BOOK III

PALI BUDDHISM
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In the previous book I have treated chiefly the general characteristics of Indian religion. They persist in its later phases but great changes and additions are made. In the present book I propose to speak about the life and teaching of the Buddha which even hostile critics must admit to be a turning point in the history of Indian thought and institutions, and about the earliest forms of Buddhism. For twelve centuries or more after the death of this great genius Indian religion flows in two parallel streams, Buddhist and Brahmanic, which subsequently unite, Buddhism colouring the whole river but ceasing within India itself to have any important manifestations distinct from Brahmanism.

In a general survey it is hardly possible to follow the order of strict chronology until comparatively modern times. We cannot, for instance, give a sketch of Indian thought in the first century B.C., simply because our data do not permit us to assign certain sects and books to that period rather than to the hundred years which preceded or followed it. But we can follow with moderate accuracy the two streams of thought in their respective courses. I have wondered if I should not take Hinduism first. Its development from ancient Brahmanism is continuous and Buddhism is merely an episode in it, though a lengthy one. But many as are the lacunæ in the history of Buddhism, it offers more data and documents than the history of Hinduism. We know more about the views of Asoka for instance than about those of Candragupta Maurya. I shall therefore deal first with Buddhism and then with Hinduism, while regretting that a parallel and synoptic treatment is impracticable.

The eight chapters of this book deal mainly with Pali Buddhism—a convenient and non-controversial term—and not with the Mahayana, though they note the tendencies which

1 Throughout this book I have not hesitated to make use of the many excellent translations of Pali works which have been published. Students of Indian religion need hardly be reminded how much our knowledge of Pali writings and of early Buddhism owes to the labours of Professor and Mrs Rhys Davids.
found expression in it. In the first chapter I treat of the Buddha's life; in the second I venture to compare him with other great religious teachers; in the third I consider his doctrine as expounded in the Pali Tripitaka and in the fourth the order of mendicants which he founded. The nature and value of the Pali Canon form the subject of the fifth chapter and the sixth is occupied with the great Emperor Asoka whose name is the clearest landmark in the early history of Buddhism, and indeed of India.

The seventh and eighth chapters discuss topics which belong to Hinduism as well as to Buddhism, namely, meditation and mythology. The latter is anterior to Buddhism and it is only in a special sense that it can be called an addition or accretion. Indian thought makes clearings in the jungle of mythology, which become obliterated or diminished as the jungle grows over them again. Buddhism was the most thorough of such clearings, yet it was invaded more rapidly and completely than any other. The Vedānta and Sāṅkhya are really, if less obviously, similar clearings. They raise no objection to popular divinities but such divinities do not come within the scope of religious philosophy as they understand it.
CHAPTER VIII
LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

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We have hitherto been occupied with obscure and shadowy personalities. The authors of the Upanishads are nameless and even Mahāvīra is unknown outside India. But we now come to the career of one who must be ranked among the greatest leaders of thought that the world has seen, the Indian prince generally known as Gotama or the Buddha. His historical character has been called in question, but at the present day probably few, if any, competent judges doubt that he was a real person whose date can be fixed and whose life can be sketched at least in outline.

We have seen that apart from the personality of Gotama, ancient India was familiar with the idea of a Buddha and had even classified the attributes he should possess. Two styles of biography are therefore possible: an account of what Gotama actually was and did and an account of what a Buddha is expected to be and do. This second style prevails in later Buddhist works: they contain descriptions of the deeds and teaching of a Buddha, adapted to such facts in Gotama’s life as seemed suitable for such treatment or could not be ignored. Rhys Davids has well compared them to Paradise Regained, but the supernatural element is, after the Indian fashion, more ornate.

The reader will perhaps ask what are the documents describing Gotama’s sayings and doings and what warrant we have for trusting them. I will treat of this question in more detail in a later chapter and here will merely say that the Pali works called Vinaya or monastic rules and Suttas¹ or sermons recount the circumstances in which each rule was laid down.

¹ Sanskrit Sūtra, Pali Sutta. But the use of the words is not quite the same in Buddhist and Brahmanic literature. A Buddhist sutta or sūtra is a discourse, whether in Pali or in Sanskrit; a Brahmanic sūtra is an aphorism. But the 227 divisions of the Pātimokkha are called Suttas, so that the word may have been originally used in Pali to denote short statements of a single point. The longer Suttas are often called Suttanta.
and each sermon preached. Some narrative passages, such as the Sutta which relates the close of the Buddha’s life and the portion of the Vinaya which tells how he obtained enlightenment and made his first converts, are of considerable length. Though these narratives are compilations which accepted new matter during several centuries, I see no reason to doubt that the oldest stratum contains the recollections of those who had seen and heard the master.

In basing the following account on the Pali Canon, I do not mean to discredit Sanskrit texts merely because they are written in that language or to deny that many Pali texts contain miraculous and unhistorical narratives\(^1\). But the principal Sanskrit Sūtras such as the Lotus and the Diamond Cutter are purely doctrinal and those texts which profess to contain historical matter, such as the Vinayas translated from Sanskrit into Chinese, are as yet hardly accessible to European scholars. So far as they are known, they add incidents to the career of the Buddha without altering its main lines, and when the accounts of such incidents are not in themselves improbable they merit consideration. On the whole these Sanskrit texts are later and more embellished than their Pali counterparts, but it is necessary not to forget the existence of this vast storehouse of traditions, which may contain many surprises\(^2\).

Though the Pali texts do not give the story of the Buddha’s life in a connected form, they do give us details about many important events in it and they offer a picture of the world in which he moved. The idea of biography was unknown to the older Indian literature. The Brâhmaṇas and Upanishads tell us of the beliefs and practices of their sages, the doctrines they taught and the sacrifices they offered, but they rarely give even an outline of their lives. And whenever the Hindus write about a man of religion or a philosopher, their weak historical sense and their strong feeling for the importance of the teaching lead them to neglect the figure of the teacher and present a portrait which seems to us dim and impersonal. Indian saints are distinguished by what they said, not by what they did and it is a strong testimony to Gotama’s individuality and force of character, that in spite of the centuries

\(^1\) *E.g.* Maj. Nik. 123 about the marvels attending the birth of a Buddha.

\(^2\) See some further remarks on this subject at the end of chap. xiii. (on the Canon).
which separate us from him and the misty unreal atmosphere which in later times hangs round his name, his personality is more distinct and lifelike than that of many later teachers.

Most of the stories of his youth and childhood have a mythical air and make their first appearance in works composed long after his death, but there is no reason to distrust the traditional accounts of his lineage. He was the son of Suuddho-dana of the Kahatriya clan known as Sākya or Sākiya. In later literature his father is usually described as a king but this statement needs qualification. The Sākyas were a small aristocratic republic. At the time of the Buddha’s birth they recognized the suzerainty of the neighbouring kingdom of Kosala or Oudh and they were subsequently annexed by it, but, so long as they were independent, all that we know of their government leads us to suppose that they were not a monarchy like Kosala and Magadha. The political and administrative business of the clan was transacted by an assembly which met in a council hall at Kapilavatthu. Its president was styled Rājā but we do not know how he was selected nor for how long he held office. The Buddha’s father is sometimes spoken of as Rājā, sometimes as if he were a simple citizen. Some scholars think the position was temporary and elective. But in any case it seems clear that he was not a Mahārāja like Ajātasattu and other monarchs of the period. He was a prominent member of a wealthy and aristocratic family rather than a despot. In some passages Brahmins are represented as discussing the Buddha’s claims to respect. It is said that he is of a noble and wealthy family but not that he is the son of a king or heir to the throne, though the statement, if true, would be so obvious and appropriate that its omission is sufficient to disprove it. The point is of psychological importance, for the later literature in its desire to emphasize the sacrifice made by

1 Also Sakya or Sakka. The Sanskrit form is Śākya.
2 See among other passages the Ambattha Sutta of the Digha Nikāya in which Ambattha relates how he saw the Sākyas, old and young, sitting on grand seats in this hall.
3 But in Cullavagga vii. 1 Bhaddiya, a cousin of the Buddha who is described as being the Rājā at that time, says when thinking of renouncing the world “Wait whilst I hand over the kingdom to my sons and my brothers,” which seems to imply that the kingdom was a family possession. Raja perhaps means Consulship in the Roman sense rather than kingdom.
4 E.g. the Sonadanda and Kuttadanta Suttas of the Digha Nikāya.
the Buddha exaggerates the splendour and luxury by which he was surrounded in youth and produces the impression that his temperament was something like that reflected in the book of Ecclesiastes, the weary calm, bred of satiety and disenchantment, of one who has possessed everything and found everything to be but vanity. But this is not the dominant note of the Buddha's discourses as we have them. He condemns the pleasures and ambitions of the world as unsatisfying, but he stands before us as one who has resisted and vanquished temptation rather than as a disillusioned pleasure-seeker. The tone of these sermons accords perfectly with the supposition, supported by whatever historical data we possess, that he belonged to a fighting aristocracy, active in war and debate, wealthy according to the standard of the times and yielding imperfect obedience to the authority of kings and priests. The Pitakas allude several times to the pride of the Sâkyas, and in spite of the gentleness and courtesy of the Buddha this family trait is often apparent in his attitude, in the independence of his views, his calm disregard of Brahmanic pretensions and the authority that marks his utterances.

The territory of the Sâkyas lay about the frontier which now divides Nepal from the United Provinces, between the upper Rapti and the Gandak rivers, a hundred miles or so to the north of Benares. The capital was called Kapilavatthu\(^1\), and the mention of several other towns in the oldest texts indicates that the country was populous. Its wealth was derived chiefly from rice-fields and cattle. The uncultivated parts were covered with forest and often infested by robbers. The spot where the Buddha was born was known as the Lumbini Park and the site, or at least what was supposed to be the site in Asoka's time, is marked by a pillar erected by that monarch at a place now called Rummindeli\(^2\). His mother was named Mâyâ and was also of the Sâkya clan. Tradition states that she

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\(^1\) Sanskrit Kapilavastu: red place or red earth.

\(^2\) Tradition is unanimous that he died in his eightieth year and hitherto it has been generally supposed that this was about 487 B.C., so that he would have been born a little before 560. But Vincent Smith now thinks that he died about 543 B.C. See J.R.A.S. 1918, p. 547. He was certainly contemporary with kings Bimbisâra and Ajâtasattu, dying in the reign of the latter. His date therefore depends on the chronology of the Saisunâga and Nanda dynasties, for which new data are now available.
died seven days after his birth and that he was brought up by her sister, Mahāprajāpatī, who was also a wife of Suddhodana. The names of other relatives are preserved, but otherwise the older documents tell us nothing of his childhood and the copious legends of the later church seem to be poetical embellishments. The Sutta-Nipāta contains the story of an aged seer named Asita who came to see the child and, much like Simeon, prophesied his future greatness but wept that he himself must die before hearing the new gospel.

The personal name of the Buddha was Siddhārtha in Sanskrit or Siddhattha in Pali, meaning he who has achieved his object, but it is rarely used. Persons who are introduced in the Pitakas as addressing him directly either employ a title or call him Gotama (Sanskrit Gautama). This was the name of his gotra or gens and roughly corresponds to a surname, being less comprehensive than the clan name Sākya. The name Gotama is applied in the Pitakas to other Sākyas such as the Buddha’s father and his cousin Ānanda. It is said to be still in use in India and has been borne by many distinguished Hindus. But since it seemed somewhat irreverent to speak of the Buddha merely by his surname, it became the custom to describe him by titles. The most celebrated of these is the word Buddha itself, the awakened or wise one. But in Pali works he is described just as frequently by the name of Bhagavā or the Lord. The titles of Sākya-Muni and Sākya-Simha have also passed into common use and the former is his usual designation in the Sanskrit sūtras. The word Tathāgata, of somewhat obscure signification, is frequently found as an equivalent of Buddha and is put into the mouth of Gotama himself as a substitute for the first personal pronoun.

We can only guess what was the religious and moral atmosphere in which the child grew up. There were certainly Brahmans in the Sākya territory: everyone had heard of their

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1 It was some time before the word came to mean definitely the Buddha. In Udāna 1.5, which is a very early work, a number of disciples including Devadatta are described as being all Buddhā.

2 The Chinese translators render this word by Ju-lai (he who has come thus). As they were in touch with the best Indian tradition, this translation seems to prove that Tathāgata is equivalent to Tathā-gata not to Tathā-gata and the meaning must be, he who has come in the proper manner: a holy man who conforms to a type and is one in a series of Buddhas or Jinas.
Vedic lore, their ceremonies and their claims to superiority. But it is probable that their influence was less complete here than further west\(^1\) and that even before this time they encountered a good deal of scepticism and independent religious sentiment. This may have been in part military impatience of priestly pedantry, but if the Sâkyas were not submissive sheep, their waywardness was not due to want of interest in religion. A frequent phrase in the Buddha’s discourses speaks of the “highest goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen leave their homes and go forth into homelessness.” The religious mendicant seemed the proper incarnation of this ideal to which Kshatriyas as well as Brahmans aspired, and we are justified in supposing that the future Buddha’s thoughts would naturally turn towards the wandering life. The legend represents him as carefully secluded from all disquieting sights and as learning the existence of old age, sickness and death only by chance encounters which left a profound impression. The older texts do not emphasize this view of his mental development, though they do not preclude it. It is stated incidentally that his parents regretted his abandonment of worldly life and it is natural to suppose that they may have tried to turn his mind to secular interests and pleasures\(^2\). His son, Râhula, is mentioned several times in the Pitakas but his wife only once and then not by name but as “the princess who was the mother of Râhula\(^3\).” His separation from her becomes in the later legend the theme of an affecting tale but the scanty allusions to his family found in the Pitakas are devoid of sentimental touches. A remarkable passage is preserved in the Anguttara Nikâya\(^4\) describing his feelings as a young man and may be the origin of the story\(^5\) about the four visions of old age, sickness, death and of peace in the religious life. After describing the wealth and comfort in which he lived\(^6\), he says that he reflected how people feel

\(^1\) See the article on the neighbouring country of Magadha in Macdonell and Keith’s *Vedic Index*.
\(^2\) Cf. the Ratthapâla-sutta.
\(^3\) Mahâv. t. 54. 1.
\(^4\) Devadâtavagga. Ang. Nik. iii. 35.
\(^5\) But the story is found in the Mahâpadâna-sutta. See also Winternitz, *J.R.A.S.* 1911, p. 1140.
\(^6\) He mentions that he had three palaces or houses, for the hot, cold and rainy seasons respectively, but this is not necessarily regal for the same words are used of Yassa, the son of a Treasurer (Mahâv. 1. 7. 1) and Anuruddha, a Sâkyan noble (Cullav. vii. 1. 1).
repulsion and disgust at the sight of old age, sickness and death. But is this right? "I also" he thought "am subject to decay and am not free from the power of old age, sickness and death. Is it right that I should feel horror, repulsion and disgust when I see another in such plight? And when I reflected thus, my disciples, all the joy of life which there is in life died within me."

No connected account of his renunciation of the world has been found in the Pitakas but1 people are represented as saying that in spite of his parents' grief he "went out from the household life into the homeless state" while still a young man. Accepted tradition, confirmed by the Mahâparinibbâna Sutta, says that he retired from worldly life when he was twenty-nine years old. The event is also commemorated in a poem of the Sutta-Nipâta2 which reads like a very ancient ballad.

It relates how Bimbisâra, King of Magadha, looking out from his palace, saw an unknown ascetic, and feeling he was no ordinary person went himself to visit him. It would appear from this that Gotama on leaving his family went down to the plains and visited Râjagaha, the capital of Magadha, now Rajgîr to the south of Patna. The teachers of the Ganges valley had probably a greater reputation for learning and sanctity than the rough wits of the Sâkya land and this may have attracted Gotama. At any rate he applied himself diligently to acquire what knowledge could be learned from contemporary teachers of religion. We have an account put into his own mouth3 of his experiences as the pupil of Alâra Kâlâma and Uddaka Râmâputta but it gives few details of his studies. It would appear however that they both had a fixed system (dhamma) to impart and that their students lived in religious discipline (vinaya) as members of an Order. They were therefore doing exactly what the Buddha himself did later on a larger scale and with more conspicuous success. The instruction, we gather, was oral. Gotama assimilated it thoroughly and rapidly but was dissatisfied because he found that it did not conduce to perfect knowledge and salvation4. He evidently

1 In the Senadanâ-sutta and elsewhere.
2 The Pabbajjâ-sutta.
3 Maj. Nik. Ariyapariyesana-sutta. It is found in substantially the same form in the Mahâsaccaka-sutta and the Bodhirajakumâra-sutta.
4 The teaching of Alâra Kâlâma led to rebirth in the sphere called akiñcañ-nâyatanam or the sphere in which nothing at all is specially present to the mind.
accepted his teachers' general ideas about belief and conduct—a dhamma, a vinaya, and the practice of meditation—but rejected the content of their teaching as inadequate. So he went away.

The European mystic knows the dangers of Quietism¹. When Molinos and other quietists praise the Interior Silence in which the soul neither speaks nor desires nor thinks, they suggest that the suspension of all mental activity is good in itself. But more robust seekers hold that this “orison of quiet” is merely a state of preparation, not the end of the quest, and valuable merely because the soul recuperates therein and is ready for further action. Some doctrine akin to that of the quietists seems to underlie the mysterious old phrases in which the Buddha’s two teachers tried to explain their trances, and he left them for much the same reasons as led the Church to condemn Quietism. He did not say that the trances are bad; indeed he represented them as productive of happiness² in a sense which Europeans can hardly follow. But he clearly refused to admit that they were the proper end of the religious life. He felt there was something better and he set out to find it.

The interval between his abandonment of the world and his enlightenment is traditionally estimated at seven years and this accords with our other data. But we are not told how long he remained with his two teachers nor where they lived. He says however that after leaving them he wandered up and down the land of Magadha, so that their residence was probably in or near that district³. He settled at a place called Uruvelâ. “There” he says “I thought to myself, truly this is a pleasant spot and a beautiful forest. Clear flows the river and pleasant are the bathing places: all around are meadows and villages.” Here he determined to devote himself to the severest forms of asceticism. The place is in the neighbourhood of Bodh-Gaya, near the river now called Phalgu or Lilañja but formerly

and that of Uddaka Râmaputta to rebirth in the sphere where neither any idea nor the absence of any idea is specially present to the mind. These expressions occur elsewhere (e.g. in the Mahâparinibbâna-sutta) as names of stages in meditation or of incorporeal worlds (arûpabrahmâloka) where these states prevail. Some mysterious utterances of Uddaka are preserved in Sam. Nik. xxxv. 103.


