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THE ORIGINAL TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA

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Basic / Introductory Series

The Original Teachings Of the Buddha

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CHARLESTON BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP
Charleston, SC USA

2012 (2556)

Note: The references were updated in October 2014 (2558) and again in 2016 (2560).

The doctrinal positions expressed in this book are based upon the original teachings (*aggavāda*) of the Buddha.

This book is dedicated to the bygone Monks of the Mahāvihāra Monastery in Anurādhapura, Śri Lanka, in deep appreciation for their meticulous preservation of the sacred Pāḷi scriptures.

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Preface

This work started out as a revision of the book *Pāḷi Buddhism* (Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press [1900]) by Henry H. Tilbe (1859—1935). However, so many changes have been made and so much new material has been added that it has virtually become a new book. Consequently, the title has been changed to *The Original Teachings of the Buddha* and Henry H. Tilbe is no longer listed as the author.

The purpose of this book is to provide a brief, reliable, clear, well-arranged outline of the life and original teachings (*aggavāda*) of the Buddha, as preserved in the Pāḷi scriptures of Theravādin Buddhism. These scriptures are the most authentic record of these teachings that have come down to us, inasmuch as they come directly from the Buddha himself or from his direct disciples. They provide both the clearest account of the Buddha's true teachings and a valuable record of the early history of Buddhism.

Beliefs and practices which were not part of the earliest form of Buddhism but which arose at later dates have been purposely excluded from this book, or, if they are discussed at all, are identified as later developments. An attempt has also been made to separate fact from fiction by stripping away the many legendary tales that have inevitably grown around the birth, life, and person of the Buddha. Finally, all references to and comparisons with Christianity, which occasionally crept into the various works consulted in preparing this book, have been removed.

Throughout the book, the original Pāḷi terms are given for key doctrinal concepts. However, when discussing other schools of Buddhism in which Sanskrit is used as the liturgical language, the appropriate Sanskrit terms are given instead.

It is important to bear in mind that the Buddha had very clear ideas about which questions his teachings were meant to answer and which ones they were not. He repeatedly emphasized that his teachings concerned suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. He intentionally refused to answer metaphysical questions that were not relevant to those objectives.

Unfortunately, after his death, all of the metaphysical speculations, forms of worship, rites and rituals, and superstitious beliefs which the Buddha had fought so hard to dispel and to protect his teachings against came rushing into it, but, as long as he was alive, he kept them at bay. Fortunately, it is possible to strip away all of the accumulated trappings of later ages to reveal the original teachings of the Master for all to appreciate in their pristine magnificence. As will be seen in the following pages, those teachings are empirical, scientific, pragmatic, therapeutic, psychological, egalitarian, and individual. They expound a unique and effective path to enlightenment. ■

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Introduction

Three hundred years before the founding of Alexandria in Egypt, around the time that Thales of Miletus, the most ancient philosopher (6th century BCE) of Greece, was teaching, an enlightened Sage, who had renounced a throne, was traveling throughout the valley of the Ganges in central India exhorting his followers to abandon unwholesome actions such as killing, stealing, false speech, adultery, and indulgence in intoxicants. Moreover, he did not limit his exhortations to external vices — pride, anger, lust, envy, jealousy, and covetousness were equally condemned by him in strong terms.

He required all his followers to develop loving-kindness, compassion, sympathy, patience, renunciation, generosity, truthfulness, and the cultivation of wisdom. Good, or wholesome, words, thoughts, and deeds were constant themes in his discourses, and he was unceasing in his exhortations to keep the mind free from the turmoil of passion and the concerns of everyday life. Immediately after the death of this great sage, his disciples scattered in all directions to continue the work of spreading the teachings of their Master.

Buddhism, which includes those doctrines, together with the systems of worship that have grown out of them, has numbered more adherents and influenced more people than any other system of belief historically known — perhaps more than all others combined.

However, Buddhism, according to a strict definition of the word “religion”, is not a religion at all. Buddhism does admit, on a cultural level, nearly the whole pantheon of gods and goddesses of early Hinduism, along with all the demons, spirits, and other mythological beings that are equally a feature of that system. However, such beings are irrelevant and unnecessary in terms of the goals of Buddhism. Nowhere does Buddhism admit the existence of a Creator God, or Supreme Being, nor does it hold that there are any other superhuman beings worthy of worship. Original Buddhism had no temples, no altars or sacrifices, no priests, no prayers, no rituals, and no religious rites of any kind. Buddhism does not claim divine origin or superhuman intervention of any kind, but is, by its own account, the product of human endeavor. It is based upon human experience. As such, it is rational and not speculative. Blind beliefs are rejected.

Buddhism is simply a non-theistic philosophical and moral system that expounds a unique path to enlightenment. It is so clear, so profound, and so positive, that it cannot help but uplift and awaken those who put its teachings into practice.

In order to gain a fuller understanding of Buddhism, one must study its origin and early growth in terms of:

1. The social, cultural, religious, and political environment, that is, India (Jambudīpa) around 600—500 BCE;
2. The life of its founder, Gotama Buddha;

3. The doctrines — the fundamental teachings (Dhamma) of the Buddha as preserved in the Pāḷi scriptures of Theravādin Buddhism;
4. The institutions — the Order (Sangha) of Monks and Nuns.

Each of these topics will be dealt with in detail in the next four chapters of this book. A final chapter will then summarize the doctrines of primitive Buddhism and trace how those doctrines changed over time. ■

1

India (Jambudīpa) 600—500 BCE

Buddhism arose in the valley of the great river Ganges, dating from the lifetime of its founder, Siddhattha Gotama ("The Buddha"), somewhere around 600—500 BCE.

When Prince Siddhattha was born, Indian civilization was already old. Perhaps fifteen hundred years (or more) had passed since wandering Aryan tribes from Central Asia, entering the Indian subcontinent along the Indus River, had found a civilization already more than a thousand years old, in which the defining features of the Hindu faith seem to have already been established.

The Aryans brought with them a social order presided over by priests, or Brahmins, the trustees of ancient hymns, rituals, and deities related to those of other lands, especially Persia (modern-day Iran), where Aryan tribes had also spread. India seems to have dealt with this new religion as it has dealt with cultural imports ever since — it absorbed the new into the old. As a result, in even the earliest of the Indian scriptures — the Rig Veda, whose oldest hymns go back at least to 1500 BCE —, we find Aryan nature gods integrated with the loftiest conceptions of mysticism. There is no inconsistency in this integration, only a very early recognition that life's supreme reality can be described in many ways. "Truth is one", says a hymn of the Rig Veda; "the wise call it by different names".

The Vedic literature gives a picture of life in that far away period a thousand years before the rise of Buddhism. At that earlier time, the Aryans were engaged in wars of conquest, gradually advancing from a cold northland into richer and warmer regions towards the south and southeast, taking these lands from their conquered foes. At times, they turned against fighting their foes to quarrels among themselves.

The Aryans were a patriarchal society, each father being the ruler and priest in his own family. Women were accorded equality with men and were treated with respect and tenderness. As a wandering, pastoral people, their wealth consisted chiefly of cattle, though they possessed other domesticated animals as well.

They believed that each individual had a soul (*ātman*) that animated his or her body and continued to exist even after the dissolution of the physical body, and they gave souls not only to human beings but also to other animals and even to inanimate objects.

They worshiped a number of powerful gods, which were doubtless deifications of heavenly bodies and of the forces of nature. Though very religious, they had quite liberal

notions of sexual morality. The life they lived was simple, free, and harmonious. There was generally an abundance of the few simple necessities of life, and there were relatively few cares.

But, by the time of the rise of Buddhism, great changes had come about. The old wandering pastoral life had been abandoned. Wealth no longer consisted of cattle alone, but in the fields of grain and gardens of fruits, besides many of the other luxuries of a civilized and prosperous life.

The householder was no longer patriarchal ruler and priest, for society had become divided into castes and was ruled by petty chieftains. A special caste arose that assumed the duties and claimed the rights of priesthood.

Those of their predecessors who had not been destroyed or driven from the land had been relegated to the position of menials, forming a great class of "untouchables" that was scorned and mistreated. Among themselves, too, distinctions of rank and class had developed — the learned priests took precedence, claiming divine descent with divine powers and requiring divine honors; the warriors came next in power and honor; and, below them, was the great body of farmers, merchants, and artisans. These distinctions had thus already settled into a system of castes that has continued to this day, becoming ever more complex and rigid over time and which has been a blight on the great mass of the people of India.

From the beginning, two subcurrents ran through the broad spectrum of the Vedic faith. One, followed by the vast majority of people, was the social religion of the Vedas, with Brahmins in charge of preserving the ancient scriptures and presiding over a complex set of rituals. But another tradition, at least as ancient, taught that, beyond ritual and the mediation of priests, it is possible, through the practice of spiritual disciplines, to realize directly the divine ground of life. This ideal is sanctioned in Vedic religion as the human being's highest vocation. The opportunity is open to anyone to wrap up social obligations and retire to a religious community (*āṣrama*) in the Himalayas or in the forests flanking the Ganges to learn from an illumined teacher how to realize truth. This choice is often misunderstood as world-weariness, and we know that, even in those most ancient times, India had ascetics who tortured their bodies in the desire to free their spirit. But this is not India's classical tradition, and the typical religious community of the times was a retreat where students would live with an illumined teacher as one of his followers, leading a life of outward simplicity in order to concentrate on inner growth.

Sometimes, graduates of these forest academies would go on to become teachers themselves. But it was at least as likely that they would return to society, disciplined in body and mind, to make a contribution to some secular field. Some, according to legend, became counselors of kings — one actually was a king. These men and women turned inward for the same reason that scientists and adventurers turn outward — not to run from life, but to master it. They went into the forests of the Ganges to find the truth, as a poet turns to poetry or a musician to music, because they loved life so intensely that nothing would do but to grasp it at the heart. They yearned to *know* — to know what the human being is, what life is, what death means and whether it can be conquered.

Oral records of their discoveries began to be collected around 1000 BCE, or even earlier, in fragments called "*Upanishads*" (*upaniṣad*). Individualistic in their expression, yet completely universal, these ecstatic documents belong to no particular religion but to

all mankind. They are not systematic philosophy; indeed, they are not philosophy at all. Each *upanishad* contains the record of a *darśana*, literally, "something seen", a view not of the world of everyday experience but of the deep, still realms beneath the sense-world, accessible in deep meditation.

Born in freedom and stamped with the joy of self-realization, these early testaments of the Vedic sages are clear predecessors of the Buddha's voice. They contain no trace of world denial, no shadow of fear, no sense of diffidence about our place in an alien universe. Far from deprecating physical existence, they teach that self-realization means health, vitality, long life, and a harmonious balance of inward and outward activity. With a triumphant voice, they proclaim that human destiny lies ultimately in human hands for those who master the passions of the mind.

And they insist on *knowing*, not the learning of facts, but the direct experience of truth — the one reality underlying the diversity of life. This is not an intellectual achievement. Knowledge means realization. To know the truth, one must make it real, must live it out in thought, word, and deed.

The method these sages followed in their pursuit of truth was called the "supreme science" (*brahmavidyā*), a discipline in which attention is focused intensely on the contents of consciousness. In practice, this means meditation. The modern mind may balk at calling meditation scientific, but, in the passion of these sages for truth, in their search for reality as something that is the same under all conditions and from all points of view, in their insistence on direct observation and systematic empirical method, we find the essence of the scientific spirit. It is not improper to call *brahmavidyā* a series of experiments — on the mind, by the mind —, with predictable, replicable results.

Yet, of course, the sages of the *Upanishads* took a different track from modern science. They looked not at the world outside, but at human knowledge of the world outside. They sought invariants in the contents of consciousness and discarded everything impermanent as ultimately unreal, in the way that the sensations of a dream are seen to be unreal when one awakens. Their principle was "this is not the self; that is not the self". They peeled away personality like an onion, layer by layer, and found nothing permanent in the mass of perceptions, thoughts, emotions, drives, and memories that we call "I", "me", or "mine". Yet, when everything individual was stripped away, an intense awareness remained — consciousness itself. The sages called this ultimate ground of personality "*ātman*", the "Self".

