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# BUDDHISM AND HINDUISM



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*there is seen why there is hope for man  
and where we hold the wheel of life at will"*  
(*Light of Asia*)

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GURUSEVAK UPADHYAYA

BANARAS



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF  
ADVANCED STUDY  
SIMLA**

# BUDDHISM AND HINDUISM

BY

GURUSEWAK UPADHYAYA

FOREWORD BY

Dr. V. S. JHA, Ph. D. (London)

*Vice-Chancellor*

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY

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## FOREWORD

This is a plea for a mutual recognition by Hindus and Buddhists of those basic religious values which are common to both. The author reminds Hindu readers, in particular, of the Brahmanical roots of Buddhism on the one hand and its impact on the shaping of Hinduism throughout the centuries, on the other. Documentation and amplification is provided for Mahatma Gandhi's view that "Gautama was himself a Hindu of Hindus.....Buddha never rejected Hinduism, but he broadened its base. He gave it a new life and a new interpretation". The book ought to help readers to realize that the essential message of the Buddha constitutes not a "different" religion but forms an integral part of Hinduism itself, supplying to it the dynamism needed for continuous self-criticism and self-purification.

*8th November, 1956*

V. S. JHA  
*Vice-Chancellor*  
Banaras Hindu University



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## PREFACE

I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to two books, in particular, namely, "Buddha-Mimansa" (English, out of print) by Sri Maitreya, a Buddhist scholar of Gaya (India) and "The Yoga of the Bhagavat Gita" by Sri Krishna Prem (Mr. Nixon). I have drawn upon them freely.

Sri Krishna Prem is an Englishman who has made a deep study of Hinduism and Buddhism. He was a professor at the Banaras Hindu University for a short time, then retired from the world about 30 years ago and has since been living in one of the Himalayan districts, namely, Almora.

Two valuable books in Hindi, "Buddha-darshan Mimansa" (1946) by Acharya Baldeva Upadhyaya, a professor at the Banaras Hindu University, and "Buddha Dharma Darshana" (1956) by Acharya Narendra Deva, sometime Vice-Chancellor of the Banaras Hindu University, have appeared, which give an extensive survey of Buddhist religion and philosophy. A third book, "The teachings of the compassionate Buddha" by Mr. Burt, 'the sage professor of philosophy' at Cornell University, America, recently published, is thoughtful and helpful. I have made here and there some references to them in my booklet, as also to several older treatises. My grateful acknowledgment is expressed hereby.

Buddha is looked upon and worshipped by us, Hindus, as an *avatara* (incarnation of God Vishnu). Much of our subsequent writings has been influenced by his teachings. We have, therefore, a right to speak about his teachings which were largely based on our Upanishads, and which have in certain respects been misinterpreted now and then. "Most Mahayanist doctrines have their roots in old Indian ideas" (Sir Charles Eliot : Hinduism

& Buddhism, P. XXX)". Its (of Mahayana) two most important books "Saddharma Pundarika" and "Mahayana Shraddhotpatti" are indebted to the Gita (Dr. Radhakrishnan).

Hindus and Buddhists have got to put their heads together and work out a harmonious scheme in the interest of the nation and world peace on the occasion of the celebrations of the 2500th birthday of Buddha, one of India's greatest and noblest sons.

A mutual understanding on the religious level is the key to spiritual union.

Shivpur, Banaras,  
*15th August, 1956.*

GURUSEVAK UPADHYAYA

## INTRODUCTION

### I

“It is my definite opinion” says Mahatma Gandhi “that the essential part of the teachings of Buddha now forms an integral part of Hinduism. By his immense sacrifice, by his great renunciation and by the immaculate purity of his life he left an indelible impress upon Hinduism, and Hinduism owes an eternal debt of gratitude to that great teacher. I would venture to tell you that what Hinduism did not assimilate of what passes as Buddhism today was not an essential part of Buddha’s life and his teachings. It is my fixed opinion that the teaching of Buddha found its full fruition in India, and it could not be otherwise, for Gautama was himself a Hindu of Hindus. He was saturated with the best that was in (Brahminism) Hinduism, and he gave life to some of the teachings that were buried in the Vedas and which were overgrown with weeds. His teaching like his heart was all expanding and all-embracing and so it has survived his own body and swept across the face of the earth. And at the risk of being called a follower of Buddha, I claim this achievement as a triumph of Hinduism. Buddha never rejected Hinduism, but he broadened its base. He gave it a new life and a new interpretation.

“I have heard it contended that Buddha did not believe in God. In my humble opinion such a belief contradicts the very central fact of Buddha’s teaching. He undoubtedly rejected the notion that a being called God was actuated by malice and like the kings of the earth could possibly be open to temptations and bribes (animal sacrifice) and could possibly have favourites. He emphasized and redeclared the eternal and unalterable existence of the moral government of this universe. He unhesitatingly said that the Law was God Himself”. (From a speech delivered by Gandhiji in Colombo in 1927).

*Note*—Very often, the modern scholar steeped in Western Materialistic philosophies, reads his cherished godless creed into the Lord's teachings.

Mrs. Rhys Davids says "Gautama was born and brought up and lived and died as a Hindu.....There was not much in the metaphysics and principles of Gautama which cannot be found in one or other of the orthodox systems, and a great deal of his morality could be matched from earlier or later Hindu books. Such originality as Gautama possessed lay in the way in which he adopted, enlarged, ennobled and systematized that which had already been well said by others; in the way in which he carried out to their logical conclusion principles of equity and justice already acknowledged by some of the most prominent Hindu thinkers. The difference between him and other teachers lay chiefly in his deep earnestness and in his broad public spirit of philanthropy".

## II

All great teachers like Sri Krishna (Gita, Chap. IV) and Lord Buddha are content to affirm that they are only restating the teachings of their former masters. Milindapāṇha explains that it is an ancient way that had been lost that Buddha opens up again. When Buddha returns to his father's capital in an ascetic's garb with a begging bowl in hand, his father asks him: "Why is this?" and the answer comes: "My father, it is the custom of my race". The King in surprise asks: "What race?" and Buddha answers: (Light of Asia).

"The Buddhas who have been and who shall be,  
Of these am I and what they did, I do,  
And this, which now befalls, so fell before,  
That at his gate a King in warrior mail,  
Should meet his son, a prince in hermit weeds".

Ideas are not the property of individual thinkers. Rather is it the fact, as Plato rightly taught, that when we entertain a 'new idea' we do but participate in something that is eternal, and that when two men "think" of the same idea they are united with each other by this very fact since both are participating in a particular facet of the Eternal Wisdom.

*Note*—There will be many occasions when parallels will be adduced. It is needless to say that the purpose is not to suggest "borrowing", but to point out that the cultural basis of both Hinduism and Buddhism is the same, and they are essentially the same.

After leaving home Gautama spent six years in study and practice of austerities; a few years with sage Arada Kalama, a Sankhya philosopher living at Vaishali, and a few with Rudraka, a sage of Rajagriha, and with five other Brahmins. He became saturated with the teachings of the Upanishads. Finding that the Brahmin hermits' ascetic denial of the body's demands in extreme form was not the right way, it did not bring spiritual illumination and peace but exhaustion and impotence of mind, he became his own guide and light. His five Brahmin Companions then forsook him. After a long period of meditation under a peepal tree (afterwards known as 'bodhi' tree) in Gaya, his quest reached its culmination and he became Buddha (enlightened) suddenly.

The attainment of Buddhahood (Buddhattva) was an ancient ideal (see introduction to Narendra Deva's book).

"When the mind grapples with a great and intricate problem it makes its advances, it secures its positions step by step, with but little realization of the gains it has made, until suddenly, with an effect of abrupt illumination, it realizes its victory. So, it would seem, it happened to Gautama" (H. G. Wells: Outline of History).

## III

The Upanishads are the metaphysical portions of the Vedas, and came much later than their ritual portions. The Upanishads themselves speak disparagingly of rituals without gnosis. For example, Mundaka Upanishad says : “Yajnas (sacrifices) with their ritual (ritual without gnosis) and its eighteen parts are frail boats indeed ; and they that rejoice in sacrifice (Yajna) as the best of things in their infatuation shall pass on again to decay and death”. The Gita is called an epitome of the Upanishads. It also denounces “the undiscerning who rejoice in the letter of the Vedas” and asks us to renounce all *selfish* desire and selfish work, and sacrifice the lower self to the higher self (ch. II & IV). But it was for the earnest and compassionate Buddha to fight for the abolition of “animal” sacrifice which had become prevalent. There is no sanction for “animal” sacrifice in the Vedas ; as explained in the Mahabharata : “Those given to meat eating and drinking had animal sacrifice introduced into the Yajna, (Surām matsyān madhu mānsamāsavam kris-raudanam, Dhurtai pravartitam hyetat naitat Vedeshu kalpitam : Shantiparva).

Some of the authors of the Upanishads such as Yajnya-Valkya have taught control of the senses and *withdrawal from the world*. Others have emphasized *disinterested work*, and service of God through service of humanity. All speak of the “Yoga” attained through mastery of the mind, and through the belief that one Life, one *atman* (Spirit) pervades the whole creation ; speak of the existence of Brahman (Absolute) and Atman (Soul spirit) ; of Law of Karma i.e., the principle of causality which operates in man’s moral and spiritual experience causing recurring earthly lives ; of the need of breaking the chain by giving up selfish desires and obtaining moksha (Nirvana), the final goal of absolute peace and unfading bliss ; of *ananda* (happiness, joy) as the root of creation ; of *dharma*, among other things.

Buddha was naturally influenced by his Upanishadic background and by the historical situation which he found himself challenged to meet. The form which his teaching took was also, of course, largely determined by the unique genius of his own personality. As Prof. Burt says: "A mastery of the meaning of Upanishadic concepts is essential to a comprehension of Buddha's teaching and of the course of its development in the thought of his followers". It may be said that accepting certain assumptions of the Upanishads he opened up new paths for the mind of man, and his followers in their own way dilated upon those assumptions reading their cherished creed into his teachings.

What was the historical situation? Wars were frequent between the petty princes and rival clans in northern India, where the field of his work lay. Though they professed to be followers of Buddha, the Rajas of Magadh, Koshal, Koshambi and Ujjaini were often at war with each other (Acharya Baldeva Upadhyaya: *Bauddha Darshana* P. 21). The organization of society was moving more and more in the direction of a rigid caste system. Religious thinkers were championing varied cosmological systems. Rituals and ceremonials were in great favour. Religion was mired in obstructive tradition. Minds of ordinary men were bewildered, and their spiritual and moral ideals had suffered badly. Animal sacrifice was prevalent. Buddha decided to teach in the people's language (Pali, not Samskrita) a religion, simple and practical, transferring the emphasis from metaphysics to a life of practical righteousness and self discipline. It had to do with the immediate question of life, suffering and people's conduct. It made no distinction of caste, creed or sex. He wanted to inspire his followers to right living. He did not want the force of his appeal to be dissipated by speculation on the why and wherefore of things.



## IV

Why had the Upanishads failed to rouse the people, when even Philosopher Schopenhauer, the pessimist, has spoken so eloquently of them : "From every sentence (of the Upanishads) deep, original and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit.....In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads.....They are products of the highest wisdom... It is destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people". And again : "The study of the Upanishads has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death". Writing on this, Max Muller says "I share his enthusiasm for the Vedanta and feel indebted to it for much that has been helpful to me in my passage through life".

Sri Nehru's wise words as an answer to the above query need to be taken to heart "It is obvious that the ideas of the authors of the Upanishads, the rarefied mental atmosphere in which they moved, were confined to a small body of the elect who were capable of understanding them. They were entirely beyond the comprehension of the vast mass of the people. A creative minority is always small in numbers but, if it is in tune with the majority and is always trying to pull the latter up and make it advance, so that the gap between the two is lessened, stable and progressive culture results. Without that creative minority a civilization must inevitably decay. But it may also decay if the bond between a creative minority and the majority is broken and there is a loss of social unity in society as a whole, and ultimately that minority itself loses its creativeness and becomes barren and sterile. Or else it gives place to another creative or vital force which society throws up. ....For popular purposes, the new thought of the Upanishads was interpreted so as to fit in with popular prejudices and superstition, thereby losing much of its essential meaning".