² Sam. Nik. xxxvi. 19.

³ The Lalita Vistara says Alâra lived at Vesâli and Uddaka in Magadha.
Nerañjara. The fertile fields and gardens, the flights of steps and temples are modern additions but the trees and the river still give the sense of repose and inspiration which Gotama felt, an influence alike calming to the senses and stimulating to the mind. Buddhism, though in theory setting no value on the pleasures of the eye, is not in practice disdainful of beauty, as witness the many allusions to the Buddha’s personal appearance, the persistent love of art, and the equally persistent love of nature which is found in such early poems as the Theragathâ and still inspires those who select the sites of monasteries throughout the Buddhist world from Burma to Japan. The example of the Buddha, if we may believe the story, shows that he felt the importance of scenery and climate in the struggle before him and his followers still hold that a holy life is led most easily in beautiful and peaceful landscapes.

Hitherto we have found allusions to the events of the Buddha’s life rather than consecutive statements and narratives but for the next period, comprising his struggle for enlightenment, its attainment and the commencement of his career as a teacher, we have several accounts, both discourses put into his own mouth and narratives in the third person like the beginning of the Mahâvagga. It evidently was felt that this was the most interesting and critical period of his life and for it, as for the period immediately preceding his death, the Pitakas provide the elements of a biography. The accounts vary as to the amount of detail and supernatural events which they contain, but though the simplest is perhaps the oldest, it does not follow that events consistent with it but only found in other versions are untrue. One cannot argue that anyone recounting his spiritual experiences is bound to give a biographically complete picture. He may recount only what is relevant to the purpose of his discourse.

Gotama’s ascetic life at Uruvelâ is known as the wrestling or struggle for truth. The story, as he tells it in the Pitakas, gives no dates, but is impressive in its intensity and insistent iteration. Fire, he thought to himself, cannot be produced

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1 The following account is based on Maj. Nik. suttas 85 and 26. Compare the beginning of the Mahâvagga of the Vinaya.
from damp wood by friction, but it can from dry wood. Even so must the body be purged of its humours to make it a fit receptacle for illumination and knowledge. So he began a series of terrible fasts and sat "with set teeth and tongue pressed against the palate" until in this spiritual wrestling the sweat poured down from his arm pits. Then he applied himself to meditation accompanied by complete cessation of breathing, and, as he persevered and went from stage to stage of this painful exercise, he heard the blood rushing in his head and felt as if his skull was being split, as if his belly were being cut open with a butcher's knife, and finally as if he were thrown into a pit of burning coals. Elsewhere he gives further details of the horrible penances which he inflicted on himself. He gradually reduced his food to a grain of rice each day. He lived on seeds and grass, and for one period literally on dung. He wore haircloth or other irritating clothes: he plucked out his hair and beard: he stood continuously: he lay upon thorns. He let the dust and dirt accumulate till his body looked like an old tree. He frequented a cemetery—that is a place where corpses were thrown to decay or be eaten by birds and beasts—and lay among the rotting bodies.

But no enlightenment, no glimpse into the riddle of the world came of all this, so, although he was nearly at death's door, he determined to abstain from food altogether. But spirits appeared and dissuaded him, saying that if he attempted thus to kill himself they would nourish him by infusing a celestial elixir through his skin and he reflected that he might as well take a little food. So he took a palmful or two of bean soup. He was worn almost to a shadow, he says. "When I touched my belly, I felt my backbone through it and when I touched my back, I felt my belly—so near had my back and my belly come together through this fasting. And when I rubbed my limbs to refresh them the hair fell off." Then he

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2 If this discourse is regarded as giving in substance Gotama's own version of his experiences, it need not be supposed to mean much more than that his good angel (in European language) bade him not take his own life. But the argument represented as appealing to him was that if spirits sustained him with supernatural nourishment, entire abstinence from food would be a useless pretence.
3 The remarkable figures known as "fasting Buddhas" in Lahore Museum and elsewhere represent Gotama in this condition and show very plainly the falling in of the belly.
reflected that he had reached the limit of self-mortification and yet attained no enlightenment. There must be another way to knowledge. And he remembered how once in his youth he had sat in the shade of a rose apple tree and entered into the stage of contemplation known as the first rapture. That, he now thought, must be the way to enlightenment: why be afraid of such bliss? But to attain it, he must have more strength and to get strength he must eat. So he ate some rice porridge. There were five monks living near him, hoping that when he found the Truth he would tell it to them. But when they saw that he had begun to take food, their faith failed and they went away.

The Buddha then relates how, having taken food, he began to meditate and passed through four stages of contemplation, culminating in pure self-possession and equanimity, free alike from all feeling of pain or ease. Such meditation was nothing miraculous but supposed to be within the power of any trained ascetic. Then there arose before him a vision of his previous births, the hundreds of thousands of existences with all their details of name, family and caste through which he had passed. This was succeeded by a second and wider vision in which he saw the whole universe as a system of karma and reincarnation, composed of beings noble or mean, happy or unhappy, continually “passing away according to their deeds,” leaving one form of existence and taking shape in another. Finally, he understood the nature of error and of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path that leads to the cessation of suffering. “In me thus set free the knowledge of freedom arose and I knew ‘Rebirth has been destroyed, the higher life has been led; what had to be done has been done, I have no more to do with this world.’” This third knowledge came to me in the last watch of the night: ignorance was destroyed, knowledge had arisen, darkness was destroyed, light had arisen, as I sat there earnest, strenuous, resolute.”

1 Āsava. The word appears to mean literally an intoxicating essence. See *e.g.* *Vinsaya*, vol. iv, p. 110 (Rhys Davids and Oldenburg’s ed.). Cf. the use of the word in Sanskrit.

2 Nāpam itthattāyāti. Itthattam is a substantive formed from ittham thus. It was at this time too that he thought out the chain of causation.

3 Tradition states that it was on this occasion that he uttered the well-known stanzas now found in the Dhammapada 154-5 (cf. Theragāthā 183) in which he
On attaining enlightenment he at first despaired of preaching the truth to others. He reflected that his doctrine was abstruse and that mankind are given over to their desires. How can such men understand the chain of cause and effect or teaching about Nirvana and the annihilation of desire? So he determined to remain quiet and not to preach. Then the deity Brahmā Sahampati appeared before him and besought him to preach the Truth, pleading that some men could understand. The Buddha surveyed the world with his mind’s eye and saw the different natures of mankind. “As in a pool of lotuses, blue, red or white, some lotuses born in the water, grown up in the water, do not rise above the water but thrive hidden under the water and other lotuses, blue, red or white, born in the water, grown up in the water, reach to the surface: and other lotuses, blue, red or white, born in the water, grown up in the water, stand up out of the water and the water does not touch them.” Thus did he perceive the world to be and he said to Brahmā “The doors of immortality are open. Let them that have ears to hear, show faith.”

Then he began to wonder to whom he should first preach his doctrine, and he thought of his former teachers. But a spirit warned him that they had recently died. Then he thought of the five monks who had tended him during his austerities but left him when he ceased to fast. By his superhuman power of vision he perceived that they were living at Benares in the deer park, Isipatana. So, after remaining awhile at Uruvelā he started to find them and on the way met a naked ascetic, in answer to whose enquiries he proclaimed himself as the Buddha; “I am the Holy One in this world, I am the highest teacher, I alone am the perfect supreme Buddha, I have gained calm and nirvana, I go to Benares to set moving the wheels of righteousness”. I will beat the drum of immortality in the darkness of this world.” But the ascetic replied. “It may be exults in having, after long search in repeated births, found the maker of the house. “Now, O maker of the house thou art seen: no more shalt thou make a house.” The lines which follow are hard to translate. The ridge-pole of the house has been destroyed (visankhitaṁ more literally de-com-posed) and so the mind passes beyond the sankhāras (visankhāragataṁ). The play of words in visankhitaṁ and visankhāra can hardly be rendered in English.

As Rhys Davids observes, this expression means “to found the Kingdom of Righteousness” but the metaphor is to make the wheels of the chariot of righteousness move unopposed over all the Earth.
reflected that he had reached the limit of self-mortification and yet attained no enlightenment. There must be another way to knowledge. And he remembered how once in his youth he had sat in the shade of a rose apple tree and entered into the stage of contemplation known as the first rapture. That, he now thought, must be the way to enlightenment: why be afraid of such bliss? But to attain it, he must have more strength and to get strength he must eat. So he ate some rice porridge. There were five monks living near him, hoping that when he found the Truth he would tell it to them. But when they saw that he had begun to take food, their faith failed and they went away.

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\(^1\) Åśvaka. The word appears to mean literally an intoxicating essence. See e.g. Vinaya, vol. iv, p. 110 (Rhys Davids and Oldenberg's ed.). Cf. the use of the word in Sanskrit.

\(^2\) Nāparaṁ itthattāyāti. Itthattam is a substantive formed from ittham thus. It was at this time too that he thought out the chain of causation.

\(^3\) Tradition states that it was on this occasion that he uttered the well-known stanzas now found in the Dhammapada 154–5 (cf. Theragāthā 183) in which he
delivered by the daemon of Socrates. The appearance of Brahmā Sahampati is related with more detail and largely in verse, which suggests that the compiler may have inserted some legend which he found ready to hand, but on the whole I am inclined to believe that in this narrative we have a tradition not separated from the Buddha by many generations and going back to those who had themselves heard him describe his wrestling to obtain the Truth and his victory.

Other versions of the enlightenment give other incidents which are not rendered less credible by their omission from the narrative quoted, for it is clearly an epitome put together for a special didactic purpose. But still the story as related at the beginning of the Mahāvagga of the Vinaya has a stronger smack of mythology than the passages quoted from the Sutta-Pitaka. In these last the Bodhi-tree is mentioned only incidentally, which is natural, for it is a detail which would impress later piety rather than the Buddha himself. But there is no reason to be sceptical as to the part it has played in Buddhist history. Even if we had not been told that he sat under a tree, we might surmise that he did so, for to sit under a tree or in a cave was the only alternative for a homeless ascetic. The Mahāvagga states that after attaining Buddhahood he sat cross-legged at the foot of the tree for seven days uninterruptedly, enjoying the bliss of emancipation, and while there thought out the chain of causation which is only alluded to in the suttas quoted above. He also sat under three other trees, seven days under each. Heavy rain came on but Mucalinda, the king of the serpents, “came out of his abode and seven times encircled the body of the Lord with his windings and spread his great hood over the Lord’s head.” Here we are in the domain of mythology: this is not a vignette from the old religious life on the banks of the Nerañjara but a work of sacred art: the Holy Supreme Buddha sitting immovable and imperturbable in the midst of a storm sheltered by the folds of some pious monster that the artist’s fancy has created.

1 Similar heavenly messages were often received by Christian mystics and were probably true as subjective experiences. Thus Suso was visited one Whitsunday by a heavenly messenger who bade him cease his mortifications.

2 It is the Pipal tree or Ficus religiosa, as is mentioned in the Dīgha Nikāya, xiv. 30, not the Banyan. Its leaves have long points and tremble continually. Popular fancy says this is in memory of the tremendous struggle which they witnessed.
The narrative quoted from the Majjhima-Nikāya does not mention that the Buddha during his struggle for enlightenment was assailed or tempted by Māra, the personification of evil and of transitory pleasures but also of death. But that such an encounter—in some respects analogous to the temptation of Christ by the Devil—formed part of the old tradition is indicated by several passages in the Pitakas¹ and not merely by the later literature where it assumes a prominent and picturesque form. This struggle is psychologically probable enough but the origin of the story, which is exhaustively discussed in Windisch’s Buddha und Māra, seems to lie not so much in any account which the Buddha may have given of his mental struggles as in amplifications of old legends and in dramatizations of metaphors which he may have used about conquering death.

The Bodhi-tree is still shown at Bodh-Gaya. It stands on a low terrace behind the temple, the whole lying in a hollow, below the level of the surrounding modern buildings, and still attracts many pilgrims from all Buddhist lands though perhaps not so many as the tree at Anuradhapura in Ceylon, which is said to be sprung from one of its branches transplanted thither. Whatever title it may have to the reverence of the faithful rests on lineage rather than identity, for the growth which we see at Bodh-Gaya now cannot claim to be the branches under which the Buddha sat or even the trunk which Asoka tended. At best it is a modern stem sprung from the seeds of the old tree, and this descent is rendered disputable by legends of its destruction and miraculous restoration. Even during the time that Sir A. Cunningham knew the locality from 1862 to 1880 it would seem that the old trunk decayed and was replaced by scions grown from seed.

The texts quoted above leave the Buddha occupied in teaching the five monks in the Deer Park and the Mahāvagga gives us the text of the sermon² with which he opened his instruction. It is entitled Turning the Wheel of Righteousness, and is also known as The Sermon at Benares. It is a very early statement of the main doctrines of primitive Buddhism and I see no reason to doubt that it contains the ideas and phrases

¹ Such are the Padhāna-sutta of the Sutta-Nipāta which has an air of antiquity and the tales in the Mahāvagga of the Samyutta-Nikāya. The Mahāvagga of the Vinaya (i. 11 and 13) mentions such an encounter but places it considerably later after the conversion of the five monks and of Yasa.
² The text is also found in the Samyutta-Nikāya.
of the Buddha. The gist of the sermon is extremely simple. He first says that those who wish to lead a religious life should avoid the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-torture and follow a middle way. Then he enunciates what he calls the four truths\(^1\) about evil or suffering and the way to make an end of it. He opens very practically, and it may be noticed that abstruse as are many of his discourses they generally go straight to the heart of some contemporary interest. Here he says that self-indulgence is low and self-mortification crazy; that both are profitless and neither is the religious life. That consists in walking in the middle path, or noble eightfold path defined in a celebrated formula as right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right rapture. He then enunciates the four truths. The first declares that all clinging to existence involves suffering. I shall have occasion to examine later the pessimism which is often said to characterize Buddhism and Indian thought generally. Here let it suffice to say that the first truth must be taken in conjunction with the others. The teaching of the Buddha is a teaching not so much of pessimism as of emancipation: but emancipation implies the existence of evil from which men must be freed: a happy world would not need it. Buddhism recognizes the evil of the world but it is not on that account a religion of despair: the essence of it is that it provides a remedy and an escape.

The second and third truths must be taken together and in connection with the formula known as the chain of causation (paṭiccasamuppāda). Everything has a cause and produces an effect. If this is, that is: if this is not, then that is not. This simple principle of uniform causation is applied to the whole universe, gods and men, heaven, earth and hell. Indian thought has always loved wide applications of fundamental principles and here a law of the universe is propounded in a form both simple and abstract. Everything exists in virtue of a cause and does not exist if that cause is absent. Suffering has a cause and if that cause can be detected and eliminated, suffering itself will be eliminated. This cause of evil is Tanhā, the thirst or craving for existence, pleasure and success. And the cure is to remove it. It may seem to the European that this is a

\(^1\) Concisely stated as suffering, the cause of suffering, the suppression of suffering and the method of effecting that suppression.
proposal to cure the evils of life by removing life itself but when in the fourth truth we come to the course to be followed by the seeker after salvation—the eightfold path—we find it neither extravagant nor morbid. We may imagine that an Indian of that time asking different schools of thinkers for the way to salvation would have been told by Brahmans (if indeed they had been willing to impart knowledge to any but an accredited pupil) that he who performs a certain ceremony goes to the abode of the gods: other teachers would have insisted on a course of fasting and self-torture: others again like Sāñjaya and Makkhali would have given argumentative and unpractical answers. The Buddha's answer is simple and practical: seven-eighths of it would be accepted in every civilized country as a description of the good life. It is not merely external, for it insists on right thought and right aspiration: the motive and temper are as important as the act. It does not neglect will-power and activity, for right action, right livelihood and right effort are necessary—a point to be remembered when Buddhism is called a dreamy unpractical religion. But no doubt the last stage of the path, right rapture or right meditation, is meant to be its crown and fulfilment. It takes the place of prayer and communion with the deity and the Buddha promises the beatific vision in this life to those who persevere. The negative features of the Path are also important. It contains no mention of ceremonial, austerities, gods, many or one, nor of the Buddha himself. He is the discoverer and teacher of the truth; beyond that his personality plays no part.

But we are here treating of his life rather than of his doctrine and must now return to the events which are said to have followed the first sermon.

The first converts had, even before embracing the Buddha's teaching, been followers of a religious life but the next batch of recruits came from the wealthy mercantile families of Benares. The first was a youth named Yasa who joined the order, while his father, mother and former wife became lay believers. Then came first four and subsequently fifty friends of Yasa and joined the order. "At that time" says the Mahāvagga, "there were sixty-one Arhats in the world," so that at

1 Writers on Buddhism use this word in various forms, arhat, arahat and arahant. Perhaps it is best to use the Sanskrit form arhat just as karma and nirvana are commonly used instead of the Pali equivalents.
first arhatship seems to have followed immediately on ordination. Arhat, it may be mentioned, is the commonest word in early Buddhist literature (more common than any phrase about nirvana) for describing sanctity and spiritual perfection. The arhat is one who has broken the fetters of the senses and passions, for whom there will be no new birth or death, and who lives in this world like the Buddha, detached but happy and beneficent.