The scientific temper of this method is a vital part of the Buddha's background. If, as Aldous Huxley observed, science is "the reduction of multiplicities to unities", no civilization has been more scientific. From the Rig Veda on, India's scriptures are steeped in the conviction of an all-pervasive order (*ṛtam*) in the whole of creation that is reflected in each part. In medieval Europe, it was the realization that there cannot be one set of natural laws governing earth and another set governing the heavens that led to the birth of classical physics. In a similar insight, Vedic India conceived of the natural world — not only physical phenomena but human action and thought — as uniformly governed by universal law.

Ancient India was noted for its distinguished philosophers and religious teachers, who held diverse views regarding life and its goal. The names of some of these teachers, along with their views, are mentioned in the Pāḷi scriptures. The Brahmajāla Sutta of the

Dīgha Nikāya mentions sixty-two varieties of philosophical theories that were prevalent at the time of the Buddha.

One extreme view, which was diametrically opposed to all current religious belief, was the nihilistic teaching of the materialists. According to their teaching, man is annihilated after death, leaving forever behind whatever force was generated by him. In their opinion, death is the end of all. This present world alone is real. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for death comes to all", appears to be the ideal of their system. Virtue, they say, is a delusion, and enjoyment is the only reality. Religion is a foolish aberration, a mental disease. There was a distrust of everything good, high, pure, and compassionate. Their theory stands for sensuality and selfishness and the gross affirmation of the loud will. There is no need to control passion and instinct, since they are nature's legacy to men.

Another extreme view was that liberation was possible only by leading a life of strict asceticism. This was purely a religious doctrine, firmly held by ascetics of the highest order. The five ascetics who attended on the Buddha during his struggle for enlightenment tenaciously adhered to this belief. In accordance with this view, the Buddha, too, before his enlightenment, subjected himself to all forms of austerity. After an extraordinary struggle for six years, he realized the utter futility of self-mortification. Consequently, he changed this unsuccessful approach and adopted a middle way. His favorite disciples thus lost confidence in him and deserted him, saying: "The Ascetic Gotama has become luxurious, has ceased from striving, and has returned to a life of comfort".

Finally, there were those who taught that change, flux, becoming, integration and disintegration, are inherent in the nature of things; that no thing ever remains the same for two consecutive moments; that even the Absolute is ever evolving and becoming. This was the Indian School of Becoming.

There is an innate sense of justice in man, which expects right actions to be rewarded and wrong actions to be punished. Unfortunately, however, the facts do not always support this sense of justice — oftentimes, good men suffer and bad men prosper. How are these inconsistencies to be explained? It was to answer this question that the doctrine of transmigration of the soul was formulated. According to this doctrine, it is the spiritual self, the undying soul, the *ātman*, that actuates the body in all it does and is, therefore, the real doer of all deeds, good or bad. Ultimately, therefore, it is the soul that must be rewarded or punished. Thus, at the death of the physical body, the soul must pass into another body — good or bad, high or low, divine or human or animal, as its circumstances may require — in which it shall receive the just recompense of what it has done before. That new life will, in the same way, require another, and that, another, and so on and so forth, forever. This transmigration was practically universally accepted by both the Brahmins and the sages of ancient India as the explanation for why there is suffering and seeming wrong in the lives of men.

But, the very nature of life itself is suffering, and the unending series of existences seemed the most unendurable evil of all. So the question as to how suffering might be averted or escaped gained importance.

Slowly, through many centuries, the religious and philosophical teachers of India had been working out that answer. At last, they had settled upon Brahmā, the Supreme God, the All-Soul, the One. His was the only real existence. Everything else was a mere

emanation from him. Man's only release from the suffering of the unending series of existences lay in reabsorption into Brahmā, from which he had emanated.

The Brahmins taught that this reabsorption could only be obtained by means of sacrifices and adherence to the Vedic rites and rituals, as performed by the priests. The ascetics and philosophers, on the other hand, declared that it could more certainly and efficaciously be attained by individual effort in the practices of self-mortification and meditation.

Such was the environment amidst which there arose a Sage who gave new and startling answers to those questions such as the origin of suffering and how it might be escaped, and who worked out, in connection with those answers, an absolutely non-theistic philosophy on which rested a system of ethics. This new Sage was Gotama, the Buddha. ■

2

The Life of the Buddha

THE EARLY YEARS

At the foot of the Himalaya Mountains, about one hundred miles north-northwest of the modern city of Benares (Varanasi), there was, in the sixth century BCE, a small kingdom, whose inhabitants were called the "Sakkas". The principle town and capital of this kingdom was Kapilavatthu. The ruler was named Suddhodana. He had two wives, both daughters of another King whose lands lay on the opposite bank of the Rohiṇī River. Both of these queens were childless, until, in her forty-fifth year, the elder, Queen Māyā, gave birth to a son.

This son was born under a *sāla* tree (*Shorea robusta*) while his mother was on the way home to her parents to give birth, according to the custom of the times. Thereafter, the child and his mother were taken back to Kapilavatthu, where Queen Māyā died on the seventh day after giving birth. The child was adopted and raised by his aunt, his mother's younger sister, Queen Pājāpatī, and was named Siddhattha Gotama.

As was the custom in India, universal then as now, Prince Siddhattha married young, in his sixteenth year, taking as bride his cousin, the beautiful Princess Yasodharā, the daughter of his mother's brother, the King of the neighboring Koliyans. In his twenty-ninth year, his wife bore him their first and only child — a son, Prince Rāhula.

Gotama seems to have been, from youth, of a contemplative disposition and was allowed to study portions of the Vedas and to spend much of his time in the open air in quiet contemplation.

Though, as prince, he was carefully shielded from the hardships and unpleasant aspects of life, he could not be insensitive to the dire suffering of the masses of the common people around him, and his natural tenderness of heart, as well has his natural inclination toward philosophical contemplation, led him irresistibly into the deep study of the causes and cures of life's woes.

He was probably not the first — he certainly was not the last — who, in the midst of prosperity and comfort, has felt a yearning and a need which nothing could satisfy, and which have robbed of their charm all earthly gains and hopes. This vague dissatisfaction deepens with every fresh proof of the apparent futility of life and does not lose but gains in power, when, as is reported in the case of Gotama, it arises more from sympathy with

the suffering of others than from any personal suffering of one's own. At last, the struggles of life become unbearable, and the calm life of a recluse, not troubled with such worldly concerns, seems an attractive alternative, where a life of self-denial and earnest introspection may lead to a solution to the enigmas of life.

It was at that moment, when Gotama had reached this point, that he was told of the birth of his son. Realizing how strong this new bond would become, he determined to break it at once and to abandon the life he had hitherto led for the undisturbed life of a recluse and the severest types of self-denial and asceticism in order that he might, if possible, discover the causes and the cure of human suffering.

RENUNCIATION AND QUEST

Abandoning his home that very night, without ever having taken his child in his arms, he hastened away to Rājagaha and became a student first of Āḷāra Kālāma and, afterwards, of Uddaka Rāmaputta, Brahmin ascetics who were dwelling in hillside caves near that city. From these teachers, he learned all that Hindu philosophy had to teach concerning life here and hereafter. Dissatisfied with the teachings of these Brahmins, he left them and traveled to the jungles near Uruvelā, where he sought for himself, by practicing severe asceticism, combined with intense meditation, to discover the answers to the questions now burning so fiercely within him.

There, accompanied by five fellow ascetics, he starved and abused his body for six years, until the fame of his self-mortification spread "abroad like the sound of a great bell hung in the canopy of the skies". But it was all to no avail. He acquired neither peace of mind nor any superhuman insight that was of benefit in his quest.

Realizing then the futility of this approach, he gave up all self-mortification and sought to nourish back to wonted strength the feeble life that remained in his wasted body. Thereupon, his disappointed companions, feeling that he had abandoned his quest, forsook him and went away to Benares.

As he gradually regained strength, he resolved to devote himself to meditation without austere penance. Seating himself under a large banyan tree, known subsequently as the "sacred *bodhi*-tree" (*Ficus religiosa*), he descended into deeper and deeper depths of meditation. First of all, he reviewed his life and the efforts in which, so far, he had so signally failed — all he had learned, all he had believed, all he had trusted in, hitherto, had only proved false. All his labors and self-inflicted mortifications had been to no avail. That which he sought seemed no nearer than on that long-past night when he had broken away from the twining love of wife and child.

Thereupon, the temptation came to abandon the unsuccessful attempt to solve the mysteries of life and to return to the ease and luxury of his old home and to the tender caresses of his beautiful wife and infant son.

But, in his heart of hearts, he knew that this would not satisfy him. The old unrest would never be stilled until he had gained satisfactory answers to those momentous questions concerning the origin and cure of woe. He could not go back — indeed, he could not even pause. Deeper, deeper, and deeper, he plunged into meditation, until one morning, after a night of severe struggle, in which his debilitated body almost failed due

to the intense concentration of his mind, he emerged victorious. His questions had been answered; he had attained to absolutely perfect knowledge; all mysteries had vanished; life, suffering, and liberation were clearly understood. Henceforth, he was "Buddha", the "Enlightened One".

MINISTRY

At first, he was tempted to keep the knowledge of his discovery to himself, believing that the truths he had realized were beyond the comprehension of others and that his "way" was too difficult for them to follow. But his compassion for the suffering of others soon led him to decide to try to liberate them. At first, he thought of his former teachers, Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, but, discovering that they had since died, he decided to teach the five ascetics who had been his companions for the six years during which he had practiced self-mortification. Accordingly, he traveled to Benares in search of them and, finding them in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares, expounded his first discourse, in which he set forth the fundamental principles of his new system. His former companions were readily convinced of the truth of his teachings and became his first five disciples. Within five months, he was able to send forth sixty disciples to disseminate his teachings, for he made his system a missionary one from the very beginning.

Having sent forth these disciples, he himself returned to the vicinity of Uruvelā, where he won as followers the three fire-worshiping Kassapa brothers, together with their own community of one thousand disciples. Accompanied by these three brothers and their former disciples, the Buddha proceeded to Rājagaha, where the King, Bimbisāra, became a lay follower, and his most illustrious disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, joined his Order (Sangha). Some bad feelings arose concerning the high position which the Buddha assigned these two disciples, and he was obliged to repeat the principles of his system and to promulgate a few simple rules for the guidance of the Sangha, which thus became formally incorporated.

Meanwhile, news of his spreading fame had reached the Buddha's family, and he received an invitation to return to Kapilavatthu from his aged father, King Suddhodana, who wished to see his son once again before he died. The Buddha complied with the request, and his father became a lay disciple and is said to have subsequently attained *nibbāna* at the moment of death. At the same time, there was a most touching meeting with his wife, Yasodharā, the accounts of which are simply too true to life to be wholly fictitious legends. He received his half-brother Nanda and his own son Rāhula into the Sangha, whereupon his father asked him to establish a rule forbidding the ordination of any youth under twenty years of age without the consent of his parents.

Soon thereafter, he received several other of his kinsmen into the Sangha, among whom were his cousin, Ānanda, who later became his devoted attendant, and his cousin, Devadatta, who later became an ardent opponent and caused a schism in the Sangha.

In the fifth year after his enlightenment, the Buddha again visited Kapilavatthu and was present at the death of his father, King Suddhodana, after which, due to the persistence of his stepmother and his own wife, and earnestly promoted by his beloved

disciple Ānanda, he reluctantly established a female Sangha, to which Queen Pājāpati and Princess Yasodharā were admitted as the first members.

He spent the next forty-five years of his life after his enlightenment teaching the Dhamma he had realized and training his disciples. Generally, the Buddha spent the four months of the rainy season in some Vihāra, with his most eminent disciples gathered around him for instruction. The remainder of the year, he wandered from place to place, making new converts or revisiting and encouraging the widely scattered bands of his disciples. In his travels, some of his most famous disciples accompanied him, while others went in other directions, expounding the Dhamma taught to them by the Buddha and receiving into the Sangha those who accepted it in its entirety.

In is worth noting at this point that, throughout his whole ministry, those attracted to the teachings of the Buddha were generally from the upper classes of society. His most ardent supporters were kings, princes, and wealthy merchants, while the most illustrious members of his Sangha were Brahmins and learned philosophers of the higher castes.

