcendence, it is still a person, the embodiment of the Absolute. Dharmkaya is the essence of

the Reality. He is manifest also in His body of enjoyment and splendour, "Sambhogkaya" dispensing the benefits of His grace to all those who seek him and pray to Him and who have need of His succour. His Nirmankaya is its outer manifestation in this world of phenomena as a great Teacher of gods and men, making it possible through His Teachings, the path of Nirvana for all living beings. These three bodies of Buddha are necessary for the completion of His work. We all have the potentialities of Buddha in us and we have also in a way these bodies, physical, astral and mental. If it were not so we could have no hope of Buddhahood. The enlightenment is not a new quality born in us, it is more in the nature of the removal of defilements and the outer coverings, which shadow the inner light in us all. It is essentially the dawn of a new awareness of what we truly are. This exposition may cause some surprise, for the tendency has become fashionable to regard Lord Buddha as a great social reformer. As a preacher of the norm and as a well-poised man of great wisdom and compassion and to treat His teachings, as one amongst the many that have been given to us by the spiritually great men of our race. The learned and the wise entrenched in their wisdom, but mere academicians with it all, and lacking the quality of faith, have read in His teachings some restatement of old values or a paraphrasing of the Teaching that are claimed to have been given in older texts. To all these I need say, friend you understand not the

greatness and the true nature of the Buddha—
Is it not sad enough that you should not know
of Him, when He actually came to redeem
and to uplift you. But why misrepresent Him ?

People may now seek to know whether it
would be correct for them to assume that Bud-
dhism is one more religion which believes in the
efficacy of faith in its teacher and as a means of
emancipation. To them I have to state that Lord
Buddha's teachings have the specific quality of
being all-embracive. It views the human being
essentially as the vehicle for the rediscovery of
the universal or transcendental character of
mind or consciousness. It seeks to harness the
whole man and not to develop him fragmenta-
rily. His teachings should never be treated as
one more path, but as an underlying principle
to all paths. His teachings defy all those classi-
fications of Bhakti Marg, Gyan Marg, Karma
Marg and Raja Yoga, which we have come to
associate with fragmentary Teachings. Faith,
wisdom, mindfulness, meditation and action, all
find their full and highest development in Bud-
dhism. It is the all-embracive universality of
the teachings, its emphasis on integration of
the man, which is its specific quality and makes
it the Teachings of all teachings.

Therefore I consider that the conflict be-
tween reason and faith and between the mind
and heart has to continue with every sincere
Buddhist, till he reaches the offshore of Nirva-
na and knows the Real as Itself.

When he does come to it then he would know that the Real cannot know the Truth as it is Truth itself. It cannot declare the Truth for this would need some instruments of communication, which would have need to be both adequate and appropriate. It would not feel that the world had suffered in any way due to Truth not being declared.

It is only then the divine purpose of having Tathagata as a principle of mediation between the Real and the phenomenal world will be appreciated. For only a being enjoying actual existence both in this world of phenomena and in the world of absolute can truly know the Real and reveal it to others. It will then be realised that it is not the function of the Real to reveal, the revelation comes only through a Tathagata.

How can we dispense with what has been provided for our good, for grievously we are likely to suffer if we were to commit any such folly. Confined to the world of phenomena having reason only as our guide, which can function only within the realms of thought concept, which are ultimately its own creations, with sense organs and mind perfumed with Avidya, how can it be possible for us to know the Real, except through an enlightened Teacher. Reason may prove helpful, but would it catch the true significance of Reality without a proper guide. This guidance can only come through a free egoless personality, which is the habitant of both the worlds, the world of the Real and

the world of phenomena, Who will have enough of the phenomena in Him to feel His kinship with His fellow beings and have the feel and the urge to free them from the bondage of Sansara. It is not only His Enlightenment but His Mahakaruna which is of such immense benefit to humanity. No valid argument can be advanced against such a free egoless personality. Freedom does not repel personality; therefore it is the fit object of our reverence and adoration, as it is identical in essence with the Absolute. Having cognised Reality, one can truly become one with it, as in the transcendental plane, no distinction of subject and object holds valid. I need here also express that I unhesitatingly subscribe to the view that although all enlightened men share in a great measure the enlightening quality of the Lord's own experience, they do so with some specific difference. The Enlightenment of Buddha is something beyond the reach of ordinary mortals, they have also not the need of it. Testimony for this view is found even in our most ancient records. The Beloved disciple Ananda, who had thirty years of close association with the Lord in His body of Nirmankaya, has stated that between the great Teacher and even His most enlightened disciple there lay an impassable gulf. The same view is expressed by Sariputra, His chief disciple.

THE HUMAN QUALITIES OF LORD BUDDHA

The human qualities of a teacher are in some respects more important than his teachings as they more truly mirror the greatness of the man. This greatness has its foundation in the virtues that form part of this nature and to that extent each follower can have confidence that if he was also to persevere he could also develop these virtues.

Unfortunately, however, monastic records have not preserved much of this part of the Lord's life. The picture that has been tried to be presented is of a mystic who for the most part of His life was wrapt in meditation. The fact, however, is that the best part of His time was spent amongst people, ministering to their diverse needs, assuaging their grief, listening patiently to their problems and showing them a better way of living which would enable them to have a happier and a richer life. A few incidents of the Lord's life are being narrated here to bring out the human qualities of the Lord's nature and to illustrate His Teachings.

Suffer children to come unto me

The monastic records have not preserved many incidents of Lord Buddha's dealings with

the children. There was obviously not much interest in these narratives. A few examples have, however, come down to us and these bring out His great love for children. Some Jaina children were playing near Jetavana and felt thirsty. Their parents had, however, instructed them not to visit Jetavana which was the establishment of a rival sect. Lord Buddha, however, lovingly brought them to Jetavana and served them with water. He also told them that they were always welcome to the place and could come there and quench their thirst.

One of the sisters had entered the order of nuns when she was in an advanced stage of pregnancy, which fact was, however, not known to her. As days passed by her state came to be known and there was much criticism of her in the Sangha. The Lord, however, interceded on behalf of the distressed mother and had the child brought up with great loving care.

His sermon to the daughters of Mendaka so that they make good housewives and lead a happy life, His journey to Champa to relieve the distress of a young lady whom he had known as a sweet child, are shining examples of His great love and affection for children. So great was the charm of his gracious personality, that children could not fail to gather round Him wherever He went.

Ministers to the sick

There are quite a few instances recorded in Buddhist literature which show the Lord's soli-

citude for the sick, the aged and the infirm. One evening, after a tiring journey the Lord reached a monastery where apparently everything was in a good state. As was usual with Him, He enquired about the welfare of the resident Bhikkhus and was assured that all was well with them. When, however, He retired for His rest He heard groans of a man who was lying sick somewhere in the monastery and was apparently in great pain. Enquiries disclosed the fact that a Bhikkhu was ill and was neglected by others, both because he was not liked and also as he was suffering from a foul disease. Lord Buddha immediately attended to this monk and along with Ananda bathed him and washed his uncleanliness. He tended him throughout his sickness and did not leave the monastery till he was fully restored to health. He admonished the Bhikkhus for neglecting the sick man and preached to them a sermon, "You, monks, have no mothers and no fathers to wait on you. If you do not wait on one another who will wait on you. Whosoever would wait on me let him wait on the sick." Another example that has come down to us is His attendance on Vakkali who was suffering from some serious and painful sickness. He spent a good deal of His time at his bedside, ministered to his needs, consoled and uplifted him but alas the sickness proved too much for the Bhikkhu and he eventually committed suicide. The Buddha also attended Vakkali's funeral.

Sincere Love for People Round Him

Lord Buddha's solicitude for the well-being

of His disciples and those that came in touch with him and looked to Him for support and guidance knew no bounds. Whenever He visited a monastic establishment He made earnest enquiries about their health and well-being. He invariably enquired whether they had been well provided for by the laity with the means of livelihood. Quarrels and bickerings in large monastic establishments were frequent and possibly on that account, as also due to the fact that He placed special value on peace, amity and concord, He always enquired whether these conditions had prevailed in the monastic establishments during "Vasa." Similar enquiries were made from all Bhikkhus who visited Him. After these enquiries about the physical well-being of the man had been made He referred to their spiritual problems.

Bhikkhu from Avanti

When a young Bhikkhu visited Him from far off Avanti, a place which the Lord had not visited, He received the Bhikkhu with very great affection and kindness, enquired of his well-being and the well-being of the small community that had gathered round Mahakaccana. He had the young Bhikkhu's bed spread out in His own room and treated him in every way as His own personal guest.

When He was invited to meals with His Bhikkhus He never began the meal till He had made sure that all the Bhikkhus that had been

invited had come and He never finished His own meal till He had made sure that all others who had sat for a meal with Him had finished. He never departed from a house without blessing it and giving to the members suitable religious instructions which gladdened their heart and established them in spiritual well-being.

Asks for a meal

One evening while He was delivering a sermon to a large gathering it was disturbed by the visit of a man who attended the sermon late. The audience naturally resented this late attendance and murmured their resentment. The defaulting party expressed his sincere regret and explained that he had been delayed as he had gone in search of a strayed ox and had hurried to attend the sermon without even taking his meal. When this information reached the Lord's ears He suspended His sermon, had a meal first served to the hungry man and then resumed His discourse.

Another example

Another example of His loving care has been recorded by the recipient Bhikkhu in the Theragatha, "I had been cast out from my house. I strayed to the place where the Lord was staying. I sat at the doorway weeping. The Lord came to me, He touched my head and He brought me inside. He provided me with water and towel to clean and refresh my body". It were these little acts of personal kindness

which endeared Him so greatly to the people round Him.

On Roja the Mallan prince the Lord poured out such an affluence of love that he could not help following the Lord as a calf follows the cow. He would not permit the monks to drive away a demented woman from Him. He would not permit Ananda to keep away the aged and much enquiring Sumedha at His deathbed, as He was interested in the personal well-being of both these persons and both of them were made whole spiritually. To save any reproach to Chunda the blacksmith whose meal had proved so fatal He proclaimed that of all the gifts that had been given to Him by devout laymen, Chunda's gift of the last meal will rank with that of Sujata. His words to Ananda are worth repetition.

“It may happen, Ananda, that some one might stir up regret in Chunda the metal-worker by saying, ‘It is no gain to you friend Chanda, it is an ill-gotten thing for you Chunda that the Tathagata passed away after eating His last meal at your hands.’ Any regret so arising Ananda in Chunda the metal-worker should be banished by saying to him face to face ‘Friend Chunda, with the Exalted one did I hear it said, face to face I received the saying.’ These two meals are of like fruit and merit and what are they, that meal after eating of which the Tathagata was enlightened and that meal after eating which the Tathagata passed away”.

He had disclosed great solicitude for the aged Sariputra, for Ananda His faithful and loving disciple and for Anath Pindika the great philanthropist in their trials and tribulations and sufferings, many instances of which are preserved in our texts.

Accepts advice from all

A wrong impression seems to exist and it has been created by our texts that His communion with His disciples and all those that came to Him was always a one-way traffic, in which all that He had to do was to give a discourse after which the audience dispersed. His communion with His people was, however, very much more intimate. He not only gave them advice but also patiently listened to every advice that was given to Him, and all that was good was accepted by Him gladly and cheerfully. He had the dynamic nature which absorbed all that was good in the sum total of humanity and uplifted it to a still higher plane. Nothing that was good was foreign to Him as it partook of His own essential goodness.

There are many instances recorded of things which had not occurred to Him in the first instance but when they came to His notice He immediately took cognisance of them and provided for or against them. All these find mention in the Vinaypitaka. Many instances are also recorded in which He gladly accepted advice from His lay friends and a few are being mentioned here for illustration.

When Rahula was initiated as a monk the aged grandfather Suddhodana was struck with grief and expressed his grief in the following moving words :—

“Lord”, he said, “When the Blessed One went forth it was no small grief to me, so when Nanda did, very great is it now that Rahula has done so. The love of a son cuts the skin, having cut the skin it cuts the hide, it cuts in like order into flesh, the sinews, the bones, the marrow. It would be well Lord if their reverences admitted no son without the consent of his father and his mother and Buddha made it a rule accordingly.”

He readily accepted king Bimbisara’s advice for observing the weekly upsatha days. He accepted the suggestion from Vishakha that nuns need have an extra clothing for their body so that they may be better able to maintain their modesty. He accepted the advice of Ananda and established the order of Nuns. He accepted Jivaka’s advice for Bhikkhus having only one midday meal and taking open air exercises. He also accepted the physicians’ advice that sick be not initiated in the Sangha as they become a burden to it. He introduced the Vasa, *i.e.* 4 months’ retreat on hearing criticism against His wandering monks.

When Rajagriha was facing famine He accepted the suggestion that monks be fed only by special invitation or by distribution of tickets. At a very early period in His ministry He

accepted the suggestion that monks may accept gifts of cloth which must be, however, strictly limited to their requirements and also gifts of huts and Viharas for residence. He permitted Mahakaccana to have a chapter of less than ten monks, when He became aware of Mahakaccana's difficulty in getting a larger body. He permitted the use of shoes and of coverings of skins to monks residing in hilly regions as soon as He became aware of their difficulties. The use of garlic was not encouraged in the Sangha but He remonstrated with Sariputra and pressed Him to take garlic when it was prescribed to him as a medicine."

He kept His mind always open for new ideas and suggestions and was ever willing to modify or cancel a rule when any difficulties in its observation were brought to His notice. It was not mere magnanimity, it was through conviction that He had spoken to Ananda at His deathbed, "If the Sangha so wishes Ananda let it when I have passed away abolish the minor precepts."

The Lord discouraged idolatrous worship of His person. Worship of a higher being or beings is inculcated in some shape or form in almost all religions. Religions which believe in God or in gods and goddesses exalt this worship to the highest. In all these religions a secondary place is assigned to efforts for self-improvement. Even virtue in thoughts, words and deeds is made dependent on the pleasure

of the deity, where due to false teachings or superstitious beliefs, it is held that an immoral act will be found more pleasing to the deity or some magic formula, ritual or chants will be more acceptable to him, virtue is given a go-bye and the efforts of the devotees are directed towards the accomplishment of the immoral act. This may be as heinous as the sacrifice of a person or animal. Unchastity, use of intoxicants, etc. is treated as lightly as the performance of some magic ritual and ceremony. Efforts for self-improvement and for perfection in the practice of virtue in thoughts, words and deeds are made only when it is believed that these will be pleasing to the deity.

The Teachings of Saints

As against this saints and sages have always preached that earnest and sincere efforts for self-improvement and practice of virtue has its own reward.

It is through self-improvement that a man grows into the divine and recovers his lost heritage. The true function of a saint or sage is to act as a guide, to radiate goodness, preach goodness and be an example of goodness. The true saint and sage never inculcates His own worship on the disciples. In fact he discourages all tendencies which transcend the bounds of reverence and affection and tend towards idolatrous worship.

Whatever views may be held on this matter in other religions which have some great

teachers as their guide we have a very clear indication of the Lord's stand in this matter. He did not claim any divinity for Himself. Nor did He claim any powers which could uplift a disciple who will not make the effort for himself for the higher state.