The Buddha then addressed his followers and said—"Monks, I am delivered from all fetters, human and divine, and so are you. Go now and wander for the gain of many, for the welfare of many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain and for the welfare of gods and men. Let not two of you go the same way. Preach the doctrine which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in the middle and glorious in the end, in the spirit and in the letter; proclaim a consummate, perfect and pure life of holiness." The monks then went forth and returned bringing candidates to be formally ordained by the Buddha. But seeing that these journeys caused fatigue and trouble, he authorized the ordained monks to confer ordination without reference to himself. He then returned to Uruvelâ, where he had dwelt before attaining Buddhahood, and converted a thousand Jātīlas, that is to say Brahmans living the life of hermits, which involved the abandonment of household life but not of sacrifices. The admission of these hermits to the order is probably historical and explains the presence among the Buddha's disciples of a tendency towards self-mortification of which he himself did not wholly approve. The Mahâvagga\(^1\) contains a series of short legends about these occurrences, one of them in two versions. The narratives are miraculous but have an ancient tone and probably represent the type of popular story current about the Buddha shortly after or even during his life. One of them is a not uncommon subject in Buddhist art. It relates how the chamber in which a Brahman called Kassapa kept his sacred fire was haunted by a fire-breathing magical serpent. The Buddha however spent the night in this chamber and after a contest in which both emitted flames succeeded in conquering the beast. After converting the Jātīlas he preached to them the celebrated Fire Sermon, said to

\(^1\) i. 15-20.
have been delivered on the eminence now called Brahma Yoon near Gaya and possibly inspired by the spectacle of grass fires which at some seasons may be seen creeping over every hill-side in an Indian night. “Everything, Monks, is burning and how is it burning? The eye is burning: what the eye sees is burning: thoughts based on the eye are burning: the contact of the eye (with visible things) is burning and the sensation produced by that contact, whether pleasant, painful or indifferent is also burning. With what fire is it burning? It is burning with the fire of lust, the fire of anger, with the fire of ignorance; it is burning with the sorrows of birth, decay, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair.”

The Buddha now went on with his converts to Rājagaha. He stopped in a bamboo grove outside the town and here the king, Bimbisāra, waited on him and with every sign of respect asked him to take food in his palace. It was on this occasion that we first hear of him accepting an invitation to dinner, which he did frequently during the rest of his career. After the repast the king presented a pleasure garden just outside the town “to the fraternity of monks with the Buddha at their head.”

At that time another celebrated teacher named Sānjaya was stopping at Rājagaha with a train of two hundred and fifty disciples. Two of them, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, joined the Buddha’s order and took with them the whole body of their companions.

The Mahāvagga proceeds to relate that many of the young nobility joined the order and that the people began to murmur saying “The Monk Gotama causes fathers to beget no sons and families to become extinct.” And again “The Great Monk has come to Giribbaja of the Magadha people, leading with him all the followers of Sānjaya. Whom will he lead off next?” When this was told to the Buddha he replied that the excitement would only last seven days and bade his followers answer with the following verse “It is by the true doctrine that the great heroes, the Buddhas, lead men. Who will murmur at the wise who lead men by the power of truth?” It is possible, as Oldenburg suggests, that we have here two popular couplets which were really bandied between the friends and enemies of the Buddha.

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1 Brahmāyoni. I make this suggestion about grass fires because I have myself watched them from this point.

2 This meal, the only solid one in the day, was taken a little before midday.
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It now becomes difficult to give dates but the Mahâvagga\(^1\) relates that the Buddha stopped some time at Râjagaha and then revisited his native town, Kapilavatthu. That he should have done so is natural enough but there is little trace of sentiment in the narrative of the Vinaya. Its object is to state the occasion on which the Buddha laid down the rules of the order. Irrelevant incidents are ignored and those which are noticed are regarded simply as the circumstances which led to the formulation of certain regulations. "The Lord dwelt in the Sakka country near Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Grove. And in the forenoon having put on his robes and taken his alms bowl he went to the home of the Sakka Suddhodana\(^2\) and sat down on a seat prepared for him. Then the princess who was the mother of Râhula\(^3\) said to him 'This is your father, Râhula, go and ask him for your inheritance.' Then young Râhula went to the place where the Lord was, and standing before him said 'Your shadow, Monk, is a place of bliss.' Then the Lord rose from his seat and went away but Râhula followed him saying 'Give me my inheritance, Monk.' Then the Lord said to Sâriputta (who had already become his chief disciple) 'Well, Sâriputta, confer the preliminary ordination on young Râhula.' Sâriputta asked how he should do so and the Buddha explained the forms.

"Then the Sakka Suddhodana went to the place where the Lord was and after respectfully saluting him asked for a boon. 'Lord, when the Blessed One gave up the world, it was great pain to me and so it was when Nanda\(^4\) did the same. Great too was my pain when Râhula did it. The love for a son, Lord, cuts into the skin, the flesh, the bones, and reaches the marrow. Let not the preliminary ordination be conferred on a son without his parents' permission.' The Buddha assented. Three or four years later Suddhodana died."

From Kapilavatthu the Buddha is said to have gone to Sâvatthi, the capital of Kosala where Pasenadi was king, but now we lose the chronological thread and do not find it again

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\(^1\) i. 53-54.
\(^2\) His father.
\(^3\) i.e. the Buddha's former wife.
\(^4\) Half brother of the Buddha and Suddhodana's son by Mahâprajâpati.
until the last years of his life. Few of the numerous incidents recorded in the Pitakas can be dated. The narrators resemble those Indian artists who when carving a story in relief place all the principal figures in one panel without attempting to mark the sequence of the incidents which are represented simultaneously. For the connection of events with the Buddha’s teaching the compilers of the Pitakas had an eye; for their connection with his life none at all. And though this attitude is disquieting to the historic sense it is not unjustifiable. The object and the achievement of the Buddha was to preach a certain doctrine and to found an order. All the rest—years and countries, pains and pleasures—was of no importance. And it would appear that we have not lost much: we should have a greater sense of security if we had an orderly account of his wanderings and his relations with the kings of his time, but after he had once entered on his ministry the events which broke the peaceful tenour of his long life were few and we probably know most of them though we cannot date them. For about forty-five years he moved about Kosala, Magadha and Anga visiting the two capitals Sāvatthī and Rājagaha and going as far west as the country of the Kurus. He took little part in politics or worldly life, though a hazy but not improbable story\(^1\) represents him as pacifying the Sākyas and Koliyas, who were on the point of fighting about the water of the Rohini which irrigated the lands of both clans. He uniformly enjoyed the respect and attention of kings and the wealthy classes. Doubtless he was not popular with the Brahmans or with those good people who disliked seeing fine young men made into monks. But it does not appear that his teaching provoked any serious tumults or that he was troubled by anything but schism within the order. We have, if not a history, at least a picture of a life which though peaceful was active and benevolent but aloof, majestic and authoritative.

We are told\(^2\) that at first his disciples wandered about at all seasons but it was not long before he bade them observe the already established routine for itinerant monks of travelling on foot during the greater part of the year but of resting for three months during the rainy season known as Vassa and beginning some time in June. When moving about he appears to have

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\(^1\) Jātaka, 356.

\(^2\) Mahāvag. III. 1.
walked from five to ten miles a day, regulating his movements so as to reach inhabited places in time to collect food for the midday meal. The afternoon he devoted to meditation and in the evening gave instruction. He usually halted in woods or gardens on the outskirts of villages and cities, and often on the bank of a river or tank, for shade and water would be the first requisites for a wandering monk. On these journeys he was accompanied by a considerable following of disciples: five hundred or twelve hundred and fifty are often mentioned and though the numbers may be exaggerated there is no reason to doubt that the band was large. The suttas generally commence with a picture of the surroundings in which the discourse recorded was delivered. The Buddha is walking along the high road from Rājagaha to Nālanda with a great company of disciples. Or he is journeying through Kosala and halting in a mango-grove on the banks of the Aciravatī river. Or he is stopping in a wood outside a Brahman village and the people go out to him. The principal Brahmans, taking their siesta on the upper terraces of their houses, see the crowd and ask their doorkeepers what it means. On hearing the cause they debate whether they or the Buddha should pay the first call and ultimately visit him. Or he is halting on the shore of the Gaggarā Lake at Campā in Western Bengal, sitting under the fragrant white flowers of a campaka tree. Or he visits the hills overlooking Rājagaha haunted by peacocks and by wandering monks. Often he stops in buildings described as halls, which were sometimes merely rest houses for travellers. But it became more and more the custom for the devout to erect such buildings for his special use and even in his lifetime they assumed the proportions of monasteries. The people of Vesāli built one in a wood to the north of their city known as the Gabled Hall. It was a storied house having on the ground floor a large room surrounded by pillars and above it the private apartments of the Buddha. Such private rooms (especially those which he occupied at Śāvatthi), were called Gandhakūṭī or the perfumed chamber. At Kapilavatthu the Sākyas erected a new building known as Santhagāra. The Buddha was asked to inaugurate it

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1 Thus we hear how Dasama of Atthakam (Maj. Nik. 52) built one for fifteen hundred monks, and Ghotamukha another in Pataliputta, which bore his name.

2 Maj. Nik. 53.
and did so by a discourse lasting late into the night which he delivered sitting with his back against a pillar. At last he said his back was tired and lay down, leaving Ananda to continue the edification of the congregation who were apparently less exhausted than the preacher.

But perhaps the residence most frequently mentioned is that in the garden called Jetavana at Sāvatthī. Anāthapindika, a rich merchant of that town, was converted by the Buddha when staying at Rājagaha and invited him to spend the next rainy season at Sāvatthī. On returning to his native town to look for a suitable place, he decided that the garden of the Prince Jeta best satisfied his requirements. He obtained it only after much negotiation for a sum sufficient to cover the whole ground with coins. When all except a small space close to the gateway had been thus covered Jeta asked to be allowed to share in the gift and on receiving permission erected on the vacant spot a gateway with a room over it. “And Anāthapindika the householder built dwelling rooms and retiring rooms and storerooms and halls with fireplaces, and outside storehouses and closets and cloisters and halls attached to the bath rooms and ponds and roofed open sheds.”

Buddhaghosa has given an account of the way in which the Buddha was wont to spend his days when stopping in some such resting-place, and his description is confirmed by the numerous details given in the Pitakas. He rose before dawn and would often retire and meditate until it was time to set out on the round for alms but not unfrequently he is represented as thinking that it was too early to start and that he might first visit some monk of the neighbourhood. Then he went round the town or village with his disciples, carrying his almsbowl and accepting everything put into it. Sometimes he talked to his disciples while walking. Frequently, instead of begging for alms, he accepted an invitation to dine with some pious person who asked the whole band of disciples and made strenuous culinary efforts. Such invitations were given at the conclusion of a visit paid to the Buddha on the previous day and were

1 Cullavag. vi. 4.
2 Probably sheds consisting of a roof set on posts, but without walls.
3 Translated by Rhys Davids, American Lectures, pp. 108 ff.
4 E.g. Maj. Nik. 62.
accepted by him with silence which signified consent. On the morning of the next day the host announced in person or through a messenger that the meal was ready and the Buddha taking his mantle and bowl went to the house. The host waited on the guests with his own hands, putting the food which he had prepared into their bowls. After the repast the Buddha delivered a discourse or catechized the company. He did the same with his own disciples when he collected food himself and returned home to eat it. He took but one meal a day\(^1\), between eleven and twelve, and did not refuse meat when given to him, provided that he did not know the animals had been slaughtered expressly for his food. When he had given instruction after the meal he usually retired to his chamber or to a quiet spot under trees for repose and meditation. On one occasion\(^2\) he took his son Râhula with him into a wood at this hour to impart some of the deepest truths to him, but as a rule he gave no further instruction until the late afternoon.

The Pitakas represent all believers as treating the Buddha with the greatest respect but the salutations and titles which they employ hardly exceed those ordinarily used in speaking to eminent persons\(^3\). Kings were at this time addressed as Deva, whereas the Buddha’s usual title is Bhagavâ or Bhante, Lord. A religious solemnity and deliberation prevails in the interviews which he grants but no extravagance of adoration is recorded. Visitors salute him by bowing with joined hands, sit respectfully on one side while he instructs them and in departing are careful to leave him on their right hand. He accepts such gifts as food, clothes, gardens and houses but rejects all ceremonial honours. Thus Prince Bodhi\(^4\) when receiving him carpeted his mansion with white cloths but the Buddha would not walk on them and remained standing at the entrance till they were taken up.

The introduction to the Ariyapariyesana-Sutta gives a fairly complete picture of a day in his life at Sâvatthi. It relates how

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\(^1\) But in Maj. Nik. ii. 5 he says he is not bound by rules as to eating.

\(^2\) Maj. Nik. 147.

\(^3\) In an exceedingly curious passage (Dig. Nik. iv.) the Brahman Sonadanda, while accepting the Buddha’s teaching, asks to be excused from showing the Buddha such extreme marks of respect as rising from his seat or dismounting from his chariot, on the ground that his reputation would suffer. He proposes and apparently is allowed to substitute less demonstrative salutations.

\(^4\) Cullavagga v. 21 and Maj. Nik. 85.
in the morning he took his bowl and mantle and went to the town to collect food. While he was away, some monks told his personal attendant Ānanda that they wished to hear a discourse from him, as it was long since they had had the privilege. Ānanda suggested that they had better go to the hermitage of the Brahman Rammaka near the town. The Buddha returned, ate his meal and then said “Come, Ānanda, let us go to the terrace of Migāra’s mother\(^1\) and stay there till evening.” They went there and spent the day in meditation. Towards evening the Buddha rose and said “Let us go to the old bath to refresh our limbs.” After they had bathed, Ānanda suggested that they should go to Rammaka’s hermitage: the Buddha assented by his silence and they went together. Within the hermitage were many monks engaged in instructive conversation, so the Buddha waited at the door till there was a pause in the talk. Then he coughed and knocked. The monks opened the door, and offered him a seat. After a short conversation, he recounted to them how he hadstriven for and obtained Buddhahood.

These congregations were often prolonged late into the night. We hear for instance how he sat on the terrace belonging to Migāra’s mother\(^2\) in the midst of an assembly of monks waiting for his words, still and silent in the light of the full moon; how a monk would rise, adjusting his robe so as to leave one shoulder bare, bow with his hands joined and raised to his forehead and ask permission to put a question and the Lord would reply, Be seated, monk, ask what you will. But sometimes in these nightly congregations the silence was unbroken. When King Ajātasattu went to visit him\(^3\) in the mango grove of Jivaka he was seized with sudden fear at the unearthly stillness of the place and suspected an ambush. “Fear not, O King,” said Jivaka, “I am playing you no tricks. Go straight on. There in the pavilion hall the lamps are burning...and there is the Blessed One sitting against the middle pillar, facing the east with the brethren round him.” And when the king beheld the assembly seated in perfect silence, calm as a clear lake, he

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\(^1\) Visākhā, a lady of noted piety. It was probably a raised garden planted with trees.

\(^2\) Maj. Nik. 110.

\(^3\) Dig. Nik. No. 2. Compare Jātaka 150, which shows how much variation was permitted in the words ascribed to the Buddha.
exclaimed "Would that my son might have such calm as this assembly now has."

The major part of the Buddha's activity was concerned with the instruction of his disciples and the organization of the Sangha or order. Though he was ready to hear and teach all, the portrait presented to us is not that of a popular preacher who collects and frequents crowds but rather that of a master, occupied with the instruction of his pupils, a large band indeed but well prepared and able to appreciate and learn by heart teaching which, though freely offered to the whole world, was somewhat hard to untrained ears. In one passage\(^1\) an enquirer asks him why he shows more zeal in teaching some than others. The answer is, if a landowner had three fields, one excellent, one middling and one of poor soil, would he not first sow the good field, then the middling field, and last of all the bad field, thinking to himself; it will just produce fodder for the cattle? So the Buddha preaches first to his own monks, then to lay-believers, and then, like the landowner who sows the bad field last, to Brahmans, ascetics and wandering monks of other sects, thinking if they only understand one word, it will do them good for a long while. It was to such congregations of disciples or to enquirers belonging to other religious orders that he addressed his most important discourses, iterating in grave numbered periods the truths concerning the reality of sorrow and the equal reality of salvation, as he sat under a clump of bamboos or in the shade of a banyan, in sight perhaps of a tank where the lotuses red, white and blue, submerged or rising from the water, typified the various classes of mankind.

He did not start by laying down any constitution for his order. Its rules were formed entirely by case law. Each incident and difficulty was referred to him as it arose and his decision was accepted as the law on that point. During his last illness he showed a noble anxiety not to hamper his followers by the prestige of his name but to leave behind him a body of free men, able to be a light and a help to themselves. But a curious passage\(^2\) represents an old monk as saying immediately after his

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\(^1\) Sam. Nik. xiii. 7.

\(^2\) Mahāparinibbāna-sutta, 8. 20. The monk Subhadda, in whose mouth these words are put, was apparently not the person of the same name who was the last convert made by the Buddha when dying.
death "Weep not, brethren; we are well rid of the Great Monk. We used to be annoyed by being told, 'This beseems you and this does not besem you. But now we shall be able to do what we like and not have to do what we don't like.'" Clearly the laxer disciples felt the Master's hand to be somewhat heavy and we might have guessed as much. For though Gotama had a breadth of view rare in that or in any age, though he refused to multiply observances or to dogmatize, every sutta indicates that he was a man of exceptional authority and decision; what he has laid down he has laid down; there is no compulsion or punishment, no vow of obedience or sacrificium intellectus; but it is equally clear that there is no place in the order for those who in great or small think differently from the master.

In shepherding his flock he had the assistance of his senior disciples. Of these the most important were Sâriputta and Moggallâna, both of them Brahmans who left their original teacher Sânjaya to join him at the outset of his ministry. Sâriputta\(^1\) enjoyed his confidence so fully that he acted as his representative and gave authoritative expositions of doctrine. The Buddha even compared him to the eldest son of an Emperor who assists his father in the government. But both he and Moggallâna died before their master and thus did not labour independently. Another important disciple Upâli survived him and probably contributed materially to the codification of the Vinaya. Anuruddha and Ánanda, both of them Sâkyas, are also frequently mentioned, especially the latter who became his personal attendant\(^2\) and figures in the account of his illness and death as the beloved disciple to whom his last instructions were committed. These two together with four other young Sâkya nobles and Upâli joined the order twenty-five years before Gotama's death and perhaps formed an inner circle of trusted relatives, though we have no reason to think there was any friction between them and Brahmans like Sâriputta. Upâli is said to have been barber of the Sâkyas. It is not easy to say what his social status may have been, but it probably did not preclude intimacy.