..... However, the ideology of the Upanishads did not permeate to any marked extent to the masses and the intellectual separation between the creative minority and the majority became more marked. In course of time this led to new movements—a powerful wave of materialistic philosophy, agnosticism, atheism. Out of this again grew Buddhism and Jainism” (Discovery of India, Pp. 70 and 71).

“Buddhism influenced Indian life in a hundred ways. Even in the long years of its decline in India, and when later it practically ceased to count as a separate religion here, much of it remained as a part of the Hindu faith and in national ways of life and thought.....There was a change in outlook partly due to Buddhism and the foreign contacts it had brought about.....

“Buddha had denied the moral value of austere asceticism. But the whole effect of his teaching was one of pessimism towards life. This was especially the Hinayana view and even more so that of Jainism. There was an emphasis on other-worldliness, a desire for liberation, of freedom from the burdens of the world. All these ideas were present in India before the Buddha but the emphasis was different. The emphasis of the old Aryan ideal was on a full and all-rounded life”. (Discovery of India, P. 141-143).

“It has become possible for men to say that existence is evil, only because in our blindness we have missed something wherein our existence has its truth. If a bird tries to soar with only one of its wings, it is offended with the wind for buffeting it down to the dust. All broken truths are evil.....Bondage in all its forms has its stronghold in the inner self and not in the outside world; it is in the dimming of our consciousness, in the narrowing of our perspective, in the wrong valuation of things”. (Dr. Tagore).

## MODERN LIFE

## V

"The vastness of the race problem with which we are faced today will either compel us to train ourselves to moral fitness in place of merely external efficiency, or the complications arising out of it will fetter all our movements and drag us to our death". (Dr. Tagore).

Einstein, most eminent among scientists, said : "The fate of the human race was more than ever dependent on its moral strength today. The way to a joyful and happy state is through renunciation and self-limitation everywhere".

"Modern morality differs from all preceding conceptions of goodness in its increased insistence upon the duty of knowing and understanding ourselves and others to the full extent of our capacity. The "simple faith" the "simple virtue" of former times we are now inclined to dismiss as intellectual sloth. There is no goodness in conscious conduct without criticism.....we shall become more critical of ourselves and more tolerant of others". (Science of Life, P. 831).

"We are all experiments together, says biology ; we are all serving in the education and growth of life.....Individual is not a cut-off unity. As this realization soaks into people's minds, it changes their attitude to conduct very profoundly. They develop what is called "the scientific attitude of mind, the scientific style of behaviour" (Science of Life).

It is not necessary that life should be simple, but it ought to be creative. For life may grow complex, and yet if there is a living personality in its centre, it will still have the unity of creation, it will carry its own weight in perfect grace, and will not be a mere addition to the number of facts that only goes to swell a crowd.

## VI

"The fundamental teaching of Gautama is clear and simple and in the closest harmony with modern ideas. It is beyond all dispute the achievement of one of the most penetrating intelligences the world has ever known.....But common men must have their cheap marvels and wonders, hence association of myths with his life.....

"There is, as we are seeing, no social order, no security, no peace or happiness, no righteous leadership or kingship, unless men lose themselves in something greater than themselves .....There can be no doubt that for the great multitude of human beings, then as now, the mere idea of an emancipation from self is a very difficult one to grasp. It is probable that even among the teachers Buddha was sending out from Banaras there were many who did not grasp it and still less were able to convey it to their hearers.

"In spite of the truth and profundity of the psychological side of Gautama's teaching, primitive Buddhism stagnated and corrupted for the lack of any progressive (lack of progressive effort of life, hence renunciation of active life) or directive idea (such as the idea of a Promise to Judaism).

"The theological disregard of the great Eastern teachers neither assenting nor denying permitted elaborations of explanation and accumulations of ritual from the very beginning..... There was no effective prohibition of superstitious practices, spirit-raising, incantations, prostrations and supplementary worships. At an early stage a process of incrustation began, and continued. The new faiths caught almost every disease of the corrupt religions they sought to replace.....Tibet today is a Buddhistic country, yet Gautama, could he return to earth, might go from end to end of Tibet seeking his own teaching in vain.

“Over great areas of the world Buddhism still survives ; it is possible that in contact with western science, and inspired by the spirit of history, *the original teaching of Gautama, revived and purified*, may yet play a large part in the direction of human destiny”. (H. G. Wells : Outline of History, P. 409-410).

Dr. Tagore wrote “perhaps Gandhi will fail as the Buddha failed and as Christ failed to wean men from their iniquities, but he will always be remembered as one who made his life a lesson for all ages to come” (as Buddha and Christ made their lives).

Buddha’s teachings were not committed to writing until about 300 years after his death. “In fact, Buddhism as a religion distinct from Brahminism was little known” until Maharaja Asoka recognized it as his state religion. (Oxford History of India of V. Smith).

## FANATICISM

### VII

What stands in the way of the original teaching of Gautama being “revived and purified ?” Fanaticism of certain Theravadins, fanaticism of certain Mahayanists, and fanaticism of certain Hindus.

It is well known how Buddha used to forgive his calumniators, among whom Devadatta was most notorious. When his followers would combine to punish any of them he would make them desist from taking such a course (cf. Digha Nikaya, Brahmajala Sutra 5ff). That should serve as a guide to Buddhists who should desist from hating each sect the other, “Hatred ceaseth not by hatred but by love”. Hindus should remember also the weighty words of Krishna in the Gita—“In all ways, men follow my Path”. Asoka proclaimed in one of his edicts—“All sects deserve reverence for one reason or another. By

thus acting a man exalts his own sect and at the same time does service to the sects of other people". We should cultivate generosity and a feeling of brotherhood if we wish to follow the Master. A liberal education and respect for religions other than our own also, are among the effective cure for fanaticism.

Four Arya Satyas, eightfold noble path and Panch a Sheela are common to all the three—Hinayana, Mahayana and Hinduism. It is these that matter. Any individual that followed them sincerely would be shorn of fanaticism, and would be in harmony with the others. And now that fortunately almost all the civilized religions of the world have come together in India, I would go further and say that for the full realization of the varied spiritual potentialities of mankind a magnificent opportunity is there by appreciating what is significant and valuable in each of them. Each exemplifies even characteristics common to all in a somewhat *distinctive* way.

The follower of no religion should say that his religion is the best of all. Comparison is odious and creates ill feeling unnecessarily. One's religion may be best for oneself but comparison is not called for.

Another thing to be avoided is 'conversion', 'proselytization'. As long as this goes on there will be no peace in the world. A man may believe in the Tripitakas and Dhammapada, in the Bible, in the Koran or in the Vedas and Upanishads, but he need not discard his own religion, his own society. Mahatma Gandhi says "We should by living the life according to our lights share the best with one another, thus adding to the sum total of human effort to reach God" (or "dhammo sanatano", Eternal Law).

The question of conversion does not arise in the case of the various sects of the Hindus among themselves—Buddhists,

Jains, Sikhs, Shivites, Vishnuites, Kabirpanthis and others as there is even inter-marriage among them by caste. There is no restriction as to the following of a faith by an individual, even if it be atheism, as long as he conforms to certain social rules and practices.

## IMPACT OF THE WEST

### VIII

Now-a-days political passions have taken the place of religious enthusiasm. Even Bhikkhus take an active part in voting and securing votes, in fighting for certain political privileges and linguistic preferences. No spiritual considerations seem to govern their conduct then. Satya and Ahimsa are compromised. Strenuous and constant self-examination as taught in the Dhammapada is perhaps set aside for a time. This is not to say that the Bhikkhus ought not to take part in politics, but, as in the case of Mahatma Gandhi, their struggles should be hallowed by religious serenity through the practice of detachment; they must rise above sectarianism and try to win over their opponents by suffering and love. Hinduism and Buddhism are ever evolving.

The West has also brought Science with it. "It is the Scientific approach, the adventurous and yet critical temper of science, the search for truth and new knowledge, the refusal to accept anything without testing and trial, the capacity to change previous conclusions in the face of new evidence, the reliance on observed fact and not on preconceived theory, the hard discipline of the mind, all this is necessary, not merely for the application of science but for life itself and the solution of its many problems". (Nehru : Discovery of India).....The essential basis of Indian thought (Hinduism and Buddhism) for ages past, though not its later manifestations, fits in with

the scientific temper and approach, as well as with internationalism (Discovery of India), so there should not be many obstructions on our way. Buddha's teaching was consciously based on a systematic rational analysis of the problem of life, and of the way to its solution. He was a lover of mankind and a philosophic genius, rolled into a single personality.

## BUDDHA'S BIRTH CELEBRATIONS

### IX

At present many forces have combined to revitalise the memory of the Master. Free India is a secular state, and no exclusive religious consideration can dominate its policy. World peace and welfare are its dominant policy. On the occasion of the celebrations of the 2500th birthday of Buddha, one of the greatest and noblest sons of India, persons from all parts of the world have been coming on pilgrimage to this country. Any civilized government would give them necessary facilities, which the Govt. of India are trying to do. Moreover, as pointed out by H. G. Wells "*The original teaching of Gautama revived and purified* may yet play a large part in the direction of human destiny". And the truth of this statement as exemplified by Asoka in his administration, "who is the only military monarch on record who abandoned warfare after victory" (Outline of History), has naturally encouraged Indians to visualize the possibility of peace in the present distracted world through the celebrations, as one of the steps to it. Nepal has invited the "World Buddhist Fellowship" to hold its fourth conference there. In the circumstances, India is only doing what it behoves her to do.

The two world wars have caused widespread destruction, not only of material resources and human lives but of essential



values that have given meaning to life. And we should take advantage of such celebrations to restore these.

“The political failure of the East does not prove the impotence of philosophical wisdom even as the two wars do not invalidate the truth and spirit of science” (Dr. Radhakrishnan : India and China, P. 37).

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## **PART I**



## CHAPTER I

### BRAHMINISM AND BUDDHA

Much of what appears here (in Part I, Ch. I, II and III) is based on certain portions of Sri Maitreya's book, *Buddha-Mimansa* (English version, out of print). For Sanskrit texts in original that book must be consulted. The author speaks of the book as "*being a collection of notes with original texts, intended as materials for any future treatise on Buddhism*".

It has been said in the introduction that Gautama (Buddha) was born and brought up and lived and died as a Hindu. In his time Upanishadic teachings held the field, still animal sacrifice was prevalent which they had denounced. Kshatriya Rajas could not do without a shikar (hunt). King Rama Chandra went after even a golden deer, such is the amusing tradition. King Dushyanta would not spare the deer of an *ashrama* (hermitage). Bhagavana Buddha after his arrival at Sarnath (deer park) had once to offer himself to the king of Banaras as a sacrifice to save a young doe from his shikar.

#### (a) BUDDHA, A VEGETARIAN

However, Kshatriya Gautama's family was a vegetarian one, and his father had earned the title of *Shuddhodana*, meaning a pure vegetarian. In *Bhavishya Purāna* (2-83) it is said "By virtue of Shuddhaudana or the purity of his food God Himself took birth as his (Gautama's father's) son. *Puranas* are sacred writings containing Hindu mythology.

## (b) A FIRE-WORSHIPPER

Fire and sun worship was followed by Buddha. He was called "Arkabandhu", friend of the sun (See Amarkosha, Abhidhana Chintamani and Vaijayanti Kosha). Buddha recommended the worship of the sacred fire and himself practised it (See Arya Manjusri Mulakalpa, Ch. XIII); and he always chose to sit beneath the Peepal (Bodhi) tree whose wood was specially consecrated to purposes of the Sacred Fire (Rhys Davids: "Buddhist India", P. 231). Fire-worshipping is a yajna without the animal sacrifice.

In the Bible also there are many references to sacred fire. God appeared to Moses in Fire at the burning bush, and on mount Sinai (Exodus). Gods (Deities, Devas) are supposed to have fiery bodies (Mahabharata). Fire was first born as the sun (Rig Veda, 10-45-1).