The Parable of the man who loses his way

When Maggalana the Brahmin accountant questioned the Lord, how was it that some of His disciples were able to attain Nirvana and perfect themselves in virtue, others did not, the Lord gave him the parable of the two men who had enquired from the accountant of the way leading to Rajagriha, one man took the road pointed out to him and reached Rajagriha safely while the other took to the wrong road and lost his way. He enquired from the Brahmin, "Now Brahmin what is the reason, what is the cause. Here we have Rajagriha, here we have the road to Rajagriha and we have you as the instructor. But after all your advice and instructions one man took the wrong road and went west while the other man got safe to Rajagriha. Is that my business master Gautama? I am just the shower of the way." Having brought home the lesson to the Brahmin the Lord stated, "Well Brahmin, here we have Nirvana, here we have the way to Nirvana and here stand I as instructor of the way, yet some of my disciples thus advised and trained by me do attain to Nirvana and others do not attain, what do I in the matter Brahmin? The Tathagata is one who only shows the way."

The Lord claimed no special sacredness for His physical body as well. When Ananda asked Him at His deathbed, "How Lord are we to deal with the body of the Tathagata?" He said, "Worry not about the body rites of the Tathagata, look you Ananda, strive for your own welfare, apply yourself to your own welfare, dwell heedful, ardent and resolute." That His body was subject to the same process of decay as the body of any other mortals and His spirit felt the same measure of pain due to its sickness, except that He bore them with courage and fortitude, is also made clear by the Lord in following touching words which cannot fail to move the heart. "As for me, Ananda, I am now a broken down old man, aged, far gone in years, I have reached the journey's end. I have come to life's limit. My age is turning now eighty years. Just as, Ananda, a worn out cart is kept going by being tied together with helps even so, methinks Ananda, the Tathagata's body is kept going by helps", and further, "Only at times when the Tathagata withdraws His attention from all externals by the ceasing of His several feelings by entering on and abiding in the objectless concentration of mind only at such times Ananda is the Tathagata's body at ease."

When He discovered Ananda weeping at His deathbed He again exhorted him, "Enough Ananda, sorrow not, lament not. Have I not said to you ere now Ananda? In all things dear and delightful there is the element of

change, separation and of otherness ? How then can it be possible Ananda that what is born, what has come to be, what is put together, what is of nature to crumble away should fail to crumble away. It cannot be.”

When the Lord visited Vakkali at his death-bed he told the Lord that he will now die in peace as his last wish which was to see the Lord had been fulfilled. The Lord stated in reply, “Oh, Vakkali what is in this foul body, which is subject to decay and death to be pleased about ?”

In spite of these clear indications from the Lord, idolatrous worship of the Lord’s mortal remains and of His disciples and of His statues has become the accepted feature of Buddhism. To the extent this worship is an expression of our reverence and affection for the Lord and His memory and a symbol for our own self-improvement, it is good and worthy of respect. But at the stage this worship becomes idolatrous and we begin to feel that we acquire any merit through this worship or when we believe that the Lord’s own or His disciples mortal remains or their statues have any supernormal potent charm about them, we become superstitious in our worship and act against the spirit of the Lord’s teachings.

I adhere to this conviction in spite of some passages, in our literature in which it has been put into Lord’s mouth that worship of His mortal remains and the stupas built over them or a pilgrimage to four holy spots, *i. e.* the place

where He was born, attained enlightenment, delivered His first sermon and entered into Mahaparinirvana, will earn merit. The only merit that we rightly acquire through these acts of reverence is that we get nearer in our spirit to the Lord and through this nearness our spirit becomes purer and is made more perfect.

The Lord was so very humble about Himself that once when visiting a prince He refused to walk on the cloth that was laid for His reception as He stated that He would be setting a bad precedent if He accepted this extravagant distinction. On another occasion He refused to accept the gift of a hand-woven cloth from His own step-mother Prajapati as He desired that all gifts should be made to the Sangha where He would receive His proper share.

Rebuke to Sariputra

We will close this chapter by mentioning one more incident that occurred with Sariputra. After our Lord had delivered a most enlightening discourse Sariputra became so gladdened in his heart that he burst into a song of praise for the Lord and stated that the like of Him had not been born on this earth nor would be born again. This extravagant praise was, however, not liked by the Lord and He quietly enquired from Sariputra whether he had any yardstick to measure the greatness of men. When Sariputra confessed that he had no such yardstick with him, the Lord told him that such extravagant praise from the mouth of a discreet

person did not sound well. More need not be said on this subject. Hints are sufficient for the wise. The correct attitude for a Buddhist is to follow the golden mean. No one should receive the extravagance of personal worship and no one even the lowliest need be despised. Every person should receive the respect and consideration that is due to him as a human being.

Kindness towards animals

In the very first chapter of this book we have given a clear indication of the fact that our Lord had very great compassion for the animal world. This was a most sublime and beautiful characteristic of the Blessed One's life. The incidents that find mention are too numerous to be recounted and if we were to add to them the incidents that are narrated in the Jataka tales, of His very great kindness towards animals, it will well overflow a volume.

Many examples

As a young boy the Blessed One was moved to pity when His cousin Deva Dutta shot down a swan and He lovingly nursed the wounded bird back to life and health. As a wayfarer in quest of truth He took compassion on a wounded lamb who was being mercilessly driven along with its mother and other animals for sacrifice at the king's yagna. He lovingly took the lamb in His lap and offered His own head in its place on the sacrificial block and delivered

a beautiful and moving sermon on Ahinsa which saved the life of the herd and made the great king abandon sacrificial yagnas for all time. As a Buddha He admonished the naughty children who were teasing fishes in a dried up pond near His monastery.

All these instances and the entire trend of His teaching are convincing proof that He had prohibited killing of animals for sacrifice, sports and meat and all that is written in the Tripitaka to the contrary indicating any compromise on this subject, to say the least does not correctly represent Him.

The more correct representation of His attitude towards animals has come down to us in the Lalitvistara whose immortal rendering in English verse has been given by Sir Edwih Adnold in "The Light of Asia" :—

“Then, craving leave, He spoke
of life, which all can take but none can give,
Life which all creatures love and strive to
keep,
Wonderful, clear, and pleasant with each,
Even to the meanest, yea a boon to all
where pity is, for pity makes the world
soft to the weak and noble for the strong.
Unto the dumb lips of His flock He lent
sad pleading words, showing how man, who
prays

for mercy to the Gods is merciless,
Being as god to those, albeit all life
Is linked and kin, and what we slay have
given

Meek tribute of the milk and wool, and set
Fast trust upon the hand which murder them.
In other places the Lord had stated :—

“All tremble at punishment,
All fear death.

Comparing others with oneself
One should neither kill nor cause to be killed.
All tremble at punishment,
To all life is dear.

Comparing others with oneself
One should neither kill nor cause to be
killed.”

“From the meanest worm up to a man, you
shall kill no animal.”

“Whatsoever but shall have regard for life,
Let him not destroy or cause to be destroyed
any life
at all or sanction the acts of those who do
so.”

“Let, him refrain even from hurting any
creature both those
that are strong and those that tremble in the
world.”

“Suffuse the world with friendliness, let all creatures both strong and weak see nothing in you that will bode them harm and they will then learn the ways of peace.”

“Putting away murder of that which lives he abstains from destroying life. The cudgel and the sword he lays aside and full of modesty and pity he is compassionate and kind to all creatures that have life.”

“If a man lives a hundred years and engages the whole of his time and attention in religious offerings to the Gods, sacrificing elephants, horses and other things, all this is not equal to one act of pure love in saving life”.

Reverence and sympathy towards Women

The bulk of the Buddhist teachings have come to us through monastic sources and they do not therefore give us a correct picture of Lord Buddha's attitude towards women. There can be no denying the fact that at the young age of twenty-nine years, under the impelling influence of His times He renounced His hearth and home, His aged parents, a beloved and loving wife and a newly born child and spent six years in practising the severest austerities which He eventually gave up as useless.

When after six years He became fully enlightened He returned to the world not as an

inconspicuous householder, tending His family and ruling over the destiny of a small principality, but as an incomparable Teacher who delivered a great message for the benefit of mankind. So greatly was He taken up with His great mission that He not only spent His own life on it but He also recruited all noble men of high endeavour whom He could gather for the noble task.

All these men bade good-bye to their hearths and homes and like Him led a monastic life. The largest single contingent was recruited from people of His own clan. His brother cousins, brothers-in-law and son joined Him.

Men from all stations of life were recruited and some of these men came to Him from other monastic establishments. There can be also no denying the fact that before this noble land of people He held out the ideal of a monastic life and also enforced on them a fairly rigid discipline which helped them to live their new life.

If one were to make a sincere study of the conditions obtaining in the Lord's time he cannot help reaching the conclusion that it was not possible for the Lord to fulfil His noble mission without living a monastic life and recruiting for it a noble band of people. The need of a highly organised monastic order continued for a long time afterwards. In fact it is only in recent times that conditions have so much changed for the better that one can dis-

pense with it. Nobody can deny that a strictly celibate life was an absolute necessity for an itinerant preacher and it was equally necessary for the monk to take the vow of poverty and non-possession.

Made no difference

But all these factors did not in any way affect Lord Buddha's attitude towards the fair sex. He held them in very great esteem as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters and owed them much in life. Even those who had strayed from the strict path of virtue received from Him a saint's love, sympathy and assistance in rehabilitating their life. He had the misfortune of losing His divine mother when He was only seven days old. This must have been a matter of deep personal regret. The aunt and step-mother who tended Him, as her own dearly beloved child, received from Him the respect which was due to her as a mother and as a saint. She eventually became the head of the order of nuns and is remembered in Buddhist literature as Maha Prajapati Gautami. On the day of His renunciation He is believed to have given His last loving glances to His dearly beloved wife and child and another account credits Him with having reverently taken three rounds of the bridal bed.

A Graceful Act

When after attaining enlightenment He returned to Kapilvastu for a family reunion He found that all had come to greet Him

except His own dear wife and with love and courtesy so characteristic of Him He made enquiries about her and went to greet her in her own palace. The two disciples who accompanied Him were told not to place any hindrance in the way of the princess even if she were to embrace Him. He told them, "I am free, the princess, however, is not as yet free. Not having seen me for a long time she is exceedingly sorrowful, unless her grief be allowed its course her heart will cleave. Should she even touch the Tathagata, you must not prevent her"

The simple and beautiful incident narrated with characteristic frankness and candour gives a lie to all statements that He ever considered married life as vulgar and low. It is also mentioned that to console His noble partner He told her that she was a sharer in His enlightenment and that in many previous births of which she had no memory she had helped Him in diverse ways to reach His present state and made great sacrifices for their common cause.

Sujata's gift

In the very story of the Lord's enlightenment is woven the story of a mother's loving offering of a dish of rice cooked in milk of well-tended cows which rapidly nourished His famished body and recouped His strength. Mother Sujata's gift has been ranked as one of the two most pre-eminent of all gifts made to our Lord and

the very mention of her name arouses a fervour of devotion in the heart of all Buddhists.

Others who share

Other mothers whose names shine out in the annals of our Lord's life for their acts of faith, affection, love, reverence and selfless offering are Vishakha the talented wife of Purnavardhana and daughter-in-law of Migara the merchant prince of Sarvasti.

Viskakha

This noble daughter of Bengal was wise beyond her years and her wise counsel was greatly welcome to the Lord in solving knotty and difficult problems which cropped up from time to time in connection with the order of nuns. Her humility was as great as her charity and she felt privileged and blessed when her gifts were accepted.

A beautiful story is told about her gift of a monastery to our Lord. She had once gone to a fair and was wearing a costly head-dress of jewellery. Returning from the fair she could not resist the desire to pay her respects to the Lord who was in residence at Jetawana Vihar which was close by. She could not, however, think of presenting herself before the Lord while wearing her costly jewellery, and therefore took the same out and gave the bundle to her accompanying maidservant for safe custody. This bundle containing a precious charge was through forgetfulness left behind by the maid-

servant in the main hall of the monastery and was discovered by Ananda who kept it safely, for being reclaimed by the rightful owner. No sooner Visakha discovered her loss, she returned post-haste to search for the missing bundle. When, however, Ananda delivered the bundle, thought came to the devout lady that by his very touch Ananda had sanctified the jewels and made them unfit for mortal wear and she sold them to provide funds for building the spacious double-storeyed monastery which is so frequently mentioned in the Buddhist texts as the Eastern monastery.

A unique tribute

Her apostate father-in-law the great merchant prince Migara after his conversion to Buddhism paid the unique tribute of owning Visakha the great benefactress as his little mother and in all our literature Visakha is known as Migara's mother.

Ambapali is one other great name which has come down in history and numerous are the tales that are connected with this beautiful courtesan's love life. The Lord had strayed into her famous garden for a night's rest and when the news of His blessed stay was conveyed to her, she was beside herself and rode post-haste to make comfortable arrangements for the Lord's stay and she also requested Him for a meal at her place next day. As invitation came from a penitent heart it was immediately accepted.

The Lichhavi nobles in their shining dress

and dazzling jewellery, seated in golden chariots, came a little later and remonstrated vainly with the Lord to give preference to their invitation. They also offered large sums of money to the courtesan for exchanging this unique honour, but the brave girl, who had been transformed by one contact with the Lord, spurned the offer with the remark that even the gift of the entire domain of the Lichhavi Republic was not a fair price for foregoing such a unique honour as to be the first in Vesali to fill in a beggar's bowl with alms. Next day after Lord Buddha had dined at her house with His company of disciples, she made the gift of her entire property for the Dhamma and entered the Sangha as a nun. Ambapali soon rose to be a saint poetess of great distinction and is amongst the immortals who trode the path of virtue and attained perfection in spite of their dubious past.

Patachara

Patachara is another great name in our records. As a girl she had eloped with her own servant and had two children by him. While she was returning to Sarvasti for a reconciliation with her parents she lost her lover and her two children in most tragic circumstances. Nearing Sarvasti she also learnt the news of the tragic death of her parents and brother in a house collapse a night previous.

These lightning strokes of misfortunes completely deranged her and in this state of mental

anguish and with absolutely no covering on her nude body she was seen coming towards the Lord when Bhikkhus tried to chase her away. "Suffer the mother to come to me", said the Lord and asked Ananda to throw a robe on her body. This robe became her wear for sainthood and she rose to be the leader of a band of five hundred nuns who took pride in her leadership.

Vimala

Vimala the beautiful dancer and many others tasted the bliss of Nirvana under the Lord's guidance. Dharma Dinā the great missionary preacher, Sundari Nanda, the Lord's own half-sister, Kashima the queen of Bimbisara who became a nun, His own wife Yashodhra, Uttara and Kujjali the hunchback are other distinguished names amongst the many who have become immortal. The number of those who had received rough treatment from the world and who were helped to rehabilitate themselves under His divine guidance was truly great.

The last tribute

The last and most touching tribute came from the aged Mallan princess, the widow of the Kosalan Commander-in-Chief, who in her youth had fired her warrior husband to acts of unsurpassed valour. He, however, lost his life with his eight valiant sons in a treacherous ambush. When the Lord's body was being carried in a procession through the streets of Kusinara the widowed princess made an humble offering of

all her costly jewellery and laid it reverently on His bier.

A man who could inspire so much love, affection and reverence in the heart of women could not have possibly treated them with any disdain and contempt. It could not have been possible for the Lord to inspire confidence in Ambapali and Patchara or assuage the grief of a Krishna Gautami if His compassionate heart had seen them as Mara's snares.