The Buddha was frequently occupied with maintaining peace and order among his disciples. Though the profession of a monk

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1. His personal name was Upatissa.
2. This position was also held, previously no doubt, by Sagata.
excluded worldly advancement, it was held in great esteem and was hence adopted by ambitious and quarrelsome men who had no true vocation. The troubles which arose in the Sangha are often ascribed in the Vinaya to the Chabbaggiyas, six brethren who became celebrated in tradition as spirits of mischief and who are evidently made the peg on which these old monkish anecdotes are hung. As a rule the intervention of the Buddha was sufficient to restore peace, but one passage\(^1\) indicates resistance to his authority. The brethren quarrelled so often that the people said it was a public scandal. The Buddha endeavoured to calm the disputants, but one of them replied, "Lord, let the Blessed One quietly enjoy the bliss which he has obtained in this life. The responsibility for these quarrels will rest with us alone." This seems a clear hint that the Blessed One had better mind his own business. Renewed injunctions and parables met with no better result. "And the Blessed One thought" says the narrative "'truly these fools are infatuated,' and he rose from his seat and went away."

Other troubles are mentioned but by far the most serious was the schism of Devadatta, represented as occurring in the old age of Gotama when he was about seventy-two. The story as told in the Cullavagga\(^2\) is embellished with supernatural incidents and seems not to observe the natural sequence of events but perhaps three features are historical: namely that Devadatta wished to supersede the Buddha as head of the order, that he was the friend of Ajātasattu, Crown Prince and afterwards King of Magadha,\(^3\) and that he advocated a stricter rule of life than the Buddha chose to enforce. This combination of piety and ambition is perhaps not unnatural. He was a cousin of the Buddha and entered the order at the same time as Ānanda and other young Sākyya nobles. Sprung from that quarrelsome breed he possessed in a distorted form some of Gotama's own ability. He is represented as publicly urging the Master to retire and dwell at ease but met with an absolute

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\(^1\) Mahāvag. x. 2. Compare the singular anecdote in vi. 22 where the Buddha quite unjustifiably suspects a Doctor of making an indecent joke. The story seems to admit that the Buddha might be wrong and also that he was sometimes treated with want of respect.

\(^2\) VII. 2 ff.

\(^3\) The introductions to Jātakas 26 and 150 say that Ajātasattu built a great monastery for him at Gayāsīsa.
refusal. Sāriputta was directed to "proclaim" him in Rājagaha, the proclamation being to the effect that his nature had changed and that all his words and deeds were disowned by the order. Then Devadatta incited the Crown Prince to murder his father, Bimbisāra. The plot was prevented by the ministers but the king told Ajātasattu that if he wanted the kingdom he could have it and abdicated. But his unnatural son put him to death all the same1 by starving him slowly in confinement. With the assistance of Ajātasattu, Devadatta then tried to compass the death of the Buddha. First he hired assassins, but they were converted as soon as they approached the sacred presence. Then he rolled down a rock from the Vulture's peak with the intention of crushing the Buddha, but the mountain itself interfered to stop the sacrilege and only a splinter scratched the Lord's foot. Then he arranged for a mad elephant to be let loose in the road at the time of collecting alms, but the Buddha calmed the furious beast. It is perhaps by some error of arrangement that after committing such unpardonable crimes Devadatta is represented as still a member of the order and endeavouring to provoke a schism by asking for stricter rules. The attempt failed and according to later legends he died on the spot, but the Vinaya merely says that hot blood gushed from his mouth.

That there are historical elements in this story is shown by the narrative of Fa Hsien, the Chinese pilgrim who travelled in India about 400 A.D. He tells us that the followers of Devadatta still existed in Kosala and revered the three previous Buddhas but refused to recognize Gotama. This is interesting, for it seems to show that it was possible to accept Gotama's doctrine, or the greater part of it, as something independent of his personality and an inheritance from earlier teachers.

The Udāna and Jātaka relate another plot without specifying the year. Some heretics induced a nun called Sundari to pretend she was the Buddha's concubine and hired assassins to murder her. They then accused the Bhikkhus of killing her to conceal their master's sin, but the real assassins got drunk with the money they had received and revealed the conspiracy in their cups.

But these are isolated cases. As a whole the Buddha's long

1 The Buddha says so himself (Dig. Nik. ii.) but does not mention the method.
career was marked by a peace and friendliness which are surprising if we consider what innovations his teaching contained. Though in contending that priestly ceremonies were useless he refrained from neither direct condemnation nor satire, yet he is not represented as actively attacking them and we may doubt if he forbade his lay disciples to take part in rites and sacrifices as a modern missionary might do. We find him sitting by the sacred fire of a Brahman and discoursing, but not denouncing the worship carried on in the place. When he converted Siha, the general of the Licchavis, who had been a Jain, he bade him continue to give food and gifts as before to the Jain monks who frequented his house—an instance of toleration in a proselytizing teacher which is perhaps without parallel. Similarly in the Sigalovāda-sutta it is laid down that a good man ministers to monks and to Brahmans. If it is true that Ajātasattu countenanced Devadatta’s attempts to murder him, he ignored such disagreeable details with a sublime indifference, for he continued to frequent Rājagaha, received the king, and preached to him one of his finest sermons without alluding to the past. He stands before us in the suttas as a man of amazing power of will, inaccessible to fear, promises and, one may add, to argument but yet in comparison with other religious leaders singularly gentle in taking the offensive against error. Often he simply ignored it as irrelevant: “Never mind” he said on his deathbed to his last convert “Never mind, whether other teachers are right or wrong. Listen to me, I will teach you the truth.” And when he is controversial his method is often to retain old words in honourable use with new meanings. The Brahmans are not denounced like the Pharisees in the New Testament but the real Brahman is a man of uprightness and wisdom: the real sacrifice is to abstain from sin and follow the Truth.

Women played a considerable part in the entourage of Gotama. They were not secluded in India at that time and he admitted that they were capable of attaining saintship. The work of ministering to the order, of supplying it with food and raiment, naturally fell largely to pious matrons, and their

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1 The Dhamma-sangani defines courtesy as being of two kinds: hospitality and considerateness in matters of doctrine.

2 Maj. Nik. 75.

3 Mahāv. vi. 31. 11.
attentive forethought delighted to provide for the monks those comforts which might be accepted but not asked for. Prominent among such donors was Visākhā, who married the son of a wealthy merchant at Sāvatthī and converted her husband's family from Jainism to the true doctrine. The Vinaya recounts how after entertaining the Buddha and his disciples she asked eight boons which proved to be the privileges of supplying various classes of monks with food, clothing and medicine and of providing the nuns with bathing dresses, for, said she, it shocked her sense of propriety to see them bathing naked. But the anecdotes respecting the Buddha and women, whether his wife or others, are not touched with sentiment, not even so much as is found in the conversation between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī in the Upanishad. To women as a class he gave their due and perhaps in his own opinion more than their due, but if he felt any interest in them as individuals, the sacred texts have obliterated the record. In the last year of his life he dined with the courtezan Ambapālī and the incident has attracted attention on account of its supposed analogy to the narrative about Christ and "the woman which was a sinner." But the resemblance is small. There is no sign that the Buddha, then eighty years of age, felt any personal interest in Ambapālī. Whatever her morals may have been, she was a benefactress of the order and he simply gave her the same opportunity as others of receiving instruction. When the Licchavi princes tried to induce him to dine with them instead of with her, he refused to break his promise. The invitations of princes had no attraction for him, and he was a prince himself. A fragment of conversation introduced irrelevantly into his deathbed discourses is significant—"How, Lord, are we to conduct ourselves with regard to womankind? Don't see them, Ānanda. But if we see them, what are we to do? Abstain from speech. But if they should speak to us what are we to do? Keep wide awake."

This spirit is even more evident in the account of the admission of Nuns to the order. When the Buddha was visiting his native town his aunt and foster mother, Mahāprajāpati, thrice begged him to grant this privilege to women but was thrice refused and went away in tears. Then she followed him to Vesālī and stood in the entrance of the Kūṭāgāra Hall "with

1 Cullavag. x. 1. 3.
swollen feet and covered with dust, and sorrowful.” Ánanda, who had a tender heart, interviewed her and, going in to the Buddha, submitted her request but received a triple refusal. But he was not to be denied and urged that the Buddha admitted women to be capable of attaining saintship and that it was unjust to refuse the blessings of religion to one who had suckled him. At last Gotama yielded—perhaps the only instance in which he is represented as convinced by argument—but he added “If, Ánanda, women had not received permission to enter the Order, the pure religion would have lasted long, the good law would have stood fast a thousand years. But since they had received that permission, it will now stand fast for only five hundred years.”

He maintained and approved the same hard detached attitude in other domestic relations. His son Ráhula received special instruction but is not represented as enjoying his confidence like Ánanda. A remarkable narrative relates how, when the monk Sangâmājī was sitting beneath a tree absorbed in meditation, his former wife (whom he had left on abandoning the world) laid his child before him and said “Here, monk, is your little son, nourish me and nourish him.” But Sangâmājī took no notice and the woman went away. The Buddha who observed what happened said “He feels no pleasure when she comes, no sorrow when she goes: him I call a true Brahman released from passion.” This narrative is repulsive to European sentiment, particularly as the chronicler cannot spare the easy charity of a miracle to provide for the wife and child, but in taking it as an index of the character of Gotama, we must bear in mind such sayings of Christ as “If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

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1 Mahāparinib. v. 23. Perhaps the Buddha was supposed to be giving Ánanda last warnings about his besetting weakness.
2 Udāna 1. 8.
3 Compare too the language of Angela of Foligno (1248–1309) “By God’s will there died my mother who was a great hindrance unto me in following the way of God: my husband died likewise and all my children. And because I had commenced to follow the aforesaid way and had prayed God that he would rid me of them, I had great consolation of their deaths, although I did also feel some grief.” Beatae Angelae de Fulginio Visionum et Instructionum Liber. Cap. ix.
Political changes, in which however he took no part, occurred in the last years of the Buddha's life. In Magadha Ajātassattu had come to the throne. If, as the Vinaya represents, he at first supported the schism of Devadatta, he subsequently became a patron of the Buddha. He was an ambitious prince and fortified Pātaligāma (afterwards Pātaliputra) against the Vajjian confederation, which he destroyed a few years after the Buddha's death. This confederation was an alliance of small oligarchies like the Licchavis and Videhans. It would appear that this form of constitution was on the wane in northern India and that the monarchical states were annexing the decaying commonwealths. In Kosala, Viḍūḍabha conquered Kapilavatthu a year or two before the Buddha's death, and is said to have perpetrated a great massacre of the Sākyas. Possibly in consequence of these events the Buddha avoided Kosala and the former Sākyas territory. At any rate the record of his last days opens at Rājagaha, the capital of Magadha.

This record is contained in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, the longest of the suttas and evidently a compilation. The style is provokingly uneven. It often promises to give a simple and natural narrative but such passages are interrupted by more recent and less relevant matter. No general estimate of its historical value can be given but each incident must be apprized separately. Nearly all the events and discourses recorded in it are found elsewhere in the canon in the same words and it contains explanatory matter of a suspiciously apologetic nature. Also the supernatural element is freely introduced. But together with all this it contains plain pathetic pictures of an old man's fatigue and sufferings which would not have been inserted by a later hand, had they not been found ready in tradition.

1 No account of this event has yet been found in the earliest texts but it is no doubt historical. The versions found in the Jātaka and Commentaries trace it back to a quarrel about a marriage, but the story is not very clear or consistent and the real motive was probably that indicated above.

2 See Rhys Davids, Dialogues, ii. p. 70 and Przyluski's articles (in J.A. 1918 ff.) Le Parinirvana et les funérailles du Bouddha where the Pali texts are compared with the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya and with other accounts.
And though events and sermonettes are strung together in a way which is not artistic, there is nothing improbable in the idea that the Buddha when he felt his end approaching should have admonished his disciples about all that he thought most important.

The story opens at Rājagaha about six months before the Buddha’s death. The King sends his minister to ask whether he will be successful in attacking the Vajjians. The Buddha replies that as long as they act in concord, behave honourably, and respect the Faith, so long may they be expected not to decline but prosper. The compiler may perhaps have felt this narrative to be an appropriate parallel to the Buddha’s advice to his disciples to live in peace and order. He summoned and addressed the brethren living in Rājagaha and visited various spots in the neighbourhood. In these last utterances one phrase occurs with special frequency, “Great is the fruit, great the advantage of meditation accompanied by upright conduct: great is the advantage of intelligence accompanied by meditation. The mind which has such intelligence is freed from intoxications, from the desires of the senses, from love of life, from delusion and from ignorance.”

He then set forth accompanied by Ānanda and several disciples. Judging from the route adopted his intention was to go ultimately to Sāvatthī. This was one of the towns where he resided from time to time, but we cannot tell what may have been his special motives for visiting it on the present occasion, for if the King of Kosala had recently massacred the Sākyas his presence there would have been strange. The road was not direct but ran up northwards and then followed the base of the mountains, thus enabling travellers to cross rivers near their sources where they were still easy to ford. The stopping-places from Rājagaha onwards were Nālanda, Pāṭaliputra, Vesāli, Bhandagāma, Pāvā, Kusinārā, Kapilavatthu, Setavya, Sāvatthī. On his last journey the Buddha is represented as following this route but he died at the seventh stopping-place, Kusinārā. When at Pāṭaligāma, he prophesied that it would become a great emporium. He was honourably entertained by the officers of the King who decided that the

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1 This was probably written after Pāṭaliputra had become a great city but we do not know when its rise commenced.
gate and ferry by which he left should be called Gotama’s gate and Gotama’s ferry. The gate received the name, but when he came to the Ganges he vanished miraculously and appeared standing on the further bank. He then went on to Vesāli, passing with indifference and immunity from the dominions of the King of Magadha into those of his enemies, and halted in the grove of the courtezan Ambapāli. She came to salute him and he accepted her invitation to dine with her on the morrow, in spite of the protests of the Licchavi princes.

The rainy season was now commencing and the Buddha remained near Vesāli in the village of Beluva, where he fell seriously ill. One day after his recovery he was sitting in the shade with Ānanda, who said that during the illness his comfort had been the thought that the Buddha would not pass away without leaving final instructions to the Order. The reply was a remarkable address which is surely, at least, in parts the Buddha’s own words.

“What does the order expect of me, Ānanda? I have preached the truth without any distinction of esoteric or exoteric, for in respect of the truth, there is no clenched hand in the teaching of the Tathāgata. If there is anyone who thinks ‘it is I who will lead the brotherhood’ or ‘the order is dependent on me,’ it is he who should give instructions. But the Tathāgata does not think that he should lead the order or that the order is dependent on him. Why then should he leave instructions? I am an old man now, and full of years, my pilgrimage is finished, I have reached my sum of days, I am turning eighty years; and just as a worn-out cart can only be made to move along with much additional care, so can the body of the Tathāgata be kept going only with much additional care. It is only when the Tathāgata, ceasing to attend to any outward thing becomes plunged in meditation, it is only then that the body of the Tathāgata is at ease. Therefore, Ānanda, be a lamp and a refuge to yourselves. Seek no other refuge. Let the Truth be your lamp and refuge; seek no refuge elsewhere.

“And they, Ānanda, who now or when I am dead shall be a lamp and a refuge to themselves, seeking no other refuge but

1 She was a noted character in Vesāli. In Mahāvag. viii. 1, people are represented as saying that it was through her the place was so flourishing and that it would be a good thing if there were some one like her in Rājagaha.
taking the Truth as their lamp and refuge, these shall be my foremost disciples—these who are anxious to learn."

This discourse is succeeded by a less convincing episode, in which the Buddha tells Ānanda that he can prolong his life to the end of a world-period if he desires it. But though the hint was thrice repeated, the heedless disciple did not ask the Master to remain in the world. When he had gone, Māra, the Evil one, appeared and urged on the Buddha that it was time for him to pass away. He replied that he would die in three months but not before he had completely established the true religion. Thus he deliberately rejected his allotted span of life and an earthquake occurred. He explained the cause of it to Ānanda, who saw his mistake too late. "Enough, Ānanda, the time for making such a request is past."

The narrative becomes more human when it relates how one afternoon he looked at the town and said, "This will be the last time that the Tathāgata will behold Vesāli. Come, Ānanda, let us go to Bhandagāma." After three halts he arrived at Pāvā and stopped in the mango grove of Cunda, a smith, who invited him to dinner and served sweet rice, cakes, and a dish which has been variously interpreted as dried boar's flesh or a kind of truffle. The Buddha asked to be served with this dish and bade him give the sweet rice and cakes to the brethren. After eating some of it he ordered the rest to be buried, saying that no one in heaven or earth except a Buddha could digest it, a strange remark to chronicle since it was this meal which killed him. But before he died he sent word to Cunda that he had no need to feel remorse and that the two most meritorious offerings in the world are the first meal given to a Buddha after he has obtained enlightenment and the last one given him before his death. On leaving Cunda's house he was attacked by dysentery and violent pains but bore them patiently and started for Kusinārā with his disciples. In going thither he crossed the river Kakutthā, and some verses inserted into the

1 The whole passage is interesting as displaying even in the Pali Canon the germs of the idea that the Buddha is an eternal spirit only partially manifested in the limits of human life. In the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta Gotama is only voluntarily subject to natural death.

2 The phrase occurs again in the Sutta-Nipāta. Its meaning is not clear to me.

3 The text seems to represent him as crossing first a streamlet and then the river.
text, which sound like a very old ballad, relate how he bathed in it and then, weary and worn out, lay down on his cloak. A curious incident occurs here. A young Mallian, named Pukkusa, after some conversation with the Buddha, presents him with a robe of cloth of gold, but when it is put on it seems to lose its splendour, so exceedingly clear and bright is his skin. Gotama explains that there are two occasions when the skin of a Buddha glows like this—the night of his enlightenment and the night before his death. The transfiguration of Christ suggests itself as a parallel and is also associated with an allusion to his coming death. Most people have seen a face so light up under the influence of emotion that this popular metaphor seemed to express physical truth and it is perhaps not excessive to suppose that in men of exceptional gifts this illumination may have been so bright as to leave traces in tradition.