DEATH OF THE BUDDHA

In the forty-fifth year after he had attained enlightenment, while spending the rainy season at Beluva, he came down with a severe illness. Realizing that he would not live long, he spent such strength as he could muster in exhorting his disciples to adhere firmly to and to zealously propagate the Dhamma that he had realized and taught to them. He continued this exhortation after the end of the rainy season, while he traveled slowly from place to place in order to visit bands of his disciples scattered throughout the land, from Sāvatthī to Rājagaha.

The death of the Buddha occurred at Kusinārā, when he was in his eightieth year. The immediate cause of his death was food-poisoning from eating a dish of rice and pork specially prepared for him by a lay disciple, the goldsmith Chanda.

Such, in outline, is what can be considered the facts surrounding the real life of the historical Gotama, the Buddha. The impossible legendary tales and miraculous fables that have been interwoven with those facts by generations of Easterners have been shorn from this account. ■

3

The Dhamma

THE PĀḶI CANON

The Pāḷi Canon, known as the *Tipiṭaka*, or "Three Baskets", is divided, as its The Pāḷi Canon, known as the *Tipiṭaka*, or "Three Baskets", is divided, as its name indicates, into three parts: (1) the first, the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, is devoted largely to rules for the guidance of the *Sangha*; (2) the second, the *Sutta Piṭaka*, contains the discourses of the *Buddha* and several of His distinguished disciples and is devoted particularly to doctrinal and ethical teaching; and (3) the third, the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, which appears to have been compiled later than the other two divisions, contains additional doctrinal and ethical teaching, together with some metaphysical discussions. Though earlier divisions are known to have existed, the *Tipiṭaka* is the only arrangement of the Pāḷi Canon still in use among Theravādin Buddhists.

These Buddhist scriptures are essentially different from the scriptures of all other religions in that they do not claim divine inspiration or superhuman intervention of any kind, but are, by their own admission, the product of pure human insightfulness.

It is claimed that the great scholar-monk Buddhaghosa, who lived at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries CE, retranslated into Pāḷi the Sinhalese translation made by Mahinda of the original Pāḷi Commentaries for extensive parts of the *Tipiṭaka*, which had unfortunately been lost before the time of Buddhaghosa. It is further claimed that these original Pāḷi texts had been brought from India to Śri Lanka by Mahinda himself, immediately after the last of the three councils which were held for the purpose of collecting the teachings of the *Buddha* and fixing, in accordance therewith, the disciplinary rules of the *Sangha* and the *Dhamma* taught by the *Buddha*. Buddhaghosa was also the author of the *Visuddhimagga*, a detailed exposition of the Theravādin tenets as taught at the Mahāvihāra Monastery in Anurādhapura, Śri Lanka. Some of the Pāḷi Commentaries were also prepared by Dhammapāla in the fifth or sixth century CE.

The first of these councils took place three months after the death of the *Buddha* and was made up of five hundred *Arahants* who, with Kassapa as their chosen leader, recited the precepts and discourses of the *Buddha* and took the first steps towards a methodical arrangement in two collections: (1) *Vinaya* — the disciplinary rules for the

Sangha; and (2) the *Dhamma* — the ethical and doctrinal teachings of the *Buddha*. These collections were thenceforth passed down orally from generation to generation.

Sometime later, grave departures from the disciplinary rules began to develop among members of the *Sangha*, which was, consequently, becoming split into two factions: (1) an orthodox faction, favoring strict adherence to the established rules and (2) a laxer faction, favoring relaxation of those rules. A second council was held somewhere around 350 BCE, consisting of seven hundred members. At this council, the principles of the orthodox faction prevailed, the deviations from the disciplinary rules were prohibited, and the disciplinary rules and doctrines were again recited in the unaltered form and vindicated. However, the decisions of this council were not accepted by everyone, and the first open schism after the death of the *Buddha* occurred. Thus began the history of differing and antagonistic schools and sects.

A third council was held at Pāṭaliputta somewhere around 240 BCE, under the patronage of the great Indian ruler Asoka, also known as Dhammāsoka, the grandson of Chandragupta. This council consisted of a thousand members and, like the second council, was convened to settle disagreements among members of the *Sangha*. At this council, the disciplinary rules and the doctrines were again recited and, for the more conservative Theravādin School, definitively fixed. A fourth council was held around the beginning of the Common Era, but it was completely under the control of the less orthodox Sarvāstavādin School and had no bearing whatsoever on the Pāḷi Canon.

It was probably around this time that the Pāḷi Canon was first put into writing. It is certain, at least, that writing was well known at the time, inasmuch as Asoka used it widely in inscribing Buddhist edicts in the Pāḷi language throughout his extended empire. Asoka seems to have been the guiding spirit not only at the third council but also in the immediately subsequent history of Buddhism. It is unlikely that so astute a ruler would have let slip the advantages gained at the council, with the means available to him for fixing them. And it is quite clear that the Pāḷi Canon was settled from this time onward, as it would probably not have been, unless fixed in writing.

Both the first and second councils are mentioned in portions of the *Tipiṭaka* itself, but the third council is not. This makes it seem probable that portions of the Pāḷi Canon are at least as old as the second council and that all of its present contents were received at the time of the third. However, most of the Pāḷi Canon is known to be much older, and the majority of it undoubtedly gives us the authentic teachings, if not always the exact words, of the *Buddha* Himself.

The Pāḷi *Piṭakas*, therefore, may safely be accepted as a reliable — of all the Buddhist scriptures thus far known, certainly the most reliable — source of information about the original teachings which the *Buddha* Himself promulgated.

It must be stressed in this connection that the *Buddha* did not leave an immature, embryonic system, but that His doctrines had been fully developed and clearly stated long before His death. A long and vigorous life had gone into the development and statement of those doctrines. He spent six years of his life — from age 29 to age 35 — engaged in the most active and independent mental investigation ever undertaken, during which time He formulated the fundamentals of His system and shaped the forms of their expression. Then, He devoted the next forty-five years of His life to wide promulgation among people, who were, at first, uninterested, in private and public discussions with the most

bitter and most intelligent opponents and in constant teaching of enthusiastic adherents, employing the most logical and exacting methods of instruction and explanation.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF PRIMITIVE BUDDHISM

In approaching the careful examination of the fundamental doctrines of primitive Buddhism, one must constantly bear in mind the environment in which the system was conceived and developed. Of the principles that had come to be generally or universally accepted by His predecessors and contemporaries, the *Buddha* flatly denied certain that appeared to Him patently false, while He accepted others that appeared to Him patently true. He then modified certain others to agree with what He had accepted and yet would not necessitate what He had rejected. Lastly, He made certain original additions which perfected His system. These features include:

1. God and soul: One of the most characteristic and fundamental features of original Buddhism is its rejection of the ideas of God and of soul, self, or ego. The *Buddha's* system was absolutely atheistic, but without the materialistic doctrine which is often associated with atheism and which knows nothing higher than the world of the senses and the slight happiness it can bestow. No other feature of the system is so surprising to those who first encounter Buddhism. In no other doctrine did it differ more from Brahminism and other contemporary systems of philosophy. And, at no other point are several modern schools of Buddhism more at variance with the original. There have always been those who reject God, and there were such persons in the days of the *Buddha* — blasphemous atheists who mocked the idea of God and found in their atheism license for base indulgence; pessimistic atheists who rejected the idea of God and left mankind helpless and hopeless in the ceaseless world of suffering. But the *Buddha* was not such as these. He was unquestionably a chaste, earnest, and honest truth-seeker, looking for a way that would enable mankind to conquer lust and escape from suffering. In His search for truth, He had to rely solely upon His own intuition and powers of reason. To him, the idea of God seemed absolutely beyond proof, quite unnecessary in any system of belief, and utterly incapable of explaining either the cause or the cure of suffering. Therefore, He rejected it, and, with it, every form of worship, every form of sacrifice, and every kind of priestly intervention. He declared that belief in God and in the efficacy of worship was one of the three great delusions that must be entirely abandoned in the first stage of His path (*Sotāpanna*), and one of the four attachments (*upādāna*) that cause all woe and despair.

   The *Buddha* spoke of gods, demons, ghosts, etc. — good and evil spirits of every sort —, and He even retained their Brahmanical names, but He modified the nature of their positions and functions to suit His own views, which did not admit the existence of an Omnipotent Creator or any Supreme Being higher than the perfectly enlightened man. The gods, better called "celestial beings", are in no sense superior to other forms of life except that they temporarily inhabit more blissful abodes. Such beings are subject to the universal law of dissolution, and, after death, they are succeeded by others, so that there is not one Brahmā or Sakka, but many successive

deities so named, and many classes of deities under them. They have no power to affect anyone else's liberation. On the contrary, they must see to their own liberation.

When any being in any of the various realms of existence dies, he must be reborn in some other realm, based upon his *kamma*, for there is no other possibility. If he is reborn in one of the woeful (hell) realms, he is not thereby disbarred from seeking liberation, and, even if he is reborn in a celestial realm as a god, he must, at some time, leave it and seek a still higher state — that of the perfectly enlightened being.

In the *Buddha's* system, all sentient existence is thus really the same, and any particular temporary being — whether it be as a god, human, animal, ghost, demon, or whatever — is continuously changing, subject to that particular being's own control, inasmuch as any particular rebirth depends entirely on the volitional actions (*kamma*) of that particular being in a former existence. It must not be supposed, however, that the *Buddha* envisioned the doctrine of rebirth as a permanently existing soul (*attā*) migrating from one life to another, from one form of existence to another. He emphatically denied that there could be a permanent soul, self, or ego in this ever-changing cycle of sentient existence (*saṁsāra*). Just as He had rejected the idea of any real God, so, too, He utterly rejected the idea of a permanent soul, self, or ego. Belief in a permanent soul, self, or ego is another of those three primary delusions which has to be abandoned in the first stage of His path (*Sotāpanna*).

There is nothing in the doctrinal part of His system that the *Buddha* more strenuously maintained or made more essential to the acceptance of His system than the rejection of these two mistaken views.

2. Impermanence (*anicca*): The *Buddha*, in denying the existence of a Creator God and in rejecting the idea of a permanent soul, self, or ego, did not, in so doing, assume the eternal existence of matter. He held that the material universe, like sentient being, was continually changing in its passage through an unending cycle of existences. Indeed, He did not recognize any essential difference between animate and inanimate as to either cause or continuance. He recognized no real *being* but an ever-changing, never-ending process of *becoming*. Through countless "great eons" (*mahākappa*), each consisting itself of eons (*kappa*) upon eons, the destruction and regeneration of the universe (*cakkavāla*) goes on. Slowly, each new universe evolves from its predecessor, and, just as slowly, it disintegrates only to evolve immediately after its demise into another universe that succeeds it.

   Kamma and the succession of cause and effect are constant and eternal. But, aside from these two abstract ideas, in all His teachings, the *Buddha* reiterated and insisted upon the impermanence and unreality of everything else, mental or material, animate or inanimate. As stated in the *Dhammapada* (verses 277—279):

> *"All compound things (saṁkhārā) are impermanent (anicca); those who realize this through insight-wisdom (paññā) are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to purity."*

"All compound things have suffering (dukkha) as their nature; those who realize this through insight-wisdom are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to purity."

"All states (dhammā) are without self (anattā); those who realize this through insight-wisdom are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to purity."

Impermanence (*anicca*), suffering, (*dukkha*), and no-self (*anattā*) are the three characteristics of all mental and physical phenomena, and are, consequently, the three great postulates of the *Buddha's* system. These three were prescribed as subjects of constant meditation, and were doubtless, from the start, as they still are today, often repeated in melancholy monotone as reminders — "*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā*".

3. The aggregates (*khandha*): Having denied the existence of an abiding entity in the form of a soul, self, or ego, the *Buddha* replaced this false notion with an assemblage of five aggregates, as follows:

   A. Form, matter, materiality, or corporeality (*rūpa*): the collection, or aggregate, of material attributes, twenty-eight of which are enumerated.
   B. Feeling, or sensation (*vedanā*): the aggregate of the six classes of sensations received by the six senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind) through contact with a sense object, which are further divided into eighteen classes according to whether any one of them is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.
   C. Perception (*saññā*): the aggregate of the six classes of abstract ideas which correspond with the six classes of sensations; this is the aggregate that recognizes an object.
   D. Mental formations (*saṁkhāra*): the aggregate of fifty mental factors (*cetasika*) of subjective discrimination, or imputation.
   E. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*): the aggregate of reaction, awareness, or response.