Love of a little girl

So great was His love for some of them that for one small sister of Sarvasti who was unhappily married in distant Champa in Bihar, He walked all that distance to intercede on her behalf and bring sanity to the people of her household who had been maltreating her.

He showed similar solicitude for queen Mallika and brought about a reconciliation between her royal consort. On another occasion when the Lord noticed signs of dejection on the face of the Koalan king, when the news of the birth of a daughter was given to him, He remonstrated with him and told him that birth of a daughter must be hailed with the same delight as the birth of a son.

I have mentioned all these incidents and episodes to bring out the fact that it would not be correct for us to entirely rely on records which have come down to us from monastic sources to get a true picture of the Lord's views on

many matters, specially those that concern with the women and the householder's life.

It will be more helpful and possibly we will get a more correct picture if we turn for guidance to these episodes of His life and to His sermons to householders, some of which have fortunately come down to us. We can also seek inspiration from a verse of Mangala sutra in which the Lord has showered high praise on a house-holder's life.

“Much learning and much science.
And discipline well learned.
Yea and a pleasant utterance.
This is the great blessing.
The support of mother and father.
The cherishing of child and wife.
To follow a peaceful livelihood.
This is the greatest blessing.
Giving of alms, the righteous life.
To cherish kith and kin.
And to do deeds that bring no blame.
This is the greatest blessing.

He was great lover of Solitude

Buddha spent most of His life amidst people. He worked and toiled for them ceaselessly and every minute of His life. He did not spare himself this effort even on His deathbed. But with all that He was a great lover of solitude and lost no opportunity in cultivating the practice of quiet

contemplation and He took to it regularly every day. This practice of quiet contemplation gave Him poise and inner strength. It enabled Him to bear all His trials and tribulations with good cheer and serenity. It enabled Him to maintain His sense of detachment and equanimity. He had firmly established Himself in Truth and He had perfected Himself in every way. He had become the great seer. He had eradicated all His asavas, still He felt the need of quiet contemplation. How much more do we need it? No one can reach perfection and even acquire efficiency in his work unless he cultivates love of solitude and practises meditation.

The Lord once had occasion to speak about His habit of quiet contemplation to a Brahman. "Brahman, perhaps you may entertain the thought that up till now Gautama has not been freed from worldly attachments and it is to get rid of these attachments that He retires to a lonely place and practises contemplation. I, however, tell unto you that such thoughts would not be correct. I practise quiet contemplation for my own well-being and for the good of the world so that people may follow my example and benefit from it." This habit of quiet contemplation was a part of His divine nature. Even as a child of eight or nine years while watching the ploughing festival He had lost Himself in ecstasy. Immediately after leaving His house He spent seven days in the Anupuya mango grove in the joy of retirement. Once

Ajatsatru went to pay his homage to the Lord on a moonlit night and felt much surprised when on reaching the monastery he noticed the pindrop silence of the place where over twelve hundred Bhikkhus were in residence and each one of them was absorbed with the Lord in quiet contemplation. So greatly fond was the Lord of quietness that He prohibited the use of wooden sandals in monastic establishments.

Pukkhusa the Mallan once expressed his surprise when he found the Lord wrapt in deep contemplation. "It is wonderful, revered sir, it is strange, revered sir, how those who have gone forth, dwell in calm abstraction". The Lord then narrated to Pukkhusa one incident when He sat in quiet contemplation in a threshing floor and got so absorbed in it that He remained oblivious to the great storm that had raged outside and had caused the death of two brothers and four oxen which were struck with lightning. He always exhorted His disciples to lead a life of quiet contemplation and not to resist the coming of the ecstasy. He also enjoined the silence of the wise but with that reasonableness and restraint which was so characteristic of Him, He condemned the practice of silence for prolonged periods. Contemplation for Him was the means to an end and was not the end itself.

Charity towards all

Lord Buddha was noted for His charity towards all. Saints, sages, sinners, revilers, opponents, all had the same uniform courteous treatment from

Him. He did not speak ill of anybody, nor did He ever permit His disciples to speak ill of anybody. He also bore patiently with those who reviled Him and treated with remarkable courtesy all His opponents. He was ever keen to cultivate friendship even with persons who differed from Him on fundamentals.

He admonished His monks not to lose their patience, when any one spoke ill of Him in their presence, as praise and disparagement did not in any way affect Him. When Sinha the Lichchavi Commander accepted the Lord as his teacher and guide He cautioned him against a hasty decision. He also advised him to continue his charity towards the monks of the Jain faith as the commander's family had been well known for its charity towards Jain monks.

When the Jatila leaders came to accept Him as their teacher He advised them to first take counsel amongst themselves. The Lord had differed from His two early teachers but He continued to hold them in high esteem. His five disciples forsook Him when He accepted the gift of a dish from Sujata but this betrayal did not effect His love and solicitude for their spiritual welfare, and to give them the glad tidings of a new teaching, He undertook the arduous journey from Uruvella to Sarnath. He was reviled as a shaveling and outcaste, as a low-born, as a beggar and heretic. He was even accused of the guilt of unchastity and seduction but He always maintained His com-

posure even against the gravest of provocations. Several murderous attempts were made on His life but all these personal trials and tribulations did not affect His innate sense of magnanimity towards all those who caused Him injury. With charity towards all and enmity towards none, He truly lived a life of peace and concord with all.

HE SUFFERED TO REDEEM A SUFFERING HUMANITY

We have touched on some aspects of the Lord's life in previous chapters. It is necessary, however, to throw light on some other aspects of His life which do not seem to have received sufficient attention.

The cup of bitterness

There is a general impression that after completion of His Tapasya at Uruvella the Lord had unprecedented success in His mission and received little or no opposition. Our own literature has sought in some way to create this impression. A critical study of the Buddhist literature would, however, disclose that in many respects His experience was not different from the experience of any other great teacher. The Lord was at the very height of His powers as a world teacher in the closing days of His life. The picture, however, which comes to us through the Mahaparinirvanasutra is that except for the fact that He retained His composure through all His trials and tribulations, He had His cup of bitterness like other teachers of mankind.

The dynastic revolutions

The tide had turned against the Lord in many ways before He laid down His body between the twin Sal trees at Kusinara. There were dynastic revolutions both in Magadha and Kosala and two Royal patrons of Dhamma, Bimbisara and Prasenjit, were not only deposed but died as unhappy men in dire distress and disgrace. The new rulers who had usurped the throne by committing parricide were not at all friendly to the great teacher and His mission. Ajatsatru of Magadha remained for a long time an active supporter of Deva Dutta and the Kosalan king not only put to sword every adult member of the Sakyan clan but razed the capital city to ground. He was perhaps also responsible for reviving the worship of a previous Buddha whose discipline Deva Dutta claimed to follow in His domain.

Disowned by his own clan

His own kinsmen at Devadaha were none too friendly to the Lord and there is mention of abuse being poured on His venerable head by His maternal uncle and father-in-law.

In his own Sakyan clan He had come to be disowned by many and there is mention of the hostile reception given to Him in several Sakyan villages. Things were no better in Magadha and Vesali. In one Brahman village in Magadha He could not get a morsel to eat.

Hostility from Jains

At Vesali the Jains had publicly demonstrated against Him and had tried to bring Him into disrepute. They plotted against Him even at Sarvasti and brought highly defamatory charges against Him. Anatha Purdaka had been a tower of strength to the new Church, but he was reduced to penury and died in great poverty.

Factions in Sangha

Sangha seems to have become a heterogeneous and cumbersome body. Disputes in the Sangha were most frequent and the Lord was hard put to it in composing its factional disputes. Lapses from the high moral standard were also equally plentiful and forced the Lord to frame new rules from time to time. The defection of Deva Dutta was perhaps only one amongst a series, for we find mention of many other Bhikkhus coming to the Lord and threatening to leave the Sangha on some minor rule of discipline or a particular exposition of the Dhamma.

The schism at Kausambi could only be composed when the laity withdrew its support from both the warring sections. This is a clear indication of the fact that the Lord's own efforts in this direction were of no avail.

Some of His most noted disciples had predeceased Him. This included Sariputra and Maudgalyana, Mahaprajapati Gautami, Rahula,

and Yashodhara. The death of these noted disciples was a great blow to the new movement. It had become increasingly difficult to maintain a unity of purpose in the heterogeneous elements which had managed to secure admittance into the Sangha. Quite an important section had marked leanings for the cheerless and more austere way of life advocated by Deva Dutta and possibly Mahakashyapa who came to be chosen as the leader in the first council, superseding many of his seniors, himself headed this section.

We get a glimpse of the Lord's disappointment on this sorry state of affairs in the Sangha in one of the Lord's sermons. He states in this sermon that some of His disciples lived only on fruits and nuts gathered from jungle trees and shrubs, others restricted themselves further still, by confining themselves to only one particular fruit and even there limiting themselves to one or half a fruit daily. Others denied themselves the use of monasteries and preferred to live under trees. Some others went still further and denied themselves even this little shelter and had only sky as their shelter.

The same restrictions had been imposed in respect of clothing. Not only silk had been discarded altogether but some wore only home-spun cloth, while some others wore clothes made from cast off rags. The Lord, however, emphatically states that despite all these diversities of practices in the Sangha He follows the more sober and sensible way of not attaching any value to these

matters. His main concern was for the inner transformation of man and promoting his happiness and welfare and his growth into wisdom. The picture of the Sangha that we get is not in many ways different from the conditions obtaining in other monastic establishments.

It would not be correct to make any dogmatic assertion, but the impression that I get from the Mahaparinirvana sutra is that when Lord set out from Rajagriha on His last journey, perhaps Ananda was His sole companion. It is customary in the Buddhist texts to mention a company of five or twelve hundred Bhikkhus accompanying the Lord and stray mention of this number here and there cannot entirely redeem the absence of any other name in all His discourses on this last fateful journey. The Sangha that partook of Chunda's hospitality was perhaps the local community living at Pava and those that gathered round His deathbed perhaps were members of the residential community at Kusinara. It will be wrong to state that the Lord had been completely forsaken by His own community of monks in His last days but do we not get an inkling of some rift, at least of some simmering dissatisfaction in the heart of the leader with His following. Does not Ananda's request for a last message disclose an anxiety for the future and some premonition of the coming events at Rajagriha where he was to be temporarily put into disgrace? Was it the popular clamour against the ruling

clique's decision or Ananda's sudden enlightenment that compelled the powers that be to give him a place in their councils? I am inclined to believe that it was the popular clamour.

Another wrong impression

Another wrong impression that seems to exist is that the Lord had given a teaching which was in opposition to Vedic tradition. A careful reading of the Tripitika would, however, disclose the fallacy of this belief. The Lord's opposition to the prevalent Hindu religion was confined to a few important issues. He did not recognise the divinity of the Vedas. He did not concede the Brahmanical claim of superiority by birth. He did not believe in an unchangeable and immutable Atta or Atma and considered that its growth and transformation has to be willed. He did believe in the gods in heaven but He did not assign them any place of importance in human destiny, for according to Him this destiny has to be worked out by each individual partly for himself and partly jointly with others. These were the main planks of His opposition to the Aryan school of thought and He did refer the priests to the period when the aberration of belief and heresies which He criticised had not crept in their creed. His main opposition was against the heretical schools itself who laid much store on the ascetic way of life. His success against the contemporary teachers of these schools was more marked but so far as the Brahmanical teachers were concerned His

success was only partial. In this respect it can be truly stated that His was an unfinished mission which was left to be completed by the Sangha.

The Sangha undoubtedly would have met with a tremendous success if its members had concerned themselves with the pith of the Lord's teachings, and had continued to evince the same solicitude for promoting human weal and happiness which had characterised the Lord. Instead philosophy, ritualism, Tantra, formalism and minor rules of discipline became its main concern and preoccupation.

People feel surprised that after fifteen hundred years of sway in the sub-continent the Dhamma ceased to have any votaries in India and Brahmanism managed to stage a comeback. To me, however, this phenomena has caused no surprise whatsoever as I am clear in my mind that the social life of the Indian masses had largely remained unchanged despite their adherence to the Buddhist faith. Forty-five years was too short a period for a message to take root in a vast sub-continent like India when the means of communication were so slow and there was utter absence of a central authority.

In His own times the farthest that the Lord had travelled was Mathura in the west, Bithur near Allahabad in the south and Bhagalpur in the East. Some of His disciples had carried the message a little further but the farthest that the message

had spread was Ujjain in Malwa. Brahmanism was more firmly established in the western regions and while the Lord's fame had travelled as far as Taxila there were no regular missionary activities in the western region.

All evidence tends to confirm the fact that the task of spreading the teachings with earnestness was undertaken only under Asoka's guidance and this effort met with a tremendous success. The true spirit of the Lord's teaching was, however, soon lost and the Sangha's main achievement during subsequent periods was to obtain an honoured place for the Buddha and a few Bodhisatavas in the hierarchy of Indian gods and goddesses.

This was quite different from the real objective which should have been the inner transformation of man and his environments. Most of the Bodhisatavas were conceived more as heavenly beings like Shiva, Indra and Brahma and these failed to catch the popular imagination to the same extent as the Brahmanical versions of Rama and Krishna, the bardic tales of whose exploits seem to have been already popular amongst the Indian masses. In any case these were more historical and familiar figures with the teeming millions of India. Sangha did produce some good philosophical literature which gained wide popularity in foreign countries, but in India this literature soon came to be superseded by the more prolific Brahmanical literature which covered a wider range and included

Upanishads, the two epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, Pitanjali's Yogsutras, the re-edited forms of Purana's Sankara's work on Vedant, Yogvashisht the Bhagvata literature and Geeta.

HE PREACHED FOR A CASTELESS AND CLASSLESS SOCIETY

There is ample evidence available in our literature that the Lord did not believe in racial superiority and caste distinctions and all His life He preached against both these pernicious evils of our social system. It is also evident that He made sincere and sustained efforts to uplift those who suffered from social disabilities.

Upali the Barber

Upali the barber was ordained as a Bhikkhu along with five hundred Sakyans youths but to ensure that he suffered no disability as a Bhikkhu on account of his low caste, he was ordained first which ensured for him the customary respect from the Sakyans youths which was due to a senior Bhikkhu. Upali became one of the foremost disciples and was considered so proficient in Vinaya rules that his recitation of these rules was accepted the standard and finds place in the Vinaya Pitika.

Sona the Scavenger

Sona the scavenger who rose early to sweep the street on which Lord Buddha was to pass with His company of disciples received immediate ordination on the very street which he had swept for Him. Maid-servant Kujjutra the

hunchback received preference over her mistress Shyamavati and was declared by the Lord as one of the foremost in the order of nuns.

The Matanga girl

The story of the Matanga girl whom Ananda had requested for water to quench his thirst and who in reply was told "I am Matanga" has become famous. Ananda told the frightened girl, "My sister I asked for water to drink. I did not enquire thy caste". The girl was simply overwhelmed and entered the order of nuns. King Prasenjit, the Brahmans and nobles of Sarvasti got greatly perturbed over this ordination and waited in deputation on the Lord. For their pains these men were treated to a sermon against the harmful effect of caste distinction.