Then they went on to a grove at Kusinârâ, and he lay down on a couch spread between two Sâla trees. These trees were in full bloom, though it was not the season for their flowering; heavenly strains and odours filled the air and spirits unseen crowded round the bed. But Ânanda, we are told, went into the Vihâra, which was apparently also in the grove, and stood leaning against the lintel weeping at the thought that he was to lose so kind a master. The Buddha sent for him and said, "Do not weep. Have I not told you before that it is the very nature of things most near and dear to us that we must part from them, leave them, sever ourselves from them? All that is born, brought into being and put together carries within itself the necessity of dissolution. How then is it possible that such a being should not be dissolved? No such condition is possible. For a long time, Ânanda, you have been very near me by words of love, kind and good, that never varies and is beyond all measure. You have done well, Ânanda. Be earnest in effort and you too shall soon be free from the great evils—from sensuality, from individuality, from delusion and from ignorance."

The Indians have a strong feeling that persons of distinction

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1 It is not said how much time elapsed between the meal at Cunda's and the arrival at Kusinârâ but since it was his last meal, he probably arrived the same afternoon.
should die in a suitable place\(^1\), and now comes a passage in which Ânanda begs the Buddha not to die “in this little wattle and daub town in the midst of the jungle” but rather in some great city. The Buddha told him that Kusinârâ had once been the capital of King Mahâsudassana and a scene of great splendour in former ages. This narrative is repeated in an amplified form in the Sutta and Jâtaka\(^2\) called Mahâsudassana, in which the Buddha is said to have been that king in a previous birth.

Kusinârâ was at that time one of the capitals of the Mallas, who were an aristocratic republic like the Sâkyas and Vajjians. At the Buddha’s command Ânanda went to the Council hall and summoned the people. “Give no occasion to reproach yourself hereafter saying, The Tathâgata died in our own village and we neglected to visit him in his last hours.” So the Mallas came and Ânanda presented them by families to the dying Buddha as he lay between the flowering trees, saying “Lord, a Malla of such and such a name with his children, his wives, his retinue and his friends humbly bows down at the feet of the Blessed One.”

A monk called Subhadda, who was not a believer, also came and Ânanda tried to turn him away but the Buddha over hearing said “Do not keep out Subhadda. Whatever he may ask of me he will ask from a desire for knowledge and not to annoy me and he will quickly understand my replies.” He was the last disciple whom the Buddha converted, and he straightway became an Arhat.

Now comes the last watch of the night. “It may be, Ânanda,” said the Buddha, “that some of you may think, the word of the Master is ended. We have no more a teacher. But you should not think thus. The truths and the rules which I have declared and laid down for you all, let them be the teacher for you after I am gone.

“When I am gone address not one another as hitherto, saying ‘Friend.’ An elder brother may address a younger brother by his name or family-name or as friend, but a younger brother should say to an elder, Sir, or Lord.

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\(^1\) Cf. Lyall’s poem, on a Rajput Chief of the Old School, who when nearing his end has to leave his pleasure garden in order that he may die in the ancestral castle.

\(^2\) Dig. Nik. 17 and Jâtaka 95.
"When I am gone let the order, if it should so wish, abolish all the lesser and minor precepts."

Thus in his last address the dying Buddha disclaims, as he had disclaimed before in talking to Ánanda, all idea of dictating to the order: his memory is not to become a paralyzing tradition. What he had to teach, he has taught freely, holding back nothing in "a clenched fist." The truths are indeed essential and immutable. But they must become a living part of the believer, until he is no longer a follower but a light unto himself. The rest does not matter: the order can change all the minor rules if expedient. But in everyday life discipline and forms must be observed: hitherto all have been equal compared with the teacher, but now the young must show more respect for the older. And in the same spirit of solicitude for the order he continues:

"When I am gone, the highest penalty should be imposed on Channa." "What is that, Lord?" "Let him say what he likes, but the brethren should not speak to him or exhort him or admonish him.""

The end approaches. "It may be, that there is some doubt or misgiving in the mind of some as to the Buddha, or the truth, or the path, or the way. Enquire freely. Do not have to reproach yourselves afterwards with the thought, 'Our teacher was face to face with us and we could not bring ourselves to enquire when we were face to face with him.'" All were silent. A second and third time he put the same question and there was silence still. "It may be, that you put no questions out of awe for the teacher. Let one friend communicate to another." There was still silence, till Ánanda said "How wonderful, Lord, and how marvellous. In this whole assembly there is no one who has any doubt or misgiving as to the Buddha, the truth, the path and the way." "Out of the fulness of faith hast thou spoken Ánanda, but the Tathāgata knows for certain that it is so. Even the most backward of all these five hundred brethren has become converted and is no longer liable to be born in a state of suffering and is assured of final salvation."

"Behold, I exhort you saying, The elements of being are

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1 It is said that this discipline was efficacious and that Channa became an Arhat.
transitory. Strive earnestly. These were the last words of the Tathāgata.” Then he passed through a series of trances (no less than twenty stages are enumerated) and expired.

An earthquake and thunder, as one might have predicted, occurred at the moment of his death but comparatively little stress is laid on these prodigies. Anuruddha seems to have taken the lead among the brethren and bade Ānanda announce the death to the Mallas. They heard it with cries of grief: “Too soon has the Blessed One passed away. Too soon has the light gone out of the world.”

No less than six days were passed in preparation for the obsequies. On the seventh they decided to carry the body to the south of the city and there burn it. But when they en- deavoured to lift it, they found it immoveable. Anuruddha explained that spirits who were watching the ceremony wished it to be carried not outside the city but through it. When this was done the corpse moved easily and the heaven rained flowers. The meaning of this legend is that the Mallas considered a corpse would have defiled the city and therefore proposed to carry it outside. By letting it pass through the city they showed that it was not the ordinary relics of impure humanity.

Again, when they tried to light the funeral pile it would not catch fire. Anuruddha explained that this delay was due to the intervention of spirits who wished that Mahākassapa, the same whom the Buddha had converted at Uruvela and then on his way to pay his last respects, should arrive before the cremation. When he came attended by five hundred monks the pile caught fire of itself and the body was consumed completely.

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1 It is difficult to find a translation of these words which is both accurate and natural in the mouth of a dying man. The Pali text "vayadhammado saṅkhārān" (transitory-by-nature are the Saṅkhāras) is brief and simple but any correct and adequate rendering sounds metaphysical and is dramatically inappropriate. Perhaps the rendering “All compound things must decompose” expresses the Buddha’s meaning best. But the verbal antithesis between compound and decomposing is not in the original and though saṅkhāra is etymologically the equivalent of confection or synthesis it hardly means what we call a compound thing as opposed to a simple thing.

2 The Buddha before his death had explained that the corpse of a Buddha should be treated like the corpse of a universal monarch. It should be wrapped in layers of new cloth and laid in an iron vessel of oil. Then it should be burnt and a Dagoba should be erected at four cross roads.
leaving only the bones. Streams of rain extinguished the flames and the Mallas took the bones to their council hall. There they set round them a hedge of spears and a fence of bows and honoured them with dance and song and offerings of garlands and perfumes.

Whatever may be thought of this story, the veneration of the Buddha’s relics, which is attested by the Piprava vase, is a proof that we have to do with a man rather than a legend. The relics may all be false, but the fact that they were venerated some 250 years after his death shows that the people of India thought of him not as an ancient semi-divine figure like Rama or Krishna but as something human and concrete.

Seven persons or communities sent requests for a portion of the relics, saying that they would erect a stupa over them and hold a feast. They were King Ajātashatru of Magadha, the Licchavis of Vesāli, the Sākyas of Kapilavatthu, the Bulis of Allakappa, the Koṇiyas of Rāmagāma, the Mallas of Pāvā and the Brahman of Vēthadīpa. All except the last were Kshatriyas and based their claim on the ground that they like the Buddha belonged to the warrior caste. The Mallas at first refused, but a Brahman called Dona bade them not quarrel over the remains of him who taught forbearance. So he divided the relics into eight parts, one for Kusinārā and one for each of the other seven claimants. At this juncture the Moriyas of Pipphalivana sent in a claim for a share but had to be content with the embers of the pyre since all the bones had been distributed. Then eight stupas were built for the relics in the towns mentioned and one over the embers and one by Dona the Brahman over the iron vessel in which the body had been burnt.

Thus ended the career of a man who was undoubtedly one of the greatest intellectual and moral forces that the world has yet seen, but it is hard to arrive at any certain opinion as to the details of his character and abilities, for in the later accounts he is deified and in the Pitakas though veneration has not gone so far as this, he is ecclesiasticized and the human side is neglected. The narrative moves like some stately ceremonial in

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1 The Mallas had two capitals, Kusinārā and Pāvā, corresponding to two subdivisions of the tribe.
which emotion and incident would be out of place until it reaches the strange deathbed, spread between the flowering trees, and Ānanda introduces with the formality of a court chamberlain the Malla householders who have come to pay their last respects and bow down at the feet of the dying teacher. The scenes described are like stained glass windows; the Lord preaching in the centre, sinners repenting and saints listening, all in harmonious colours and studied postures. But the central figure remains somewhat aloof; when once he had begun his ministry he laboured uninterruptedly and with continual success, but the foundation of the kingdom of Righteousness seems less like the triumphant issue of a struggle than the passage through the world of some compassionate angel. This is in great part due to the fact that the Pitakas are works of edification. True, they set before us the teacher as well as his teaching but they speak of his doings and historical surroundings only in order to provide a proper frame for the law which he preached. A less devout and more observant historian would have arranged the picture differently and even in the narratives that have come down to us there are touches of human interest which seem authentic.

When the Buddha was dying Ānanda wept because he was about to lose so kind a master and the Buddha’s own language to him is even more affectionate. He cared not only for the organization of the order but for its individual members. He is frequently represented as feeling that some disciple needed a particular form of instruction and giving it. Nor did he fail to provide for the comfort of the sick and weary. For instance a ballad\(^1\) relates how Panthaka driven from his home took refuge at the door of the monastery garden. “Then came the Lord and stroked my head and taking me by the arm led me into the garden of the monastery and out of kindness he gave me a towel for my feet.” A striking anecdote\(^2\) relates how he once found a monk who suffered from a disagreeable disease lying on the ground in a filthy state. So with Ānanda’s assistance he washed him and lifting him up with his own hands laid him on his bed. Then he summoned the brethren and told

\(^1\) Theragāthā 557 ff. Water to refresh tired and dusty feet is commonly offered to anyone who comes from a distance.

\(^2\) Mahāvag. viii. 26.
them that if a sick brother had no special attendant the whole order should wait on him. "You, monks, have no mothers or fathers to care for you. If you do not wait one on the other, who is there who will wait on you? Whosoever would wait on me, he should wait on the sick." This last recalls Christ's words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these brethren, ye have done it unto me." And, if his approval of monks being deaf to the claims of family affection seems unfeeling, it should also be mentioned that in the book called *Songs of the Nuns* women relate how they were crazy at the loss of their children but found complete comfort and peace in his teaching. Sometimes we are told that when persons whom he wished to convert proved refractory he "suffused them with the feeling of his love" until they yielded to his influence. We can hardly doubt that this somewhat cumbrous phrase preserves a tradition of his personal charm and power.

The beauty of his appearance and the pleasant quality of his voice are often mentioned but in somewhat conventional terms which inspire no confidence that they are based on personal reminiscence, nor have the most ancient images which we possess any claim to represent his features, for the earliest of them are based on Greek models and it was not the custom to represent him by a figure until some centuries after his death. I can imagine that the truest idea of his person is to be obtained not from the abundant effigies which show him as a somewhat sanctimonious ascetic, but from statues of him as a young man, such as that found at Sarnath, which may possibly preserve not indeed the physiognomy of Gotama but the general physique of a young Nepalese prince, with powerful limbs and features and a determined mouth. For there is truth at the bottom of the saying that Gotama was born to be either a Buddha or a universal monarch: he would have made a good general, if he had not become a monk.

We are perhaps on firmer ground when we find speakers in the Pitakas commenting on his calm and bright expression and

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1 *E.g.* Therigāthā 133 ff. It should also be remembered that orientals, particularly Chinese and Japanese, find Christ's behaviour to his mother as related in the gospels very strange.

2 *E.g.* Roja, the Malla, in Mahāvag. vi. 36 and the account of the interview with the Five Monks in the Nidanakathā (Rhys Davids, *Budd. Birth Stories*, p. 112).

3 *E.g.* Maj. Nik. 36.
his unruffled courtesy in discussion. Of his eloquence it is hard to judge. The Suttas may preserve his teaching and some of his words but they are probably rearrangements made for recitation. Still it is impossible to prove that he did not himself adopt this style, particularly when age and iteration had made the use of certain formulae familiar to him. But though these repetitions and subdivisions of arrangement are often wearisome, there are not wanting traces of another manner, which suggest a terse and racy preacher going straight to the point and driving home his meaning with homely instances.

Humour often peeps through the Buddha’s preaching. It pervades the Jātaka stories, and more than once he is said to have smiled when remembering some previous birth. Some suttas, such as the tales of the Great King of Glory, and of King Mahā Vijita’s sacrifice, are simply Jātakas in another form—interesting stories full of edification for those who can understand but not to be taken as a narrative of facts. At other times he simply states the ultimate facts of a case and leaves them in their droll incongruity. Thus when King Ajātasaṭṭu was moved and illuminated by his teaching, he observed to his disciples that His Majesty had all the makings of a saint in him, if only he had not killed that excellent man his own father. Somewhat similar is his judgment on two naked ascetics, who imitated in all things the ways of a dog and a cow respectively, in the hope of thus obtaining salvation. When pressed to say what their next birth would be, he opined that if their penance was successful they would be reborn as dogs and cows, if unsuccessful, in hell. Irony and modesty are combined in his rejection of extravagant praise. “Such faith have I, Lord” said Sāriputta, “that methinks there never has been nor will be nor is now any other greater or wiser than the Blessed One.” “Of course, Sāriputta” is the reply, “you have known all the Buddhas of the past.” “No, Lord.” “Well then, you know those of the future.” “No, Lord.” “Then at least you know me and have penetrated my mind thoroughly.” “Not even that, Lord.” “Then why, Sāriputta, are your words so grand and bold.”

There is much that is human in these passages yet we should

1 Dig. Nik. xvii. and v.  
2 Maj. Nik. 57.  
3 Mahāparib. Sutta, r. 61.
be making a fancy portrait did we allow ourselves to emphasize them too much and neglect the general tone of the Pitakas. These scriptures are the product of a school; but that school grew up under the Buddha's personal influence and more than that is rooted in the very influences and tendencies which produced the Buddha himself. The passionless, intellectual aloofness; the elemental simplicity with which the facts of life are stated and explained without any concession to sentiment, the rigour of the prescription for salvation, that all sensual desire and attachment must be cut off, are too marked and consistent for us to suppose them due merely to monkish inability to understand the more human side of his character. The Buddha began his career as an Indian Muni, one supposed to be free from all emotions and intent only on seeking deliverance from every tie connecting him with the world. This was expected of him and had he done no more it would have secured him universal respect. The fact that he did a great deal more, that he devoted his life to active preaching, that he offered to all happiness and escape from sorrow, that he personally aided with advice and encouragement all who came to him, caused both his contemporaries and future generations to regard him as a saviour. His character and the substance of his teaching were admirably suited to the needs of the religious world of India in his day. Judged by the needs of other temperaments, which are entitled to neither more nor less consideration, they seem too severe, too philosophic and the later varieties of Buddhism have endeavoured to make them congenial to less strenuous natures.

Before leaving the personality of the Buddha, we must say a word about the more legendary portions of his biography, for though of little importance for history they have furnished the chief subjects of Buddhist art and influenced the minds of his followers as much as or more than the authentic incidents of his career. The later legend has not distorted the old narrative. It is possible that all its incidents may be founded on stories

1 The earliest sources for these legends are the Mahâvastu, the Sanskrit Vinayas (preserved in Chinese translations), the Lalita Vistara, the Introduction to the Jâtaka and the Buddha-carita. For Burmese, Sinhalese, Tibetan and Chinese lives of the Buddha, see the works of Bigandet, Hardy, Rockhill and Schieffner, Wieger and Beal. See also Foucher, L'histoire indienne des actes du Bouddha and Hackin, Scènes de la Vie du Buddha d'après des peintures tibétaines.
known to the compilers of the Pitakas, though this is not at present demonstrable, but they are embellished by an unstinted use of the supernatural and of the hyperbole usual in Indian poetry. The youthful Buddha moves through showers of flowers and an atmosphere crowded with attendant deities. He cannot even go to school without an escort of ten thousand children and a hundred thousand maidens and astonishes the good man who proposes to teach him the alphabet by suggesting sixty-four systems of writing.

The principal scenes in this legend are as follows. The Bodhisattva, that is the Buddha to-be, resides in the Tusita Heaven and selects his birth-place and parentage. He then enters the womb of his mother Māyā in the shape of a white elephant, which event she sees in a dream. Brahmans are summoned and interpret the vision to mean that her son will be a Universal Monarch or a Buddha. When near her confinement Māyā goes to visit her parents but on the way brings forth her son in the Lumbini grove. As she stands upright holding the bough of a tree, he issues from her side without pain to her and is received by deities, but on touching the ground, takes seven steps and says, “I am the foremost in the world.” On the same day are born several persons who play a part in his life—his wife, his horse, Ānanda, Bimbisāra and others. Asita does homage to him, as does also his father, and it is predicted that he will become a Buddha and renounce the world. His father in his desire to prevent this excludes him in the enjoyment of all luxury. At the ploughing festival he falls into a trance under a tree and the shadow stands still to protect him and does not change. Again his father does him homage. He is of herculean strength and surpasses all as an archer. He marries his cousin Yasodharā, when sixteen years old. Then come the four visions, which are among the scenes most frequently depicted in modern sacred art. As he is driving in the palace grounds the gods show him an old man, a sick man, a corpse and a monk of happy countenance. His charioteer explains what they are and he determines to abandon the world. It was at this time that his son was born and on hearing the news he said that a new fetter now bound him to worldly life but still decided to execute his resolve. That night he could take no pleasure in the music of the singing women who were wont to play to
him and they fell asleep. As he looked at their sleeping forms he felt disgust and ordered Channa, his charioteer, to saddle Kanṭhaka, a gigantic white horse, eighteen cubits long from head to tail. Meanwhile he went to his wife's room and took a last but silent look as she lay sleeping with her child.