   These five aggregates comprise absolutely all that belongs to, or goes to make up, sentient being.

4. Volitional actions (*kamma*): The denial of a permanent soul, together with the doctrine of the five aggregates, made it impossible for the *Buddha* to accept the soul-transmigration theories of the Brahmins without radical modification. Consequently, He proposed a new interpretation of the doctrine of *kamma*. Literally, the word *kamma* means "volitional deeds", or "volitional actions". It should be noted that *kamma* never refers to the results of deeds, or actions — technically, the results are called "*vipāka*".

   According to this theory, at the death of any sentient being, a new being, that is, a new assemblage of aggregates (*khandha*), is immediately produced as a result of grasping and clinging (*upādāna*), and the conditions of the existence of the new being are determined by the accumulated *kamma* of its predecessor, which has just passed away. The production of the new assemblage of aggregates is simultaneous with the

dissolution of the old, and the new being becomes a continuation of the old, not by the transmigration of a soul, but by the transference of personal *kamma*.

To Western minds, this doctrine is often difficult to grasp. That the accumulated *kamma* of another being who has entirely ceased to exist should be transferred to an entirely new being who never existed before and with whom it never had any apparent connection whatsoever seems impossible in itself. And yet, this doctrine provides the only reasonable answer as to why there are such stark differences in the characters, personalities, and innate aptitudes of beings. There is no other doctrine, moreover, in the whole Buddhist system, except perhaps the doctrine of *nibbāna*, so distinctly original with the *Buddha*, and nothing else that has persisted so unchanged through all schools and sects of Buddhism. It is unquestionably the driving force behind Buddhist ethics — the actuating principle in most, if not all, of the conscious, intentional righteousness and benevolence in the lives of the millions of those who have claimed to be Buddhists during more than twenty-six centuries.

5. Four Noble Truths (*ariya-saccāni*): The "Four Noble Truths" might be reckoned the essence of Buddhism. They constitute the epitome of the fundamental doctrines of the system, subscribing to which, one is said to have "entered the path". Those who have not entered the path are said to be "deluded" — *sabbe puthujjanā ummattakā* "all worldlings are deluded". If, however, they are led, through association with the wise, through hearing the *Dhamma*, and through the practice of virtue, to see and realize these "Noble Truths", they will have entered the path. These truths are universal, not bound up with any particular country or any particular epoch. And, in everyone, even in the lowliest, there lies latent the capacity for seeing and realizing these truths and attaining to the highest perfection.

   These Four Noble Truths are as follows:

   A. The First Noble Truth, about the universality of suffering (*dukkha*), teaches, in short, that all forms of existence are uncertain, transient, contingent, and devoid of intrinsic self-identity and are, therefore, by their very nature subject to suffering.

      The word "*dukkha*" is technically used to express every variety or possible idea of pain, sorrow, suffering, affliction, hardship, grief, unrealized anticipation of pleasure, active disappointment, distress, etc. The *Buddha* does not deny that there is happiness, enjoyment, and pleasure in life. However, due to their fleeting nature, even these are reckoned as *dukkha*. Consequently, the *Buddha* enjoins His followers to abandon such pleasures and, instead, to seek the joys of a life devoted to realizing the truth.

   B. The Second Noble Truth, about the origin (*samudaya*) of suffering, teaches that all suffering is rooted in selfish craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). It further explains the cause of this seeming injustice in nature by teaching that nothing in the world can come into existence without a reason or a cause and that, not only all our latent tendencies, but our whole destiny, all weal and woe, results from causes that can be traced partly in this life and partly in former states of existence.

The Second Noble Truth further teaches us that the future life, with all its weal and woe, must result from the seeds sown in this life and in former lives.

To be more precise, the word "*taṇhā*" is used technically to express every kind of desire or craving possible for a sentient being. It is produced by "feeling" ("sensation") (*vedanā*), arising from contact of the six sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind) with sense objects. Now, this *taṇhā* is not only the cause of suffering but, even more directly, of life itself, for *taṇhā* causes clinging (*upādāna*), which, as we have already seen, produces, at the death of any sentient being, the new assemblage of aggregates (*khandha*), to which the accumulated *kamma* of the old being is passed on.

It is, in reality, but one of the twelve links in a chain of cause and effect described by the doctrine of "Dependent Origination" (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), by which the *Buddha* accounted for the arising of universal suffering. This doctrine consists of twelve links arranged in eleven propositions. These propositions are as follows:

1. Ignorance (*avijjā*) conditions volitional formations (*saṁkhāra*);
2. Volitional formations (*saṁkhāra*) condition consciousness (*viññāṇa*);
3. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) conditions mind-body (*nāma-rūpa*);
4. Mind-body (*nāma-rūpa*) conditions the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*);
5. The six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*) condition contact (*phassa*);
6. Contact (*phassa*) conditions sensation (*vedanā*);
7. Sensation (feeling) (*vedanā*) conditions craving (*taṇhā*);
8. Craving (*taṇhā*) conditions clinging (*upādāna*);
9. Clinging (attachment) (*upādāna*) conditions becoming (*bhava*);
10. Becoming (conditioned existence) (*bhava*) conditions rebirth (*jāti*);
11. Rebirth (*jāti*) conditions aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair (*jarāmaraṇaṁ*).

In other words, the ultimate cause of all that is undesirable in life, and even of life itself, is ignorance (*avijjā*). But, the more immediate cause and, for all practical considerations, the more important cause, is craving (*taṇhā*). If, then, craving can be destroyed, release from all suffering might be attained. This leads to the Third Noble Truth.

C. The Third Noble Truth, or the truth about the cessation (*nirodha*) of suffering, shows how, through the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*), all suffering will disappear, and liberation from cyclic existence (*saṁsāra*) will be attained. This liberation is termed "*nibbāna*", and it is the goal of Buddhism.

Literally, "*nibbāna*" means "extinction". This extinction, however, does not mean the extinction of *life*, but of *craving*. It expresses that condition of life wherein an *Arahant* has utterly extinguished all desire, or craving, of every sort, all ignorance, all defilements, all taints, all fetters, and all attachment to existence in any form whatsoever.

D. The Fourth Noble Truth shows the way, or the means, by which the cessation of suffering is to be reached. It is the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhangika-magga*) of: (1) Right Understanding; (2) Right Thought; (3) Right Speech; (4) Right Action; (5) Right Livelihood; (6) Right Effort; (7) Right Mindfulness; and (8) Right Concentration.

Each truth requires that it be acted upon in its own particular way — *understanding* suffering, *letting go of* its origin, *realizing* its cessation, and *cultivating* the path. In describing to the five ascetics what His awakening meant, the *Buddha* spoke of having discovered complete freedom of heart and mind from the compulsions of craving. He called such freedom "the taste of *Dhamma*".

6. The Four Stages of Sainthood (*ariya-puggala*): Those who persevere on the Noble Eightfold Path will pass successively through the Four Stages of Sainthood, wherein they will be freed from ten "Fetters" (*saṁyojana*), that is, ten mental obstructions that stand in the way of self-purification and that bind beings to the round of existences (*saṁsāra*):

1. Personality belief — the delusion of selfhood;
2. Skeptical doubt — doubt about the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*;
3. Attachment to rites and rituals — this includes any kind of a belief in a Supreme Being, together with all charms, rites, ceremonies, or other forms of worship;
4. Desire for gratification of the senses — this includes every conceivable form of desire for sensory gratification;
5. Ill-will — this includes all forms of anger, hatred, aversion, resentment, and the like, no matter how subtle;
6. Craving for fine-material existence — the desire for existence in bodily, material form, whether as a human being on earth or as a celestial being in one of the lower celestial realms;
7. Craving for immaterial existence — the desire for existence without bodily, material form, as a celestial being in one of the higher celestial realms;
8. Conceit — there are three types of conceit which must be overcome: (a) equality conceit; (b) inferiority conceit; and (c) superiority conceit;
9. Restlessness — an unsettled, agitated, or excited state of mind;
10. Ignorance — this is synonymous with "delusion" (*moha*), the primary root of all evil and suffering in the world.

The Four Stages of Sainthood are:

1. One who has put an end to the first three Fetters is known as a "Stream-Winner", or "Stream-Enterer" (*Sotāpanna*); he has entered the stream of liberation, and his destiny has become fixed. He cannot be born in any sphere lower than the human, and if he does not attain full liberation earlier, he is bound to do so within the course of seven lives at the most. One who has reached this stage becomes

incapable of committing any of the unwholesome deeds that lead to rebirth in sub-human realms of suffering.

2. When, in addition, the next two Fetters are weakened, he becomes a "Once-Returner" (*Sakadāgāmi*); he will not have to endure more than one rebirth in the sensory spheres, which means that, if he fails to reach *nibbāna* in the current life, he is bound to do so in the next birth.
3. When all of the first five Fetters, which are known as the "Grosser Fetters", are completely destroyed, he becomes a "Non-Returner" (*Anāgāmi*); he who will not be born again in the sensory spheres. If he does not gain *nibbāna* before he dies, he will reach it in the next birth, which occurs in the Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāsa*). There, he attains Arahantship and passes straight to *nibbāna* without returning to the sensory planes.
4. When all ten Fetters are destroyed, he attains the state of *Arahant*. He has then realized the Paths and Fruits of the holy life, and, for him, the painful round of rebirth (*saṁsāra*) has come to an end.

These Four Stages of Sainthood are sometimes separated by intervals, sometimes they follow immediately after one another, but at each stage the "Fruit" (*phala*), or attainment, follows instantly upon the realization of the Path in the series of thought-moments (*cittakkhaṇa*). When the thought-moment of insight flashes forth, the meditator knows beyond all doubt the nature of his attainment and what, if anything, still needs to be accomplished.

The above points constitute a fair and complete outline of the characteristic and important features of the *Buddha's* teaching.

That teaching is eminently practical. The *Buddha* always refused to enter upon metaphysics or the discussion of topics not relevant to the purpose of the *Dhamma*, which was to answer, practically, those two burning questions as to the origin of suffering and the way to escape from it. That there was knowledge outside this narrow domain, He readily admitted, and He claimed, as *Buddha*, to be familiar with it. But, He claimed that it was utterly useless — everything which was not pertinent to the escape from suffering was a hindrance, and, as such, an evil to be absolutely avoided.

BUDDHIST MORALITY

The most practical part of the *Buddha's* teaching is the system of ethics included in the Fourth Noble Truth, for Buddhist ethical precepts most certainly encourage much that is in itself praiseworthy — recognizing, as they do, not only man's duty of external moral conduct, but also his need of inner purity.

For Buddhist Monks, the training in morality consists of the observance of 227 rules, while Buddhist Nuns must follow an additional set of rules. The collection of these rules is called the *Pāṭimokkha*, that is, the "Code of Conduct", or "Disciplinary Rules", and is a part of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

Lay practitioners observe either five or eight rules of moral training, the so-called "Five Precepts" (*pañca-sīla*) or "Eight Precepts" (*aṭṭhanga-sīla*). In any kind of spiritual development, aspirants need to establish their practice on moral principles so that they feel self-respect and stability. The training rules provide a guide that they can use for proper behavior in their daily lives, and observance of these rules provides the foundation for the practice of meditation (*bhāvanā*) and the attainment of wisdom (*paññā*).

The Five Precepts are:

1. To abstain from taking life;
2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given;
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct;
4. To abstain from false speech;
5. To abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness.

The Eight Precepts include the above five together with three additional precepts; here, the third precept is changed to prohibit any and all types of sexual activity:

1. To abstain from taking life;
2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given;
3. To abstain from all sexual activity;
4. To abstain from false speech;
5. To abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness;
6. To abstain from eating any solid food after noon;
7. To abstain from dancing, singing, music, and unseemly shows; from the use of garlands, perfumes, and unguents; and from things that tend to beautify and adorn;
8. To abstain from high and luxurious beds and seats.