Sunita the flower Gatherer

Sunita the flower gatherer has left a beautiful account of his own ordination in the Sangha. "I came of a humble family. I was poor and needy. The work which I performed was lowly, sweeping the withered flowers. I was despised of men, looked down upon, held in low esteem, with submissive mien I showed respect to many. Then I beheld the Buddha and His band of Bhikkhus as He passed to Magadha. I cast away my burden to run to bow myself in reverence to Him. From pity for me He halted, He the mightiest among men. I bowed myself at the Master's feet and begged of Him the highest

of all beings to accept me as a Bhikkhu. Then said unto me the gracious master come, O Bhikkhu that was all the initiation I received. Then the Master told me, O Bhikkhu let your light so shine before the world that you having embraced the religious life according to so well taught a doctrine and discipline are seen to be mild and forebearing.”

Admitted no pretensions of superiority

The Lord had nothing but praise for those Brahmans who were proficient in learning and led a good life but He missed, no opportunity to discount all pretensions to greatness based on birth, as He sincerely believed that society must accept all men as being born equal and provide them equal opportunities for pursuit of happiness and for self-improvement. After this recognition has been ensured and equal opportunities has been provided to all, they need have the freedom of growth according to their own inherent genius.

They would then become good or bad, noble or ignoble, wise or foolish according to their own deeds in this world.

Who is a Brahman

And so the Lord said, “I do not call one a Brahman on account of his birth, but the one who is possessed of nothing and seizes upon nothing, him I call a Brahman. Then again, not by birth is one a Brahman, nor is one by

birth a Brahman. By work is one a Brahman, by work is one a no Brahman.”

Whatever may be the belief of people of other faiths, but so far as our own Dharma is concerned we have a very clear conception of it from the Lord's own Blessed life in this matter and we have to live up to it.

“The Tathagata recreates the whole world like a cloud shedding its waters without distinction. He has the same sentiments for the high as for the low, for the wise as for the ignorant, for the noble-minded as for the immoral. His teaching is pure and makes no discrimination between rich and poor. It is like unto water which cleanses all without distinction. It is like unto fire which consumes all things that exist between heaven and earth, great and small. It is like unto the heaven for there is room in it, ample room for the reception of all, for men and women, boys and girls, the powerful and the lowly”.

The distinguished Galaxy

The two books of Theragatha and Therigatha contain just a few immortal songs of some disciples of the Lord who had taken refuge in Him and by doing so had found their freedom. Amongst this distinguished galaxy of enlightened men and women we find Angulimala the dreaded bandit of Sarvasti, Sunila the scavenger, Sapaka the dog-eater, Svate the fisherman and Nanda the cowherd. There were also many

courtesans and low caste women and all these men and women of diverse castes low born and with a shady past got cleansed and rose to great distinction.

A New Concept

When we come to deal with the problem of a classless and casteless society, we may in passing also dwell on the special conditions that obtain in India in both these respects. So far as the idea of a classless society is concerned it is more or less a new concept. Certain monastic establishments in India, and this included the Buddhist establishments, originally shared the monastic buildings and the laity's gifts to the order in common; but it was an equal sharing of poverty and not of riches.

In village communities, in ancient India, pasture lands, forests and groves were owned in common by certain communities but the more prosperous members of the village communities had also their own groves and parks, etc. So far as agricultural land was concerned it was invariably owned by individuals and families.

In the field of commerce, trade and industry there is mention of many guilds, but all the evidence which is on record tends to show that individual members of the guild generally worked on their own behalf although they co-operated with each other in matters of common interest.

Stress on Dana

Buddhism, however, has from its very inception laid very great stress on the practice of 'Dana' which is another name for the voluntary sharing out of one's own riches with the less prosperous section of the society. In India the main division of society has been on the basis of caste and in its fold all the members of the caste irrespective of their social and economic status have equal rights. The richer and more prosperous members have a certain moral responsibility towards those members of the caste who have not fared well in life. A miser has been always looked down upon in India and so also the wasteful spendthrift.

The Idea Extolled

The ideal that had been always set forth has been of the pious householder who lived simply and shared his good fortune with others and donated generously for good causes. In the modern conception of a socialist state it becomes the responsibility of the state to distribute wealth equitably amongst its people so that the need of private charity is greatly obviated.

This is only possible when the State has full control of all means of production and assumes power to take work from its citizens. This is a worthy ideal and no sensible man need quarrel with it.

But every situation has its own shortcomings and pitfalls and a socialist state can become

tyrannical if all its powers are vested in an all-powerful minority be it the bureaucracy or a political party, if it does not offer people full employment and various other facilities and is not able to build up and maintain a stable economic structure. In brief the socialist state must reflect public opinion, it must be a government of the people, it must be efficient, incorruptible and benevolent. Another danger of the socialist state is loss of initiative amongst its most talented citizens. We have to therefore devise a pattern which would provide for personal initiative and permit its citizens a wide measure of freedom in living their own life.

As in other things so also in this thing, what really matters is the finding of the middle path, through many trials and errors which would ensure full scope of development for the individual and at the same time secure for all the citizens a minimum standard of comforts. In all spheres where voluntary efforts of the citizen conforms to the pattern of a socialist state the individuals need be left free to work out their own destiny, but in spheres where the state must assume responsibility the same should not be shirked.

People's co-operatives offer an ideal alternative to the bureaucratic set-up, but unfortunately in India even the co-operative movement is also dominated by the bureaucracy, and the worst of it is that most of the officials who are in the co-operative movement have no faith in it. Is

it any surprise that the movement has not taken root and prospered ?

The Problem of Caste

The problem of caste in India is most complicated and all efforts regarding its reformation have more or less ended in failure.

For success in this field it is first necessary to correctly understand the problem. The conception of caste is a gift of the Vedic Aryans to India. Within the Vedic Aryans itself it was an effort, on the part of the Brahman priest and the ruling hierarchy to assure for themselves and their progeny an assured place of privilege and honour in the Aryan society. For a time there was a struggle for supremacy between the priest and the warrior and eventually the Brahman priest proved the winner and all his subsequent efforts have been to give a Brahmanical gloss to all the religious literature of the race. Outside the Aryan fold it sought to maintain a rigid dividing-line between the Aryans and non-Aryans. But at the later stage systematic efforts were made to retain the Non-Aryans as appendages to the Hindu society in the subordinate role of hewers of wood and drawers of water for the conquering race. The doctrine of Karma was conveniently utilised to keep the unfortunate victims of this conspiracy content with their lot.

It is the community of Sudras or Dasas that has been split up into numerous castes and sub-

castes. Most of the castes are based on profession and those who follow the more lowly professions are generally classed as untouchables; while others who follow slightly more remunerative and cleaner profession are now called as 'Backward Classes'. Each one of the castes or sub-castes, both amongst the untouchables and backward classes, in spite of suffering from a common handicap, clings fast to whatever little superiority that may have been given to it in the hegemony of the caste system. This has made the position most difficult. None of the untouchables or backward classes will coalesce with each other, even when they would voice a full-throated protest against the inequities of the caste system. The reformers who dare marry outside their castes and sub-castes, suffer greater disabilities amongst the untouchables and depressed classes, than do in the so-called higher classes.

As centuries passed other factors have developed which make it difficult for people of different classes to come together. Certain social and moral evils have taken a deep root amongst the most lowly of the depressed classes. Their economic condition has become desperate and they are also prey to many superstitious beliefs and customs. Poverty-stricken and superstitious, following lowly professions, they live in unclean surroundings and thus a wide gulf has developed between them and their countrymen belonging to the so-called high castes.

When the problem is so very difficult and complicated and the evil is so deep-rooted, the best chance of success lies in our being wise and determined in our approach to the problem.

The first Task

Our first task should be to make people realise that there is actually no superior or inferior caste. It may be that certain castes are backward to-day, but then it must be our duty to rapidly bring the backward classes in line with the more forward ones. Their economic condition must be improved and their social behaviour corrected. Whatever social and moral evils do exist must be uprooted. These classes must not only be educated, their character need also be properly developed. Culturally also they must be brought in line with the more fortunate and forward people.

Law now gives the lower castes full protection against social injustices. It should be seen that the backward and depressed classes take full advantage of the new provisions of the law. When this task has been achieved to a reasonable extent, we should proceed with the second step and I think the most practical step would be to first try to merge all the castes that exist amongst the depressed and backward classes into two different groups. Simultaneously we should also try that caste and sub-caste distinctions amongst the higher classes also get abolished.

The third step would then be to have a society in which all caste distinctions will cease to exist and there will be an integration of the three groups at all levels. This process may appear to be long, but it is the only natural process and shall have to be gone through, if we have to succeed in our effort of a classless and casteless society. I am confident, however, that in a socialist pattern of society this process itself will get greatly accelerated.

HE WORKED FOR A NEW SOCIAL ORDER

In a previous chapter of this book I tried to show that our Lord had actually come to establish the kingdom of heaven on this earth in which all evil will cease and righteousness will prevail.

The New Order

In the new social order when it gets fully established the sun of Nirvana will shine with its full splendour and hunger, poverty, disease, pestilence, and all forms of oppression will vanish altogether and even death will be unable to strike the young. Peace will get established amongst nations and as between people wealth and power will be widely dispersed and will be used for all and their common good.

Learning, wisdom, pursuit of knowledge, devotion to art, science and the common good of all, will constitute the mainsprings of human happiness. Love between man and woman will be free as between equals and will be an abiding and stimulating force for the integration and uplift of the spirit.

In this new world order when mankind gets free from all internal and external impediments and gets rid of all the complexes which each one

of us have acquired during the long course of our journey from the animal stage to the high stage of true spirituality, we will in a true meaning become the lord of our own self and cease to be the sport of every wind. Each one of us has earnestly and sincerely to prepare himself and qualify for the right of becoming a good citizen of this new state.

Individual efforts will greatly help in ushering in this new era, but more than that a great communal effort is needed if the kingdom of heaven has to be established in the immediate present.

Time Here and Now

The time for the establishment of the kingdom of heaven has come. If we do not establish the kingdom now, we shall soon get overwhelmed in the flood of violence. We have to decide, but decide in the immediate present. The moment of the decision is now, for the next moment may be too late for it. The Lord has given a brief outline of the new social order and the world's political set-up in a famous sermon delivered at Rajagriha. We need ponder over this sermon and read carefully the story about it.

Ajatsatru's Dilemma

Ajatsatru the young Magadhan king had great lust for power and wanted to outdo his illustrious father who had the credit of conquering Anga at the early age of sixteen years. He was determined to extend his domains to

North Bihar and had made feverish preparations for a great war. Levy in men, money, grain and arms had been collected from the whole of the Magadhan empire. The walls of the capital had been strengthened at weak points and extra guards had been mounted at the gates. A new moat had also been thrown round the fortified town and a new town with a fort had been built at the confluence of Sone and Ganges and a huge fleet had been collected below this new fort, for taking the invading Magadhan army across the river, into the very heart of the republican territory.

The priests had been propitiated, as Yagnic sacrifices had been held and the blessing of the gods had been invoked. The motley crowd of holy men who resided on the surrounding hills had also blessed the royal cause. The priests and the ministers of the youthful king had made a common cause and through oration and harangues had aroused the temper of the people of Magadha to a high pitch. Tales were daily told of oppression of the Magadhan subjects, of raids on border territories across the river, of piracy on high waters, of kidnapping of maidens and of cattle lifting by the barbaric people of the northern republic who, it was said, carried the low blood of the barbarians from the hills in their veins and did not even have the privilege of being ruled by a duly anointed king.

He Comes to Magadha

The news of the warlike preparation and the

impending war had been carried to the Buddha when He was sojourning in a distant land and this must have naturally made him extremely sad. He was advanced in age and greatly sick in body and hardly in a fit state of health to undertake an arduous journey on foot to a distant place such as Magadha, but where the welfare of humanity was concerned the Lord knew no rest. And after a difficult and perilous journey He came to Rajagriha with the company of His monks to the town which was surcharged with violence, where soldiers in heavy armour paraded the streets, where there was daily marching of the battalions of war, elephants dangled iron chains in their tusks and armed horsemen, chariot-eers and bowmen on foot, were ever ready for mortal combats at close quarters, and He quietly took His residence at Veluvana.

The presence of the Lord at the capital with His daily sermons on the beatitude of spiritual life changed the atmosphere of the capital town, the war fever began to subside and the king and his councillors were greatly chagrined. All hopes for popular support to war was lost unless the Lord's tacit consent to it could be obtained. The Prime Minister was entrusted with this difficult task and he went to the Lord and recounted the many acts of violence of which the northerners were held guilty. It was stated that the king, who had been so far patient, had been left with no alternative but to unsheath the sword in a righteous cause. The barbarians from the north could not be restrained except

through force and the Lord was requested to give His blessings to a righteous war.

The cause was pleaded on a hot and sultry evening when the Lord was seated in the courtyard of the monastery and Ananda the beloved disciple was fanning the Lord. The trap had been well laid, either the Lord would give His tacit consent and the same will be proclaimed from the housetops from next morning, or in case He sided with Vajjians, the feelings of the people will be aroused against the Lord and His Sangha for His unpatriotic attitude.

The Lord saw through the game, but through compassion for humanity, which had not fully appreciated the value of peace, He utilised the opportunity to deliver a sermon which turned the tide against war and warned the Vajjian republic of its mortal danger and showed it the way to combat it. At the same time the sermon provided a testament for the future guidance of mankind as it lays down the basic principles of good government and of enlightened leadership.

The Great Message

Turning to His beloved disciple the Lord enquired from Ananda, "Are you aware whether the Vajjians repeatedly assemble together and in large numbers to take counsel on the affairs of the State?" And on getting an answer in the affirmative the Blessed One stated, "Well,

Ananda, so long as the Vajjians shall assemble repeatedly and in large numbers, just so long may the prosperity of the Vajjians be looked for and not their decay”, and He elaborated His point and stated, “So long, Ananda, as the Vajjians assemble in harmony and disperse in harmony, so long as they do their business in harmony, so long as they introduce no revolutionary ordinance or break up no established ordinance but abide by the old time Vajjian norm as ordained, so long as they honour, reverence, esteem and worship the elders among the Vajjians and deem them worthy of listening to, so long as the women and maidens of the families dwell without being forced and abducted, so long as they honour, revere, esteem and worship the Vajjian shrines, both the inner and the outer, so long as they allow not the customary offerings given and performed to be neglected, so long as the customary watch and ward over the enlightened that are amongst them is well kept, so that they may have free access to the realm and having entered it may dwell pleasantly therein, so long as they do these things, Ananda, may the prosperity of the Vajjians be looked for and not their decay.”

The New Charter

Here was the charter for the kingdom of righteousness which no war and pestilence could lay low and overwhelm. A government of the people by the people and for the people established by common consent and reverence

for the established constitution and convention, respect for the duly elected representatives and leaders chosen for their wisdom, age, experience and exemplary character, protection for the women folk and the weak, honour and reverence for established religious institutions and shrines whether they be of one's own clan or of the clans living on borders, support and care of public institutions and freedom to holy men to live in peace and to propound their teachings. These were some of the norms for the Government which had the Buddha's support and blessing.

Tests for Leadership

He then turned to His disciples and completed the prophetic message, "So long brethren you do not succumb to craving, so long as you do not delight in your own worldly interest, so long brethren, you do not invent false tales and listen to false tales, so long as you are not sluggish, so long as you are free from evil desires, so long as you do not associate with evil men, so long as you are modest, conscientious, of wide knowledge, of ardent energy, of steady mindfulness and full of wisdom, so long as you have the spirit of enquiry, energy and enthusiasm for noble pursuits, contemplation and poise, so long as you are kind in deeds, in words, in thoughts, so long as you are impartial sharers and dividers of lawful gains, even to the last scrap of bread, so long will you prosper and be held in respect".