Buddha's place of worship is called "Chaitya" which originally meant 'the place of the sacred fire'. The word Chaitya is derived from the word 'Chitya' which means fire (Panini 3-1-132) also see 'Shabdakalpadruma'; 'Chaityas' by Narayan Aiyangar.

## (c) A BELIEVER IN THE DEVAS

It is through fire that we send offerings to gods. Buddha believed in Vedic gods. He spoke of Indra, of Brahma, of Kuvera, of Mara and others. "In great number, Ananda, are the gods of the ten world systems assembled together to behold the Tathagata" (Rhys Davids: Buddhist Suttas). And again "There are spirits, Ananda, in the sky, on the earth" (Mahaparinirvana Sutra, P. 88-89).

"The modern man seeks to gain benefit from these powers of nature by an understanding of their outward being's laws,

but ancient man sought the same ends by different means. By various rituals he attuned his consciousness to the Life that ensouls all Nature and sought to control her powers from within" (Sri Krishna Prem).

*Note*—Yaska in his *Nighantu* (glossary of Vedic words) explains that there is no image worship in the Vedas, and the various Devas mentioned there only represent symbolically the various powers of God as seen working in Nature. There is only one, without a second, pervading the whole universe. He is called Brahman (Brahma) because he is Brihat—all pervading. The something has been said in *Aitareya Aranyaka*. So that the idea of some of the scholars that there is polytheism in the Vedas is not correct.

#### (d) A FOLLOWER OF THE VEDIC RISHIS

(1) Both in moral and in philosophy Buddha followed in the foot-steps of the Vedic Rishis (Sages). His veneration for them is evinced by his frequent mention of the sayings of the Rishis as his authority, whom he used to include in the term *Purva Buddhas* (Former Buddhas)—cf. L. V. Poussin: "On the authority of the Buddhist Agamas" (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London, 1902, P. 374); George Buehler: "Buddha's quotation of a 'gatha' by Sarat Kumara" (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London, 1897, P. 585); Watanabe: "The story of Kalmaspada. A study in the Mahabharata and the Jataka" (*Journal of the Pali Text Society*, London, 1909, P. 236-310). Buddha expressly said that he chose Banaras/Varanasi (Sarnath, Rishipattana) as the place where to begin his mission of reformation because it was the ancient and venerable place of the Rishis of old, (*Lalita Vistara*, Ch. 25).

(2) The *Vinaya Suttas* or moral codes of the Buddhist canon are apparently a recapitulation of the *Grihya Suttas* of

the Hindu scriptures (cf. Fuehrer : "Manusara-Dhamma-sattham, the Buddhist law book compared with the Brahminical Manava-dharma-shastram or Manu Samhita)" (Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay, 1882, Vol. XV, P. 333); Edmund Hardy on Pali canon as coming from the Grihya Sutras of the Vedas : "Der Grhya-Ritus pratyavarohana im Pali-Kanon". For Brahmanic precedent in Buddhism, see Max Muller : "Dhammapada", P. 28; on the relation of Buddhist sacred Books to Satapatha Brahmana, see Kern; "Saddharma-Pundarika", P. XVI; and to Mahabharata and Manusmriti, see Buhler : "The Laws of Manu", P. xci, note).

(3) Buddha's prohibition of the slaughter of animals, and killing in general, was based on the authority of well-known Vedic texts, such as "Ma hinsyat sarva bhutani" (don't slay any living being). The dictum "ahimsa paramo-dharma" (not to slay is the highest religion) was not first pronounced by Buddha but occurs in the Mahabharata more than once (Adiparva, 11-13; Anusasana-parva, 115-1, 115-25, 116-38, Aswamedha-parva 43-21).

*Note*—In the Mahabharata it has been said that those fond of meat-eating and drinking had animal sacrifice introduced into the yajnas.

(4) His doctrine of universal love is based upon the principle of conquering hatred by non-hate, which is Vedic in its origin. The Sama Veda, Chhanda Archika, ch. 6, pt. 1, Mantra 9, says "One should bridge over the otherwise unbridgable stream of hatred by non-hate". cf. Dhammapada, 1-5 where Buddha says "Hatred ceases not by hatred but by not-hating; this is eternal law" (Dhammo sanatano).

(5) He upheld the Vedic doctrine of the sacredness of marriage and denounced unchastity (See Rhys Davids : "Buddhist Sutras", P. 91) cf. "Dhammapada" gatha 242.

(6) Like the Rishis he believed in the existence of the *soul* and its rebirth, in the life to come, and in the law of retribution (Karma) which visits evil doing with evil and good doing with good. "Being a Hindu Buddha adopted the then, as now, current Hindu notion of metempsychosis—Waddell : "Buddha's secret from a sixth century commentary" (Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1894, P. 372). cf. Gough : "The philosophy of the Upanishads", P. 186. Krishnamacharya : "Buddhism, its fundamental beliefs" (Brahmavadin, 1911).

"The belief that after death the departed spirits roam about enjoying the fruits of their good and bad deeds here upon earth, is one of the central ideas of the Buddhist faith, and a treatise dealing with spirits and spirit world, Peta-vatthu, is included in the Pali sacred canon" (Law : Buddhist conception of spirits, P. 1).

"The belief in the existence of departed ancestors, and the presentation of offerings to them have always formed a part of Hindu domestic religion. To gratify this persistent belief, Buddhism recognised the world of Petas, i.e. ghosts or spirits". (Sir Charles Eliot : Hinduism and Buddhism, Vol. I, P. 338).

"Beyond the sense and mind consciousness is the Alaya Vijnān, corresponding to Atman" (Sri Krishna Prem).

"Buddhists do not believe in Atman, but in 'Santati' to which is attributed all the qualities of 'atman' (Narendra Deva, P. 286). According to Poussin in the beginning Buddhism believed in the existence of the soul, in its transmigration and nirvana. There was no philosophy. Later on the doctrine of "dharma-nairatmya" (everything is empty) led to partial disbelief in the existence of soul through the doctrines of 'pudgal' and santati (Narendra Deva, P. 293).

*Note*—Buddha taught that as long as there is belief in *atma* (meaning separate self) there can be no nirvana. Hindu



scriptures also say the same thing. Buddha directed so much of his teaching against 'Satkayadrishti', the theory that there are permanent soul monads, eternally separate. In the VII chapter of the Gita it has been said that sin is the central ignorance which sees the separate, personal self as real and seeks its own gain though the whole world perish.

"Soul does not refer to a separate entity within the body, but to the inner centre of the linked streams of experience that make up a personality. That centre is a focus in consciousness, not any individual's consciousness but the all pervading sea of Light. As such it is not a separate entity any more than the focus to which light is brought by a lens is a separate entity...

"The primary bed rock of experience is not sensations in the eye, ear or brain, but visual and other forms *in space*. All the rest is inference and construction. Materialistic science begins by abstracting consciousness from the forms in order to deal with them more objectively and impersonally and then, when analysis fails to reveal any life or conscious principle in those forms, triumphantly exclaims that all is mechanism, no where is there anything of a spiritual nature. Behaviourist psychology is an example of the same procedure applied to mental life. If you start abstracting consciousness from phenomena it is obviously absurd to expect to find it as a term in your concluded analysis. For this reason no one should feel disappointed that science (as now-a-days practised) does not know anything of the existence of 'the soul'. It is the old story of looking for one's spectacles when they are on one's nose (Sri Krishna Prem's Gita).

"Body and mind are not distinct entities, but two expressions of the unitary living organism" (H. G. Wells : Science of Life).

*Note*—They die together. There is another body inside, a subtle body called *Sukshma Sharira*, according to the Upanishads. That survives. And that is the focus (like the focus

to which light is brought by a lens) for the *Atman*, and passes on birth after birth.

In the "Dharma Chakrapravartana Sutta" (the sermon at Banaras) Buddha says : "This is the noble truth of pain. Thus monks, among doctrines unheard before, in me sight and knowledge arose, wisdom arose, knowledge arose, Light arose". Light seems to be the light of the Soul, in which sense it had been used in Hindu Scriptures.

As pointed out by Dr. Weber the word "Buddha" itself has been used in the sense of a man who had attained to perfect knowledge of the 'Soul' in the Satapath Brahmana of the Vedic literature (14-7-2-17) and Buddha may have used it for himself in that sense.

Buddha proclaimed that he had discovered the Path to Salvation, and exhorted his disciples to be their own lights. The words that escaped Buddha's lips when he had attained his enlightenment were only a rehearsal, a recitation of an already established truth by the Vedic Rishis and the Purva Buddhas (see Warren : "Buddhism in translations" Harvard Series, P. 83), namely, the doctrine of the soul as The Creator and of salvation by realisation of this truth. His words were "O builder of the body, I have seen thee, never again shalt thou build house for me. Broken are all the beams and sundered lies the ridge pole. My mind is set on the Eternal, extinguished is all desire" (Dhammapada 11-9). This utterance which has been a puzzle to many Buddhists (cf. Knighton's History of Ceylon, P. 67) can be understood only by those who are versed in the mysteries of the Upanishads relating to "Yoga". There 'Atma-darshan' or seeing the soul by intuition is held to be the way of attaining salvation (Taïttiriya Upanishad 2-I, Svetashwara Upanishad, 6-15). By Dhyana or intense concentration, which Buddha practised, a supernatural vision may be obtained.

The example of dream should make it intelligible how the soul is the creator of the body. In dream our outer body lies flat, while another starts up in the dream and frets about in the dream-land. This dream-body is a creation of the soul. In like manner, when the awakening takes place in man he cognizes the outer body also as a creation of the soul. In the Iti-Vuttaka Buddha says "when the perfect bhikkhu has crossed over and gone to the other shore he standeth upon the dry land of Brahman (Nixon : 'Knowledge of the Buddha', Mahabodhi Journal, Vol. 32, P. 340). After death a man will find himself in his subtle body resembling the body in which even now he finds himself in dreams, a body which can experience pleasure and pain but which cannot be injured.

The meaning of the concept of *atman* (soul) is determined by the central Hindu conviction that the true self of each human being is identical with Brahman, and that when that identity is realized the quest for salvation is fulfilled. Being identical with Brahman (the Absolute) the soul cannot rightly be conceived as a separate 'entity'. However, as some people crudely considered it to be so, Buddha denounced the doctrine. He was a reformer of Brahminism through and through.

Lord Buddha used the expression 'Amritapada' for the Nirvana. Consequently some scholars are of opinion that it referred to the undying (*amrita*) *atman* (soul) and unending joy (*anand*) in salvation (Narendra Deva, P. 9). In the Upanishads 'amrita' stands for Brahman (Narendra Deva, P. 287). According to Majjhimanikaya, 1/172, Shakyamuni on getting 'enlightenment' said 'I have found *amrita*'.

According to Prof. Burt "The leaders of civilized religion, in accepting as valid a universal moral law, and in responding to the divine as interpreted in monistic terms, have discovered in themselves, and they ascribe to all men, a spiritual capacity

that constitutes the human soul for them. As making up the core of one's personality, it is that in him which is most real and of greatest value", P. 14.

According to the Gita, without knowledge of the Atman the sacrificial (disinterested) action is not possible in the true sense. Until the One Self, or at least its forth-shining Light, is known, the abandonment of all desire for the fruits of action is in no way really feasible and remains but a matter of grand words. This inner knowledge first comes in the form of a perception that within the self is that which is immortal. This perception is of fundamental importance, because without it the spiritual life can find no lasting basis. Personal survival is not in question here, but unless the core of man's being is rooted in something immortal there can be no ultimate value in his life, since in the end all will be swallowed up in universal death.

(7) Lord Buddha maintained that the proper path to salvation lay in the combined practice of right knowledge and right action. In the Dharma-chakrapravartana Sutra, Buddha lays the foundation of the kingdom of Righteousness on the middle path of life, which ultimately consists of right action and right contemplation (see Rhys Davids: "Buddhist Suttas", P. 147). Right action means desireless action which is called "Nishkama Karma" in the Upanishads and the Gita. The Ishavasya Upanishad says "He who practises both action and knowledge—desireless action and knowledge of the spirit—obtains salvation".

(8) According to Buddha desire is the source of creation. That is exactly what Rig Veda has said "Desire first arose in it, the primal germ". Again, Rig Veda says

"Who verily knows and who can here declare it,  
Whence it was born and whence comes this creation?"