The Five Precepts, the first and most important Buddhist ethical principles, are applicable to all alike. The Eight Precepts, on the other hand, are not obligatory for lay disciples, and yet, all earnest followers of the *Buddha* are expected to observe them at certain times, especially on Uposatha Days.

There is also a set of Ten Precepts (*dasa-sīla*). Here, the seventh precept is divided into two, and a tenth precept is added not to accept gold or silver. Only very pious lay persons undertake to observe the Ten Precepts, and, then, only for a specified period of time covered by a special vow. All ten are obligatory for members of the *Sangha*, and, in their observance, the third precept requires absolute chastity.

There are ten "Mental Defilements" (*kilesa*) that must be vanquished, the first three of which are referred to as the "Three Unwholesome Roots" (*akusalamūlāni*):

1. Greed (*lobha*);
2. Hatred (*dosa*);
3. Delusion (*moha*);
4. Conceit (*māna*);
5. Speculative views (*diṭṭhi*);
6. Skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*);

7. Mental torpor (*thīna*);
8. Restlessness (*uddhacca*);
9. Shamelessness (*ahirika*);
10. Lack of moral dread, or unconscientiousness (*anottappa*).

Likewise, there are four "Taints", or "Cankers" (*āsava*), that must be destroyed:

1. Wrong views (*diṭṭhāsava*);
2. Sense-desire (*kāmāsava*);
3. Desire for (eternal) existence (*bhavāsava*);
4. Ignorance (*avijjāsava*).

The Taint of wrong views is eliminated through the path of Stream-Entry, the Taint of sense-desire is eliminated through the path of Non-Returning, and the remaining two Taints are eliminated through the path of Arahantship.

The Taints are to be overcome through insight, sense-control, avoidance, wise use of the necessities of life, etc.

Finally, there are ten "Fetters" (*saṁyojana*) that must be eradicated. These are discussed above under the Four Stages of Sainthood.

In addition to this merely negative morality, which consists of avoiding and/or eliminating unwholesome, corrupting deeds of body, speech, and mind, there are positive aspects which promote the cultivation of meritorious, wholesome deeds, together with states of heart both benevolent and pure.

Among these are the four "Divine Abodes" (*brahmavihāra*). They are also called *appamaññā* "limitless, boundless", because these thoughts are radiated towards all beings without limit or obstruction. The system of meditation on the Divine Abodes has come to occupy a central position in the field of mental training (*bhāvanā*) in Buddhism. Its exercises include the development of the following four higher sentiments:

1. Loving-kindness (*mettā*);
2. Compassion (*karuṇā*);
3. Sympathetic, or altruistic, joy (*muditā*);
4. Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

From an ethical point of view, these four principles emphasize the moral foundation of every form of religious life and are considered indispensable to spiritual development.

Next, there are the so-called "Seven Jewels" (*satta-ratanāni*), also known as the "Requisites of Enlightenment" (*bodhipakkhiya-dhammā*), which is a collection of active virtues that are to be most strenuously sought and guarded:

1. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*): This is equivalent to the seventh step of the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Mindfulness, or alertness of mind. It consists of abiding self-possessed and attentive, contemplating according to reality:

A. The body (*kāya*);
B. Feelings (*vedanā*);
C. The state of the mind (*citta*);
D. The contents of the mind, or mind objects (*dhamma*);

seeing all as composite, ever-becoming, impermanent, and subject to decay. It is maintaining ever-ready mental clarity no matter what we are doing, speaking, or thinking and in keeping before our mind the realities of existence, that is, the impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactory nature (*dukkha*), and egolessness (*anattā*) of all forms of existence.

2. Right Effort (*sammappadhāna*): This is equivalent to the sixth step of the Noble Eightfold Path and is the fourfold effort one makes to put forth the energy, to prod the mind, and to struggle:

   A. To prevent unarisen unwholesome mental states from arising;
   B. To abandon unwholesome mental states that have already arisen;
   C. To develop wholesome mental states that have not yet arisen;
   D. To maintain and perfect wholesome mental states that have already arisen.

   In other words, it is the fourfold effort that one makes to overcome and avoid fresh bad actions by body, speech, and mind; and the effort that one makes in developing fresh actions of righteousness, inner peace, and wisdom, and in cultivating them to perfection.

3. Roads to Power (*iddhipāda*): This consists of the following four qualities:

   A. Concentration of intention accompanied by effort of will;
   B. Concentration of energy accompanied by effort of will;
   C. Concentration of consciousness accompanied by effort of will;
   D. Concentration of investigation accompanied by effort of will.

4. Spiritual Faculties (*indriya*): This includes the following five factors:

   A. Faith (*saddhā*);
   B. Energy (*viriya*);
   C. Mindfulness (*sati*);
   D. Concentration (*samādhi*);
   E. Wisdom (*paññā*).

5. Powers (*bala*): The list of the powers includes the same factors as that of the spiritual faculties given above:

   A. Faith (*saddhā*);
   B. Energy (*viriya*);

C. Mindfulness (*sati*);
D. Concentration (*samādhi*);
E. Wisdom (*paññā*).

The powers are distinguished from the spiritual faculties in that they are unshakable by their opposites. They represent, therefore, the aspect of firmness in the spiritual faculties.

6. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*bojjhanga*): They are so called because they lead to Enlightenment. They are:

A. Mindfulness (*sati*);
B. Investigation of the *Dhamma* (*dhamma*);
C. Energy (*viriya*);
D. Rapture (*pīti*);
E. Tranquility (*passaddhi*);
F. Concentration (*samādhi*);
G. Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

7. The Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhangika-magga*): The Noble Eightfold Path has already been discussed above. It consists of:

A. Right Understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*);
B. Right Thought (*sammā-sankappa*);
C. Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*);
D. Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*);
E. Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*);
F. Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*);
G. Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*);
H. Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

Finally, there are the ten "Perfections" (*pāramī*, or *pāramitā*), also known as the "Transcendental Virtues". These are ten qualities leading to Buddhahood. They are:

1. Generosity (*dāna*);
2. Morality (*sīla*);
3. Renunciation (*nekkhamma*);
4. Wisdom (*paññā*);
5. Energy (*viriya*);
6. Patience (*khanti*);
7. Truthfulness (*sacca*);
8. Determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*);
9. Loving-kindness (*mettā*);
10. Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

It will be noticed that there is a great deal of repetition in these lists, the same vice or virtue being frequently repeated in a slightly different view or connection. One may find such repetitions tiresome, but they serve to show where emphasis is laid.

Besides these formal divisions of vices to be avoided and virtues to be cultivated, there are many passages scattered throughout the older portions of the Pāḷi Canon in which these lists occur again and again. Self-restraint; the destruction of greed, hatred, and delusion; the avoidance of moral defilement and laxity; the breaking of all ties that bind one to sense desire; the cultivation of purity, generosity, loving-kindness, patience, determination, wisdom, truthfulness, and equanimity — these are duties that are taught both by precept and example, in story, dialog, parable, and simile throughout the entire Pāḷi Canon.

Moreover, it is clearly taught and frequently repeated that an outward, exemplary lifestyle in these respects is not sufficient — one's inner character must be brought into perfect harmony with these principles as well. ■

4

The Sangha

Two Types of Followers

From the very beginning, there were two types of followers of the Buddha: (1) the Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs, that is, the Monks and Nuns; and (2) the Gahapatis, or "householders", also called (m.) "*upāsaka*", (f.) "*upāsikā*", that is, "lay follower". A third type, the forest renunciants, may have functioned alongside and in addition to the monastic and lay communities.

The Buddha wisely recognized that comparatively very few men and women would ever attempt, and fewer still succeed in the attempt, to follow his path throughout its four difficult stages to the goal. Thus, with practical good sense, he a set up an Order of Monks and Nuns who could devote all of their time and energy to the attainment of the goal, and he opened that Order to all, regardless of caste or social standing.

The lay disciples, on the other hand, continued to live ordinary lives in the world, marrying, rearing a family, earning a livelihood, etc. Though the goal was available to them as well, its attainment was considered far more difficult, and it appears that the majority did not advance beyond the first stage, Stream-Entry (*Sotāpatti*). All, however, were certain of finally attaining the goal.

Admission as a lay follower of the Buddha was very simple, consisting merely of accepting the Four Noble Truths and the repetition of the formula of the Three Refuges:

Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	I go to the Buddha for Refuge.
Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	I go to the Dhamma for Refuge.
Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	I go to the Sangha for Refuge.
Dutiyampi, Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	A second time, I go to the Buddha for Refuge.
Dutiyampi, Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	A second time, I go to the Dhamma for Refuge.
Dutiyampi, Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	A second time, I go to the Sangha for Refuge.
Tatiyampi, Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	A third time, I go to the Buddha for Refuge.
Tatiyampi, Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	A third time, I go to the Dhamma for Refuge.
Tatiyampi, Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	A third time, I go to the Sangha for Refuge.

After admission, the only absolute requirement was the observance of the Five Precepts (these are discussed in Chapter 3). However, the lay disciples were admonished to observe the entire ethical system and to undertake more or less intense and protracted meditation, and the door was always open for them to join the Sangha if, at any time, they became earnest enough to abandon the life of a householder and become mendicant ascetics. Even as householders, they were encouraged to undertake more serious and extended observances of the Dhamma, especially on Uposatha Days and during longer or shorter periods of voluntary vows.

THE SANGHA

As noted above, the Buddha recognized the inherent difficulties to be surmounted by those who were struggling to extinguish craving and ignorance. He clearly taught that only those who were prepared to utterly, fully, completely abandon attachment to the world might be successful in attaining the goal. In practical terms, such a life was only possible to a hermit, an ascetic, or a cenobitic Monk or Nun. The very nature of his system, therefore, necessitated the establishment of an Order of renunciants.

It must be clearly understood that the Sangha was in no sense a priesthood. Since there were no sacrifices, no religious rites, no ceremonies of any kind admitted in the Buddha's system, there could be no class to whom such functions belonged, and, since there was no God, no prayer, and no worship, it would be manifest absurdity for any to claim, or to be assigned, mediatory power or other priestly rights, duties, or privileges.

Moreover, the Sangha was not a hierarchy. No one ever took vows of obedience, and there were no distinctions of place or of power, except that seniority and purity of character were beautifully honored through the voluntary deference of one's peers.

The Sangha was simply a band of the Buddha's most ardent followers, each of whom was strenuously cultivating that virtue, concentration, and wisdom which alone would bring about the extinction of craving — *nibbāna*. At the same time, the members of the Sangha were actively spreading, for the benefit of others, the blessed knowledge of the path, which they themselves had received.

At first, the members of the Sangha were considered equals, and admission was easy and simple, consisting merely of the repetition of the Refuges. Later, admission was more guarded, and a distinction was made between a novice (*sāmaṇera*) and a fully-ordained member, an "ascetic" (*samaṇa*), or "Monk" (*bhikkhu*).

A novice might be admitted by any Bhikkhu. The candidate had to be at least fifteen years old, and, if a child, had to have the consent of his parents. He must be free from contagious diseases, consumption, and fits; he must not be a slave, or a debtor, or in royal service; and he must have provided himself with suitable robes. Bearing his robes in hand, while still wearing the clothing of a householder, he approached a Bhikkhu and requested admission to the Sangha. If his request were granted, his hair was cut, and his robes were donned. Then, he knelt while repeating the Refuges and took a vow to observe the Ten Precepts (these are discussed in Chapter 3).

This admission as a novice was called "going forth" (*pabbajjā*), the thought being that he had gone forth from household life to homelessness.