These were the tests that he laid for leaders and they hardly need any elaboration from any one.

We need establish a Government and build a leadership which would stand the tests laid for it by the Blessed One. In our individual life also each one of us has sincerely, earnestly and every moment to conform to these standards.

The Cruelties of Two Wars

It has been the lot of most of us to live in a period which has witnessed the devastations and cruelties of two world wars and although these wars officially ceased after a few years' duration, the propaganda and preparations for it have continued unabated. We have in many respects become more cruel and hypocritical than we were ever before. We swear by peace, while we make every preparation for war. We say we desire peace and that man's salvation lies in working for peace, but through press and pulpit and the numerous means now available to humanity for false propaganda, we sow the seed for future wars by preaching hate and spreading all sorts of lies about other nations and peoples. How can this bring about the era of peace to which we pay such lip service ?

Leaders at fault

The leaders of mankind are grievously at fault. They have become mentally debased, crooked and cunning are their ways, and much

suffering is in store for mankind unless it succeeds in snatching leadership from these men and reposing it in men who will work unflinchingly for peace.

Besides declared war there have been many other carnages through which humanity has suffered grievously. In our own country we had large-scale carnage and atrocities in the two Punjab and in East Bengal, which had its repercussion in other parts of the country. We have to hang our head in shame, that in spite of the cultural and spiritual values we have built in ourselves we should be guilty of such heinous offences against humanity.

THE BUDDHA'S IDEAL OF A MAN

In a previous chapter of this book we have tried to bring out the fact that the Lord came to establish a new social order. In this chapter we would try to bring out His ideal of a man so that we may try to grow into the picture of His ideal man.

Awakening of Bodhichita

To progress on the path of virtue a man need have faith in his divine potentiality. Unless this awakening of faith has taken place and the Bodhichitta in man has been vivified he cannot fathom the depth of Nirvana, nor taste the joy of true freedom. Man need realise, as a living and sustaining experience, that though he has a separate existence in an inscrutable way, he is part and parcel of the Dharmakaya and it is his divine destiny that every day he should grow nearer to Dharmakaya and become a beneficent power for good.

The Need for an Ideal

For the growth of man it is necessary that he should set out an ideal before him and this ideal he must try to reach with all his being and spirit.

The ideal that Santi Deva placed before himself is worth emulation by all sincere followers of the Lord as there is perhaps no passage in the entire Buddhist literature which puts so forcefully the Buddhist ideal before a man.

“May I be a balm to the sick, their healer and servitor until sickness ceases to exist. May I with plenty of food and drink quench the anguish or hunger and thirst”.

“May I become an unfailing store for the poor and serve them with manifold things for their need. My own being and my own pleasures, all my righteousness in the past and present and future, I surrender indifferently that all creatures may win their end. Nirvana lies in the surrender of all things and my mind is after Nirvana. If I must surrender all, it is best to give it for fellow creatures”.

“I yield myself to all living beings to deal with me as they desire, they may smite or revile me, for ever bestrew me with dust, play with my body, laugh and wanton. I have given them my body. Why should I feel anxious? Let them make me do whatever work bring them pleasure, but may never mishap befall any of them by reason of me. If any be worth or pleased with me, may that be ever a cause of them to gain all their ends. May all who slander me or do me hurt or jeer at me gain a share in enlightenment.”

‘I would be a protector of the unprotected,

a guide of wayfarer, a ship, dyke and a bridge to them who seek the further shore, a lamp for them who need a lamp, a bed for them who need a bed, a slave for all beings who need a slave, I would be a magic gem, a lucky jar, a spell of power, a sovereign balm, a wishing tree, a cow of plenty for all beings. As the earth and other elements are for the various service of the countless creatures, dwelling in the whole of space, so may I in various ways support the whole sphere of life in space until all be at peace.”

Self-reliance

This is the ideal set forth. It provides an indication of the extent of self-surrender and sacrifice that is required for promoting the common good, it also gives an indication of the social order that is set forth as an ideal, which has to be achieved. It is clear from the Lord's last message to Ananda, in which He asked Ananda, “Do ye abide islands unto yourselves, taking refuge in none other, islanded by the Norm, taking refuge in the Norm, seeking refuge in none other”.

He wanted Man to be self-reliant

The exhortation did not mean that we learn nothing from each other, what it means is that we should have no dependence on external assistance and should work out our own salvation. Our Lord has laid very great stress on this quality and has emphasised repeatedly that

man is the architect of his own fate. His exhortations to Ananda, who depended on Him a great deal, were most frequent. "Therefore, Ananda, be ye lamp unto yourself. Betake yourself to no external refuge. Hold fast as a refuge to truth, look not for refuge to any one besides yourself. Work out your own salvation with diligence". At another place He stated, "In him who depends on others there is wavering, in him who is independent there is no wavering".

Freedom from Fear

He wanted men to be brave and fearless. As a young man our Lord was noted for His skill as a charioteer and as a fast rider. These qualities marked Him out as a brave and fearless young man. When He led a lonely life in the wilderness all sorts of fears haunted Him in the beginning but He soon overcame all these fears. The Lord gave a vivid description of these fears and how He overcame them to the Brahman Jaissoni.

"So, Brahman, when the next time came round I did so and made such shrines my lodging for the night. As I stayed there a deer may be, came up to me or a peacock threw down a twig or else a breeze stirred a heap of fallen leaves. Then I thought here it is, here comes that panic fear and horror. Then Brahman there came to me this thought, why do I remain thus in constant fear and appre-

hension? Let me bend down to my will that panic, fear and horror just as I am and just as it has come to be. So as I was walking to and fro that panic, fear and horror came upon me. Then I neither stood still nor sat nor lay down but just walking up and down I bent to my will that panic, fear and horror.”

When Angulimala the bandit chief aimed at at the Lord, He stood firm and unmoved and the Lord’s cool courage and utter absence of fear surprised the bandit chief. It is most difficult to cultivate this quality but it is the sign of a truly great man and we need cultivate it. In one of His sermons He stated that absence of fear was one of the qualities of a truly wise man. While the Lord exhorted men to be self-reliant and fearless He also wanted them to cultivate the virtue of humility. “Let us not be puffed up” was one of His favourite advice to disciples.

He wanted men to be up and doing, work hard and with diligence and to acquire proficiency in their work. His exhortations on this subject are most numerous and we can reproduce only a few here.

“Awake and arise there can be no slumber for those that are diseased and pierced by arrows of pain”.

“Be watchful and have done with indolence.”

“Thou thyself spur thyself on and by thyself purify thyself.”

“By manly deeds, by earnest striving, by self-discipline and renunciation make for yourself, ye wise an island that no flood can overwhelm”.

“Yield not to idleness.”

“Idleness is disgrace, constant sloth is defilement.”

“By strenuous striving and with the help of insight you should pull out the poisoned arrow of indolence.”

“With all thy strength struggle.”

“Awake, arise and strive unremittingly”.

“Nerveless sloth the true disciple has cast away. From idle lassitude he is free. He purges his heart of all sloth and idleness. By effort wisdom is achieved. By heedlessness wisdom is lost”.

“I adjure you O disciples for your own sake be diligent.”

“Half-hearted effort prepares the way for new error and delusion.”

“Like a thorough bred horse touched by the whip even so be strenuous and be filled with religious emotion. Fruitful be in all good work.”

Proficiency in Work

Proficiency and skill in one's profession was deemed by the Lord to be a great blessing.

Steadfastness

The Lord wanted men to be steadfast in their duty and persevere in their efforts for good against all odds.

“Be steadfast in the performance of your duties, great and small.”

“Follow ye the path of duty.”

“The noble swerve not from the right path let happen what may”.

Nirvana it is stated is realised only by those who are steadfast and persevering.

“The ever-meditative, the ever-steadfast, persevering wise ones realise Nirvana free of bonds and the highest.”

Discipline

He wanted men to discipline themselves and keep their desires in restraint ; for without discipline and self-restraint no progress was possible for man. History is strewn with the examples of many talented and highly gifted men whose brilliance and great natural gifts came to be altogether wasted as they did not restrain their desires. History also records many instances of men's achievements in different fields which became possible due to their turning a new page in their life.

His many exhortations on this subject are worth a serious study.

“Good it is to bind the body, to put a bridle upon the tongue, to bring the mind to subjection.”

“Good is perfect self-mastery. The disciple who is lord of himself shall be free from all sorrows.”

“Though a man may conquer in battle thousands and thousands of men, a yet greater conqueror still is he who has conquered himself.”

“Who so conquers desires that is difficult to subdue sorrow steps from him like water off a lotus leaf.”

“As rain does not soak through into a well-thatched house even so desires can find no entrance into a well-guarded heart”.

Unselfishness

He wanted men to cast off selfishness. “To bring self-seeking to an end that is blessedness”. He wanted men to be open and frank in their dealings with each other.

“Let us be open and unconcealed, not furtive and hidden.”

About our Lord it had been stated:

“As the perfect one speaks so He acts. As the perfect one acts so He speaks. And because He speaks as He acts and acts as He speaks therefore is He called the perfect one.”

Discard Greed

He wanted men to discard all greed and self-

aggrandisement. "An adherent of the doctrine should everywhere avoid appropriating to himself what is not given to him or what he knows belongs to another. He should shun every kind of misappropriation."

He wanted men to be gentle, even to those who may have transgressed the law. Forbearance and friendly speech were considered by Him to be a very great blessing. There are many beautiful sayings of the Lord on this subject. "Liberality, courtesy, good behaviour and unselfishness these are to the world what the linchpin is to the chariot. Even if a man has powers over others yet ought to be gentle with the weak. Follow the path of duty, show kindness to thy brother and bring them not into suffering."

Judge not

He strongly deprecated the common failing of judging others harshly and exhorted men to be generous to the fault of others and instead look for one's own fault. "A man readily perceives the fault of his neighbours, his own, however, he perceives only with difficulty. Men eagerly uncover the failings of others but their own they carefully conceal, as the cheat the loaded dice, what does it matter to thee? Whether another be guilty or guiltless, come, friend, and look to thine own ways. He who only sees the faults of others and whose thoughts run continuously on blame, delusion daily in him grows and the end of pain for him is still very

far away. Look not upon the fault of another what this one has done, or has left undone, rather turn thine eyes upon thine own perverted ways, thine own omission and negligence.”

He wanted men to take their own reformation in hand earnestly before they set to reform others. “Each should first establish himself in that which is good and true and only then undertake the instructions of others. Thus doing he who has insight will avoid much sorrow”.

He tells Chunda his disciple that a man who has not reformed himself can hardly reform others.

HE CAME TO FULFIL AND NOT TO DESTROY

Many devout Buddhists, more specially in other lands, cling to the belief that Lord Buddha gave an entirely new teaching to the world. Hindus also have been guilty in giving currency to this belief as in many of their books they seem to have stated that the Lord's teachings were rejected by His own people as they were against national traditions.

True Inheritor

No sensible man, however, can agree with either of these two theses. In the world of thought no teachings can ever be entirely new. Nor can they ever be against national tradition unless there is a trace of some foreign influence in them. For the world of thought is a growth which assimilates in its growth its entire past.

There is no evidence to show that our Lord was influenced in any way by any foreign teaching. He spent all His life in India and had no contact with any foreign stream of thought.

The Lord therefore was the true inheritor of the spiritual traditions of His people. He was also its most capable and eloquent expositor. He

assimilated all that was best, noble, inspiring and beautiful in our ancient teachings. He thought deeply over every profound teaching, tried them out in His own life and lived to them to their white heat intensity till He became the very embodiment of the truths to which He lived and became their very source and fountain. In His life and thoughts these ancient truths took a new shape which was more beautiful and enchanting. These truths acquired a new significance and meaning and through it they became richer in their contents and more positive in their values. They carried a greater appeal to humanity as they had more sustaining power and vitality.

Truth has Many Vestures

It is the law of life that any one who lives sincerely in accordance with certain truths he becomes intimate with them and is able to witness its greater splendour. For all truths have their several vestures and only those that are in intimate touch with them can take off its inner folds. The Lord's own conception of His mission was also that He had come to fulfil and not to destroy. It was His life's task to make perfect what was imperfect, to purify, to uplift and to infuse a new spirit in the perennial teachings which was the glorious heritage of our nation.

Traditions of many Buddhas

The Lord had repeatedly stated that He was

walking only in the footsteps of the Buddhas that had gone before Him. Many such Buddhas are mentioned in our sacred literature and these texts also contain the promise of a future Buddha who would further enrich the spiritual life of people. It is not possible to construct ancient history with any degree of certainty, but this much is clear from the Buddhist literature, that when the Lord commenced His ministry the tradition about previous Buddhas was still very fresh and strong amongst the eastern people.

When the Lord's father, the aged King Shudhodana, remonstrated with the Lord for begging in His own capital the Lord silenced him by stating that He was only following the traditions of the previous Buddhas. When Anathpindaka, the celebrated Buddhist philanthropist, attended the feast that was given by his brother-in-law at Rajgir he felt greatly awed when he was told that the feast was being given in honour of a Buddha who had begun His ministry in Magadha. When Deva Datta seceded from the Lord, he did so to follow a stricter discipline which was enjoined by a previous Buddha.

The great Buddhist emperor Ashoka had a stupa of a previous Buddha renovated whose ruins had existed in the Sakyan country. The great Chinese pilgrim Huien Tsang has made mention of stupas which commemorated previous Buddhas. If the teachings that the Lord had given were something entirely new and were not in conformity with the national tradi-

tions there was hardly any need to trace the lineal descents to previous Buddhas. These Buddhas of yore, instead of being revered and their stupas being reverently restored, would have been denounced as teachers of false doctrines.

Sharmanas and Brahmans

The truth is that the Lord had very great respect for the spiritual heritage of His people and He held in high esteem all holy and learned people. True Sharmanas and Brahmans are mentioned by Him in the same breath. The same standards of virtues are enjoined for both and people are exhorted to give them the same respect and support. In one of His sermons He had traced the source of corruption amongst the Brahmans from the time of Ikshvaku, one of His own illustrious ancestors who had showered so much royal patronage on the Brahmans that they became greedy, indolent and ease-loving.

When He attained enlightenment He wavered a little before embarking on His missionary career. His hesitation was, however, not due to the fact that He considered His teachings to be something new but He certainly considered them to be in advance of His times. The people who flocked in thousands to hear His sermons never felt that the Lord was giving them an entirely new teaching, nor did they ever feel that these teachings were not in conformity with the national traditions.

One of the characteristic passages which is repeated in the Tripitikas is the exclamation from the hearers, "Excellent O Lord! Just as if Lord one should lift up the fallen discover the hidden, point out the way to one bewildered, show a light in the gloom seeing which they who have eyes to see can see shapes". In this passage the Lord is given credit for throwing new light on truths which were already in existence. In another sermon He has likened himself to a traveller who had discovered an old abandoned city which had been lost in the jungle and had made it known to all, "Just as if brethren a man travelling in a forest along mountain heights should come upon an ancient road, an ancient track, traversed by men of ancient days and should proceed along it and as he went should come upon an old time city, a royal city of olden days dwelt in by men of bygone ages, laid out with parks and groves and water tanks and stoutly walled about, a delightful spot.