The actual first impulse to creation is for ever hidden in the darkness, and that is why Buddha kept silent on the subject and refused to go beyond desire.

(9) (Yoga philosophy)—Buddha believed in 'yoga' and practised it himself. In Buddha Charita of Aswaghosha it is said "When the mind has come to rest, then and only then does a man discover the Path to immortality through yoga (dhyana). In Jataka-shashthi puja-prakarnam it is said "the Mahayogi (Buddha) with shaven head was absorbed in dhyana". This led to the growth of the sect of yogā-chārās in Buddhism. Shankaracharya called him 'prince among the yogis'. He acquired the highest power of the yogin, the power to recollect the series of previous births (Jatismarattwa is the theme of all the Jataka tales of Buddhism). Sri Krishna had also acquired the power of Jatismarattwa (Gita Ch. 4, 5). Yoga is an ancient philosophy and practice of the Hindus.

(10) (Metaphysics)—Buddha's metaphysics too is no other than that of the Vedic Rishis (cf. L. V. Poussin : "Mahayana Buddhism" Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1908, P. 889). One of his accepted names is Advaya-vadin i.e. Monist (See Amarkosha and Vaijayanti Kosha). Monism is the doctrine of the Upanishads. To indicate its Aryan origin Buddha calls it "Arya prajna paramita" and applies to it epithets of Vedic coinage, as amita (infinite), nirvikalpa (absolute) etc. (see the Abhidharma pitaka—Introductory hymn to the Prajna paramita Ashtasahasrika). This is the Vedic Brahmapada in his philosophy. And there is also the corresponding Mayavada in it under the name of Shunyavada i.e. the dream-like unreality, the delusive appearance of all things that make up the universe (see the Jnana sankalini tantra—the true meditation in which the mind penetrates into shunya, verse 54). That is not nothingness. The term *nirvana* for salvation in Buddhistic literature contributed to produce this false interpretation. The term

nirvana, however, is not Buddha's own, but occurs in pre-buddhistic Hindu philosophy, and does not mean annihilation. Buddha once being asked what is nirvana? said 'Nirvana is the destroying of all desires'. (From the Kanjur translated by Rev. Mr. Webber). Those who wish to derive the meaning of nirvana from Buddha's 'fire-sermon' (Mahavarga) should know that the sermon was not original, but based upon older teachings and must, therefore, be interpreted in the previously accepted sense, cf. yogavashishtha : "To him whose soul is cool the world is cool, to him whose soul is set on fire by secret desires, the world is on fire" (quoted in the Jivana mukti viveka, ch. 4). Nirvana means a condition of perfect freedom from desires (Yogavashishtha).

Prof. Stcherbatsky, who is an authority on the subject, having personally examined the original texts in various languages including Tibetan, says that 'Shunyata' is relativity. Everything, being relative and inter-dependent, has no absoluteness by itself. Hence it is shunya. On the other hand there is something entirely beyond the phenomenal world, but comprising it, which might be considered the 'Absolute', this cannot be conceived or described in terms of the finite and phenomenal world and it is referred to as 'Tāthata' or thatness, suchness. This Absolute has also been called Shunyata (Sri Nehru : Discovery of India, P. 139).

"The Madhyamika Buddhists call the Ultimate Reality void or shunya, lest by giving it any other name they may be betrayed into limiting it. For them it is that which shall be known when all oppositions are resolved in the Supreme identity" (Dr. Radhakrishnan ; Gita, P. 21).

Buddha never denied the existence of God or Atma. When questioned on them he kept silent. In Dhammapada, gatha 332, he expressly says "Brahmajnta sukha"—knowledge of

Brahma is happiness (bliss). He has also spoken of Brahma-vihara—living in Brahma (Infinite).

“Even if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him”, so said Voltaire.

Let us hear what Mahatma Gandhi has to say on the subject. “The fellow-feeling which makes you feel miserable because of your brother’s misery is godliness. You may call yourself an atheist, but so long as you feel akin with mankind you accept God in practice”.

“Every one who wants to live a true life has to face difficulties in life, some of which appear insurmountable. At that time prayer and faith in God that is Truth alone will sustain you”.

“Only a living faith in God—the Rock of ages—could give you that steadiness, perseverance and unflagging determination which are needed to overcome the inertia of the masses and mobilize one’s inner resources for a sustained non-violent mass effort”.

*Note*—The most important and useful consideration is this, how to establish moral conduct and work disinterestedly for humanity? If belief in God helps you, have it, if disbelief in God helps you, have that—But there should be sincerity and integrity and moral considerations to guide life. God is experienced as ‘that’ ‘thou’ or ‘I’ or humanity or nothingness according to the plane in which consciousness centres. Only spiritual experience can provide us with proofs of the existence of God or Soul.

Too much dependence on supernatural factors may lead to a loss of self reliance in man, and too much exclusive dependence upon oneself may cause arrogance and vanity (aham). Neither is desirable. Buddha’s middle path is the golden rule.

## (e) A RESPECTER OF VARNA (CASTE) SYSTEM

In *Lalita Vistara*, Ch. 3, it is said "The Bodhisattva or Buddha elect has respect for Varna-divisions. He never takes birth in the lower castes, he takes birth only in one of the two higher castes, namely Brahmin or Kshatriya". "Several of the Purva Buddhas were Brahmins (see Sherring's "Banaras", P. 153). Buddha generally accepted Brahmins and Kshatriyas as his disciples (Copleston: "Buddhism Past and Present" Ch. 16). Buddha did not denounce the caste theory but exploded the doctrine that salvation is not open to all castes (cf. Chalmers: "The Madhura Sutra", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1894, P. 348). The Gita holds the same view, i.e. salvation is open to all (Ch. IX, 32). Also both agree that Varna does not go by birth but by qualities and work (Guna and Karma). Brahminattva—qualities for Brahmin—are applauded by them, as also by Shankaracharya.

According to Prof. MacDonnell-Buddha discarded the distinctions of caste within the monastic order, though not as a general classification of society.

His denunciation of the priest craft and asceticism should be hailed. He says "Not nakedness nor plaited hair can purify a mortal who has not overcome desires, so on and so forth". (cf. Gita, Ch. XVII, 5 and 6).

## (f) MIDDLE PATH—MAJJHIMA PATIPADA

Buddha condemned self indulgence and self mortification the two extremes, and recommended the middle course. The use of the word 'samyak' (right, balanced) before each of the eightfold path is also expressive of the idea of middle course. (cf. the Gita, Ch. VI, 16 and 17 and Ch. XVII, 5 and 6, wherein the two extremes have been condemned and the 'yoga' said to be attainable by those following the middle path). The



Mahabharata, Shanti-parva, Ch. 70, deals with the subject in detail.

#### (g) FOUR ARYA SATYAS AND EIGHTFOLD PATH

In Darshana Shastra (science of philosophy) the same four Arya satyas are to be found—samsara (*dukkha*), samsarahetu (samudaya, cause of unhappiness), moksha (nirodha, destruction of unhappiness) and mokshopaya (nirodhagamini-pratipada, means of destroying unhappiness).

The eightfold path of yoga though not exactly the same as Buddha's eightfold path there is much common between them. They are yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. Buddha's eightfold path may be said to be simpler and more practical. But H. G. Wells says "Except for Gautama's insistence upon Right Views (*samyaka drishti*), which was easily disregarded, there was no *self-cleansing* element in Buddhism" (Outline of History, P. 408). He obviously means by Buddhism here the eightfold path which is only one gatha of the 'Dhammapada'. The whole of Dhammapada is nothing but "self-cleansing element", which includes yama, niyama (non-violence, truth, non-stealing, innocence, non-possession, celibacy etc. etc.) and many other things, Pancha Sheela etc.

#### (h) STORY OF BUDDHA'S DEATH

The story of Buddha's death at Kusinara from the effects of ingesting "dried boar's flesh" while at Pava, is a fallacy supported by a falsehood. The word 'sukara' in Samskrita means both 'a pig' and a 'mushroom plant'. It is this word, used in the story (suska sukara mardava—dried soft mushroom) that has been played upon by Buddha's enemy to give him a bad name, or by those anxious to get a sanction for meat-eating (cf. Khunnilal Shastri : "Buddha as a believer". See Newmann :

“Die Raden Gotama Buddhō’s”. Also Silachara’s “Catechism”). In the Mahabharata, similarly, it has been said that those fond of meat-eating and drinking had animal sacrifice introduced into the yajnas.

The last meal was offered to him by Chanda, a Hindu, to whom a pig’s flesh is untouchable. Also no word meaning “flesh” occurs in the story. It is, therefore, clear that it was mushroom which Lord Buddha ate. Some varieties of this mushroom is edible and some poisonous (see Bhavaprakash, Indian medicine book). Lorand in his ‘Health and longevity through rational diet’ says “Even the edible varieties may, at times, have a poisonous action as they become very rapidly decomposed when kept for any length of time”.

#### (i) BUDDHA’S FAREWELL ADDRESS

“By the time oral tradition became committed to writing, much material had accumulated about Buddha’s acts and sayings during the weeks preceding his death. Some of these reported sayings seem out of harmony with each other, and it is difficult for the student of Buddhism to decide which among them most truly represent his farewell teaching” (Burt).

However, practically all are agreed that the Tathagata addressed as below : “O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help. Hold fast to the eternal truth as a lamp. Seek salvation alone in the truth. Look not for assistance to any one besides yourselves” (cf. Gita, Ch. VI, 5 & 6 and Ch. XVIII, 63).

“The true Path to salvation consists not in worshipping Buddha with hymns and offerings but in devoutly fulfilling all the greater and lesser duties of life and in walking according to the precepts, and that this alone is not only the worthiest homage due to Buddha, but also is the worship of him in the

form most desired by him and, therefore, most acceptable to him" (Mahāparinivāna Sūtra, Ch. 5, 6 and Ch. 2, 33); cf. Gita Ch. III on duties, Ch. XV & XVI on following precepts).

(j) WILL IN BUDDHISM

The above exhortation demands the exercise of the will-power (cf. Rhys Davids: "On the Will in Buddhism" Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1898, P. 47). Buddha's metaphysics appears to be based on Will. Schopenhauer indeed admits the affinity of his theory with Buddhism" (See Waddell: Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1994, P. 382). "Will" is the 'Shakti', power of the Spirit, is "the supreme wish of the larger life whose greater portion is out of our present reach". It gradually triumphs over body and mind and secures the final liberation (Nirvana, mukti). This is the theme of the Vedānta Philosophy and the Upanishads, and is the "*dridh-nishchaya of yatatma*" (unshakable determination or will of the self-controlled) of the Gita (Ch. XII, 14).

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## CHAPTER II

### BUDDHA, AN AVATARA OF THE HINDUS

Buddha is unanimously admitted by the Hindus to be an Incarnation of God, who came to rescue the Kingdom of Righteousness from the hands of the wicked into which it had fallen at that time (see Matsya Purana 47-247, Kalki Purana 2-3-26, Vayu Purana 12-43, Garuda Purana 86-10, Varaha Purana 4-3, Nrisigha Purana 36-29, Agni Purana 16-1, Bhagavata Purana 6-8-17, Brihannaradiya Purana 2-39, Garga Samhita 59-119, Sankar Vijaya 12-8, Gita Govind "Hymn to avataras" and some others). For Sanskrit texts see Buddha-Mimamsa. They all declare that Buddha was the ninth incarnation of Narayana (God)—the incarnation for the Kali age (present age). An Avatara is the highest object of worship among the Hindus, and that Buddha, along with Rama and Krishna, is such an object. *Puranas* are sacred writings containing Hindu mythology.

The Buddhists themselves admit that their Buddha is the Narayana of the Hindus (See Lalita Vistara, Ch. 7 and 15 ; Mahaparinirvana Sutra, Ch. 5, Lankavatara Sutra). Kshemendra, a Buddhist author, counts Buddha as one of the avataras of the Hindus in his Dasavatara Charitam (cf. Foucher : "Ksemendra Le Buddhavatara", Journal Asiatique, Paris, 1892, Vol. XX, P. 167ff).