Full ordination was a more formal and difficult matter. The candidate had to be at least twenty years old and, generally, and had to have been, for a longer or shorter period, according to circumstances, under instruction as a novice. One who had been a novice from his fifteenth year would have spent at least five years under such instruction, while, in the case of mature men, the two admissions were either simultaneous or immediately successive. The candidate was required beforehand to select a Bhikkhu of at least ten years' standing in the Sangha, who was to act as his instructor for the five years immediately following his entrance into the Order. He was also required to be provided with robes and alms-bowl. He then removed the robes he had been wearing as a novice and resumed the garb of a householder. An assembly consisting of not fewer than ten Bhikkhus was then convened, presided over by a Bhikkhu who had been a full member of the Sangha for at least ten years, and the candidate had to appear before this assembly and request admission to full membership in the Order. In answer to questions, he satisfied the assembly as to his age; to his freedom from disqualifying diseases; to the fact that he was not a slave, a debtor, or in royal service; to his provision of robes and alms-bowl; and to his being a real man and not a "non-human" being such as *nāga* or *yakkha*, which can assume human form. If the candidate was found to be satisfactory, he was led aside and reclad in his mendicant robes. Then, bearing his alms-bowl, he reappeared before the assembly, thrice repeated the Three Refuges, and again took a solemn vow to observe the Ten Precepts. He was most emphatically warned against the "Four Forbidden Acts" (*cattāri-akaṇīyāni*) and admonished to trust only the "Four Resources" (*cattāro-nissayā*). Then, if no one in the assembly objected to his admission, silence was construed as consent, and the presiding Bhikkhu declared him admitted.

The Four Forbidden Acts are:

1. Sexual activity of any kind;
2. Taking anything not freely given;
3. Taking a human life or inducing another to commit suicide;
4. Falsely boasting of supernormal powers.

The breaking of any one of these prohibitions was inevitably followed by irrevocable expulsion from the Sangha.

The Four Resources were not absolutely binding, since, in every case, the laity were encouraged to furnish, and the members of the Sangha were allowed to accept, better. But they were a Bhikkhu's only resources when left to himself. They are:

1. Alms collected in bits, for food;
2. Old rags from the dust heap, for clothing;
3. Excreta of cows, for medicine;
4. Shelter of trees, for residence.

The two great requirements in the Sangha, voluntary poverty and purity of life, are emphasized in these two lists.

Theoretically, poverty was to be all but absolute. A member of the Order was allowed to own only eight articles:

1—3. The three separate pieces of his robes (loincloth, skirt, and cloak [see below]);
4. An undergarment;
5. An alms-bowl;
6. A razor;
7. A needle;
8. A water strainer.

His food was to consist of whatever was collected in his alms-bowl as a result of going on alms-rounds from house to house. His robes were to be patched together by himself out of old yellowed rags collected from the dust heaps and cemeteries. Finally, he was expected to dwell in the open air at the foot of a sheltering tree or in a little hut built by himself of leaves and grass.

Practically, however, these austerities were not strictly enforced. For, in all these respects, minor indulgences were allowed by the Buddha, and with his full consent.

Though the Buddha held that the quiet life of a hermit in the forest was most conducive to meditation, which he considered so essential to subjective improvement and to the acquisition of wisdom, yet, for missionary and practical reasons, he permitted residence in a Vihāra, or "Monastery", provided by the laity, in the suburbs of a village or town, especially during the Vassa, or "Rains" (the monsoon season), and life in Vihāras became almost universal. At first, these Vihāras probably consisted of small huts (*kuṭī*) for individual Bhikkhus, but these huts soon gave way to rich and commodious buildings with accommodations for crowds of Bhikkhus, with assembly halls, dining rooms, and sleeping apartments. They were generally built in parks or forests adjoining villages and towns — far enough away to be free from confusion and noise, but near enough for ready accessibility. Some of the Vihāras, where the Buddha himself often dwelt and where he is said to have given much of his instruction, are very famous, such as Veḷuvana at Rājagāha, provided by King Bimbisāra, and Jetavana at Sāvatthī, provided by the wealthy merchant Anāthapiṇḍika.

The Buddha also allowed the eating of food prepared and brought to Vihāras by pious lay disciples and even the acceptance of invitations to go to the homes of the laity and eat what was prepared for them there. Of course, on such occasions, the very best possible provisions and service would be provided by the pious host, but animal food was generally, though not always, omitted. There seems never to have been any very strong prohibition against eating meat, provided someone else had killed and prepared it — even the Buddha himself is said to have died from eating tainted pork.

However, while these indulgences in food were allowed, the regular rule of going from house to house with the alms-bowl to collect whatever was freely given was quite generally adhered to. In eating, each Bhikkhu went apart and ate alone, while, at the same time, meditating on the impermanence of the body and assuring himself that he ate only for the purpose of sustaining life. He must not pick and choose from what was in his bowl, but eat everything as it came.

The rule concerning clothing was seldom, if ever, enforced. From the very first, the laity were permitted and encouraged to provide members of the Sangha with the necessary robes (*cīvara*), and special merit (*puñña*) was supposed to accrue to the pious lay disciple who observed, with commendable generosity, "Robe Month" (*cīvaramāsa*) at

the close of each "Rains". Under no circumstances whatsoever was a member of the Sangha to take steps to provide himself with robes, other than according to the original rule of picking rags from the dust heap and sewing them together.

A Bhikkhu was never allowed to have more than one change of robes in addition to those actually worn at the time.

If the robes provided by the laity were of new cloth, the cloth must be torn into pieces and sewed together, in order to destroy its commercial value.

The robes consisted of three separate pieces: (1) a loincloth — a straight strip for covering the loin and thighs; (2) a skirt — a straight strip fastened about the waist and draped about the lower limbs; and (3) a cloak — a broad, straight strip adjusted about the trunk in order to cover the entire body below the neck, except the right shoulder and arm, which were left bare. The completely shaven head was always left bare.

Later on, sandals and an umbrella were also allowed, and a large fan was carried as a screen to shut out sights likely to disturb the calm of subjective contemplation.

The duties and routine of daily life in the Sangha were very simple.

First of all was the necessity for discipline within the Order itself. Members of the Sangha had little contact with the laity; they were not spiritual or moral overseers, and, in no sense, were they pastors to the masses of lay people among whom they lived and to whom they looked for support. However, it was essential that they maintain the disciplinary rules and avoid the prohibitions laid down for the Sangha.

Except in cases of violation of the more serious prohibitions and when a member voluntarily requested the assembled members to point out any fault noticed in his life, no charges were ever brought by one against another, but all matters of discipline came up on voluntary confession of fault.

On Uposatha Days, all members of the Sangha assembled in their regular communities to listen to the Pātimokkha — the body of rules for the governing of the Order, even in the most trivial details —, and each was expected to confess any conscious infraction in the observance of the rules. Silence was considered a claim of guiltlessness. In case of violation of one or more of the Four Forbidden Acts, immediate and irrevocable expulsion from the Sangha was inflicted. In other, more minor violations, penances, more or less severe, were imposed.

Instruction was an important duty. The preceptors must give instruction for five years to those who had selected them at the time of admittance into full membership in the Order. The novices were under more or less constant instruction. In general, any saintly or capable Bhikkhu was expected to impart his greater attainments to those who desired his instruction. Outside their own membership, there was much instruction of the laity and active missionary effort in propagating the Teachings among those who had not yet been exposed to or who had not yet accepted the Buddha's Teachings. And, in later times at least, in every land where Buddhism established itself, schools were opened in connection with the Vihāras for the daily instruction of all the boys of the community, both in the Dhamma and in the ordinary branches of secular learning, so that, in Buddhist communities, a man was rarely met who had not received the rudiments of an education.

Meditation, however, was the most important concern in a Bhikkhu's life, for the wisdom so essential to his advancement along the stages of the path was predominantly

that which was developed from his own inner experience in the practice of meditation. The following five subjects of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) were of particular importance:

1. Loving-kindness (*mettā*);
2. Compassion (*karuṇā*);
3. Sympathetic joy (*muditā*);
4. Equanimity (*upekkhā*);
5. Impurity (*asubha*).

One objective in the practice of meditation was the cultivation of the *jhānas*, or "absorptions", in which increasingly subtle states of serenity (*samatha*) were attained.

To attain the *jhānas*, the meditator would begin by eliminating the unwholesome mental states obstructing inner collectedness, generally grouped together as the "Five Hindrances" (*pañcanīvaraṇa*):

1. Desire for gratification of the senses (*kāmacchanda*);
2. Ill-will (*vyāpāda*);
3. Sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*);
4. Restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*);
5. Doubt, or indecisiveness (*vicikicchā*).

The mind's absorption on its object was brought about by five opposing mental states:

1. Applied thought, or initial application (*vitakka*);
2. Sustained thought, or sustained application (*vicāra*);
3. Rapture, ecstasy, or zest (*pīti*);
4. Happiness (*sukha*);
5. One-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).

These states are called the "*jhāna* factors" (*jhānanga*), because they lift the mind to the level of the first *jhāna* and remain there as its defining components. After reaching the first *jhāna*, the ardent meditator could go on to reach the remaining three *jhānas*, which was done by eliminating the coarser factors in each *jhāna*.

Beyond these four *jhānas*, there was another fourfold set of higher meditative states which deepened still further the element of serenity. These attainments (*āruppā*) are:

1. The base of boundless space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*);
2. The base of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*);
3. The base of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*);
4. The base of neither perception nor non-perception (*n'eva saññā-n'asaññāyatana*).

In the Pāḷi Commentaries, these latter four states came to be called the "Four Immaterial Absorptions" (*arūpajjhāna*), and the four preceding states were renamed, for

the sake of clarity, the "Four Fine-Material Absorptions" (*rūpajjhāna*). Often, the two sets were combined as the "Eight Absorptions" (*aṭṭhajjhānāni*), or "Eight Attainments" (*aṭṭhasamāpattiyo*).

Another subject in meditation was the cultivation of concentration (*samādhi*), a state of calmness frequently confounded with *jhāna*. The term, however, has a wider application. *Samādhi* is a necessary preliminary to *jhāna* and always accompanies it in all its stages. Three levels of *samādhi* are distinguished: (1) preliminary concentration (*parikamma-samādhi*), which is present whenever one directs one's mind to any of the various subjects of concentration; (2) access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), which is the level of concentration that approaches, or comes near to, the first *jhāna*; and (3) attainment concentration (*appanā-samādhi*), which is the level of concentration that is present during the *jhānas*.

There were many different exercises for the development of concentration. One of the most common was "Mindfulness of Breathing" (*ānāpānasati*).

The concentration exercises, as such, only served the purpose of developing serenity (*samatha*) and sharpening concentration (*samādhi*). Serenity, however, was the fundamental and indispensable condition for the successful development of insight (*vipassanā*). And it was this insight alone that had the power to confer entrance to the Four Stages of Sainthood and, thus, to free beings forever from the ten Fetters that bind them to the never-ending cycle of rebirth and suffering.

Cleanliness and sanitation were highly valued, and frequent baths, the washing of robes, and caring for the Vihāras and their grounds were obligatory duties for members of the Sangha. The Sangha was frequently relieved of the last duty, however, by pious lay followers who gained much merit by this service. When no lay followers were available to undertake this duty, it generally became the responsibility of the novices.

In the ordinary daily routine of life, the early morning hours, often long before daybreak, were spent in meditation, in the recitation of parts of the Dhamma, and in instruction. Later in the morning came the alms-rounds for collecting food, and, just before noon, the one substantial meal of the day. After the midday meal, there was a short period of rest, followed by more instruction and more meditation. In the evening, there were quiet walks in the well-kept grounds, or quiet conversation, or meditation, this last often extending far into the night. Duties requiring manual labor were performed in the early morning or in the evening. Manual labor, however, was considered no help to the religious life, but, rather, a hindrance, as interfering with meditation, and it was never engaged in except, and so far, as was actually required in cases where the Sangha could not be, or happened not to be, relieved by pious lay followers.

On the death of his father, King Suddhodana, the Buddha agreed to the creation of an Order for women, and his stepmother, Queen Pajāpatī, and former wife, Princess Yasodharā, were the first members. A member of this Order was called a "female ascetic" (*samaṇī*), or a "Nun" (*bhikkhunī*), and the Order itself was called the "Bhikkhunī Sangha".

This Order was, in almost every respect, an exact counterpart for that for the Bhikkhus. It was not, however, independent, but was, in everything, subordinate to the regular Sangha. In all important matters, the decisions of their own communities had to be confirmed by a community of Bhikkhus before they were valid. All instruction was

by Bhikkhus, and their Pātimokkha confession had to be presided over by a Bhikkhu appointed to that duty by the regular Sangha.

No Bhikkhunī was ever allowed to dwell alone, anywhere, nor, any number of them together, in a forest. They had to dwell in groups in Vihāras near some village or town. Generally, their Vihāras were near to those of the Bhikkhus, but the two Vihāras were never connected.