"Then suppose brethren that this man should tell of his find to the king or royal minister thus, 'Pardon me Sir, but I would have you know that while travelling in a forest I came upon an ancient road, a delightful spot, Sir restore that city' Then suppose brethren that king or royal minister were to restore that city so that thereafter it became prosperous, fortunate and populous, crowded with inhabitants and were to reach growth and increase, even so brethren

have I seen an ancient path, an ancient track, traversed by the perfectly enlightened ones of former times.”

This passage gives a clear indication of what the Lord felt to be His own mission in life. It was to restore the ancient teachings to their pristine purity, to revive and renovate them, to make them grow and bloom with a renewed freshness and fragrance.

Difference

It is necessary, however, to explain that the teachings that the Lord gave, while they had their roots in the past and were an extension of them, something in the nature of a higher affirmation they also marked a departure in many respects from the prevalent thoughts and practices, some of which have persisted to our own times. Let us state them clearly so that there may be no mistake about them.

He did not recognise the divinity of the Vedas. In fact He denied every such claim and laid none for His own teachings. He did believe in the existence of spirits in other spheres but He questioned the validity of their worship. He believed in heredity and in the formative influence of environments but He did not believe in caste distinction or in any kind of racial superiority.

As about the sacrifices and ablutions offered to gods and goddesses it could be said of Him

that He hated and despised all these feasts of burnt offerings, roasted meat and fermented wine and was sick of all the magic chants of mantras which accompanied these orgies.

He had other philosophical differences with the narrow Brahmanical creed in regard to the nature of the spirit, on rebirth and karma. We have dealt with these subjects elsewhere. Therefore we need save space on them here.

Love of National Shrines

In His itineraries it was customary for the Lord to stay in national shrines and hold His religious discourses there. Proper maintenance of these national shrines was declared by the Lord as one of the conditions of national welfare.

In His last visit to Vesali, He looked back at the town and made a reverent and loving mention of some of the beautiful shrines at which He had stayed in that town. He did the same in case of Rajgir. Those of us who profess to be disciples of the Lord need cultivate His innate reverence for the spiritual heritage which is preserved in our own Tripitakas, sutras and other religious and philosophical literature of our country, without making any distinction about their being Buddhist or non-Buddhist. This reverence, however, should not imply our acceptance of those parts of their teachings which are diametrically opposed to the Lord's teachings. 'All that has been well said has been said by Buddha.' We must live to this truth.

No Acceptance on Authority

The Lord has, however, made it clear that all that is given in religious books is not to be accepted on authority and trust. We have to carefully ponder over every teaching and accept what appears to be good and reject that which does not appear to be so. His words on this subject are worth pondering, as there is too much tendency amongst people to accept a teaching on authority. Most religious people are so superstitious that they have not even the courage to question the truth of a teaching in their own inner self.

The Lord's own attitude on this subject can be clear from the following passage :

“But Kalamas when you know of yourselves, these teachings are not good, they are blameworthy, they are condemned by the wise, these teachings when followed out and put in practice conduce to loss and suffering then reject them.”

The Fatal Tendency

There is fatal tendency amongst us that we seek to justify everything that is stated in our religious literature. This tendency is a sign of weakness and not of strength. It is necessary for all of us to have the courage of our conviction. If there is anything even in the Lord's teachings which does not appear to be correct we should have the courage to state that it does not appear to be correct. If we do not have

this freedom of thought and boldness His message 'Be ye a lamp unto yourself, Be ye a guide unto yourself' loses all its significance and validity.

He is a better follower of the Lord who has the courage to deny Him and His teaching when they have ceased to appeal to Him than one who tries to put off his doubts and misgivings. It will take really a very long time for such a man to reach certitude.

Extravagance of Beliefs

I need, however, here also caution against any wholesale adoption of Hindu religious thoughts and its practices for in it lies many lurking dangers. In no country the quest for everlasting Happiness and for a vision of Reality has been so intense and so sustained as in India. The very intensity of our search, however, has often taken us into wrong channels. In no country there would be found such an abundance of extravagant beliefs and practices about Reality or Happiness as in our country. Hinduism has particularly suffered from this extravagance and Buddhism has not altogether escaped from its harmful effects.

I would resist the wish to criticise in any way the spiritual experiences of men in whom my countrymen have reposed so much faith. What, however, I can emphasise without causing any offence is that the goal we have set before us, is in many respects different from

the ideals that most of these religious men had pursued.

What We Seek

We do not seek a union with any God or Power, nor do we seek any psychic or supermundane power for ourselves. Nor do we wish to revel in ecstatic reveries. What we aim at is to grow in wisdom and virtue and through this growth create conditions which will permit humanity to live a happy and purposeful life in this world.

We believe that such a condition of happiness is possible only when men have perfected themselves, have shed off the illusion of 'self' and have developed a heart which will identify itself completely with all life. It is the harmonious integration of the man at all levels physical, emotional, mental, intuitive and spiritual, that we seek, and we may be a little vain but this is what we believe, that this integration is possible by following the teachings of Buddha and for this we have need not only to improve the individual but have need also to establish conditions which would permit people to live a truly Buddhistic life.

All teachings which conform to Lord Buddha's teachings and are concerned with the creation of conditions in which humanity will live a fuller and happier life, both inwardly and outwardly need be reverently accepted by us. Our preference will naturally go to the teachings

of our own saints and sages but we would not exclude any good teaching whatever its source. In this respect I have no hesitation in recommending that a very large mass of post-Buddhistic Nirgun literature should be accepted by us as our own precious inheritance.

Dhamma Not a Narrow Creed

The Lord's own conception of the Dhamma was that while it would continue to have its roots in His teachings, it will grow and flower in future in conformity with the law of its own growth. He wanted His followers to look forward rather than look backward and therefore when Ananda asked for a last message with characteristic frankness He stated, 'What, Ananda, does the order of brethren expect of me? I have taught you the Norm, Ananda, by making it without inner or outer. There is no closed fist of the teacher in a Tathagata, Ananda'.

'If then, Ananda, any one thinks I will lead the order of brethren or on me the order of brethren depends, let him make some pronouncement'.

The One Message

He refused to give any message except the one that He had given them all His life, 'Be ye lamps unto yourselves, be ye a refuge unto yourselves. Seek not any outside help in this matter.' This exhortation has been considered as something unique in the history of religious

thought, but it was in full conformity with the Lord's lifelong teachings. The Lord never claimed that the teachings that He gave were not capable of further development, for any such claim would have been fatal to the growth of Dhamma and His disciples.

Parable of Simsap Leaves

In a beautiful parable He brought home the truth to His disciples that in the universe there are more Truths than are contained in any Teachings and it is human destiny to be ever on the march and discover new Truths and laws. The path of progress, however, lies in making full use of the truths that have been discovered and using them as a basis for further development.

This beautiful parable need be told in full.

The Lord was staying in the simsap grove at Kosambhi where the Sangha had been split up in two factions over some details of the monastic discipline. The Lord tried to patch up the difference, but neither of the two rival factions listened to His wise counsel. They came to their senses only when the Lord abandoned both of them and the laity also withdrew its patronage from them. A deputation of both the factions waited on the Lord and He agreed to return to Kosambi and stay in the simsap grove. Utilising the occasion for a discourse, the Exalted One taking a handful of simsap leaves said to the brethren.

‘Now what think ye brethren? Which are more, these few simsap leaves that I hold in my hand, or those that are in the simsap grove above?’

Few in number, Lord, are these simsap leaves that are in the hand of the Exalted One, far more in number are those in the simsap grove above.

‘Just so brethren, those things that I know by my super knowledge but have not revealed are greater by far in number than those things that I have revealed. And why brethren, have I not revealed them?’

‘Because, brethren they do not conduce to profit, are not concerned with the holy life, they do not tend to repulsion, to cessation, to calm, to the super knowledge, to the perfect wisdom, to Nibbana’.

The lesson is clear that we need concern ourselves with the pith of the teachings and that part of it which is likely to prove most beneficial to us.

Parable of a Raft

In another beautiful sermon He likened His teachings to a raft, which all use to cross the stream but which none carries on his back once he has reached the other shore. While on His death-bed, He exhorted His disciples to work zealously for their own inner deliverance and permitted them to make such changes in His minor teachings which they may consider

necessary in the light of their knowledge, but with a conservatism so characteristic of all followers, the very first thing they resolved was not to make any change whatsoever. While this may be some proof of their loyalty to the Lord ; it is a sad commentary on the Sanghas' lack of foresight and initiative. That the collective wisdom of the elders could not think of even one minor change is really strange.

Change Inevitable

Change, however, is an inevitable process and as time passed Buddhism also could not escape it. The Lord's most significant contribution in ensuring the future of His teachings consisted in His prophecy about the coming of Lord Maitreya about whom the Lord prophesied that He would come to usher in an era of peace, happiness and love in this world. This gave His disciples the longing to look forward and not to look backward.

Era of Wisdom

The Lord's own era marked the growth of wisdom in the world. The world in His era has made great progress in the scientific and technological fields. This would enable man to abolish want, poverty, hunger and disease and to create conditions in which all mankind would be able to have a decent standard of life. This would permit the new economic order of a socialist society to supersede the capitalist

system in which competition has been the law of life.

The Era of Love

In the new order the co-operative spirit would be the dominant factor for progress. Man would have recognised His common kinship, and being fully established in wisdom he would develop the Bhavana of Maitri. In this era of plenitude the Kingdom of Heaven would get fully established on this earth. It is the bounden duty of all true Buddhists that while they should conform to the teachings of **their** Lord Gautama Buddha they should also make the effort to approximate themselves to the new world order in which the law of love will prevail.

The Critical Period

Two thousand five hundred years have passed since the birth of our Lord. We are closer now to the era of Lord Maitreya and we have to be the heralds of His era. We shall be denying our Lord if we refuse to extend His teachings and enrich them further and instead decide to remain orthodox and narrow-minded. Our Dhamma is not static. It is a dynamic force working for progress. The truths which it proclaims are eternal, but our appreciation of these truths grows richer as we ourselves grow in wisdom and piety. It is, however, not a question of the few rare individuals growing into wisdom ; the general mass

of humanity has to mark an advance before the inner contents of truths become fully manifest.

Lord Maitreya

We have to live to the spirit of the Lord's message. 'I am not the first Buddha who came upon earth nor shall I be the last. In due time another Buddha will arise in the world, a holy one, a supremely enlightened one, endowed with wisdom, in conduct, auspicious, knowing the universe, an incomparable leader of men, a master of angels and mortals. He will reveal to you the same eternal truths which I have taught you. He will preach His religion glorious in its origin, glorious at the climax and glorious at the goal, in the spirit and in the letter. He will proclaim a religious life wholly perfect and pure such as I now proclaim. He will be known as Maitreya.'

We have to perform the dual function of being the devout followers of our Lord Buddha and at the same time being the heralds of Lord Maitreya. I need emphasise the fact that while the Lord had prophesied that Lord Maitreya will reveal the same truths as have been revealed by Him He had also stated that Lord Maitreya will emphasise more on the love aspect. This clearly indicates that the Lord had foreseen that there will be a difference in the appreciation of truths as also in the mode of its presentation.

A true Buddhist therefore has to be free from all fanaticism. He has to accept the truth

from whatever source it comes. Whatsoever is rightly spoken and is free from error that is the teaching of the Buddha. All the spiritual light that shineth forth in this world is from Nirvana's sun whose rising splendour promises for us all a perfect day. We have to revere our faith but our reverence for it shall be shallow if we do not recognise the good that is also in our brothers' Dhamma. Their faiths also have some measure of goodness in them. They have also received illuminations from the Dharam Kaya. As devout Buddhists our spirit has to be in tune with the world. We need have abundance of love and sympathy for it. We have to recognise that all the manifold life and its activity constitute a great chant which is divine and is its outward manifestation. This sympathy and attunement we cannot have if we become fanatics in our faith and devotion. The Lord had truly said, 'No preacher of the Norm, brethren, quarrels with any one in the world.'

THE THOUGHTS THAT TROUBLE

For a long time past men have troubled themselves with diverse matters which are difficult to comprehend and they have come to hold diverse views on these matters. They have accepted diverse faiths for the sake of these views and sometimes have set before themselves aims and ideals which are not firmly rooted in that righteousness and wisdom which comes to those who follow the path of enlightenment. These men are swayed to and fro by these diverse opinions.

The Diverse Views

Now some of these men hold the view that eternal is the world, this is the truth, all else is delusion, others again hold the world is finite or the world is infinite or again body and soul are one and the same, others hold body and soul are different things.

Some hold that there is survival after death, others hold that the soul also perishes with the body and there is no survival whatsoever. Some hold that the world has been created by one who himself is uncreated and there are some who say that there is a path which leads to the uncreated and gets one in union with it. Others

say that no such path does exist and the uncreated and the created can never unite.

Some hold that both good and evil come from the uncreated, others hold that all good comes from the uncreated but there is an opposite power though less powerful than the power of good but quite potent and from it flows all evil.

The Blessed One likened all these men to the people who were born blind and could therefore describe an elephant in the likeness of that part of his body which they had felt.

His Own Position

His own position was stated by Him as under.

‘I do not hold that the world is eternal and that this view alone is true and every other false. I do not hold that the world is not eternal and that this view alone is true and every other false. I do not hold that the saint both exists and does not exist after death and that this view alone is true and every other is false. I do not hold that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death. Such views are a jungle, a wilderness, a puppet, a writhing and a fetter’.

‘Freedom from All Theories’

‘To say that one is reborn would not fit the case. To say that one is not reborn would not fit the case. To say that one is both reborn and not reborn would not fit the case. To say that he is

neither reborn nor not reborn would not fit the case.'

Both the parable of the blind men and His own statement of position, so clearly and definitely made, has a meaning of profound significance for us. The parable brings out the fact that Reality is illimitable and has innumerable facets and therefore all of us who see only one facet of it are like unto men who are born blind and have limited perception. As we can dimly feel and perceive only one facet of the Reality we should neither be dogmatic about it nor quarrel over its description. The correct attitude therefore is what the Blessed One had stated that one has to be free from all theories, as no description of the Reality will fit the case.

He also stated with perfect candour that too much concern with these matters to the neglect of the task in hand, which is actually to grow into righteousness and wisdom, does not lead to profit and is positively harmful. It is in fact always the preoccupation of vain and idle men. It is on this very account that He dealt firmly and a little severely with those of His disciples who were too much preoccupied with these matters.

Malunkya Putta's Threat

One such disciple was Malunkyaputta, who had come determined to have categorical replies from the Lord on all these diverse matters. He said, if the Exalted One will declare these things to me I will follow the holy life under the Exalted One. But if the Exalted One will

not so declare them to me, then I will give up training and go back to the lower life.

Now if the Exalted One knows 'eternal is the world, let Him declare it to be so.' If He knows 'not eternal is the world let Him so declare to me'. And so with regard to the other views I have mentioned. But if the Exalted One does not know, does not see which theory is true, the straight thing is to say that. 'I know not, I see not.' And so with regard to the other views which I have named. The Lord's reply was firm and severe, possibly a little too severe, but it was for the good of Malunkyaputta, who not appreciating the beauty and grandeur of the truths by which he had to grow had set his heart on collecting pebbles.