Then he started on horseback attended by Channa and a host of heavenly beings who opened the city gates. Here he was assailed by Māra the Tempter who offered him universal empire but in vain. After jumping the river Anomā on his steed, he cut off his long hair with his sword and flinging it up into the air wished it might stay there if he was really to become a Buddha. It remained suspended; admiring gods placed it in a heavenly shrine and presented Gotama with the robes of a monk.

Not much is added to the account of his wanderings and austerities as given in the Pitakas, but the attainment of Buddhahood naturally stimulates the devout imagination. At daybreak Gotama sits at the foot of a tree, lighting up the landscape with the golden rays which issue from his person. Sujārā a noble maiden and her servant Pūrṇā offer him rice and milk in a golden vessel and he takes no more food for seven weeks. He throws the vessel into the river, wishing that if he is to become a Buddha it may ascend the stream against the current. It does so and then sinks to the abode of the Nāgas. Towards evening he walks to the Bodhi-tree and meets a grass-cutter who offers him grass to make a seat. This he accepts and taking his seat vows that rather than rise before attaining Buddhahood, he will let his blood dry up and his body decay. Then comes the great assault of the Tempter. Māra attacks him in vain both with an army of terrible demons and with bands of seductive nymphs. During the conflict Māra asked him who is witness to his ever having performed good deeds or bestowed alms? He called on the earth to bear witness. Earthquakes and thunders responded to the appeal and the goddess of the Earth herself rose and bore testimony. The rout of Māra is supposed to have taken place in the late evening. The full moon¹ came out and in the three watches of the night he attained enlightenment.

The Pali and early Sanskrit texts place the most striking

¹ It was the full moon of the month Vaiśākha.
legendary scenes in the first part of the Buddha’s life just as scribes give freest rein to their artistic imagination in tracing the first letter and word of a chapter. In the later version, the whole text is coloured and gilded with a splendour that exceeds the hues of ordinary life but no incidents of capital importance are added after the Enlightenment. Historical names still occur and the Buddha is still a wandering teacher with a band of disciples, but his miracles continually convulse the universe: he preaches to mankind from the sky and retires for three months to the Tusita Heaven in order to instruct his mother, who had died before she could hear the truth from her son’s lips, and often the whole scene passes into a vision where the ordinary limits of space, time and number cease to have any meaning.

1 The best known of the later biographies of the Buddha, such as the Lalita Vistara and the Buddha-carita of Āvaghoṣha stop short after the Enlightenment.
CHAPTER IX

THE BUDDHA COMPARED WITH OTHER RELIGIOUS TEACHERS

The personality of the Buddha invites comparison with the founders of the other world-religions, Christ and Mohammed. We are tempted to ask too if there is any resemblance between him and Confucius, a contemporary Asiatic whose influence has been equally lasting, but here there is little common ground. For Confucius’s interest was mainly in social and ethical problems, not in religion. He laid stress on those ties of kinship and society, respecting which the Indian monk (like Christ) sometimes spoke harshly, although there is a strong likeness between the moral code of the Buddhist layman and Confucianism: he was full of humility and respect for antiquity, whereas Gotama had a good share of that self-confidence which is necessary for all who propound to the world a new religion.1

But with Mohammed comparison, or rather contrast, is easier. Both were seekers after truth: both found what they believed to be the truth only when of mature years, Gotama when about thirty-six, Mohammed when forty or more: both lived to be elderly men and possessed great authority. But there the analogy ends. Perhaps no single human being has had so great an effect on the world as Mohammed. His achievements are personal and, had he never lived, it is not clear that the circumstances of the age would have caused some one else to play approximately the same part. He more than Cæsar or Alexander was individually the author of a movement which transformed part of three continents. No one else has been able to fuse the two noble instincts of religion and empire in so perfect a manner, perfect because the two do not conflict or jar, as do the teachings of Christ and the pretensions of his Church to temporal power.

1 There are some curious coincidences of detail between the Buddha and Confucius. Both disliked talking about prodigies (Analecta vii. 20) Confucius concealed nothing from his disciples (ib. 23), just as the Buddha had no “closed fist,” but he would not discuss the condition of the dead (Ana. xi. 11), just as the Buddha held it unprofitable to discuss the fate of the saint after death. Neither had any great opinion of the spirits worshipped in their respective countries.
But it is precisely this fusion of religion and politics which disqualifies Islam as a universal religion and prevents it from satisfying the intellectual and spiritual wants of that part of humanity which is most intellectual and most spiritual. Law and religion are inextricably mixed in it and a Moslem, more than the most superstitious of Buddhists or Christians, is bound by a vast number of ties and observances which have nothing to do with religion. It is in avoiding these trammels that the superior religious instinct of Gotama shows itself. He was aided in this by the temper of his times. Though he was of the warrior caste and naturally brought into association with princes, he was not on that account tempted to play a part in politics, for to the Hindus, then as now, renunciation of the world was indispensable for serious religion and there is no instance of a teacher obtaining a hearing among them without such renunciation as a preliminary. According to Indian popular ideas a genius might become either an Emperor or a Buddha but not like Mohammed a mixture of the two. But the danger which beset Gotama, and which he consistently and consciously avoided, though Mohammed could not, was to give authoritative decisions on unessential points as to both doctrine and practice. There was clearly a party which wished to make the rule of his order more severe and, had he consented, the religious world of his day would have approved. But by so doing he would have made Buddhism an Indian sect like Jainism, incapable of flourishing in lands with other institutions. If Buddhism has had little influence outside Asia, that is because there are differences of temperament in the world, not because it sanctions anachronisms or prescribes observances of a purely local and temporary value. In all his teaching Gotama insists on what is essential only and will not lend his name and authority to what is merely accessory. He will not for instance direct or even recommend his disciples to be hermits. “Whoever wishes may dwell in a wood and whoever wishes may dwell near a village.” And in his last days he bade them be a light unto themselves and gave them authority to change all the lesser precepts. It is true that the order decided to make no use of this permission, but the spirit which dictated it has shaped the destinies of the faith.

Akin to this contrast is another—that between the tolerance of Gotama and the persecuting spirit of Islam. Mohammed and
his followers never got rid of the idea that any other form of
religion is an insult to the Almighty: that infidels should if
possible be converted by compulsion, or, if that were impossible,
allowed to exist only on sufferance and in an inferior position.
Such ideas were unknown to Gotama. He laboured not for his
own or his Creator's glory but simply and solely to benefit
mankind. Conversion by force had no meaning for him, for
what he desired was not a profession of allegiance but a change
of disposition and amid many transformations his Church has
not lost this temper.

When we come to compare Gotama and Christ we are struck
by many resemblances of thought but also by great differences
of circumstances and career. Both were truly spiritual teachers
who rose above forms and codes: both accepted the current
ideals of their time and strove to become the one a Buddha,
the other Messiah. But at the age when Christ was executed
Gotama was still in quest of truth and still on the wrong track.
He lived nearly fifty years longer and had ample opportunity
of putting his ideas into practice. So far as our meagre traditions
allow us to trace the development of the two, the differences
are even more fundamental. Peaceful as was the latter part of
Gotama's life, the beginning was a period of struggle and dis-
illusion. He broke away from worldly life to study philosophy:
he broke away from philosophy to wear out his body with the
severest mortification; that again he found to be vanity and
only then did he attain to enlightenment. And though he offers
salvation to all without distinction, he repeatedly says that it
is difficult: with hard wrestling has he won the truth and it is
hard for ordinary men to understand.

Troubled as was the life of Christ, it contains no struggle of
this sort. As a youth he grew up in a poor family where the
disenchantment of satiety was unknown: his genius first found
expression in sermons delivered in the synagogue—the ordinary
routine of Jewish ritual: his appearance as a public teacher and
his ultimate conviction that he was the Messiah were a natural
enlargement of his sphere, not a change of method: the tempta-
tion, though it offers analogies to Gotama's mental struggle and
particularly to the legends about Mara, was not an internal
revolution in which old beliefs were seen to be false and new
knowledge arose from their ashes. So far as we know, his inner
life was continuous and undisturbed, and its final expression is emotional rather than intellectual. He gives no explanations and leaves no feeling that they are necessary. He is free in his use of metaphor and chary of definition. The teaching of the Buddha on the other hand is essentially intellectual. The nature and tastes of his audience were a sufficient justification for his style, but it indicates a temper far removed from the unquestioning and childlike faith of Christ. We can hardly conceive him using such a phrase as Our Father, but we may be sure that if he had done so he would have explained why and how and to what extent such words can be properly used of the Deity.

The most sceptical critics of the miracles recorded in the Gospels can hardly doubt that Christ possessed some special power of calming and healing nervous maladies and perhaps others. Sick people naturally turned to him: they were brought to him when he arrived in a town. Though the Buddha was occasionally kind to the sick, no such picture is drawn of the company about him and persons afflicted with certain diseases could not enter the order. When the merchant Anāthapiṇḍika is seriously ill, he sends a messenger with instructions to inform the Buddha and Sāriputta of his illness and to add in speaking to Sāriputta that he begs him to visit him out of compassion. He does not presume to address the same request to the Buddha. Christ teaches that the world is evil or, perhaps we should say, spoiled, but wishes to remove the evil and found the Kingdom of Heaven: the Buddha teaches that birth, sickness and death are necessary conditions of existence and that disease, which like everything else has its origin in Karma, can be destroyed only when the cause is destroyed. Nor do we find ascribed to him that love of children and tenderness towards the weak and erring which are beautiful features in the portrait of Christ. He had no prejudices: he turned robust villains like Angulimāla, the brigand, into saints and dined with prostitutes but one

1 Maj. Nik. 143.
2 The miraculous cure of Suppiyā (Mahāvag. vi. 23) is no exception. She was ill not because of the effects of Karma but because, according to the legend, she had cut off a piece of her flesh to cure a sick monk who required meat broth. The Buddha healed her.
3 The most human and kindly portrait of the Buddha is that furnished by the Commentary on the Thera- and Therī-gāthā. See Thera-gāthā xxx, xxxi and Mrs Rhys Davids' trans. of Therī-gāthā, pp. 71, 79.
cannot associate him with simple friendly intercourse. When he accepted invitations he did not so much join in the life of the family which he visited as convert the entertainment offered to him into an edifying religious service. Yet in propaganda and controversy he was gracious and humane beyond the measure of all other teachers. He did not call the priests of his time a generation of vipers, though he laughed at their ceremonies and their pretensions to superior birth.

Though the Buddha passed through intellectual crises such as the biographies of Christ do not hint at, yet in other matters it is he rather than Christ who offers a picture and example of peace. Christ enjoyed with a little band of friends an intimacy which the Hindu gave to none, but from the very commencement of his mission he is at enmity with what he calls the world. The world is evil and a great event is coming of double import, for it will bring disaster on the wicked as well as happiness for the good. "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." He is angry with the world because it will not hear him. He declares that it hates him and the gospel according to St John even makes him say, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." The little towns of Galilee are worse in his eyes than the wicked cities of antiquity because they are not impressed by his miracles and Jerusalem which has slighted all the prophets and finally himself is to receive signal punishment. The shadow of impending death fell over the last period of his ministry and he felt that he was to be offered as a sacrifice. The Jews even seem to have thought at one time that he was unreasonably alarmed.

But the Buddha was not angry with the world. He thought of it as unsatisfactory and transitory rather than wicked, as ignorant rather than rebellious. He troubled little about people who would not listen. The calm and confidence which so many narratives attribute to him rarely failed to meet with the respect which they anticipated. In his life there is no idea of sacrifice, no element of the tragic, no nervous irritability. When Devadatta meditated his assassination, he is represented as telling his disciples that they need not be uneasy because it was physically impossible to kill a Buddha. The saying is perhaps not historical but it illustrates Indian sentiment. In his previous

1 John xvii. 9. But he prayed for his executioners.  
existences, when preparing for Buddhahood, he had frequently
given his life for others, not because it was any particular good
to them but in order to perfect his character for his own great
career and bring about the selflessness which is essential to a
Buddha. When once he had attained enlightenment any idea
of sacrifice, such as the shepherd laying down his life for the
sheep, had no meaning. It would be simply the destruction of
the more valuable for the less valuable. Even the modern
developments of Buddhism which represent the Buddha Amida
as a saviour do not contain the idea that he gives up his life for
his followers.

Gotama instituted a religious order and lived long enough
to see it grow out of infancy, but its organization was gradual
and for a year or two it was simply a band of disciples not more
bound by rules than the seventy whom Christ sent forth to
preach. Would Christ, had he lived longer, have created some-
thing analogous to the Buddhist sangha, a community not
conflicting with national and social institutions but independent
of them? The question is vain and to Europeans Christ's
sketch of the Christian life will appear more satisfactory than
the finished portrait of the Bhikkhu. But though his maxims
are the perfect expression of courtesy and good feeling with an
occasional spice of paradox, such as the command to love one's
enemies, yet the experience of nearly twenty centuries has
shown that this morality is not for the citizens of the world.
The churches which give themselves his name preach with rare
exceptions that soldiering, financing and the business of govern-
ment—things about which he cared as little as do the birds and
the lilies of the field—are the proper concern of Christian men
and one wonders whether he would not, had his life been pro-
longed, have seen that many of his precepts, such as turning
the other cheek and not resisting evil, are incompatible with
ordinary institutions and have followed the example of the
great Indian by founding a society in which they could be kept.
The monastic orders of the Roman and Eastern Churches show
that such a need was felt.

There are many resemblances between the Gospels and the
teaching of the Buddha but the bases of the two doctrines are
different and, if the results are sometimes similar, this shows
that the same destination can be reached by more than one
road. It is perhaps the privilege of genius to see the goal by intuition: the road and the vehicle are subsidiary and may be varied to suit the minds of different nations. Christ, being a Jew, took for his basis a refined form of the old Jewish theism. He purged Jehovah of his jealousy and prejudices and made him a spirit of pure benevolence who behaves to men as a loving father and bids them behave to one another as loving brethren. Such ideas lie outside the sphere of Gotama's thought and he would probably have asked why on this hypothesis there is any evil in the world. That is a question which the Gospels are chary of discussing but they seem to indicate that the disobedience and sinfulness of mankind are the root of evil. A godly world would be a happy world. But the Buddha would have said that though the world would be very much happier if all its inhabitants were moral and religious, yet the evils inherent in individual existence would still remain; it would still be impermanent and unsatisfactory.

Yet the Buddha and Christ are alike in points which are of considerable human interest, though they are not those emphasized by the Churches. Neither appears to have had much taste for theology or metaphysics. Christ ignored them: the Buddha said categorically that such speculations are vain. Indeed it is probably a general law in religions that the theological phase does not begin until the second generation, when the successors of the founder try to interpret and harmonize his words. He himself sees clearly and says plainly what mankind ought to do. Neither the Buddha, nor Christ, nor Mohammed cared for much beyond this, and such of their sayings as have reference to the whence, the whither and the why of the universe are obscure precisely because these questions do not fall within the field of religious genius and receive no illumination from its light. Argumentative as the Buddhist suttas are, their aim is strictly practical, even when their language appears scholastic, and the burden of all their ratiocination is the same and very simple. Men are unhappy because of their foolish desires: to become happy they must make themselves a new heart and will and, perhaps the Buddha would have added, new eyes.

Neither the Buddha nor Christ thought it worth while to write anything and both of them ignored ceremonial and
sacerdotal codes in a way which must have astounded their contemporaries. The law-books and sacrifices to which Brahmins and Pharisees devoted time and study are simply left on one side. The former are replaced by injunctions to cultivate a good habit of mind, such as is exemplified in the Eightfold Path and the Beatitudes, the latter by some observances of extreme simplicity, such as the Pātimokkha and the Lord’s Prayer. In both cases subsequent generations felt that the provision made by the Founders was inadequate and the Buddhist and Christian Churches have multiplied ceremonies which, though not altogether unedifying, would certainly have astonished Gotama and Christ.

For Christ the greatest commandments were that a man should love God and his neighbours. This summary is not in the manner of Gotama and though love (mettā) has an important place in his teaching, it is rather an inseparable adjunct of a holy life than the force which creates and animates it. In other words the Buddha teaches that a saint must love his fellow men rather than that he who loves his fellow men is a saint. But the passages extolling mettā are numerous and striking, and European writers have, I think, shown too great a disposition to maintain that mettā is something less than Christian love and little more than benevolent equanimity. The love of the New Testament is not ἀγάπη but ἁγάπη, a new word first used by Jewish and Christian writers and nearly the exact equivalent of mettā. For both words love is rather too strong a rendering and charity too weak. Nor is it just to say that the Buddha as compared with Christ preaches inaction. The Christian nations of Europe are more inclined to action than the Buddhist nations of Asia, yet the Beatitudes do not indicate that the strenuous life is the road to happiness. Those declared blessed are the poor, the mourners, the meek, the hungry, the pure and the persecuted. Such men have just the virtues of the patient Bhikkhu and like Christ the Buddha praised the merciful and the peacemakers. And similarly Christ’s phrase about rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s seems to dissociate his true followers (like the Bhikkhus) from political life. Money and taxes are the affair of those who put their heads on coins; God and the things which concern him have quite another sphere.
CHAPTER X

THE TEACHING OF THE BUDDHA

1

When the Buddha preached his first sermon\(^1\) to the five monks at Benares the topics he selected were the following. First comes an introduction about avoiding extremes of either self-indulgence or self-mortification. This was specially appropriate to his hearers who were ascetics and disposed to over-rate the value of austerities. Next he defines the middle way or eightfold path. Then he enunciates the four truths of the nature of suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the method of bringing about that cessation. This method is no other than the eightfold path. Then his hearers understood that whatever has a beginning must have an end. This knowledge is described as the pure and spotless Eye of Truth. The Buddha then formally admitted them as the first members of the Sangha. He then explained to them that there is no such thing as self. We are not told that they received any further instruction before they were sent forth to be teachers and missionaries: they were, it would seem, sufficiently equipped. When the Buddha instructs his sixth convert, Yasa, the introduction is slightly different, doubtless because he was a layman. It treats of “almsgiving, of moral duties, of heaven, of the evil, vanity and sinfulness of desires, of the blessings which come from abandoning desires.” Then when his catechumen’s mind was prepared, he preached to him “the chief doctrine of the Buddhas, namely suffering, its cause, its cessation and the Path.” And when Yasa understood this he obtained the Eye of Truth.