No association of the two Orders was ever allowed except those for instruction, for the Pātimokkha confession, and for the confirmation of the acts of the Bhikkhunī Sangha, as mentioned above, and, in all such cases, there must always be two or more Bhikkhus present — no Bhikkhu was ever allowed, under any circumstances, to meet and talk with a Bhikkhunī alone.

For both these Orders, there were few times of special importance. Since there were no sacrifices, no offerings, no rituals, and no worship in the Buddha's system, there were, of course no holy days set aside for such things.

SPECIAL DAYS

The Buddha, however, realized the need for special days and provided for that need by adopting and adapting the special fasting days of the Brahmins. These "Uposatha Days" — the Buddha retained the Brahmin name — were originally two in each month, the days of the new-moon and of the full-moon. Later, the intermediate days of the quarter moons were added. By lamp light, in the evening, on these four Uposatha Days, the Orders met, in their respective communities, for the Pātomokkha confession. No one was allowed to be absent, except in the case of severe illness, and, even then, not unless he could assure the rest of the community, through some other member who was present, that he was guiltless of any infraction of the rules and prohibitions.

The "Rains" (*vassa*) included the four months of the annual monsoon season, which began sometime in June or July. During this period, all members of the Order were to dwell permanently in Vihāras in proximity to towns or villages. There was no travel except the daily rounds for food. This rule was partly for health reasons, the forest dwellings, leaf-huts, and traveling about being fraught with great danger to the Bhikkhus themselves, in the excessive dampness of that season. But, it was mostly enacted because a complaint had been made that the Bhikkhus, trampling about during that season, when the country was teeming with insect and vegetable life, were crushing and destroying life and, thereby, thoughtlessly violating the precept against killing.

In the enforced lull in their ordinary missionary activities and their solitary meditation, they generally paid more attention to giving instructions to the laity who visited them in increasing numbers during the rainy season.

"Invitation" (*pavāraṇā*) was a ceremony at the close of the rainy season retreat when all of the Bhikkhus met and each asked the rest to point out any fault in him while they had been together during the "Rains". Then, after all confessions had been made and all faults redressed, there was rejoicing that the "Rains" had been passed in harmony.

"Robe Month" (*cīvaramāsa*) was the month immediately following the "Rains". It was the time specially set apart for providing the Bhikkhus with necessary robes.

"Extraordinary Fortnight" (*paṭihārakapakkha*) was originally the first half of Robe Month, but the term was also applied to the whole month and even to the whole "Rains".

From the beginning, these times and seasons were made, for the laity, in a certain sense, "holy days". The laity were encouraged to consider such times particularly suitable for extraordinary efforts in piety and generosity. Special merit was to be gained by observing the Eight Precepts at these times and by generously supplying the Bhikkhus with such things as they needed. Very early on, the practice grew of laying aside worldly work and concerns on Uposatha Days, of taking generous portions of good food to the Vihāras for the Sangha, and of spending the day there listening to the reading and exposition of the Dhamma and/or practicing meditation. The whole of the "Rains" was spent in the same way by the more pious, who then refrained entirely from all animal food, though they were free to eat it at other times. Though some Western scholars have referred to this as "Buddhist Lent", this term is really inappropriate and should never be used.

The greatest merit in connection with these "holy days", however, was to be gained by observing the Precepts and attending to the needs of the Sangha during the "Extraordinary Fortnight", and most especially by furnishing members of the Sangha with robes at that time. ■

5

Doctrinal Evolution of Buddhism

PRIMITIVE BUDDHISM

The preceding chapters of this book discussed the earliest form of Buddhism — that depicted in the most authentic sources, the Pāḷi scriptures. Such was the social and religious environment in India at the time Buddhism developed; such was the life of its founder; such were its doctrines, its ethics, its monastic Order, and its special days. None of these things remained unchanged for long. In this chapter, the salient doctrines of primitive Buddhism will be summarized and a brief outline will be given of how those doctrines changed over time.

Primitive Buddhism, so far as we can judge its doctrines by means of the critical analysis of the various recensions of the Pāḷi scriptures, was the quintessential example of the philosophy of the Indian School of Becoming. Change (*anicca*) was the foundation on which its philosophy rested. The body (*kāya*) was considered to be a living complex organism, possessing no self-nature (*anattā*). The nature of the mind was analogous — impermanent and lacking self-nature. The percipient consciousness had no direct insight into truth but was merely a compound produced by the chain of causality and conditioned by its environment.

At the outset, Buddhism assumed an agnostic position regarding certain metaphysical problems. "These problems the Blessed One has left unexplained, has set aside, has rejected — whether the world is eternal or not eternal; whether the world is finite or infinite; whether the life-principle is the same as the body or the life-principle is one thing and the body is another; whether the Tathāgata exists or does not exist after death; whether the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; whether the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death."

In a word, primitive Buddhism insisted that we can only deal with facts and data of which we are immediately conscious as they unfold before us; with states of consciousness; with the analysis of the emotions; and with the universe as perceived as opposed to the universe as it is.

The doctrines of primitive Buddhism are all in agreement with this psychological basis, as may be seen by examining the doctrines of the Three Characteristic Marks (*tilakkhaṇa*) of all mental and physical phenomena and the Four Noble Truths (*ariya-saccāni*).

The Three Characteristic Marks are not doctrines which are to be accepted on faith or as the result of logical reasoning, but are considered the essential qualities of life as evidenced by daily perceptual and emotional experience. They are: (1) impermanence (*anicca*); (2) suffering (*dukkha*); and (3) no-self (*anattā*). The last mark refers not only to the individual but also to all mental and physical phenomena in the universe. Thus, the universe does not consist of self-existing things, but of complex, caused, conditioned phenomena.

The unconditioned, *nibbāna*, is experienced psychologically by means of certain forms of concentration (*samādhi*).

The Four Noble Truths (*ariya-saccāni*) are derived from the same basic ideas. These truths are: (1) suffering (*dukkha*) exists; (2) the cause of suffering is craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*); (3) there is an end (*nirodha*) to suffering; and (4) the path, or way (*magga*), to the end of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhangika-magga*), which consists of: (1) Right Understanding; (2) Right Thought; (3) Right Speech; (4) Right Action; (5) Right Livelihood; (6) Right Effort; (7) Right Mindfulness; and (8) Right Concentration.

The First Noble Truth (suffering) is the same as the second Characteristic Mark, the Third Noble Truth deals with the cessation of suffering, and the Fourth Noble Truth (the path leading to the cessation of suffering) is mainly concerned with methods: (1) ethical behavior (*sīla*); (2) the practice of meditation (*samādhi*); and (3) the development of wisdom (*paññā*). The Second Noble Truth (the cause of suffering) is the most important and contains the nucleus of a complete phenomenology, for, at a very early stage, "suffering" (*dukkha*) became synonymous with life, that is, the world of sense experience, and the Second Noble Truth provided the explanation of its origin. The world as experienced by the senses, it may be noted, was the focus of early Buddhism, which had no interest in the origin of the external physical universe.

Primitive Buddhism, though agnostic regarding certain metaphysical problems, was realistically oriented. It held that there is an external universe closely corresponding to our sense-data, so-called "conventional reality" (*sammuti*), but it realized that the world as we see it is purely subjective, the result of a percipient consciousness (*viññāṇa*) interacting with external sensory stimuli.

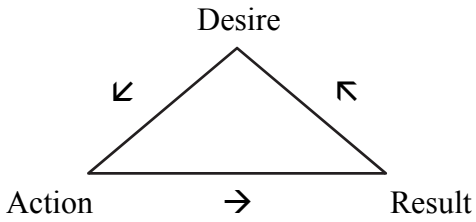
The explanation of the origin, awakening, and development of the percipient consciousness is provided by the doctrine of "Dependent Arising" (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), also known as "Dependent Origination". This doctrine, though differently interpreted by the various schools of Buddhism, always consists of the following twelve links:

1. Ignorance (*avijjā*);
2. Volitional formations (*saṁkhāra*);
3. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*);
4. Mind-body (*nāma-rūpa*);
5. The six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*);
6. Contact (*phassa*);
7. Sensation (feeling) (*vedanā*);
8. Craving (*taṇhā*);
9. Clinging (attachment) (*upādāna*);

10. Becoming (conditioned existence) (*bhava*);
11. Rebirth (*jāti*);
12. Aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair (*jarāmaraṇaṁ*).

The origin of the percipient consciousness is ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). Without these, the individual consciousness would disintegrate, and though the experienced world cannot exist without object, it equally cannot exist without subject. Consequently, when an Arahat (one who has attained liberation) dies, the experienced world for that individual comes to a permanent end. That is to say, it does not continue in another birth.

It can be seen from this that there is a close connection between cause and effect. This law of cause and effect is called "*kamma*", and it is one of the foundational features of Buddhism. Among the numerous explanations of *kamma* is the following:



The doctrine of no-self (*anattā*) rejects the belief in the existence of an undying personality, while the doctrine of *kamma*, on the other hand, teaches that our words, thoughts, and deeds have consequences. Accordingly, the early Buddhists taught that the fruit (*phala*) of one's deeds will cause the birth of a new personality after the death of the old. This birth may be in one of the numerous celestial realms or woeful (hell) realms, or it may be on the earth again.

Thus, early Buddhism was atheistic, agnostic concerning certain metaphysical problems, and positivistic. Emphasis was placed on the liberation of the individual, which takes place through one's own efforts (in meditation) and through observation of the rules of moral discipline.

SO-CALLED "HINAYĀNA" BUDDHISM

The philosophy of primitive, or pristine, Buddhism became crystallized in so-called "Hinayāna" Buddhism, the orthodox branch of Buddhism that developed during the period after the death of the Buddha down to about the time of the beginning of the Common Era (CE), after which it had to compete with the newly-developed Mahāyāna. Hinayāna itself was by no means unified, for, shortly after the death of the Buddha, several independent sects came into being, with widely varying interpretations of the earlier philosophy. Out of the eighteen or so such Hinayāna sects, two only require special attention here. These are, first, the Sthaviravādins (= Theravādins [the Pāḷi form]) and, second, the Sarvāstavādins.

The Sthaviravādins, which is the only Hinayāna sect that has survived to the

present day, keeps closest to the tenets of early Buddhism, but it soon lost ground in India proper, though it has always maintained itself in Śri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand.

The Sarvāstavādins were of a more scholarly nature. They transformed Buddhism into a complete and consistent philosophy and wrote in or translated their works into classical Sanskrit, while the more orthodox Sthaviravādins used the more colloquial Pāḷi. The Sarvāstavādins gained the upper hand in India sometime before the beginning of the Common Era, and long remained the dominant school of Indian Buddhism. Most of the Hinayāna works translated into foreign languages, such as Chinese and Tibetan, belonged to this school, and, though, as a separate school, it vanished with the demise of Buddhism in India, it had enormous influence on the philosophical development of the Mahāyāna. In fact, the Sarvāstavādins may be called "the Hinayāna school *par excellence*".

Even the more orthodox Sthaviravādin School, which prides itself in its meticulous maintenance of the original teachings of the Buddha, has added several important features. The most essential of which is that, in practice, it has abandoned the agnosticism of the earlier period and, depending upon the fidelity of sense impressions, proceeded to systematize objective phenomena. Thus, for example, it accepted, in a somewhat modified form, the ancient cosmology of India, with its account of the integration and disintegration of the material universe. Where primitive Buddhism had mostly ignored, the Sthaviravādins flatly denied, the existence of an Absolute (no Creator God or Deity). Those metaphysical problems which the early Buddhists had rejected as being irrelevant were answered by the Sthaviravādins, even though the answers were relegated to the body of relative, as opposed to absolute, truth. The latter consisted only of such doctrines as the Three Characteristic Marks and the Four Noble Truths.

One of the most important steps to be taken was the analysis of the parts of being, approached, in the first place, from the psychological point of view. Early Buddhism had taught that, instead of an ego entity, the personality consisted of five constituent parts, the Five Aggregates (*khandhas*):

1. Materiality (*rūpa*);
2. Feeling (*vedanā*);
3. Perception (*saññā*);
4. Mental formations (*saṁkhāra*);
5. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

The Sthaviravādins divided materiality (*rūpa*) into twenty-eight parts; feeling (*vedanā*) into three or five parts; perception (*saññā*) into six parts; mental factors (*cetasika*) into fifty-two parts; and consciousness (*citta*) into eighty-nine or one hundred twenty-one parts.