'Now Malunkyaputta, did I say to you, 'come thou Malunkyaputta, follow the holy life under me and I will declare to you, eternal is the world or not eternal is the world and so forth. Not so Lord. And did you, Malunkayputta, say to me Lord, I will follow the holy life under the Exalted One if the Exalted One will declare to me eternal is the world or not eternal is the world and so forth. Not so Lord. Then this being so, misguided man, who are you and whom do you thus disallow. He who should say, Malunkyaputta, I will not follow the holy life under the Exalted One until the Exalted One declare to me whether the world be eternal or not and so forth, such a one Malunkyaputta would come to an end but that

question of his would still remain unanswered by the Tathagata.'

The Parable of the Man pierced by Arrow

Then the Blessed One spoke to Malunkya-putta, the parable of the man who was pierced with an arrow well steeped in poison which needed to be taken out immediately, but the foolish man, not realising his mortal danger, would not permit the good surgeon to take out the poisoned arrow till he had been told all about the man who had shot the arrow and all about the bow, the string and the arrow. Turning to the ashamed disciple the Lord said, "Well, Malunkya-putta, the man would die, but still that matter would not be found by him" And as a last exhortation to the disciple the Blessed One stated, "Now Malunkya-putta, to say that the very existence of the holy life should depend on those two opposing views, to wit that the world is eternal or not eternal and so forth, that is not the way".

Vaccha Gotta the Wanderer

A very different treatment was given by the Blessed One to Vachagotta, the wanderer. As the man greeted the Lord and sat down on one side, the incomparable reader of the human mind sized up the man and found him not ready for the higher knowledge. In fact He apprehended that if He were to share the truth with the man it may bewilder him. Vaccha-gotta repeated to the Blessed One his favourite

questions. "Master Gautama what have you to say about the existence of self ?" At these words the Exalted One was silent. "How now, Master Gautama ? Is there no such thing as the self ?" At these words also the Exalted One was silent. Then Vacchagotta the wanderer in disgust rose up from his seat and went away.

Ananda's Bewilderment

The Lord's treatment of Vacchagotta greatly puzzled Ananda, the inseparable companion and servitor, and he respectfully enquired, "How is it, Lord, that the Exalted One made no reply to the question asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer". The Lord looked at Ananda with eyes filled with love and pity. He wished that Ananda had been as rich in wisdom as he was in love and piety. He wished, however, to dispel the doubt that had arisen in the mind of the beloved disciple. But would Ananda understand ? He had need, however, to make the effort. "Ananda if, when asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer 'Does the self exist ?' I had replied, 'The self does exist'. Would that reply be consistent with my knowledge that all things are impermanent ?" "No, Lord, it would not," came Ananda's prompt reply. "But Ananda when asked then does not the self exist ? If I had replied, No, it Does not exist, it would have added to the bewilderment of Vacchagotta the wanderer, already bewildered. Formerly I had a self but now I have one no more". Ananda had no more question to ask. He simply bowed his head in

silent admiration of the Master who dealt with each man according to his measure.

The More Positive Hints

Yet to those who led the holy life with Him, who were earnest and sincere in their noble resolve and high endeavour to perfect themselves in righteousness and wisdom, who needed just a pointing of the finger, He gave them sufficient hints to sustain them in their faith. He told them that a world without end is existence and He spoke to them the parable of the uncountable bundles of chopped straws, boughs, twigs and leaves gathered from all the forests of India. All these bundles were few in number as compared to the relationship a man establishes in his endless round of birth and death.

Oceans of Tears

And He gave to them another parable of the four mighty oceans filled with water and He enquired of them, "Now what think ye, brethren, whether is greater, the flood of tears shed by you on this long journey, for ever running through the round of birth and death weeping and wailing because of union with the undesired, because of separation from the desired or the water of the four mighty oceans."

"How long the Aeon"

Then a certain brother came to the Blessed One and sitting down at His side enquired, "How long Lord is the aeon" and the Lord replied, "Long indeed is the aeon, brother, it is not

easy to reckon it in this way—so many years, so many centuries, so many millennia, so many hundred thousand years. Just as if, brethren, there were a mighty mountain crag four leagues in length, breadth and height, without a crack or cranny, not hollowed out, one solid mass of rock, and a man should come at the end of every century and with cloth of Banaras should once on each occasion stroke that rock sooner brother, would that mighty mountain crag be worn away by this method sooner be used up than the aeon”.

And Lord Buddha then gave a loving look to the brother and said, “Thus long, brother, is the aeon of aeons, thus long many an aeon has passed away, many a hundred aeons, many a thousand aeons, many a hundred thousand aeons.” Could a more graphic and vivid description of eternity be given to man? On another occasion the Lord stated, “O Bhikkhus, the beginning of this existence is not to be seen”.

The Lord had pondered deeply on the problems of life and death and on attaining enlightenment He had a full vision of it. He then spent seven days setting the proper sequence of His vision. As He walked so He turned in His physical mind backward and forward and fixed the twelve links of the chain of existence. This law of dependent co-production has been exhaustively dealt with in a separate chapter. It seeks to primarily emphasise

the basic fact that all phenomena beingness is rooted in Dharamkaya. Here I will only give a popular version which may be taken as Samvarti Truth. He saw life starting as unknown and non-conscious potentiality with blind impulses not knowing its whither. In the beginning therefore there is this unconcious potentiality which He termed as Avidya. In this nebulous undefined life the formative and organising propensities (Sanskaras) which are inherent in it, shape crude and formless aggregate. From these small beginnings originate organisms which are possessed of awareness, sensibility and irritability (vignana). These contacts react as vedana. This reaction gives rise to Trishna, which gives rise to upadana or cleaving. This cleaving and upadana produces the growth of Bhava. This Bhava determines and gives rise to birth and so the chain goes on, an endless circle of woe, lamentation and despair.

As life started with unknown and unconscious potentialities and with blind impulses, the evil came into being. In every manifestation there is limitation and the extent of the manifestation therefore marks its limitation and determines the contents of evil. The dizzy heights of reality condition the depth of the receptacle, it also marks the extent of its shadow.

World Rooted in Dharamkaya

Fortunately the world is rooted in Nirvana.

which is another name for Dharamkaya and is inseparable from it. Dharamkaya is the living principle behind all phenomena. It is also all that which the human personality is capable of becoming. It is all into which every human being howsoever blindly is seeking to grow. Dharamkaya is the root of all good, it is the norm of all existence, the measure of all truth, righteousness and law. It inspires all our lives and urges to us to be perfect. It vivifies all our life and its experiences. It shines on us as the sun of glory, it rains clouds of bounty and mercy upon us. Eternal bliss, peace and happiness is possible to us, as we are all firmly rooted in Dharamkaya and are one with it. If we had not been rooted in it there would have been no effort for perfection, no urge for righteousness.

The Buddhist savants have therefore truly, said that Nirvana is inseparable from Sansara, both are truly one. In short it is the warp and woof of all that lives and the smile whose smile kindles the universe. The beauty which prevades all things and beings. The germ of goodness which dwelling in all from life's minute beginnings up at last to man, unfolds itself in loving deeds. Nay the spirit of truth which inspires all with courage and hope in the fight for right.

Evil, a Passing Phase

Evil, it has been further clearly stated in Buddhist literature, is a passing phase. The ordinary

mortals have a like greatness with the enlightened. The greatness of the mortal is that he who has the spirit of kindness towards them wins worship. The greatness of the enlightened is that merit is won by love towards all creatures. Nagsena in his immortal dialogue with king Millanda tells him, "And if you ask how is Nirvana to be known, it is by freedom from distress and danger, by confidence, by peace, by calm, by bliss, by happiness, by delicacy, by purity, by freshness".

To the Brahmin Unnabha, who was questioning the Blessed One on many abstruse problems of philosophy, the Lord stated, "The question, Brahmin, what is the resort of Nirvana goes far, you cannot get an answer to encompass that question. Plunged in Nirvana, Brahman, is the holy life, lived with Nirvana for its goal and ending in Nirvana". We certainly do head for trouble when we seek to explain what happens to one who has received enlightenment after he lays down his mortal body.

The favourite and the much asked for questions in the mouth of the people in the Lord's own time were, "Does the Tathagata exist beyond death? Undeclared is it friend by the Exalted One that the Tathagata exists beyond death? How then, friend, does the Tathagata not exist beyond death? Undeclared also, friend, is this by the Exalted One. What then friend? Does the Tathagata both exist and not exist beyond death? This also, friend, is undeclared by the Exalted One. How then

friend, does the Tathagata neither exist nor not exist beyond death ? That also friend is not declared by the Exalted One.”

The best answers to these series of questions was given by a gifted nun to king Prasenjit, “As the sand on the shore of the Ganges and the volume of water in an ocean cannot be counted or measured, in the same manner the existence of the ‘Perfect One’ cannot be measured by predicates of the corporal Form”. The truth has not been grasped that the consciousness of an enlightened one becomes so vast and limitless and when the mortal body is laid aside, it becomes so transcendental that it would not be correct to measure it with the measure of our own petty existence. It is also true that these questions are not concerned with profit and the first principles of the holy life do not conduce to aversion and disgust of our selfish desires, to cessation, to calm, to perfect wisdom and to Nirvana.

It has also been clearly explained that evil in any case is just a passing phase in the scheme of evolution and as a man progresses on the path, it is left behind. Therefore we have to constantly choose the more and the better and work sincerely for it and by doing so rise above the pair of opposites.

In respect of ‘self’ and its survival after the death of the physical body, there is ample evidence to confirm the view that apart from the conception of an evolving soul given by Him, the Lord had also differentiated between the higher

self which does not take birth and the lower self which gathers experience with each physical birth. This self gets merged in the higher self from which it was never entirely separate on the completion of its round and the higher self in its own time sends one more offshoot from its stem which comes with the Karma of the previous shoot to work out its further destiny, as a wayfarer in this and many other worlds.

This phenomena cannot be explained as rebirth, nor would it be correct to call it a survival or growth. None of these conceptions fits in and it would be more correct to state that new birth is more in the nature of a recreation. While these hints have been given here to satisfy the earnest seekers, the warning need be conveyed again that too much preoccupation with these questions to the neglect of the main task of perfecting oneself in holiness works to the ill of men.

Acceptance of these truths second hand tends to formulate beliefs which get crystallised into dogmas. Faith should only be the beginning of our effort, self-enlightenment should be its final goal. Till the higher truths are truly perceived and comprehended by the man and their knowledge is founded on one's own inner experience and enlightenment, these experiences hang like a millstone round the neck. Blessed truly is the man and he is sure to progress fast and get enlightened, who applies himself wholly to the task of perfecting himself and does not concern himself with the diverse theories about existence, self, rebirth and Nirvana.

KARMA MAKES ONE FREE

Static Conception

Through ignorance the law of Karma has been taken to be a punitive law or the law of retribution. Possibly much of the wrong conceptions about the Karmic law have been borrowed by us from our Criminal Procedure Codes. In these codes punishments are prescribed for every act of omission and commission and it is the judges' duty, howsoever loathsome it may be to them, to mete out the punishment that has been prescribed under the law, once the guilt against an accused is fully established. The wardens also consider it their moral duty to see to it that the rigours of the punishment meted out are fully brought home to the accused. This cruel and brutalising conception, fortunately for the progress of humanity, is fast vanishing away and an effort is being made, howsoever halting, to turn our jails into institutions which will redeem the broken down humanity entrusted to its care.

Lord's Dynamic Conception

Lord Buddha differed from this static conception of the Karmic law. In one of His discourses He stated :

“O priests, if any one were to say that a man must reap according to his deeds, in that case O priests there is no religious life, nor is any opportunity afforded for the entire extinction of misery.

“But if any one says, O priests, that the reward a man reaps accords with his deeds in that case, O priests, there is a religious life and opportunity is afforded for the entire extinction of misery.”

Mark the Lord's word in accord, what the Blessed One had stated was that a man's deed only set in certain conditions. If the deeds are evil they tend towards evil and to that extent they produce evil propensities and set in conditions for evil but if on the other hand the deeds are good they create conditions of freedom, happiness and bliss. All these, however, are conditions of the spirit and not of the body which is just a vehicle of the spirit.

The Law of Redemption

In actual fact the law of Karma is the law of redemption. It is the law which uplifts and turns upwards to freedom, bliss and happiness and turns the flow of the blind and unconscious potentiality towards Dharmakaya. The Karmic force that is applied in each case is exactly in the measure that is necessary to redeem the man. As a river which is liable to floods, which always changes its course and causes lot of destruction, is required to be tamed so that its waters may be harnessed to good purpose and

therefore engineers raise embankments, put in lockers and construct breakers at selected points, in just the same manner the law of Karma acts as an embankment, locker and breaker to arrest the destructive action of the stream of life in floods.

The measure of the impact that the stream gets on the breakers that have been provided; depends entirely on the volume and the velocity of the current. The same is true of the man, he just gets the impact that is needed for his good. So long as the blind potentiality, the current of life in man moves downwards, towards "Jaramarna," the stream courses through the embankment's lockers and breakers, that have been provided for its safety and the waters have to receive the impact of its own forces.

Once the man grows conscious of his divine self, the Bodhichita in him gets awakened and he feels sincerely sorry for whatever wrong he may have committed, he begins to live a life of high and noble endeavour in perfecting himself into righteousness and wisdom. He becomes selfless, lives more for the benefit of others than his own and he becomes like unto a quiet and limpid stream whose waters are cool and free from all impurities. And the people drink of this water, irrigate their fields with it and sing songs in praise of it. This quiet stream flows within its channels, it courses on and does not receive the impact of embankment and breakers. Such a noble and useful river nurtures

civilisation in its valleys and on its banks and becomes the high way for trade and commerce.

Divine Grace

If the redemptive character of the Karmic law is fully grasped there would be little difficulty in understanding the doctrine of the divine Grace. Dharamkaya is always working for good and wherever it can, it uplifts, it beautifies, it inspires and it elevates. No opportunity is lost, no chance is ever missed. The Grace of Dharamkaya is a more powerful redemptive force than the Karmic law. The latter taps the stream in its upper reaches while the former harnesses at the stage where its water can be usefully employed for the common good of all. Humanity is still not at that stage of evolution wherefrom it can comprehend the working of this great law. It therefore remains a divine mystery. Few conclusions can, however, be drawn.

1. The transformation that takes place through the Grace of Dharamkaya is often gradual but sometimes it is also sudden.

2. The grace manifests only when through some silent wish, prayer, penitence or action, man turns away from the path of evil and becomes suddenly responsible for doing some good, which may not appear to be an outstanding act, but deeply stirs the man, in his innermost core and transforms him.

Through it, the coils that bind the man get instantaneously released, the blinds fall from his

eyes and he suddenly grows into righteousness and wisdom. Karmic law ceases to have effect on such man and people feel surprised how a sinner becomes a saint overnight.

Many examples of this sudden transformation and getting fully established in truth are recorded in Buddhist religious literature. Well-known amongst them are Angulimala the bandit, Patachara the girl who had eloped with a servant, Ambapali the courtesan of Vesali, Vimala the dancer of Ujjaini. There are also recorded many examples of instantaneous transformation of men who had died immediately after receiving initiation and who were declared by the Blessed One to have reached the further shore. Two examples that readily came to my memory are of Suppabudha the leper and of Pukkusati the noble from Taxila. Karma also does not bind when it is selfless and is in no way tainted with a personal desire.