There were other Buddhas before the last one, but they were not regarded as *avataras*.

After Buddhism had spread to Greece and connection established between her and India, Buddha's images began to be

made in this country, and image worship started. The Puranas (Linga Purana 2-48-28 to 33, Agni Purana 49-8, Bhavisya Purana 2-73, Hemadri, Ch. 15) give directions for making idols of Buddha, and those worshipped by Hindus and Buddhists conform to those directions. These images, made for worship according to the rules of the Tantra, are to be worshipped by Hindus of the orthodox community (see Suta Samhita). To put on a 'tilaka' or special mark on the forehead by Hindus worshipping Buddha was enjoined, in accordance with the practice then and even now prevailing, as a distinctive mark for each of the different sects (see Suta Samhita). The 'tilaka' of a Buddhist resembled the leaf of the peepal or Bodhi tree. In the case of Buddha himself it was a circular one. The Barabudar images of Java have both the Tilaka and the Yajnopavita (Brahmanical sacred thread) depicted on them. They reveal a very early state of Buddhism when it had not been differentiated from Hinduism (see P. 175ff) see Karl : With plates 8 to 12. Also an elaborate system of *pūja* (worship) was developed.

Even in the present times, the worship of Buddha as carried on in China, Japan, Burma, Ceylon, Siam (Thai-land), Java and other countries bears a close resemblance to the Hindu methods of worship (see "Travels in China" etc., P. 34-35, by Maharaja Jagatjit Singh). Buddhist images have been discovered at Tagaung (Burma) with Devanagari inscriptions. See Crawfords' remarks on the purely Indian character of all the great sculptural and architectural monuments of Buddhism in Java.

"The dynamic cult of compassion for all which the Master taught cannot live in a vacuum. For if the law of life is love, if men are to be drawn away from hate, if the human race is ever to be led away from its natural urge to live the life of selfishness into a life of service, mankind must learn to see all in Him and Him in all (as taught in the Gita)".

“And in order to attain self-realization, one must, acquire faith in and surrender oneself to, Gautama the individual, for the Buddha could not possibly be dissolved in matter on his Parinirvana. He would survive as the Absolute and all-per-vading God, living in whom one could find abiding Peace. “And so, by a natural transition, Buddha the individual became the Avatara of God” (Sri K. M. Munshi).

#### SANKALPA

‘Sankalpa’ is a solemn vow to perform an observance. It is taken by Hindus by means of certain *mantras* at the commencement of every religious observance daily. The *mantras* include a reference to the avatara of Buddha in these words : “Buddha-avatara Varahakalpe Vaivaswata manvantare Kali-yuge” etc. It is a sort of invocation and shows how devoutly we worship him.

Hindus have every right to interpret his teachings which are based on their Upanishads, and their interpretation should command respectful attention.

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### CHAPTER III

## HINDUISTIC ORIGIN OF BUDDHISM

#### (1) EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

Max Muller: "Buddhism originally a Brahmanic Sect". Vincent Smith in his "Oxford History of India" says the same thing describing both Jainism and Buddhism as Brahmanic sects. "The points of difference which originally distinguished Buddhism were not such as would require its expulsion from Hinduism, such points arose at a much later period and were not intended by the founder". (Rhys Davids: "Buddhism" 1910). Prof. Macdonnell: "Buddhism cannot be understood without a knowledge of its earliest or Indian phase and without the evidence of the Buddhist sculpture" etc.

"Buddhism is an offshoot of Brahmanism which is its basis". Bloomfield: "There is no important form of Hindu thought, heterodox Buddhism included, which is not rooted in the Upanishads".

Buddhists believe in a Creative Power, the Shakti of the Hindus, and, like the Hindus, worship it in the female form of personification. This is the goddess Tara. This took its rise probably from Buddha's hymn to Transcendental and Infinite Wisdom which he personified as a goddess.... "Bhagavati Prajna Paramita-amita" (see introduction to the Astasahasrika).

Buddha's images with various postures prove their Hindu origin, Barabhayada posture (Bara = boon, abhaya = no fear Indian museum, Br. 9—Bihar), showing Buddha holding in one hand some boon and in the other assurance of fearlessness. This design is unintelligible to all except those versed in the mystery of Hindu religion. It is believed that when a god

appears in the Fire, he holds one hand in the manner of saying "no fear" to the devotee, while with the other he offers some boon to the same (see Agni Purana). In the Brihannardiya Purana it is said that Yogis see in their Yoga Buddha in this attitude. Images representing Dhyani Buddhas in the various postures of Padmasana (sitting with legs crossing each other), of Nasagradristi (eyes fixed on the tip of the nose) or of Pranayama (breath held in suspension)—all answer to the directions given by the Yoga and the Tantra of the Hindus (see Burgess: "Buddhist Mudras" Posture; Frankfurter: "The attitudes of the Buddha").

The temples to Buddha were mostly erected by the Brahmanical followers of Buddha, the expenses being borne by their kings. The great temple at Gaya was erected by a Brahmin named Amar Deva about the year 300 A.D. (Ferguson: "History of architecture"; Cunningham: "Mahabodhi"; Rajendra Lal Mitra: 'Buddha Gaya'). That Brahmanical Kings worshipped Buddha is proved by such facts as the coins of the Yaudheya Kings of India having a Brahmanical inscription on one side and the images of the Chaitya and the Bodhi tree on the other. (Cunningham: 'Coins of ancient India'). "I-Ching reports that twenty Chinese monks visited India in the middle of the third century. A Gupta emperor built for them a monastery near Bodh Gaya, called China Sangharama" (India and China, P. 28).

## (2) INTERNAL EVIDENCE

Buddhism deals (rather Buddha dealt) with moral precepts mainly and even these moral precepts are not so much intended for householders as for ascetics (Monks). It is a Code of Monastic Ethics, in which questions concerning the sanctity of marriage, the responsibilities of the individual, the obligations of society, the mutual duties of kings and subjects, the problems about God,



universe, free will and immortality—questions which any complete religious system in itself must take cognizance of are passed by altogether or treated with indifference. (cf. Vachaspati Misra : “Tatparya tika”. P. 300.—The Buddhist agamas, of which the authority is vainly supported, depend for all that concerns the practical life upon the sruti, smriti, itihahas, puranas of the Hindus. Buddhists say : ‘It is the custom (Samvritam etat), and they follow the tradition’. Quoted from L. V. Poussin’s “Authority of Buddhist Agamas”, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1902, P. 376).

It cannot be argued that Buddhism professes indifference to these questions for, as Kant has said, it is vain to profess indifference to those questions to which the mind of man can never really be indifferent.

The whole thing, however, becomes clear when it is remembered that Buddha set himself only to the task of reforming Hinduism, so far as corruptions into it had entered. He never undertook to change the whole structure of it. Beyond removing, or preaching against the corruptions he did not go. Every thing else of Hinduism he wanted to be retained, as was implied not only in his silence and want of criticism, but also by his supporting references to the Hindu scriptures. It is not that Buddha ignored those vital questions of religion and society, but meant them to be retained as they were.

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## CHAPTER IV

### DISAPPEARANCE OF BUDDHISM

Buddha was never ejected. He is still worshipped as an avatara by Hindus. But Buddhism, in its corrupt form, was expelled from India. How did it degenerate?

(1) Buddhism in its Mahayana form became very popular, both in India, and China, Japan and Western Asia. Sir Charles Eliot in his book "Hinduism and Buddhism", Vol. II says, "Mahayana became a prominent aspect of Buddhism in India about the beginning of Christian era". That indiscriminately admitted in its fold all sorts of people from inside India and outside. A few centuries later it degenerated into Vajrayana and such other sects, which practised secret immoral rites even (see "Hinduism and Buddhism", and Introduction to Acharya Narendra Deva's book). The worship of Dharmaraja, Dharma-thakur, Dharma-Vijayanti etc. prevailing in some of the lower classes of the Hindus is a survival of the degenerate form of Buddhism (cf. Hara Prasad Shastri: "Buddhism in Bengal since the Muhammedan Conquest"). Chinese travellers Hsuan T-Chuang and I. T. Ching deplore the decay of the faith which they witnessed in their own life (650-700 A.D.). Towards the end of the 8th century appeared Shankaracharya on the scene. He was so much devoted to Buddha that he was called Prachhanna Bauddha (Crypto-Hindu Buddhist). He was one of the greatest philosophers that the world has produced. He writes in his "Dasavatara stotram" "May Buddha, Prince among the Yogis, enlightened Buddha, dwell in our hearts". He gives directions as to how to meditate on him. But he preached against the corrupt form of Buddhism he found prevailing in his time, and had it expelled from some parts of India. (cf. H. B. 3

Stevenson: "On the intermixture of Buddhism with Brahminism in the religion of the Hindus of the Dekkan") Sri Shail in the Deccan was the fortress of Vajrayana—a corrupt form of Buddhism—which Shankaracharya bombarded (see Shanker Digvijaya). He also fought against the Ritualistic School of Brahmins represented by Mandana Misra whom later he converted to his own view. "He believes that Vedic rites are meant for those who are lost in ignorance and desire" (Radhakrishnan: Gita, P. 17). It is wrong to say that he opposed Buddha or Buddhism, the original Buddhism or rather Buddha's teachings having been absorbed into Hinduism. (cf. Cambridge History of India, Vol. I: "The most probable explanation of the very remarkable disappearance of Buddhism from the subcontinent is that Buddhism has been gradually absorbed into the Brahmin caste system, which has also influenced the followers of other faiths Jains, Moslems, Sikhs, even native Christians").

(2) "The furious massacres perpetrated in many places by Musalman invaders were more efficacious than orthodox Hindu persecutions, and had a great deal to do with the disappearance of Buddhism in several provinces.....Buddhism as an organized religion in Bihar, its last abode in Upper India, was destroyed once for all by the sword of a single Musalman adventurer. Many monks who escaped death fled to Tibet, Nepal and southern India" (from Vincent Smith's "Early History of India", quoted in "Worlds' debt to Buddha; see also Acharya Narendra Deva, P. 123"). The last great monasteries in Bengal were shattered by the Mohammedan invasion of 1193 (Sir Charles Eliot: Hinduism and Buddhism, XXVIII).

(3) Dr. Smith says "Buddhism passed away in India not from Brahmin persecution but rather from internal causes, such as relaxed discipline, overgrowth of monasticism, etc. "The marks of its derivative character are stamped on every

portion both of its faith and practice ; its creed can be deduced from Brahmanism by logical sequence" (Scenes in India or Oriental Annual for 1835, P. 236).

(4) Max Muller : "Collected lectures", Lecture 3, P. 94-95. "Buddha himself shows no hostility to the Brahmins in general nor does he seem to be fond of arguing against Brahmanism. Though Buddhism is a reaction against Brahmanism there is an unbroken continuity between the two. Buddha does not argue against the Vedic gods".

(5) Monier Williams : "Buddhism", P. 206. "Hinduism was contained in the Dharma of Buddhism and the great object of Gautama's advent was not to uproot the old religion but to purify it from error and restore it".

(6) Vincent Smith : "The Oxford History of India". "Buddha can hardly be said to have intended to found a new religion. He was unwilling to discuss questions concerning the nature of God or the soul, the infinity of the universe and so forth holding that such discussions are unprofitable".

(7) Rhys Davids : "Buddhism (Non-Christian systems)", P. 83-85. "One misconception is the prevalent notion that Gautama was an enemy to Hinduism. This is not the case. His purpose was to build it up, to strengthen it, not to destroy it. Many of his chief disciples, many of the most distinguished members of his order, were Brahmins. We hear of no persecutions till long after the time of Asoka, when Buddhism had become corrupt ; and Buddhism grew and flourished side by side with the orthodox belief. So far from showing how depraved and oppressive Hinduism was it shows precisely the contrary".

(8) Elizabeth A Reed : "Primitive Buddhism", Pp. 25, 183, 198, 204. "The Buddhists are indebted to Brahmins for almost all of their speculations and even in the choice of names,

such as Dharma, Nirvana, etc. As pointed out by Dr. Weber the word "Buddha" in the sense of a man who has attained to perfect knowledge of Self first occurs in the Satapatha Brahmana of the Vedic Literature. Gautama's adherence to Brahmanic ideas is repeatedly shown in his teaching. His sympathy with much of the teachings of the Upanishads was very strong. The principal theories of Buddhism lived in India long before Gautama's time. Although he did not wish to abolish caste as a social institution still he disregarded the exclusiveness of the priests and addressed himself to all the classes".