These divisions were the result of introspective analysis, but they were considered absolute and final. These several divisions constituted the unchanging elements (*dhamma*) of existence from which all phenomena are compounded. Buddhism was thus transformed from an agnostic and positivistic system, concerned only with suffering (*dukkha*) and the alleviation of suffering, into a realistic and materialistic philosophy, though the transformation was gradual and could hardly have been recognized at the

time, for early Buddhism permitted the analysis of subjective states, and the elements of existence of the Sthaviravādins were enunciated by merely subdividing the divisions of early Buddhism, while maintaining the subjective and psychological point of view.

The Sarvāstavādins were to the Sthaviravādins what the Sthaviravādins were to early Buddhism. The materialism and realism of the Sthaviravādins was made more explicit and categorical by the Sarvāstavādins. The agnostic and psychological aspect was largely lost sight of. Buddhism thus became a definite and rigid philosophical system in the Sarvāstavādin School, instead of remaining a body of truths which were effective irrespective of metaphysics. A most important step was made when the elements of existence were classified from an external or objective as well as from a subjective point of view. The older, or subjective, classification was retained (though the subdivisions of each aggregate [*skandha*] were somewhat different from those of the Sthaviravādins), but the subdivisions were rearranged in such a way as to constitute a complete analysis of the external universe.

According to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam* of Vasubandhu (fourth century CE), these elements (*dharmas*) are seventy-five in number, classified as follows:

1. Unconditioned elements (*asaṁskṛta dharma*) (simple elements), so-called because they do not enter into combinations with other elements. They are three in number, of which space and *nirvāṇa* are two.
2. Conditioned elements (*saṁskṛta dharma*) (complex elements), so-called because they enter into combinations, though themselves simple and permanent. Their compounds constitute the phenomena of the universe. These elements are seventy-two in number, divided into:

   A. Material elements, eleven in number;
   B. Mind, one in number;
   C. Mental qualities, such as love, hate, etc., forty-six in number;
   D. Miscellaneous elements, such as life, decay, etc., fourteen in number.

These elements were considered permanent and unchanging, as were the eighty odd physical elements of the scientists of several generations ago. In their present state, all phenomena were supposed to be impermanent and unstable, but they consisted of stable and unchanging rudiments.

THE TRANSITION FROM HINAYĀNA TO MAHĀYĀNA

In its fully-developed form (the Sarvāstavādin School), the Hinayāna placed great importance upon two doctrines: (1) The necessity for all to strive for Arahatship, that is, for deliverance from the suffering of cyclic existence (*saṁsāra*). (2) All phenomena are unstable compounds made up of a certain fixed number of stable elements (*dharmas*).

Neither one of these doctrines can be said to be in strict conformity with the principles of early Buddhism. As for the first, the Sarvāstavādins made a distinction *in kind* between the Arahat, one who attained deliverance through following the teachings

of another, and the Buddha, who was self-enlightened. More correctly, three distinctions were elaborated: (1) Arahatship; (2) Pratyeka Buddhahood, a so-called "private Buddha" — one who attains enlightenment but does not teach; and (3) supreme Buddhahood. According to the Sarvāstavādins, not only is there an immense difference between each stage, but, for the average person, the only possible goal is Arahatship. Only one of many millions may aspire to Pratyeka Buddhahood, and only one in many eons (*kalpa*) may attain supreme Buddhahood. In primitive Buddhism, on the other hand, little distinction, except one *of degree*, is made between the Buddha and his enlightened disciples, and the highest goal (supreme Buddhahood) is open to all.

Regarding the second point, in primitive Buddhism, the no-self (*anattā*) doctrine is taken to apply to all parts of the universe, not just to living beings. All things, including the components parts of living beings, are in a perpetual state of flux, or becoming. Even the *dhammas*, the fundamental constituents of reality, are considered complex, caused, conditioned, subject to change. The Sarvāstavādin School, however, posited the existence certain permanent stable elements (*dharmas*) which compose the universe, as noted above.

The Mahāyāna took issue with both these doctrines. Though they claimed that their own teachings more perfectly expressed the meaning of the Buddha's teaching, it must be admitted, however, that this desire for reform resulted only in the formation of a new doctrinal system, which retained something of the spirit but little of the letter of earlier Buddhism.

Let us take, for example, the question of the universality of the Buddhahood goal, whereby the distinction in kind between the Buddha and His disciples was reformulated by the Mahāyāna. The Mahāyāna regarded the Arahat Ideal as selfish. It was enamored with the idea of self-sacrifice and proclaimed that those who were content with individual liberation or individual enlightenment might aim only at Arahatship or Pratyeka Buddhahood, but, instead, that its own followers preferred to abandon these lower aspirations in order that they might become "all-saving Buddhas". Once this doctrine had been formulated, great emphasis was placed upon it, and we find many passages in the Mahāyāna scriptures praising this new altruism.

Accordingly, in early Mahāyāna, its followers aspired to become Bodhisattvas, "Buddhas-to-be", as opposed to the adherents of the Hinayāna, who were termed "*śravakas*", or aspirants only after Arahatship.

Later Mahāyāna, the so-called "true Mahāyāna", carried this idea still further and taught that supreme and perfect enlightenment was the only valid goal for all. The first half of the Mahāyāna scripture *The Lotus of the Good Law* (*Saddharma Pundarīka Sūtra*) is devoted to showing that, in reality, there is but one true goal, and that the other goals are but devices (*upāya*) developed by the Buddhas for the purpose of leading the world away from sensuality and materialism.

Strangely enough, however, though opening the doors of Buddhahood to all, Mahāyāna took great pains to exalt and enhance the dignity and power of the Buddhas. In Hinayāna, Buddhas are enlightened human beings, pure and simple, while, in Mahāyāna, they are looked upon as divine incarnations or as material manifestations of the Universal Buddha Principle, the existence of which the Mahāyāna gradually came to teach.

In Hinayāna Suttas, discourses are delivered by Śākyamuni Buddha, generally speaking, in simple and unaffected prose in order to make the listeners feel the presence of a wise and serene Teacher, advising them how to overcome the vicissitudes of life, as One who has just emerged victorious himself. In Mahāyāna Sūtras, on the other hand, we find a mysterious and transcendental being far removed from the levels of ordinary humanity, who is listened to and worshipped by countless hordes of beings, celestial, human, and demonic, who shower flowers upon the Sage while he performs stupendous supernatural deeds. In the *Saddharma Pundarīka Sūtra*, for example, the Buddha sits for long ages in meditation. He is the "Supreme Ruler", who has himself led countless thousands to enlightenment during countless ages and who never really dies and who is never really born. The only explanation to this is that Śākyamuni and all the other Buddhas are one — all are manifestations of the Universal Buddha Principle.

MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM IN INDIA

The religious aspects of Mahāyāna developed sometime immediately prior to the Common Era, but its philosophical aspects were formulated during the period extending from the first to the fifth centuries CE. Two main schools came to be differentiated. One was the Mādhyamika School, founded by Nāgārjuna and Aryadeva in the first and second centuries CE. The other was the Yogācāra School, founded by Vasubandhu and Asaṅga in the fourth century CE.

The Mādhyamika School largely devoted itself to the consideration of the second point on which the Mahāyāna claimed that the Hinayāna (that is, the Sarvāstavādins) had departed from the original teaching — the question of the existence of certain permanent stable elements which compose the universe. In propounding this doctrine, the Sarvāstavādins, as noted above, almost abandoned the doctrine of change and becoming. In Mādhyamika philosophy, a return was made to the principle of the universality of change and impermanence.

The basis of this undeveloped, or early, Mahāyāna doctrine is *śūnyatā*, literally, "emptiness", or "voidness". This doctrine has been frequently totally misunderstood in the West and taken to mean the theory of non-existence of the universe or purely nihilistic idealism. In reality, *śūnyatā* is simply an insistence that all things have no self-existence, that they are compounds, unstable entities even in their elemental stage. Currently, science holds that the supposedly rigid physical particles of classical physics are not permanent, that they can be broken down, that the particles are themselves compounds possessing the essential qualities of change and decay. Likewise, the *śūnyatā* doctrine maintains that the *dharmas* ("elements") are impermanent and have no existence in and of themselves, that they can be broken down into parts, parts into sub-parts, and so on and so forth. Accordingly, all phenomena have a relative, as opposed to an absolute, existence. All of life, all mental and physical phenomena, was once more viewed as an ever-changing flux, a stream of existence involved in an everlasting process of becoming.

In a word, then, the Mādhyamika doctrine of *śūnyatā* is that there is no "thing-unto-itself", nothing with inherent or self-existence, nothing that is not involved in an endless process of change. All things can be broken down until we reach the great

transcendent reality which is so absolute that it is wrong to say that it is or that it is not. This underlying reality — the principle of eternal relativity, non-infinity — permeates all phenomena, allowing expansion, growth, change, and evolution, which would otherwise be impossible. Though the Mādhyamika doctrine tells us that all phenomena are nothing other than a constantly changing flux or stream, it tells us little or nothing about the nature of this stream.

The next stage of doctrinal development, as represented by the Yogācāra School (also known as the "Cittamātra", or "Vijñānavāda"), was a very significant one and resulted in the formulation of a remarkably complete system of idealism. In this school, the stream of life is supposed to be the mind, a fundamental mind substance that is permanent and yet ever-changing, like the ocean. From this, all the elements (the seventy-five elements of the Sarvāstavādin School become one hundred in the Yogācāra School) and, therefore, all phenomena are derived. It is called the "*ālaya vijñāna*", the "repository", or "storehouse consciousness", yet it is considered to be neither matter nor mind, but the basic energy that is at the root of both.

It is the imperceptible and unknowable noumenon behind all phenomena. To quote Kuroda: "In contradistinction to the fallacious phenomena of existence there is the true Essence of Mind. The Essence of Mind is the entity without ideas and without phenomena and is always the same. It pervades all things, and is pure and unchanging … so it is called *Bhūtatathatā* — permanent reality."

It would be easy to exaggerate the importance of this doctrine and falsely to identify it with more developed systems, but, undoubtedly, it has many points of contact with certain phases of modern Western philosophy. The *ālaya vijñāna* is like the "*élan de vie*" of Henri Bergson (1859—1941), the "energy" of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (1646—1716), or the "unconscious" of Eduard Von Hartmann (1842—1906). Like the last, though, it is the essence of consciousness — it is not itself conscious in its earlier stages. It is mental, and yet, there is a certain objective reality about it. Each unit of life may be regarded as a vortex in the sea of life. The action and interaction of these units, one with another and with the common stream, brings about the phenomenal appearance of the universe.

Accordingly, the *ālaya vijñāna* is regarded in three aspects: (1) as active, as the seed of percipient consciousness; (2) as passive, as that which can be sensed or perceived by consciousness; and (3) as the *object of false belief*, inasmuch as, being the root of self-consciousness, each person comes to regard himself or herself as a permanent, eternal ego entity.

Further developments took place in Mahāyāna Buddhism as it spread into China, Japan, and Tibet. However, the discussion of these changes is beyond the scope of this book. Suffice it to say that so many changes have taken place in the course of its development that different scholars have spoken of Mahāyāna Buddhism as a ritualistic and animistic degeneration of early Buddhism, as a sophist nihilism, and as a mystical pantheism. They have claimed that it is polytheistic, and they have also stated that it is a vast mass of contradictory ideas, unassimilated and unrefined. Perhaps, it would be more charitable to think of Mahāyāna Buddhism as the culmination of centuries of speculative development enriched by materials from many sources and expounded by a large number of ancient metaphysicians from India, Tibet, and China.

One thing is certain — the doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism are are not the original teachings of the Buddha but, rather, are based upon, or derived from, those teachings — in other words, Mahāyāna Buddhism is really a different religion, and Tibetan Buddhism and the so-called "new schools" in Japan, such as the Nichiren School and its offshoots and the two major Pure Land Schools (Jodo-shu and Jodo Shin-shu), are even more so. ■