The Blessed One has stated that as burnt seed does not take root and sprout so also the Karmas of the man who works unselfishly. Buddhism also believes in the transference of merit from the saint to the sinner, from those who are rich in virtue to those who lack it and therefore suffer in diverse ways on this account. This act of turning over the fruit of the merit to humanity as a whole, to all the beings or any group of them, has to be an act both of robust faith and strong will.

The man turning over the fruit of his merit

has to have unflinching faith in the Dharmakaya and then finally in all sincerity and earnestness and in a spirit of utter humility he has to will it with all the strength of his Sankalpa and Bhavana that the merit of his work be turned over for the benefit of others. Amongst all the gifts that the man is capable of giving, this is considered to be the very best and its beneficial effects are most outstanding.

In the new social order that the Lord had envisaged, this act of the turning over the merit of one's work to others is the very cornerstone of the new social order. For under this new social order men will not seek to reap the full benefit of their work for themselves and will be content and happy with the little that would meet their requirements and the requirements of those who depend on them. The balance of the merit and the benefit of their work will be turned over for the benefit of humanity and all the world of beings.

In the world of spirit this turning over of the merit is a highly spiritual act and there is ample testimony available in the Buddhist literature of its beneficial effects. Saints live more in the world of spirit than they do in this physical world and they effect others more in the spirit world than they effect them in the physical world, where severe limitations apply. Who does not know that their love redeems, it emancipates, it fills people with grace and beauty and it brings sudden transformation. This turning over the merit of one's act, if it has to be true

and sincere, has to be both in the world of spirit as also in the physical world. A man who would like to reap the full benefit of his works in the physical world can hardly be expected to turn over the merit of his work in the world of spirit, in favour of other people.

THE NEW WAY OF LIFE

(A Higher Affirmation)

The life and teachings of the Blessed One have been subject of reverent study by me for the last thirty years. I have studied them in translations as I am ignorant of both Pali and Sanskrit. While I had several times wished that I had known both these languages, I had not in any measure felt the lack of knowledge of these languages as a serious handicap to my studies. Firstly there are now authoritative and reliable translations available of Buddhist works from noted and sincere scholars in the English language, and secondly because I have never laid much stress on the letter of the law and had always laid greater stress on the spirit of the Master's message.

The Lord had been my guide in this respect also, as He had said, "Many deluded men learn the doctrine in all its different branches and having so learnt the doctrine do not go to enquire wisely into its meaning and not penetrating to its meaning they fail to attain to insight. Lacking in wisdom they learn the doctrine only with a view to quoting the texts for the sake of advantage in argument. And what of the doctrines they may learn they attain to no right

comprehension thereof. And so the teachings since they do not lay hold of them in the proper way, long time lead to their hurt and sorrow and all because they have not laid hold of them rightly." It has taken me also a long time to comprehend the true meaning of the Lord's teachings.

The new comprehension, some glimpses of which have been given in the foregoing chapters came rather very late in life and came some time with startling suddenness and in these brief moments of the new dawn, I have bent my head in reverence to the sublime Master and thanked Him with all my heart and had repeated with those that have gone before, the favourite song of praise :

"Excellent O Lord, excellent O Lord. Just as if Lord one should lift up the fallen, discover the hidden, point out the way to one bewildered, show a light in the gloom, saying now they who have eyes to see can see shapes". Even in diverse ways has the Exalted One expounded the truth.

With the new dawn has also come the certitude that I have seen the true vision and received the true light and I have clung to this certitude. With this new experience the heart which was previously laden with sorrow has become light and free. It is filled with love and with a new song and melody which it had not known before. The teachings with the new meaning that have dawned on me, 'have

conducted to dispassion, to detachment, to frugality, to contentment, to high and noble endeavour and to delight in good' They have given me a new hope and made me a lover of humanity, and as these tests of the Lord have been fulfilled I say with confidence, "This is the Norm, this is the discipline, this is the Master's Message."

In the body of this book I have given a few selections of the Lord's teachings. The selections are those from which I have drawn my inspirations. There is a lot more in the Tripatikas, all of which I did not reproduce. I have only tried to share the sweetest fruits which I have tasted.

I need, however, state that although I have read the teachings that have come down to us in great reverence, I do not accept all of them as true. The dust of centuries has gathered on the teachings, they have got to be cleared of this dust, restored where they have faded, purged and made clean of the accretions that have grown round them. Here again I have been guided by the Lord's advice to Kalamas, "Now Kalamas, do not ye go by hearsay, nor by what is handed down by others, nor by what people say, nor by what is stated on the authority of your traditional teachings.

"Do not go by reasoning, nor by inferring, nor by arguments as to method, nor from reflection on and approach of an opinion, nor out of respect thinking a recluse must be defer-

red to". I have also sincerely believed that while the teachings of Buddha are for a whole kalapa they need reinterperatation in each age, according to the growing spiritual and social consciousness of humanity. Where reinterperatation is missed, the teachings are passed over by the progressive humanity as being the old and outmoded interperatations of a teaching which were suited to a different age and need and which do not satisfy the new urges which are more refined and noble in their contents. It is a failing of the orthodox people that they glorify the past and condemn the present. They fondly believe, but wrongly, that all that was in the past was good and all that is in the present is bad.

A true Buddhist, however, if he has read the teachings rightly, must be free from such delusions. He has to concern himself with the present. His beliefs must also be in conformity with the lessons of history. With all its failings humanity is on an ascending scale, spiritually, culturally, morally and socially, it has grown greatly in its ways of life. Humanity, however, always had its Buddhas, its enlightened ones, its guides and its teachers. These people have been always in advance of their times. We should not judge the present harshly by comparing it with their righteousness and wisdom or even with the wisdom and righteousness of the selected band of people who come with these Great Men to spread the new teaching or the few men who follow in their wake, to stabilise it and put in the missing links.

I, for one, sincerely believe that humanity as a whole has reached a new ascent and has the need of a new world order, the main inspiration of which has got to come from the teachings of the Blessed One. We have got to go therefore to His teachings as also to his noble life, and seek from them the life-giving waters which will cool our thirst, refresh and nourish us. In this new world order, noble and inspiring leadership of the enlightened men will play its great part, but the main and more solid inspiration will come from the common mass of humanity. This world order will have as its supporting pillars.

1. Peace and concord amongst nations and mankind.
2. A solemn and firm resolve to disown war as an instrument for settling disputes.
3. Abandonment of armament.
4. A sincere and earnest keenness to study with love and sympathetic understanding the way of life of one's brother and see its goodness where true goodness lies and to attempt correction in the spirit of humility, sincerity and with loving solicitude, wherever the need of such correction may exist.
5. Turning over the merit of one's work both in the spiritual and in the material field for the benefit of humanity.
6. Recognition of the fact that the promotion of human happiness, *i.e.* spiritual, mental

and material without any distinction of colour, caste, creed, nationality and sex and compassionate treatment of all those who are backward, handicapped and distressed as also of the lower forms of life is the noblest endeavour to which a man has to dedicate himself.

7. That this responsibility can be best discharged when man is able to rise above the gravitational pull of evil which exists in all of us and grow in wisdom and compassion through the practice of Sheela, Samadhi and Paramitas. It implies rejection both of asceticism and of a life of unrestrained sensuous pleasures as a means for promoting human happiness.
8. Rites, rituals and adorations to the extent they help to spiritualise the man can continue but in the main too much reliance on these need be discouraged. No reliance whatsoever in any case need be placed on magic formulas and mantras.
9. A life lived in the sincere and faithful practice of Sheela, Samadhi and Pragma and in case of the latter in its twin aspects of wisdom and compassion when it is matched with utter humility of heart is accepted as a suitable preparation for receiving the Grace of Dharamkaya. This grace is open equally to both Bhikkhus and householders.
10. Life to be treated as an opportunity for

growth in wisdom and compassion through honest endeavours in noble causes and accepted cheerfully with all its limitations and disabilities. These limitations have to be overcome through faith, wisdom, mindfulness meditation and vigour.

11. Trust in the grace of Dharamkaya and in the efficacy of selfless Karma need be the two important articles of faith with man.
12. Abstinence from all acts which involve killing and harm to living beings and abstinence from theft, adultery, untruthful speech and use of intoxicants. Those who are unmarried need live a life of strict celibacy. Those who are married need live a life of restraint in a monogamous marriage in utter faithfulness to each other.
13. Recognition of a man's right and his duty to earn a comfortable living for himself and his family in a calling and profession which is useful to humanity and to provide for himself and his family for the rainy day.

Inordinate accumulation of wealth is, however, to be discouraged as being an insensible act. All surplus wealth even when legitimately earned through personal effort need be turned over for the common good of all.

14. Increasing use of scientific knowledge and machinery to usher in an era of

prosperity and to relieve the burden of hard toil from the man and the beast.

15. Complete equality of men in the opportunities that are afforded to them for their self-culture and improvement materially, morally and spiritually.
16. Abandonment of all racial and national prejudices. Man need be considered more a world citizen and less a national of a particular country.
17. Complete equality of sexes in every sphere of human activity. Woman to be recognised as a true helpmate, and companion for good and treated with reverence and chivalry which is due to her as the mother of the race.
18. Banishment of poverty and provision of complete security against old age, disability, sickness and unemployment.
19. Unremitting fight against the ravages of disease and untimely death.
20. Complete freedom of conscience and of person and a due share in the Government of the state ensured to each man through a free elective system.
21. A growing sense of partnership in the Dharamkaya and a vivid realisation that we are its helpers in evolution.
22. Ceaseless pursuit of knowledge, spirit of earnest enquiry and a love for a tough life and the spirit of adventure.

A GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT AND PALI WORDS

Ahimsa	Non-harmfulness. The first precept.
Ashramas	Forest Universities, where saints and sages mused on problems of existence and trained some disciples.
Adina	Not bestowed.
Anitya	Impermanence.
Ajatsatru	A king of Magadha. For a time assisted Devadutta.
Anatta	Without a changeless soul.
Angutranikaya	A portion of Pali Tripitaka.
Anathpindika	Support of orphans. A philanthropic Buddhist merchant of Sarvasti.
Ashta	Eight.
Adhishtana	Resolve.
Arupa	Formless.
Angamin	Non-returner.
Acharya	Teacher.
Avidya	Ignorance.
Alarakalama	One of the early teachers of Lord Buddha who came from the clan of Kalamas.
Anaksar	Which cannot be described. Inexpressible.

Amitya }	Deathless.
Amata }	
Buddha	A fully enlightened world teacher.
Brahmanism	The popular priestly religion of the Hindus.
Bhikku	Buddhist mendicant.
Bhava	Inclination.
Bhavna	Right inclination.
Bodhisatva	One who is preparing for the office of Buddhahood. One who has foregone his own Bliss to help others.
Bodhi	Wisdom.
Bodhichita	Spiritual aspiration. Spark of Buddhahood.
Brahma	A Vedic god responsible for creation.
Brahmaviharas	Divine states.
Chakra	Circle, wheel.
Chara	Living.
Chetna	Awareness.
Dukha	Pain.
Dharma	Law, Religion, one ultimate reality.
Drishti	View.
Dana	Gift.
Dasa	Ten.
Dhayana	Meditation.
Dharamkaya	Body of Bliss, Dharma body.
Deva	Shining one.

Gandharva

A being about to take birth.

Indra

King of Hindu gods.

Jataka Tales

Stories of Lord Buddha's previous births.

Jap

Counting of holy name.

Kalpa

Aeon.

Kalamas

A community of people in Bihar in Lord Buddha's time.

Karma

Action.

Karuna

Compassion.

Kshema

Forgiveness.

Kshanti

Peace.

Kshatriya

Warrior clan of Hindus.

Maha

Great.

Mahayana

The great vehicle—Northern school of Buddhism.

Maitreya

The Buddha to come.

Mithya

Wrong, false.

Maitri

Goodwill, Friendliness.

Mara

Tempter.

Matanga

A low caste in Hindus.

Metta

Love.

Mudita

Joyfulness.

Madhayamika

Teaching given by Nagarjun.

Moosavada

False speech

Nirvana

State of Bliss.

Nishkarma

Work without desire of reward.

Nirgun

Signless, Without attributes.

Nirmankaya	Human Body of Lord Buddha.
Parivartan	Change, movement.
Pari	Beyond.
Paramitas	Virtues.
Partitya Sammu- pada	Law of causation.
Parmarath	Ultimate.
Pragya }	Wisdom, Insight.
Pragna }	
Rupa	Form.
Shiva	Hindu god of destruction.
Sangha	A body of people, A body of Buddhist monks.
Sunyata	Void.
Samma	Right.
Sraddha	Faith.
Sanklap	Resolve, Effort.
Sheela, Sila, Shela	Morality.
Samvarti	Relative.
Sansara	World's flow, Circling.
Sambhogkaya	The body of enjoyment and splendour.
Sutra, Sutta	A religious passage.
Shanti }	Peace.
Kshanti }	
Sotapanna	Climber of the stream.
Sakadgamin	Once returner.
Samadhi	Concentration.
Tathagata	Thus gone, A title of Lord Buddha.
Thera	Elder.
Theravada	Path of Elders

Trishna	Craving.
Uddaka Ramaputa	One of the early teachers of Lord Buddha.
Upeksha	Equanimity.
Vimuti	Deliverance.
Vachna	Speech.
Virya	Vigour.
Vikalpa	Thought formations.
Vignana	Irritability.
Vedic	Pertaining to Vedas, the revealed religious Literature of Hindus.
Vacchagotta	A mendicant wanderer who met Lord Buddha.
Vajji	A republican clan of North Bihar in Lord Buddha's time.
Vedna	Feeling.
Vinay	Discipline.

With bad advisors forever left behind,
From paths of evil he departs for eternity,
Soon to see the Buddha of Limitless Light
And perfect Samantabhadra's Supreme Vows.

The supreme and endless blessings
of Samantabhadra's deeds,
I now universally transfer.
May every living being, drowning and adrift,
Soon return to the Pure Land of Limitless Light!

*** The Vows of Samantabhadra ***

I vow that when my life approaches its end,
All obstructions will be swept away;
I will see Amitabha Buddha,
And be born in His Western Pure Land of
Ultimate Bliss and Peace.

When reborn in the Western Pure Land,
I will perfect and completely fulfill
Without exception these Great Vows,
To delight and benefit all beings.

*** The Vows of Samantabhadra Avatamsaka Sutra ***

DEDICATION OF MERIT

May the merit and virtue
accrued from this work
adorn Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land,
repay the four great kindnesses above,
and relieve the suffering of
those on the three paths below.

May those who see or hear of these efforts
generate Bodhi-mind,
spend their lives devoted to the Buddha Dharma,
and finally be reborn together in
the Land of Ultimate Bliss.
Homage to Amita Buddha!

NAMO AMITABHA

南無阿彌陀佛

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台北市杭州南路一段五十五號十一樓

Printed and donated for free distribution by

The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation

11F., 55 Hang Chow South Road Sec 1, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Tel: 886-2-23951198, Fax: 886-2-23913415

Email: overseas@budaedu.org

Website: <http://www.budaedu.org>

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Printed in Taiwan

3,000 copies; April 2011

EN334 - 9263