(9) Gough: "Philosophy of the Upanishads", P. 187. It has been said "Buddhism is the philosophy of the Upanishads with the Brahman left out". But Buddha did not deny the existence of the Godhead, he only relegated it to the domain of the unknown. Moreover, escape from sorrow was according to him the problem of life, and he found its complete solution in the moral system which he founded upon the Doctrine of Desirelessness without raising the problem of God. And this, precisely, is the position taken up by the Yogavashistha Maharamayana of the Hindus which purports to be the teaching of the Vedic Rishi named Vashistha imparted to his royal pupil, Rama, the grand predecessor of Buddha in the line of the Avataras.

Buddhism as part and parcel of Hinduism came out from the religion of the Vedas and into it returned (Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Vol. IV, P. 143).

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## CHAPTER V

### THERAVADA (HINAYANA) AND MAHAYANA

Either of the two *Yanas* had many sects developed in it, differences having arisen over the point whether such and such was the teaching of the Master or of some of his followers who wrongly considered it to be that of the Master. There were differences of interpretations also. Asoka found 18 different sects of sthaviravada (Theravada) in existence.

The life and writings of Asanga and Vasubandhu illustrate also the transitions from the Hinayana to the Mahayana (Eliot : *Hinduism and Buddhism*, P. XXXIX, Narendra Deva, P. 168-169).

Hsuantsang mentions Bhikkhus who followed Mahayana though they called themselves Theravadins. Mahayanists say that the agamas of Hinayana prove the authoritativeness of Mahayana. Chandrakirti says that *Shunyata*, *dashbhumis* and *paramita* are found in Hinayana books (Narendra Deva, P. 106-107).

Lalita Vistara was originally a book of Sarvastivada (a sect of Hinayana) but subsequently accepted as only of Mahayana (Narendra Deva, P. 123).

Theravadins did not originally worship Buddha's images or pray before them, but now so many of them do so, as had the Mahayanists been doing.

With regard to the form of religion practised by the masses of the people, in the Buddhist countries as in others, it reflects an amalgam of the teachings of the leaders with popular superstition.

## THERAVADA

Professor Burt says "It is possible that as Buddhism passed from its earliest form into that which has since prevailed in the Theravada countries there has been at work at least a selection, an emphasis and a tendency toward a more extreme interpretation than that of the Buddha on several important points—including Nirvana and transitoriness of all things-uncompromisingly rejecting ideas that give comfort and security to the religion of the masses and which, in philosophic form have been defended by the theologies of Hinduism. Many Theravada thinkers hold that Buddha himself entered Nirvana at the time of his enlightenment and at his death he passed into parinirvana which means utter extinction. They apply this concept of momentariness not only to psychological states but also to all entities in the physical world. It is evident that this radical rejection of every form of stability in the universe might be so interpreted as to threaten the moral optimism and spiritual goals that lie at the very heart of Buddhism as a religion".

This rejection makes the position of Theravada laymen, in particular, rather difficult. The story of the young Sigala, as given in the Sigalovada Suttanta, is hardly enough for the guidance of a layman through his life. It merely explains to him how "to serve the six quarters".

The author of "the Light of Asia" gave expression to correct insight when he made Buddha say when about to leave his home :

"This will I do because the woeful cry  
Of life and all flesh living cometh up  
Into my ears, and all my soul is full  
Of pity for the sickness of the world,  
Which I will heal, if healing may be found  
By uttermost renouncing and great strife".

## MAHAYANA

A description given by Anesaki, the great historian of religion in Japan, of Buddhism as it was introduced there in the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. "Whatever the Western critics may say, the influence Buddhism exerted everywhere lay in its practice of love and equality, which was an outcome of its fundamental teaching of the unity of all beings, and of its ideal of supreme enlightenment (Bodhi) to be attained by all. This Bodhi amounts to realizing, in the spirit and in life, the basic unity of existence, the spiritual communion pervading the whole universe. This was exemplified by the person of Buddha, not only in his teaching of all oneness but in his life of all embracing charity. Those united in the faith in Buddha and his teaching form a close community of spiritual fellowship, in which the truth of oneness is embodied and the life of charity is practised.

"Now the Buddhism brought over to Japan was a developed form of this religion, demonstrated artistically in ceremonies and supported by a system of idealistic philosophy."

"The central idea in Buddhist teaching is the gospel of universal salvation based on the idea of the fundamental oneness of all the beings. There are in the world, Buddhism teaches, manifold existences and innumerable beings, and each of these individuals deems himself to be a separate being and behaves accordingly. But in reality they make up one family, there is one continuity throughout, and this oneness is to be realized in the attainment of Buddhahood on the part of each and all, in the full realization of the universal communion. Individuals may purify themselves and thereby escape the miseries of sinful existence, yet the salvation of any one is imperfect so long as and so far as there remain any who have not realized the universal spiritual communion, i.e., who are not saved. To save one self by saving others is the gospel of universal salvation taught by Buddhism".



Lama Taranath in his "History of Buddhism" (original in Tibetan, translated by Schiefner) and Dr. Kern in his "Manual of Indian Buddhism" say that "Mahayanism is much indebted to the Bhagavat Gita", and Dr. Kern adds, "more even to Shaivism". "The Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, the founder of the Madhyamika system, became the greatest promoter of Mahayanism. He (himself a Brahmin) was a pupil of the Brahmin Rahulbhadra, who was a Mahayanist. Mahayanism lays a great stress on devotion, in this respect as in many others harmonising with the current of feeling in India which led to the growing importance of *bhakti*. It is by that feeling of fervent devotion, combined with the preaching of active compassion that the creed has enlisted the sympathy of numerous millions of people and has become a factor in the history of mankind of much greater importance than orthodox Buddhism. It is by its more progressive spirit that it has succeeded finally to absorb all the old sects, barring the S. "Buddhists".

Dr. Radhakrishnan says "The two chief works of Mahayana Buddhism, Mahayanashraddhotpatti and Saddharmapundarika, are deeply indebted to the teaching of the Gita".

According to Sir Charles Eliot "Most Mahayanist doctrines have their roots in old Indian ideas". "Foreign influences stimulated mythology and imagery".

Mr. Vincent Smith in his "Oxford History of India" says "the late emotional Buddhism, Mahayana, became almost indistinguishable from Hinduism".

The *Mahayana layman* "lives in the world and fulfills his responsibilities, while doing so he exemplifies all virtues that a devout follower of the Master and an aspirant for enlightenment should" (see also Vimala Kirti's story).

To soften the emphasis on monastic life which can never be popular in a land of filial piety like China, the *Sutra of the*

*Forty-two sections* extols and sublimates family life" (Dr. Radhakrishnan : India and China, P. 110). According to Dr. Hushi "Buddhism came with irresistible force.....it broke down the fatalism of Confucianism and Taoism.....and brought to the Chinese the idea of the indestructibility of the soul".

Sri Nehru says "It was through Mahayana Buddhism in the first century A.D. that China and India came near to each other and developed many contacts. There had been some sea-borne trade even before. The first record of an Indian scholar's visit to China is that of Kashyapa Matanga in 67 A.D. In the 6th century there were more than 3,000 Indian Buddhist monks and 10,000 Indian families in the Loyang province alone... The somewhat pessimistic outlook of Buddhist philosophy could not change or suppress the love of life and gaiety of the Chinese. There is an old Chinese proverb which says "If the government get hold of you, they will flog you to death, if the Buddhists get hold of you they will starve you to death".

"After being cut off from each other for many centuries India and China again look towards each other and past memories crowd in their minds, again pilgrims of a new kind cross or fly over the mountains that separate them, bringing their messages of cheer and good will and creating fresh bonds of a friendship that will endure (Discovery of India).

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## CHAPTER VI

### DHAMMAPADA (BUDDHA-GITA)

Prof. Burt says "It (Dhammapada) was apparently in existence by the time of the Emperor Asoka, 250 B.C., and it quickly became popular with all Schools of Buddhist thought and practice. It is unmatched for its powerful use of the technique of partial repetition and for the sustained note of moral earnestness which pervades it." Lin Yutang calls it "a great spiritual testimony, one of the very few religious masterpieces in the world, combining genuineness of spiritual passion with a happy gift of literary expression".

"The fundamental teaching of Gautama is clear and simple", the Dhammapada which is believed to give it bears witness to this. There is no mention of metaphysical questions—God, Soul, Universe etc. in it. The Master concerned himself only with moral values, as he found that in Brahminism they were being neglected, though they were of utmost importance in life. Metaphysical questions he found already discussed at great lengths by different schools of thought, but they were of little value for his immediate purpose. However, after his death an elaborate philosophy, a pantheon, rituals, superstitions, legends and an intricate code of discipline were used to build the framework of Buddhism. Those very things came to distract people which he had so much discouraged in his life time. In the words of Mr. H. G. Wells, "Common people must have their cheap marvels and wonders".

In the case of Hinduism the same thing had happened and its simple, clear teaching has been over-grown with mythological weeds and metaphysical subtleties. As Sir Charles Eliot says, "Foreign influences stimulated mythology and imagery" (Hinduism and Buddhism, Vol. I, P. XXXI).

Here a few gathas may be given from the Dhammapada to illustrate the spiritual and moral loftiness embodied therein. The total number of the gathas is 424. The Max Muller and the Radhakrishnan translations are used here largely. The whole book deserves to be read in original.

### Gatha

- 1-2 All that we are is the result of what we have thought : it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage, if with a pure thought, happiness follows him like a shadow.

*Note*—In the Dhammapada the words “chitta” (lower mind) and “manas” (higher mind or Self) would appear to have been used in slightly different senses (cf. “The human mind is of two kinds, pure and impure. That which is intent on securing its desires is impure ; that which is free from attachment to desires is pure”) (Upanishad) see also gatha 160 and the Chapter, “chitta vaggio”.

- 5 Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time, hatred ceases by love, this is an eternal law.
- 38 If a man's faith is unsteady, if he does not know the true law, if his peace of mind is troubled, his prajna (knowledge, buddhi) will never be perfect.
- 60 Long is the night to him who is awake, long is a mile to him who is tired ; long (tedious) is life to the foolish who do not know the true law.
- 89 Those whose mind is well grounded in the elements of knowledge, who without clinging to any thing rejoice in freedom from attachment, whose desires have been conquered and who are full of light, they have won nirvana even in this world.

## Gatha

- 103 If one man conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and if another conquer himself, he is the greatest of conquerors.
- 109 He who respects and serves his elders gains in longevity, knowledge, happiness and power.
- 142 He who has control of mind and senses, is self disciplined and a Brahmachari (practiser of continence), source of no trouble to any body, is a brahmin, a shramana, a bhikshu, though he may be enjoying life at the same time.
- 160 Self (atman, higher self) is the lord of self (empirical or personal self) who else could be the lord ? With self well subdued a man finds a lord (Self) such as few can find.
- 168 Rouse yourself ! Do not be idle ! Follow the law of virtue. The virtuous rest in bliss in this world and in the next.
- 188-92 Men driven by fear, go to many a refuge to mountains and forests, to groves and sacred trees, but they are not delivered from all pains after having gone to that refuge. He who takes refuge with Buddha, the Law and the Sangha—hew ho, with clear understanding, sees the Four Holy Truths and Eightfold Holy Way that leads to the quieting of pain has the best refuge, having gone to that refuge, a man is delivered from all pain.
- 204 Health is the greatest of gifts, contentedness the best riches, trust is the best of relationships, Nirvana the highest happiness.
- 201 Victory breeds hatred, for the conquered is unhappy. He who has given up both victory and defeat, he is contented and happy.