It is clear, therefore, that the Buddha regarded practice as the foundation of his system. He wished to create a temper and a habit of life. Mere acquiescence in dogma, such as a Christian creed, is not sufficient as a basis of religion and test of membership. It is only in the second stage that he enunciates

\(^1\) See chap. viii. of this book.
the four great theorems of his system (of which one, the Path, is a matter of practice rather than doctrine) and only later still that he expounds conceptions which are logically fundamental, such as his view of personality. "Just as the great ocean has only one taste, the taste of salt, so has this doctrine and discipline only one taste, the taste of emancipation." This practical aim has affected the form given to much of the Buddha's teaching, for instance the theory of the Skandhas and the chain of causation. When examined at leisure by a student of to-day, the dogmas seem formulated with imperfect logic and the results trite and obvious. But such doctrines as that evil must have a cause which can be discovered and removed by natural methods: that a bad unhappy mind can be turned into a good, happy mind by suppressing evil thoughts and cultivating good thoughts, are not commonplace even now, if they receive a practical application, and in 500 B.C. they were not commonplace in any sense.

And yet no one can read Buddhist books or associate with Buddhist monks without feeling that the intellectual element is preponderant, not the emotional. The ultimate cause of suffering is ignorance. The Buddha has won the truth by understanding the universe. Conversion is usually described by some such phrase as acquiring the Eye of Truth, rather than by words expressing belief or devotion. The major part of the ideal life, set forth in a recurring passage of the Dīgha Nikāya, consists in the creation of intellectual states, and though the Buddha disavowed all speculative philosophy his discourses are full, if not of metaphysics, at least of psychology. And this knowledge is essential. It is not sufficient to affirm one's belief in it; it must be assimilated and taken into the life of every true Buddhist. All cannot do this: most of the unconverted are blinded by lust and passion, but some are incapacitated by want of mental power. They must practise virtue and in a happier birth their minds will be enlarged.

The reader who has perused the previous chapters will have some idea of the tone and subject matter of the Buddha's preaching. We will now examine his doctrine as a system and will begin with the theory of existence, premising that it disclaims all idea of doing more than analyze our experience.

1 Cullavag. IX. 1. IV.
With speculations or assertions as to the origin, significance and purpose of the Universe, the Buddha has nothing to do. Such questions do not affect his scheme of salvation. What views—if any—he may have held or implied about them we shall gather as we go on. But it is dangerous to formulate what he did not formulate himself, and not always easy to understand what he did formulate. For his words, though often plain and striking, are, like the utterances of other great teachers, apt to provoke discordant explanations. They meet our thoughts half way, but no interpretation exhausts their meaning. When we read into them the ideas of modern philosophy and combine them into a system logical and plausible after the standard of this age, we often feel that the result is an anachronism: but if we treat them as ancient simple discourses by one who wished to make men live an austere and moral life, we still find that there are uncomfortably profound sayings which will not harmonize with this theory.

The Buddha’s aversion to speculation did not prevent him from insisting on the importance of a correct knowledge of our mental constitution, the chain of causation and other abstruse matters; nor does it really take the form of neglecting metaphysics: rather of defining them in a manner so authoritative as to imply a reserve of unimparted knowledge. Again and again questions about the fundamental mysteries of existence are put to him and he will not give an answer. It would not conduce to knowledge, peace, or freedom from passion, we are told, and, therefore, the Lord has not declared it. Therefore: not, it would seem, because he did not know, but because the discussion was not profitable. And the modern investigator, who is not so submissive as the Buddha’s disciples, asks why not? Can it be that the teacher knew of things transcendental not to be formulated in words? Once he compared the truths he had taught his disciples to a bunch of leaves which he held in his hand and the other truths which he knew but had not taught to the leaves of the whole forest in which they were walking. And the story of the blind men and the elephant seems to

1 Sam. Nik. LVI. 31.
2 Udāna vi. 4. The story is that a king bade a number of blind men examine an elephant and describe its shape. Some touched the legs, some the tusks, some the tail and so on and gave descriptions accordingly, but none had any idea of the general shape.
hint that Buddhas, those rare beings who are not blind, can see the constitution of the universe. May we then in chance phrases get a glimpse of ideas which he would not develop? It may be so, but the quest is temerarious. "What I have revealed hold as revealed, and what I have not revealed, hold as not revealed." The gracious but authoritative figure of the Master gives no further reply when we endeavour to restate his teaching in some completer form which admits of comparison with the ancient and modern philosophies of Europe.

The best introduction to his theory of existence is perhaps the instruction given to the five monks after his first sermon. The body is not the self, he says, for if it were, it would not be subject to disease and we should be able to say, let my body be or not be such and such. As the denial of the existence of the self or ego (Attā in Pali, Ātman in Sanskrit) is one of the fundamental and original tenets of Gotama, we must remember that this self whose existence is denied is something not subject to decay, and possessing perfect free will with power to exercise it. The Brahmanic Ātman is such a self but it is found nowhere in the world of our experience. For the body or form is not the self, neither is sensation or feeling (vedanā) for they are not free and eternal. Neither is perception (saññā) the self. Neither, the Buddha goes on to say, are the Sankhāras the self, and for the same reason.

Here we find ourselves sailing on the high seas of dogmatic terminology and must investigate the meaning of this important and untranslatable word. It is equivalent to the Sanskrit samskāra, which is akin to the word Sanskrit itself, and means compounding, making anything artificial and elaborate. It may be literally translated as synthesis or confection, and is often used in the general sense of phenomena since all phenomena are

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1 Or "determined."
2 Or form: ṛddhi.
3 The word Jīva, sometimes translated soul, is not equivalent to ātman. It seems to be a general expression for all the immaterial side of a human being. It is laid down (Diṅ. Nik. vi. and vii.) that it is fruitless to speculate whether the Jīva is distinct from the body or not.
4 Saññā like many technical Buddhist terms is difficult to render adequately, because it does not cover the same ground as any one English word. Its essential meaning is recognition by a mark. When we perceive a blue thing we recognize it as blue and as like other blue things that we have marked. See Mrs Rhys Davids, Dhamma-Sanga, p. 8.
compound\textsuperscript{1}. Occasionally\textsuperscript{2} we hear of three Sankhāras, body or deed, word and thought. But in later literature the Sankhāras become a category with fifty-two divisions and these are mostly mental or at least subjective states. The list opens with contact (phasso) and then follow sensation, perception, thought, reflection, memory and a series of dispositions or states such as attention, effort, joy, torpor, stupidity, fear, doubt, lightness of body or mind, pity, envy, worry, pride. As European thought does not class all these items under one heading or, in other words, has no idea equivalent to Sankhāra, it is not surprising that no adequate rendering has been found, especially as Buddhism regards everything as mere becoming, not fixed existence, and hence does not distinguish sharply between a process and a result—between the act of preparing and a preparation. Conformations, confections, syntheses, co-efficients, tendencies, potentialities have all been used as equivalents but I propose to use the Pali word as a rule. In some passages the word phenomena is an adequate literary equivalent, if it is remembered that phenomena are not thought of apart from a perceiving subject: in others some word like predispositions or tendencies is a more luminous rendering, because the Sankhāras are the potentialities for good and evil action existing in the mind as a result of Karma\textsuperscript{3}.

The Buddha has now enumerated four categories which are not the self. The fifth and last is Viññāṇa, frequently rendered by consciousness. But this word is unsuitable in so far as it suggests in English some unified and continuous mental state. Viññāṇa sometimes corresponds to thought and sometimes is hardly distinguished from perception, for it means awareness\textsuperscript{4} of what is pleasant or painful, sweet or sour and so on. But the Pitakas continually insist\textsuperscript{5} that it is not a unity and that its varieties come into being only when they receive proper nourishment or, as we should say, an adequate stimulus. Thus visual consciousness depends on the sight and on visible objects,

\textsuperscript{1} The Samyutta-Nikāya xxii. 79. 8 states that the Sankhāras are so-called because they compose what is compound (sankhatam).
\textsuperscript{2} Maj. Nik. 44.
\textsuperscript{3} In this sense Sankhāra has also some affinity to the Sanskrit use of Sampakāra to mean a sacramental rite. It is the essential nature of such a rite to produce a special effect. So too the Sankhāras present in one existence inevitably produce their effect in the next existence. For Sankhāra see also the long note by S. Z. Aung at the end of the Compendium of Philosophy (P.T.S. 1910).
\textsuperscript{4} The use of this word for Viññāṇa is, I believe, due to Mrs Rhys Davids.
\textsuperscript{5} See especially Maj. Nik. 38.
auditory consciousness on the hearing and on sounds. Viññāṇa is divided into eighty-nine classes according as it is good, bad or indifferent, but none of these classes, nor all of them together, can be called the self.

These five groups—body, feeling, perception, the sāṅkhāras, thought—are generally known as the Skandhas signifying in Sanskrit collections or aggregates. The classification adopted is not completely logical, for feeling and perception are both included in the Sāṅkhāras and also counted separately. But the object of the Buddha was not so much to analyze the physical and mental constitution of a human being as to show that this constitution contains no element which can be justly called self or soul. For this reason all possible states of mind are catalogued, sometimes under more than one head. They are none of them the self and no self, ego, or soul in the sense defined above is discernible, only aggregates of states and properties which come together and fall apart again. When we investigate ourselves we find nothing but psychical states: we do not find a psyche. The mind is even less permanent than the body, for the body may last a hundred years or so "but that which is called mind, thought or consciousness, day and night keeps perishing as one thing and springing up as another."

So in the Samyutta-Nikāya, Māra the Tempter asks the nun Vajirā by whom this being, that is the human body, is made. Her answer is "Here is a mere heap of sāṅkhāras: there is no 'being.' As when various parts are united, the word 'chariot' is used (to describe the whole), so when the skandhas are present, the word 'being' is commonly used. But it is suffering only that comes into existence and passes away." And Buddhaghosa says:

"Misery only doth exist, none miserable;
No doer is there, naught but the deed is found;
Nirvana is, but not the man that seeks it;
The path exists but not the traveller on it."

1 Pali, Khanda. But it has become the custom to use the Sanskrit term. Cf. Karma, nirvāṇa.

2 See Sam. Nik. xii. 62. For parallels to this view in modern times see William James, Text Book of Psychology, especially pp. 203, 215, 216.

3 Cf. Milinda Panha ii. 1. 1 and also the dialogue between the king of Sauvira and the Brahman in Vishnu Pur. ii. xiii.

4 Vis. Mag. chap. xvi. quoted by Warren, Buddhism in Translations, p. 146. Also it is admitted that viññāṇa cannot be disentangled and sharply distinguished from feeling and sensation. See passages quoted in Mrs Rhys Davids, Buddhist Psychology, pp. 52-54.
Thus the Buddha and his disciples rejected such ideas as soul, being and personality. But their language does not always conform to this ideal of negative precision, for the vocabulary of Pali (and still more of English) is inadequate for the task of discussing what form conduct and belief should take unless such words are used. Also the Attâ (Atman), which the Buddha denies, means more than is implied by our words self and personality. The word commonly used to signify an individual is puggalo. Thus in one sutta\(^1\) the Buddha preaches of the burden, the bearer of the burden, taking it up and laying it down. The burden is the five skandhas and the bearer is the individual or puggalo. This, if pressed, implies that there is a personality apart from the skandhas which has to bear them. But probably it should not be pressed and we should regard the utterance as merely a popular sermon using language which is, strictly speaking, metaphorical.

2

The doctrine of Anattâ—the doctrine that there is no such thing as a soul or self—is justly emphasized as a most important part of the Buddha’s teaching and Buddhist ethics might be summarized as the selfless life. Yet there is a danger that Europeans may exaggerate and misunderstand the doctrine by taking it as equivalent to a denial of the soul’s immortality or of free will or to an affirmation that mind is a function of the body. The universality of the proposition really diminishes its apparent violence and nihilism. To say that some beings have a soul and others have not is a formidable proposition, but to say that absolutely no existing person or thing contains anything which can be called a self or soul is less revolutionary than it sounds. It clearly does not deny that men exist for decades and mountains for millenniums; neither does it deny that before birth or after death there may be other existences similar to human life. It merely states that in all the world, organic and inorganic, there is nothing which is simple, self-existent, self-determined, and permanent: everything is compound, relative and transitory. The obvious fact that infancy, youth and age form a series is not denied: the series may be

\(^1\) Sam. Nik. xxii. 22. 1.
called a personality and death need not end it. The error to
be avoided is the doctrine of the Brahmans that through this
series there runs a changeless self, which assumes new phases
like one who puts on new garments.

The co-ordination and apparent unity observable in our
mental constitution is due to mano which is commonly trans-
lated mind but is really for Buddhism, as for the Upanishads,
a sensus communis. Whereas the five senses have different
spheres or fields which are independent and do not overlap,
mano has a share in all these spheres. It receives and cognizes
all sense impressions.

The philosophy of early Buddhism deals with psychology
rather than with metaphysics. It holds it profitable to analyze
and discuss man’s mental constitution, because such knowledge
leads to the destruction of false ideals and the pursuit of peace
and insight. Enquiry into the origin and nature of the external
world is not equally profitable: in fact it is a vain intellectual
pastime. Still in treating of such matters as sensation, percep-
tion and consciousness, it is impossible to ignore the question
of external objects or to avoid propounding, at least by
implication, some theory about them. In this connection we
often come upon the important word Dhamma (Sanskrit,
Dharma). It means a law, and more especially the law of the
Buddha, or, in a wider sense, justice, righteousness or religion. But outside the moral and religious sphere it is commonly used
in the plural as equivalent to phenomena, considered as in-
volving states of consciousness. The Dhamma-sangañi divides
phenomena into those which exist for the subject and those
which exist for other individuals and ignores the possibility of
things existing apart from a knowing subject. This hints at
idealism and other statements seem more precise. Thus the Saññyutta-Nikāya declares: “Verily, within this mortal body,
some six feet high, but conscious and endowed with mind, is
the world, and its origin, and its passing away.” And similarly
the problem is posed, “Where do the four elements pass away
and leave no trace behind.” Neither gods nor men can answer

1 With reference to a teacher dhamma is the doctrine which he preaches. With
reference to a disciple, it may often be equivalent to duty. Cf. the Sanskrit expres-
sions: sva-dharma, one’s own duty; para-dharma, the duty of another person or caste.
2 Dhamma-s. 1044–5.
3 II. 3. 8.
4 Dig. Nik. xi. 85.
it, and when it is referred to the Buddha, his decision is that the question is wrongly put and therefore admits of no solution. "Instead of asking where the four elements pass away without trace, you should have asked:

Where do earth, water, fire and wind,
And long and short and fine and coarse,
Pure and impure no footing find?
Where is it that both name and form
Die out and leave no trace behind?"

To that the answer is: In the mind of the Saint.

Yet it is certain that such passages should not be interpreted as equivalent to the later Yogâcâra doctrine that only thought really exists or to any form of the doctrine that the world is Mâyâ or illusion. The Pitakas leave no doubt on this point, for they elaborate with clearness and consistency the theory that sensation and consciousness depend on contact, that is contact between sense organs and sense objects. "Man is conceived as a compound of instruments, receptive and reacting" and the Samyutta-Nikâya puts into the Buddha's mouth the following dogmatic statement. "Consciousness arises because of duality. What is that duality? Visual consciousness arises because of sight and because of visible objects. Sight is transitory and mutable: it is its very nature to change. Visible objects are the same. So this duality is both in movement and transitory."

The question of the reality of the external world did not present itself to the early Buddhists. Had it been posed we may surmise that the Buddha would have replied, as in similar cases, that the question was not properly put. He would not, we may imagine, have admitted that the human mind has the creative power which idealism postulates, for such power seems to imply the existence of something like a self or âtman. But still though the Pitakas emphasize the empirical duality of sense-organs and sense-objects, they also supply a basis for the doctrines of Nâgârjuna and Asanga, which like much late Buddhist metaphysics insist on using logic in regions where the master would not use it. When it is said that the genesis of the world and its

1 Name and form is the Buddhist equivalent for subject and object or mind and body.
2 Mrs Rhys Davids, Buddhist Psychology, p. 39.
3 Sam. Nik. xxxv. 93.
4 The same formula is repeated for the other senses.
passing away are within this mortal frame, the meaning probably is that the world as we experience it with its pains and pleasures depends on the senses and that with the modification or cessation of the senses it is changed or comes to an end. In other words (for this doctrine like most of the Buddha's doctrines is at bottom ethical rather than metaphysical) the saint can make or unmake his own world and triumph over pain. But the theory of sensation may be treated not ethically but metaphysically. Sensation implies a duality and on the one side the Buddha's teaching argues that there is no permanent sentient self but merely different kinds of consciousness arising in response to different stimuli. It is admitted too that visible objects are changing and transitory like sight itself and thus there is no reason to regard the external world, which is one half of the duality, as more permanent, self-existent and continuous than the other half. When we apply to it the destructive analysis which the Buddha applied only to mental states, we easily arrive at the nihilism or idealism of the later Buddhists. Of this I will treat later. For the present we have only to note that early Buddhism holds that sensation depends on contact, that is on a duality. It does not investigate the external part of this duality and it is clear that such investigation leads to the very speculations which the Buddha declared to be unprofitable, such as arguments about the eternity and infinity of the universe.

The doctrine of Anattā is counterbalanced by the doctrine of causation. Without this latter the Buddha might seem to teach that life is a chaos of shadows. But on the contrary he teaches the universality of law, in this life and in all lives. For Hindus of most schools of thought, metempsychosis means the doctrine that the immortal soul passes from one bodily tenement to another, and is reborn again and again: karma is the law which determines the occurrence and the character of these births. In Buddhism, though the Pitakas speak continually of rebirth, metempsychosis is an incorrect expression since there is no soul to transmigrate and there is strictly speaking nothing but karma. This word, signifying literally action or act, is the name of the force which finds expression in the fact that every event is the result of causes and also is itself a cause which produces effects; further in the fact (for Indians regard it as
one) that when a life, whether of a god, man or lower creature, comes to an end, the sum of its actions (which is in many connections equivalent to personal character) takes effect as a whole and determines the character of another aggregation of skandhas—in popular language, another being—representing the net result of the life which has come to an end. Karma is also used in the more concrete sense of the merit or demerit acquired by various acts. Thus we hear of karma which manifests itself in this life, and of karma which only manifests itself in another. No explanation whatever is given of the origin of karma, of its reason, method or aims and it would not be consistent with the principles of the Buddha to give such an explanation. Indeed, though it is justifiable to speak of karma as a force which calls into being the world as we know it, such a phrase goes beyond the habitual language of early Buddhism which merely states that everything has a cause and that every one’s nature and circumstances are the result of previous actions in this or other existences. Karma is not so much invoked as a metaphysical explanation of the universe as accorded the consideration which it merits as an ultimate moral fact.