## Gatha

- 223 Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good, let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth.
- 225 The sages who injure no one, and who always control their body, they will go to the unchangeable place where they will suffer no more.
- 252 The fault of others is easily perceived, but that of one's self is difficult to perceive, a man winnows his neighbour's faults like chaff, but his own fault he hides as a cheat hides an unlucky cast of the die.
- 271-72 Even if you have attained Samadhi etc. do not trust yourself unless your *ashravas* (faults, desires) have been destroyed.
- 282 Through Yoga prajna (wisdom) is gained, through lack of Yoga prajana is lost, let a man who knows this two fold path of gain and loss thus concentrate himself that prajna may grow.
- 332 Pleasant in the world is the state of a mother, pleasant the state of a father, pleasant the state of an ascetic, (blissful) pleasant is the knowledge of Brahma (Brahmajnata).
- 333 Pleasant is virtue lasting to old age, pleasant is a faith firmly rooted, pleasant is attainment of intelligence, pleasant is avoiding of sins.

In chapter XXV the qualities of a Bikkhu are praised and not the so-called Bhikkhus. In chapter XXVI the qualities of a Brahmin are praised and not the so-called Brahmins by birth.

In gathas 182, 183, 184, 185 and some others *Buddhas* (in plural) are mentioned, showing thereby that there have

been and there shall be many Buddhas as believed by the Mahayanists and interpreted by the author of "Light of Asia".

So many of the gathas are parallel to the shlokas (verses) in the Mahabharata, the Gita, the Manusmriti, Yogabhashya and Hitopadesha. The fact is that the true Yoga is the same wherever it is found.

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## **PART II**





## CHAPTER I

### THE DHARMA OF THE GITA (HINDUISM)

#### I

*Note*—Much of what appears here is from Sri Krishna Prem's book, 'The Yoga of the Bhagavat Gita'.

The Gita is an epitome of the essentials of the Upanishadic teaching and is based on direct knowledge of Reality, and of the Path that leads to that Reality. It does not concern itself with the flummeries of sects and schools. The words of an Enlightened One refer to eternal realities. Those realities are the same now as they were thousands of years ago, and the texts of the Gita should be interpreted in words that refer to those realities here and now. To think otherwise is to mistake words for realities. As Buddha teaches in the Lankavatara sutra : "Meaning is entered into by words as things are revealed by a lamp.....so, I, making use of various forms and images of things, instruct my sons ; but the summit of Reality can only be realised within oneself".

Our times are different, our habits of thought, the mental background to which we relate our experience, are not quite the same as those of the classical commentators. Still Shankaracharya's commentary, the most ancient of the existing ones, is of inestimable value. The chief problem facing us today is the reconciliation of mankind. The Gita is specially suited for the purpose, as it attempts to reconcile varied and apparently antithetical forms of the religious consciousness and emphasizes the root conceptions of religion which are eternal. In the words of Aldous Huxley "The Gita is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summeries of the Perennial Philosophy ever

to have been made. Hence its enduring value, not only for Indians, but for all mankind”.

The Gita is a text book of Yoga, a guide to the treading of the Path. By yoga is here meant not any special system called by that name, not *jnana yoga*, not *karma yoga*, nor *bhakti yoga*, nor the eightfold yoga of Patanjali, but just the Path by which man unites his finite self with Infinite Being. It is the inner Path of which all these separate yogas are so many onesided aspects, and is open to every one (Ch. IX, 32). The burden of the song (Gita means song) is welfare of the world (“Lokhit”, “Lok-samgraha”), one certain means to ‘yoga’.

The Path is not the special property of Hinduism, nor indeed of any religion. It is something which is to be found, more or less deeply buried, in all religions, and which can exist apart from any formal religion at all.

The Gita does not speak of this or that form of religion but speaks of the impulse which is expressed in all forms, the desire to find the Ultimate Reality and understand our relation to It. “In all ways, men follow My Path” says Krishna (Ch. IV, 11).

All the eighteen chapters are entitled “Yoga”, such as *jnana yoga*, *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *dhyana yoga*, yoga of the *renunciation of liberation*, so on and so forth.

Yoga is to be undertaken for the sake of Truth itself, for the sake of what Buddha termed “unshakable deliverance of heart”. The particular dress in which it is presented in the Gita is an Indian one, of course. If a man has a healthy mind, a worthy aspiration, sincerity (including intellectual sincerity) courage, and tenacity of purpose he need fear no serious danger on this path. If a man approaches it from the scientific or philosophic side that is all that need be said. But if his approach

is through some particular religion he will have to be careful to discard any idea that his own religion is a unique one and any clinging to authority in the shape of inspired scriptures. He must, as Buddha also said, be his own Light and his own refuge (Ch. VI, 5 and 6 ; Ch. XVIII, 63). The only authority is within, the *soul* itself. Shankaracharya's whole philosophy is based on intuition.

"That should be known as yoga, this disconnection from the union with pain" (Ch. VI, 23). Profound words, which gain an added profundity when we remember the teaching of Buddha that *all* experience is (*in itself*) *dukkha*, painful by reason of its finite and transitory nature. This disconnection from union with all finite experience is the secret of successful Yoga, or rather, it is half the secret, the other half being the *atma sanstha*, the abiding in the *atman*. The two processes, negative and positive, go on side by side.

## II

For the Gita the world is "Dharmakshetra" (Ch. I, 1), the battle ground for a moral struggle, the field (Kshetra) of *dharma* or right duty, to be performed vigorously but with detachment of mind. The battle of life must be fought and won. Arjuna of the Gita represents the individual soul and Sri Krishna, the Divine Teacher.

Arjuna is faced, in the Gita, with conflicting loyalties and the ideas which had uplifted him in earlier days are powerless to guide him any longer. Moral considerations based on patriotism, society, race, recognized standards of conduct and belief, are all mental constructions, inadequate to the needs of the *soul*. Surrounded by desolation on all sides, the soul has no alternative but to turn within itself and seek the Divine Teacher. The perception that within the self is that which is immortal is of fundamental importance, because without it the

spiritual life can find no lasting basis. Personal survival is not in question here, but unless the core of man's being is rooted in something immortal there can be no ultimate value in his life, since in the end all will be swallowed up in universal death.

### III

Only he who resolutely attempts to withdraw himself from the life of the senses is worthy to realise his immortality—"immortality not in duration of time but in perfection of truth". The true Path aims at a detachment\* from the lower manifestation by a progressive union with the higher through "*Buddhi Yoga*" (buddhi is called *prajna* in the Upanishads and in Buddhism). The mind must cease to be united to the senses, but must become united to that which is higher than itself, namely, buddhi. It is true that the buddhi is the faculty that gives determined knowledge, but the knowledge that it gives is no mere collections of intellectual propositions, but a living knowledge, better styled intuition.

Mere withdrawal is, however, not enough, for though the sense objects lose their power over the man who habitually practises restraint, yet the desire for them remains in his heart and dies only when something higher than the sense life is actually seen. Nothing but the vision of the Atman itself can cause the utter dying-out of desire.

On the level of the mind the Light of the One Atman is split up into a number of separate individualities, each standing on its own uniqueness. The buddhi, however, is non-individual. *Buddhi Yoga* leads us to release.†

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\*The Gita teaches detachment in life and action, not abstention from them. We must see all things as manifestations of the Real and not as objects to be grasped and possessed. To hate the senses is as wrong as to love them (Gita III, 7)

† cf. Dhammapada, III, I gatha, 33 "mind, Chitta, is trembling and unsteady, *Medhavi* i.e. *buddhiyukta* makes it straight." Also gatha 282 "through yoga is gained *prajna*, let a man so exert that his *prajna* may grow."

In order to attain this union with the buddhi, the method recommended is skill in action (Karmasu Kaushalam, Ch. II, 50) and equal-mindedness (samatvam, II, 48), the same in failure as in success. Acting in this way the disciple's action will be guided by the impersonal knowledge of the buddhi and he will transcend the limits of selfish good and evil. It will be seen that the sense life is not to be merely negated, it is an inner withdrawal that is to be practised, a withdrawal to higher levels.

The doctrine of the Karma-yogi starts from the plain fact that a cessation from all action (Karma) is simply impossible. It is said by those who denounce action that it is tainted, it creates bondage, as every action has its natural reaction. How can one be free from the taint of action ? The Gita has answered the question in decisive language : "By desireless (unselfish) action, by renouncing the fruit of action, by dedicating all activities to the universal soul", that is skill in action. Mahatma Gandhi calls "renunciation of the fruits of action" as matchless remedy, and he practised it.

In advocating 'renunciation of the fruits of action', the Gita is not sanctioning irresponsible acts. It says "the action itself must be appropriate, sanctioned by the inner Ruler and skilfully performed with regard to the actor's capacity and to the consequences for others (Ch. XVIII, 23-25). To action alone we have a right and never to its fruits (Ch. II, 47). When we do our work, we shall be deflected from disinterestedness if we think of fame or income or any such extraneous consideration. We shall be tempted to adopt even foul means to get the desired result. We should do our best and not worry about the result, do without attachment, full of resolution and zeal (Ch. XVIII, 26) do what is right resigning all the fruits into the hands of that disposing Power which some call God, others, Eternal Law.

Our goal is self-realization and moksha (Nirvana), moksha (Liberation) with no selfish object, not only with the object of enjoying bliss ourselves but also of being able to help others in attaining moksha, so that we may be said to have *renounced our liberation* also for serving the suffering (Ch. XIV & XVIII).

Desire for moksha is also, after all, a desire, but it is the sublimation of the lower, selfish desire. Nature abhors a vacuum and desire there shall be.

Disinterested action requires for its support buddhi, jnana (Knowledge) and some bhakti (devotion) (Gita Ch- XVIII, 55-57) more or less all the three must go together.

Since the beginning of time there have been two main types of aspirant, jnana yogi (introvert) and Karmayogi (extrovert); in one jnana predominates, who renounces the world; in the other active life, moral struggle, predominates. Either Path can lead to salvation as has been said in the Upanishads. The Gita gives preference to the latter (Ch. III, 3 and Ch. V, 2). The two paths are not exclusive but complementary.

The characteristics of a *buddhi-yukta* and *bhakti-yukta karmayogi* has been described in the Gita at more than one place.

Here is one description :

“He who hates none and loves all,  
And has compassion for those that suffer,  
Who is rid of mynness and egoism,  
Who holds himself above happiness and misery,  
Who is always satisfied with whatever he has,  
Whose mind is concentrated and poised in self-mastery ;  
Unshaken in faith, who dedicates all actions to Me,  
He alone is dear to Me” (Ch. XII).

## IV

"While the Buddhist ideal exalts a life of contemplation, the Gita attracts all those souls who have a relish for action and adventure. Action is for self-fulfilment".

"The man of the world is lost in the varied activities of the world. The quietist withdraws into the silence of the Absolute. But the ideal man of the Gita (e.g. Krishna, King Janak) goes beyond these two extremes and works like Purushottam (Man the Eternal), who reconciles all possibilities in the world without getting involved in it" (Ch. XV, 18).

"This is possible through yoga, spiritual dynamics. It may be argued that if man is part of the Divine, what he needs is not redemption as an awareness of his true incrustated nature. Yes, this awareness is not intellectual but integral, so man's whole nature requires overhauling. By the integration of his self his unity with the world has to be achieved in a spontaneity of love and unselfish work".

"The Upanishads look upon the world as meaningful and support Divine activity and participation in nature and give us a God who exceeds the mere infinite and the mere finite". (Dr. Radhakrishnan's Bhagavadgita).

None can view the seated majesty of Buddha without knowing in his soul that renunciation alone gives peace. But neither, when he contemplates the many faceted figure of Krishna, warrior, statesman, lover, friend, philosopher, can he refuse his soul's assent to that marvellous revelation of the Divine action, free and unfettered in the very midst of the cosmic whirl.

Nature does not absolutely determine. 'Karma' is a condition, not a destiny.



## V

As long as there is the feeling of a separate self so long true renunciation is impossible, for it is the personal self which is the seat of attachment (Ch. V). We believe that Buddha also taught renunciation of the individual self and not renunciation of the world or action.

Psychologists can tell us how this "self" is gradually built up in the originally "selfless" infant, how it expands and becomes more complex with experience, how strains in the imperfectly integrated experience may sometimes distort and split it into two or more separate "personalities", and how these may be welded into one again by harmonising the conflicting stresses.

Truly do they teach, as Buddha taught, long before, that in all this there is nothing immortal, nothing permanent, no hard changeless centre in the ever-changing flux of experience which could in truth be called a self.

Therefore does Sri Krishna teach that the disciple must utterly destroy the false sense of self, realising in all that he does, "speaking, giving, grasping", no self is involved, only "the senses moving among the objects of the senses" (Ch. V).

## VI

The Gita lays great emphasis on Svabhava (one's nature, inner being) Svakarma (one's appropriate action as dictated by one's nature) and Svadharma (one's duty, law of being, outward life). Svabhava and Svadharma must answer to each other.

Each individual is an experiment, each individual has special qualities, can do something better and more effectively and joyously than others. It is the biological obligation of every individual to develop his distinctive disposition. Circums-

tances, lack of education or miseducation may render self-discovery and self-development perplexing or difficult. Doing the thing we can do exceptionally well is also the most agreeable way of living.

The Gita provides a scheme of training and social synthesis by which every nature can rise higher so that to every man is opened the pathway of yoga. But when heredity comes to be overemphasized and social security is prized above freedom social groups become fossilized. They become castes. The Gita transfers the emphasis from birth to the individual nature of man.

Sri Krishna's call is to strengthen the weakest of the forces, self-discipline, till it overcomes heredity, environments and the twists imposed by experience. Yoga is self-discipline. Every man should try to find his own truth as his nature indicates. In search of his Truth his Will will grow strong. Dynamic unity (yoga) will follow. That is why the Gita says "better to die in one's own Truth"—That is freedom, that is attaining Him. Suffering is the process through which we fight for our true nature.

Dhyana, concentration, is the most essential part of yoga. It is the first step in dynamic unity.

The mind must be kept in a cheerful mood. "It remains cheerful when it maintains an attitude of friendliness towards other's happiness, of compassion towards their misery, of joy at good deeds, of indifference towards wicked deeds" (Patanjali).

## VII

Superstition is a deadly foe and must be conquered at all costs. In their anxiety to harmonise every sincere conviction without renouncing any, Hinduism and Buddhism have become

an immense synthesis combining within themselves varied elements and motives. It is not surprising that the religions have within them superstitions, dark and primitive. Any society that lacks established scientific knowledge of the laws according to which nature processes go on is bound to be superstitious.

As it says in *the precepts of the Gurus*: "Reason being in every action the best friend is not to be avoided" (But it is also necessary to avoid cheap rationalism). "One should acquire practical knowledge of the Path by treading it and not be as are the multitude".

"Weakness of faith combined with strength of intellect are apt to lead to the error of talkativeness".

"Strength of faith combined with weakness of intellect are apt to lead to the error of narrow-minded dogmatism".

"An art of living which will enable one to utilise each activity (of body, speech and mind) as an aid on the Path is indispensable".

The Gita advises us to have reason (ch. 2, 49), faith (Ch. IV, XII and XVII) and fearlessness (Ch. II, 56, Ch. XVI, 1) as our refuge, and kill avidya (ignorance) and doubts. Also all activities should be so many acts of piety and dedication until complete immersion in the Absolute is attained (ch. V, 8-12).

## VIII

It can be imagined that, through some training or compulsion, good works may possibly be extorted from a man who personally may not be good. Such works may be useful, and yet, where the question is not of utility but of moral perfection, we hold it important that the individual should be *true* in his

goodness. His inner perfection has its own immense value, which for him is spiritual freedom. In goodness we identify ourselves with the universal humanity. Its value is not merely in some benefit for our fellow beings, but in its truth itself through which we realize within us that man is not merely an animal but a spirit that has its unfettered perfection. Goodness is the freedom of our self in the world of man, as is love. We have to be true within (Gita, Ch. III, 6 and 7 ; ch. XVII, 16). This idea enables us to understand the real character of Buddha's Nirvana which is attainable not merely through the conquest of craving but through compassionate oneness with others, which is the true state of spiritual perfection.

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## CHAPTER II

### DR. TAGORE ON 'YOGA' AND 'BRAHMA-VIHARA'

"The negative idea of the infinite is merely an indefinite enlargement of the limits of things ; in fact, a perpetual postponement of infinitude.....In the Hindu Scripture the Universe is described as an egg ; that is to say, for the human mind it has its circular shell of limitation. The Hindu Scripture goes still further and says that time also is not continuous and our world repeatedly comes to an end to begin its cycle once again. In other words, in the region of time and space infinity consists of ever-revolving finitude."

"But the positive aspect of the infinite is in *advaitam*, in an absolute unity, in which comprehension of the multitude is not as in an outer receptacle but as in an inner perfection that permeates and exceeds its content, like the beauty in a lotus which is ineffably more than all the constituents of the flower. It is not the magnitude of extension but an intense quality of harmony which evokes in us the positive sense of the infinite in our joy, in our love. For *advaitam* is *anandam*, the infinite One is infinite Love. For those among whom the spiritual sense is dull, the desire for realization is reduced to physical possession, an actual grasping in space. This longing for magnitude becomes not an aspiration towards the great, but mania for the big. But true spiritual realization is not through augmentation of possession in dimension or number. The truth that is infinite dwells in the ideal of unity which we find in the deeper relatedness. This truth of realization is not in space, it can only be realized in one's own inner spirit". "This infinite and eternal has to be known as One". "This birthless spirit is beyond space" (Upanishad).

"The special mental attitude which India has in her religion is made clear by the word Yoga, whose meaning is to effect Union. Union has its significance not in the realm of *to have*, but in that of *to be*. To gain truth is to admit its separateness, but to be true is to become one with truth. Some religions, which deal with our relationship with God, assure us of reward if that relationship be kept true. This reward has an objective value. It gives us some reason outside ourselves for pursuing the prescribed path. But those that have attained a greater height aspire for their fulfilment in union with *Narayana*, the supreme Reality of Man, which is divine".

"Our union with this spirit is not to be attained through the mind. For our mind belongs to the department of economy in the human organism. It carefully husbands our consciousness for its own range of reason, within which to permit our relationship with the phenomenal world. But it is the object of Yoga to help us to transcend the limits built up by Mind. On the occasions when these are overcome, our innerself is filled with joy, which indicates that through such freedom we come into touch with the Reality that is an end in itself and therefore is bliss'.

"Once man had his vision of the infinite in the Universal Light, and he offered his worship to the sun. Then he felt the infinite in Life, which is Time in its creative aspect, and he said "All that there is comes out of life and vibrates in it" (Upanishad). And he came deeper into his being and said "The infinite is love itself"—the eternal spirit of joy (Upanishad)....."

"Our union with a Being whose activity is worldwide and who dwells in the heart of humanity cannot be a passive one. In order to be united with Him we have to divest our work of selfishness and become *Vishwakarma*-worker for all.....In

order to be one with this Mahatma, "the Great soul", one must cultivate the greatness of soul which identifies itself with the soul of all peoples and not merely with that of one's own. This helps us to understand what Buddha has described as "Brahma-Vihara", "living in the infinite". He says: "Do not deceive each other, do not despise anybody anywhere, never in anger wish anyone to suffer through your body, words or thoughts. Like a mother maintaining her only son with her own life, keep thy immeasurable loving thought for all creatures".

"Above thee, below thee, on all sides of thee, keep on all the world thy sympathy and immeasurable loving thought which is without obstruction, without any wish to injure, without enmity".

"To be dwelling in such contemplation while standing, walking, sitting or lying down, until sleep overcomes thee, is called living in Brahma".

"This proves that Buddha's idea of the infinite was not the idea of a spirit of an unbounded cosmic activity, but that infinite whose meaning is in the positive ideal of goodness and love.....Buddha's teaching speaks of *Nirvana* as the highest end. To understand its real character we have to know the path of its attainment, which is not merely through the negation of evil thoughts and deeds but through the elimination of all limits to love. It must mean the sublimation of self in a truth which is love itself, which unites in its bosom all those to whom we must offer our sympathy and service....."

"In all appearance our world is a closed world of hard facts; it is like a seed with its tough cover. But within this enclosure is working our silent cry of life for *Mukti*, the freedom in truth, even when its possibility is darkly silent. When some huge overgrown temptation tramples into stillness this living

aspiration then does civilization die like a seed that has lost its urging for germination. And this *Mukti*\* is in the truth that dwells in the ideal man".

"Those who realize the Great Soul dwelling in the hearts of all people transcend the limits of mortality—not in duration of time, but in perfection of truth".

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\*Mukti and moksha mean the something viz. spiritual freedom.



## CONCLUSION

At the present time Buddhism is adjusting itself to the challenging impact of Western culture upon the East, and to other varied forces that have broken loose in the modern world. So far as concerns the general situation in the Buddhist countries three encouraging signs for the future are visible. One is the formation of a 'World Buddhist Fellowship' inviting Buddhists in all countries to its membership. It has already held three conferences and the fourth has been called at Kathamandoo in Nepal for November next. The second is the convening of the 'Sixth Buddhist Council at Rangoon', in a series of meetings extending for two years from May 1954. The third is the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of Buddha's birth in India by her people. The occasion has been taken advantage of by the Indian States to renovate a number of places connected with Buddhism, in particular, the four places, those of Buddha's birth (Lumbini, Kapilavastu) of his attaining enlightenment (Gaya), of his preaching the first sermon (Sarnath, Banaras) and of his attaining *parinirvana* (Kushinagar); also to publish a history of 2500 years of Buddhism in India and some of the canonical scriptures in Hindi".

I have been told by some of my Buddhist friends in India and outside her that Hindus are likely to succeed in reconciling Hinayana (Theravada) and Mahayana Buddhists, Hinduism being their parent religion. They should, therefore, try for this. There should be only one *yana*, Buddha-*yana*. I agree with them.

It has been shown in this book that Buddha followed Brahminism and reformed it, and it was the Hindus who followed

him and proclaimed him an *avatara*. His teaching stands incorporated into Hinduism. A mutual understanding on the religious level is the key to spiritual union.

It is also believed that Buddha's peaceful message, if properly propagated by earnest and sincere Hindu and Buddhist missionaries, may help to relieve world tension. In the past Hindu and Buddhist missionaries worked side by side successfully in South-east Asia and some other parts of the world and brought to them Indian culture. Nepal temples (Mahakala temple being one of the most important) Jagannath temple of Puri (Orissa), Buddha Gaya temple and some others have both Hindu and Buddhist priests, and the images of Buddha and Hindu deities in one and the same temple in most cases. According to Sir Charles Eliot "In South-east Asia Saivism and Buddhism both flourished without mutual hostility and there was less difference in the status of the two creeds (Hinduism and Buddhism, P. XXVIII).

At Taxila and Nalanda Universities both the Hindu and Buddhist dharmas and philosophies were taught to the students. It is desirable that some such arrangements be made at least at the Banaras Hindu University and the Sanskrit University. In order to achieve the desired result teachers imbued with the spirit of the age, the *yugadharma*, will have to be found.

In Asoka's time India became an important international centre (Discovery of India, P. 104). So should she become again to the advantage of all. As Dr. Radhakrishnan says "There is every reason to hope that India will once again play a great part in stimulating the spiritual life of the East" (India and China, P. 28). Of all persons, the Buddhists should have an unshakable faith in the land of their Master for inspiring the world to follow the universally accepted principle of 'live and let live'. Time is ripe, now that she is free and there has

been a demand after the second world war for a synthetic world-culture and better mutual understanding.

There were some instructive articles in the Buddha Jayanti Supplement of Amrita Bazar Patrika on Buddhism in Ceylon, Burma, China, Japan and some other countries. There is a general complaint therein of the decline of Buddhism. For example, in Ceylon, according to Mr. Austin De Silva, on account of internal strife and Portuguese barbarism, and in Burma, according to H. E. U. Aungsoe, on account of British Colonial policy and the second world war, Buddhism suffered badly. All of the writers emphasize the democratic nature of Buddhism, and we hope that its various sects will now work in harmony with each other, with Hindus and others, on the basis of universality taught in the Dhammapada and implied in the other treatises. "Hinduism and Buddhism are ever evolving", so it is said.

Truth is too universal to be made sectarian. Broken truth is evil.

THE END.

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