It has often been pointed out that the Buddha did not originate or even first popularize the ideas of reincarnation and karma: they are Indian, not specifically Buddhist. In fact, of all Indian systems of thought, Buddhism is the one which has the greatest difficulty in expressing these ideas in intelligible and consistent language, because it denies the existence of the ego. Some writers have gone so far as to suggest that the whole doctrine formed no part of the Buddha’s original teaching and was an accretion, or at most a concession of the master to the beliefs of his time. But I cannot think this view is correct. The idea is woven into the texture of the Buddha’s discourses. When in words which have as strong a claim as any in the Pitakas to be regarded as old and genuine he describes the stages by which he acquired enlightenment and promises the same experiences to those who observe his discipline, he says that he first followed the thread of his own previous existences through past æons, plumbing the unfathomed depths of time: next, the whole of existence was spread out before him, like a view seen from above, and he saw beings passing away from

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1 See Maj. Nik. 36 for his own experiences and Dig. Nik. 2. 93–96.
one body and taking shape in another, according to their deeds. Only when he understood both the perpetual transformation of the universe and also the line and sequence in which that transformation occurs, only then did he see the four truths as they really are.

It is unfortunate for us that the doctrine of reincarnation met with almost universal assent in India. If some one were to found a new Christian sect, he would probably not be asked to prove the immortality of the soul: it is assumed as part of the common religious belief. Similarly, no one asked the Buddha to prove the doctrine of rebirth. If we permit our fancy to picture an interview between him and someone holding the ordinary ideas of an educated European about the soul, we may imagine that he would have some difficulty in understanding what is the alternative to rebirth. His interlocutor might reply that there are two types of theory among Europeans. Some think that the soul comes into existence with the body at birth but continues to exist everlasting and immortal after the death of the body. Others, commonly called materialists, while agreeing that the soul comes into existence with the birth of the body, hold that it ceases to exist with the death of the body. To the first theory the Buddha would probably have replied that there is one law without exception, namely that whatever has a beginning has also an end. The whole universe offers no analogy or parallel to the soul which has a beginning but no end, and not the smallest logical need is shown for believing a doctrine so contrary to the nature of things. And as for materialism he would probably say that it is a statement of the processes of the world as perceived but no explanation of the mental or even of the physical world. The materialists forget that objects as known cannot be isolated from the knowing subject. Sensation implies contact and duality but it

1 In Dig. Nik. xxiii. Pāyāsi maintains the thesis, regarded as most unusual (sec. 5), that there is no world but this and no such things as rebirth and karma. He is confuted not by the Buddha but by Kassapa. His arguments are that dead friends whom he has asked to bring him news of the next world have not done so and that experiments performed on criminals do not support the idea that a soul leaves the body at death. Kassapa’s reply is chiefly based on analogies of doubtful value but also on the affirmation that those who have cultivated their spiritual faculties have intuitive knowledge of rebirth and other worlds. But Pāyāsi did not draw any distinction between rebirth and immortality as understood in Europe. He was a simple materialist.
is no real explanation to say that mental phenomena are caused by physical phenomena. The Buddha reckoned among vain speculations not only such problems as the eternity and infinity of the world but also the question, Is the principle of life (Jīva) identical with the body or not identical. That question, he said, is not properly put, which is tantamount to condemning as inadequate all theories which derive life and thought from purely material antecedents. Other ideas of modern Europe, such as that the body is an instrument on which the soul works, or the expression of the soul, seem to imply, or at least to be compatible with, the pre-existence of the soul.

It is probable too that the Buddha would have said, and a modern Buddhist would certainly say, that the fact of rebirth can easily be proved by testimony and experience, because those who will make the effort can recall their previous births. For his hearers the difficulty must have been not to explain why they believed in rebirth but to harmonize the belief with the rest of the master's system, for what is reborn and how? We detect a tendency to say that it is Viññāṇa, or consciousness, and the expression paṭisandhiviññāṇam or rebirth-consciousness occurs. The question is treated in an important dialogue in the Majjhima-Nikāya, where a monk called Sāti maintains that, according to the Buddha's teaching, consciousness transmigrates unchanged. The Buddha summoned Sāti and rebuked his error in language of unusual severity, for it was evidently capital and fatal if persisted in. The Buddha does not state what transmigrates, as the European reader would wish him to do, and would no doubt have replied to that question that it is improperly framed and does not admit of an answer.

His argument is directed not so much against the idea that consciousness in one existence can have some connection with consciousness in the next, as against the idea that this consciousness is a unity and permanent. He maintains that it is a complex process due to many causes, each producing its own effect. Yet the Pitakas seem to admit that the processes which constitute

1 The more mythological parts of the Pitakas make it plain that the early Buddhists were not materialists in the modern sense. It is also said that there are formless worlds in which there is thought, but no form or matter.

2 See too the story of Godhika's death. Sam. Nik. i. iv. 3 and Buddhaghosa on Dhammap. 57.

3 No. 38 called the Mahātānāsankhāya-suttam.
consciousness in one life, can also produce their effect in another life, for the character of future lives may be determined by the wishes which we form in this life. Existence is really a succession of states of consciousness following one another irrespective of bodies. If $ABC$ and $abc$ are two successive lives, $ABC$ is not more of a reality or unity than $BcA$. No personality passes over at death from $ABC$ to $abc$ but then $ABC$ is itself not a unity: it is merely a continuous process of change$^1$.

The discourse seems to say that taṇhā, the thirst for life, is the connecting link between different births, but it does not use this expression. In one part of his address the Buddha exhorts his disciples not to enquire what they were or what they will be or what is the nature of their present existence, but rather to master and think out for themselves the universal law of causation, that every state has a cause for coming into being and a cause for passing away. No doubt his main object is as usual practical, to incite to self-control rather than to speculation. But may he not also have been under the influence of the idea that time is merely a form of human thought? For the ordinary mind which cannot conceive of events except as following one another in time, the succession of births is as true as everything else. The higher kinds of knowledge, such as are repeatedly indicated in the Buddha's discourse, though they are not described because language is incapable of describing them, may not be bound in this way by the idea of time and may see that the essential truth is not so much a series of births in which something persists and passes from existence to existence, as the timeless fact that life depends upon taṇhā, the desire for life. Death, that is the breaking up of such constituents of human life as the body, states of consciousness, etc., does not affect taṇhā. If taṇhā has not been deliberately suppressed, it collects skandhas again. The result is called a new individual. But the essential truth is the persistence of the taṇhā until it is destroyed.

Still there is no doubt that the earliest Buddhist texts and the discourse ascribed to the Buddha himself speak, when using ordinary untechnical language, of rebirth and of a man dying

$^1$ See too Dig. Nik. ii. 63, "If Viññāṇa did not descend into the womb, would body and mind be constituted there?" and Sam. Nik. xii. 12. 3, "Viññāṇa food is the condition for bringing about rebirth in the future."
and being born\(^1\) in such and such a state. Only we must not suppose that the man's self is continued or transferred in this operation. There is no entity that can be called soul and strictly speaking no entity that can be called body, only a variable aggregation of skandhas, constantly changing. At death this collocation disperses but a new one reassembles under the influence of taṅhā, the desire of life, and by the law of karma which prescribes that every act must have its result. The illustration that comes most naturally is that of water. Waves pass across the surface of the sea and successive waves are not the same, nor is what we call the same wave really the same at two different points in its progress, and yet one wave causes another wave and transmits its form and movement. So are beings travelling through the world (samsāra) not the same at any two points in a single life and still less the same in two consecutive lives: yet it is the impetus and form of the previous lives, the desire that urges them and the form that it takes, which determine the character of the succeeding lives.

But Buddhist writers more commonly illustrate rebirth by fire than by water and this simile is used with others in the Questions of Milinda. We cannot assume that this book reflects the views of the Buddha or his immediate followers, but it is the work of an Indian in touch with good tradition who lived a few centuries later and expressed his opinions with lucidity. It denies the existence of transmigration and of the soul and then proceeds to illustrate by metaphors and analogies how two successive lives can be the same and yet not the same. For instance, suppose a man carelessly allows his lamp to set his thatch on fire with the result that a whole village is burnt down. He is held responsible for the loss but when brought before the judge argues that the flame of his lamp was not the same as the flame that burnt down the village. Will such a plea be allowed? Certainly not. Or to take another metaphor. Suppose a man were to choose a young girl in marriage and after making a contract with her parents were to go away, waiting for her to grow up. Meanwhile another man comes and marries her. If the two men appeal to the King and the later suitor says to the earlier, The little child whom you chose and paid for is one and the full grown girl whom I paid for and

\(^1\) Uppajjati is the usual word.
married is another, no one would listen to his argument, for
clearly the young woman has grown out of the girl and in
ordinary language they are the same person. Or again suppose
that one man left a jar of milk with another and the milk turned
to curds. Would it be reasonable for the first man to accuse
the second of theft because the milk has disappeared?

The caterpillar and butterfly might supply another illus-
tration. It is unfortunate that the higher intelligences offer no
example of such metamorphosis in which consciousness is
apparently interrupted between the two stages. Would an
intelligent caterpillar take an interest in his future welfare as
a butterfly and stigmatize as vices indulgences pleasant to his
caterpillar senses and harmful only to the coming butterfly,
between whom and the caterpillar there is perhaps no continuity
of consciousness? We can imagine how strongly butterflies
would insist that the foundation of morality is that caterpillars
should realize that the butterflies’ interests and their own are
the same.

3

When the Buddha contemplated the samsâra, the world of
change and transmigration in which there is nothing permanent,
nothing satisfying, nothing that can be called a self, he formu-
lated his chief conclusions, theoretical and practical, in four
propositions known as the four noble truths, concerning
suffering, the cause of suffering, the extinction of suffering, and
the path to the extinction of suffering. These truths are always
represented as the essential and indispensable part of Buddhism.
Without them, says the Buddha more than once, there can be
no emancipation, and agreeably to this we find them represented
as having formed part of the teaching of previous Buddhas
and consequently as being rediscovered rather than invented
by Gotama. He even compares himself to one who has found

1 Ariyasacchâni. Rhys Davids translates the phrase as Aryan truths and the
word Ariya in old Pali appears not to have lost its national or tribal sense, e.g. Dig.
Nik. ii. 87 Ariyam âyatanam the Aryan sphere (of influence). But was a religious
teacher preaching a doctrine of salvation open to all men likely to describe its
most fundamental and universal truths by an adjective implying pride of race?

2 In Maj. Nik. 44 the word dukkha is replaced by sakkâya, individuality, which
is apparently regarded as equivalent in meaning. So for instance the Noble Eight-
fold path is described as sakkâya-nirodha-gâmini patipâda.

in the jungle the site of an ancient city and caused it to be restored. It would therefore not be surprising if they were found in pre-Buddhist writings, and it has been pointed out that they are practically identical with the four divisions of the Hindu science of medicine: roga, disease; rogahetu, the cause of disease; arogya, absence of disease; bhaisajya, medicine. A similar parallel between the language of medicine and moral science can be found in the Yoga philosophy, and if the fourfold division of medicine can be shown to be anterior to Buddhism\(^1\), it may well have suggested the mould in which the four truths were cast. The comparison of life and passion to disease is frequent in Buddhist writings and the Buddha is sometimes hailed as the King of Physicians. It is a just compendium of his doctrine—so far as an illustration can be a compendium—to say that human life is like a diseased body which requires to be cured by a proper regimen. But the Buddha's claim to originality is not thereby affected, for it rests upon just this, that he was able to regard life and religion in this spirit and to put aside the systems of ritual, speculation and self-mortification which were being preached all round him.

The first truth is that existence involves suffering. It receives emotional expression in a discourse in the Samyutta-Nikāya\(^2\). "The world of transmigration, my disciples, has its beginning in eternity. No origin can be perceived, from which beings start, and hampered by ignorance, fettered by craving, stray and wander. Which think you are more—the tears which you have shed as you strayed and wandered on this long journey, grieving and weeping because you were bound to what you hated and separated from what you loved—which are more, these tears, or the waters in the four oceans? A mother’s death, a son’s death, a daughter’s death, loss of kinsmen, loss of property, sickness, all these have you endured through long ages—and while you felt these losses and strayed and wandered on this long journey, grieving and weeping because you were bound to what you hated and separated from what you loved, the tears that you shed are more than the water in the four oceans."

It is remarkable that such statements aroused no contradiction. The Buddha was not an isolated and discontented philosopher, like Schopenhauer in his hotel, but the leader of

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\(^1\) But it has not been proved so far as I know.
\(^2\) Sam. Nik. xv. 3.
an exceptionally successful religious movement in touch and sympathy with popular ideas. On many points his assertions called forth discussion and contradiction but when he said that all existence involves suffering no one disputed the dictum: no one talked of the pleasures of life or used those arguments which come so copiously to the healthy-minded modern essayist when he devotes a page or two to disproving pessimism. On this point the views and temperament of the Buddha were clearly those of educated India. The existence of this conviction and temperament in a large body of intellectual men is as important as the belief in the value of life and the love of activity for its own sake which is common among Europeans. Both tempers must be taken into account by every theory which is not merely personal but endeavours to ascertain what the human race think and feel about existence.

The sombre and meditative cast of Indian thought is not due to physical degeneration or a depressing climate. Many authors speak as if the Hindus lived in a damp relaxing heat in which physical and moral stamina alike decay. I myself think that as to climate India is preferable to Europe, and without arguing about what must be largely a question of personal taste, one may point to the long record of physical and intellectual labour performed even by Europeans in India. Neither can it be maintained that in practice Buddhism destroys the joy and vigour of life. The Burmese are among the most cheerful people in the world and the Japanese among the most vigorous, and the latter are at least as much Buddhists as Europeans are Christians. It might be plausibly maintained that Europeans' love of activity is mainly due to the intolerable climate and uncomfortable institutions of their continent, which involve a continual struggle with the weather and continual discussion forbidding any calm and comprehensive view of things. The Indian being less troubled by these evils is able to judge what is the value of life in itself, as an experience for the individual, not as part of a universal struggle, which is the common view of seriously minded Europeans, though as to this

1 Buddhist works sometimes insist on the impurity of human physical life in a way which seems morbid and disagreeable. But this view is not exclusively Buddhist or Asiatic. It is found in Marcus Aurelius and perhaps finds its strongest expression in the De Contemptu Mundi of Pope Innocent III (in Pat. Lat. ccxvii. col. 701-746).
struggle they have but hazy ideas of the antagonists, the cause and the result.

The Buddhist doctrine does not mean that life is something trifling and unimportant, to be lived anyhow. On the contrary, birth as a human being is an opportunity of inestimable value. He who is so born has at least a chance of hearing the truth and acquiring merit. "Hard is it to be born as a man, hard to come to hear the true law" and when the chance comes, the good fortune of the being who has attained to human form and the critical issues which depend on his using it rightly are dwelt on with an earnestness not surpassed in Christian homiletics. He who acts ill as a man may fall back into the dreary cycles of inferior births, among beasts and blind aimless beings who cannot understand the truth, even if they hear it. From this point of view human life is happiness, only like every form of existence it is not satisfying or permanent.

Dukkha is commonly rendered in English by pain or suffering, but an adequate literary equivalent which can be used consistently in translating is not forthcoming. The opposite state, sukha, is fairly rendered by well-being, satisfaction and happiness. Dukkha is the contrary of this: uneasiness, discomfort, difficulty. Pain or suffering are too strong as renderings, but no better are to hand. When the Buddha enlarges on the evils of the world it will be found that the point most emphasized as vitiating life is its transitoriness.

"Is that which is impermanent sorrow or joy?" he asks of his disciples. "Sorrow, Lord," is the answer, and this oft-repeated proposition is always accepted as self-evident. The evils most frequently mentioned are the great incurable weaknesses of humanity, old age, sickness and death, and also the weariness of being tied to what we hate, the sadness of parting from what we love. Another obvious evil is that we cannot get what we want or achieve our ambitions. Thus the temper which prompts the Buddha's utterances is not that of Ecclesiastes—the melancholy of satiety which, having enjoyed all, finds that all is vanity—but rather the regretful verdict of one who while sympathizing with the nobler passions—love, ambition, the quest of knowledge—is forced to pronounce them unsatisfactory. The human mind craves after something which is permanent, something of which it can say This is mine. It longs to be
something or to produce something which is not transitory and which has an absolute value in and for itself. But neither in this world nor in any other world are such states and actions possible. Only in Nirvana do we find a state which rises above the transitory because it rises above desire. Not merely human life but all possible existences in all imaginable heavens must be unsatisfactory, for such existences are merely human life under favourable conditions. Some great evils, such as sickness, may be absent but life in heaven must come to an end: it is not eternal, it is not even permanent, it does not, any more than this life, contain anything that god or man can call his own. And it may be observed that when Christian writers attempt to describe the joys of a heaven which is eternally satisfying, they have mostly to fall back on negative phrases such as "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard."

The European view of life differs from the Asiatic chiefly in attributing a value to actions in themselves, and in not being disturbed by the fact that their results are impermanent. It is, in fact, the theoretical side of the will to live, which can find expression in a treatise on metaphysics as well as in an act of procreation. An Englishman according to his capacity and mental culture is satisfied with some such rule of existence as having a good time, or playing the game, or doing his duty, or working for some cause. The majority of intelligent men are prepared to devote their lives to the service of the British Empire: the fact that it must pass away as certainly as the Empire of Babylon and that they are labouring for what is impermanent does not disturb them and is hardly ever present to their minds. Those Europeans who share with Asiatic some feeling of dissatisfaction with the impermanent try to escape it by an unselfish morality and by holding that life, which is unsatisfactory if regarded as a pursuit of happiness, acquires a new and real value if lived for others. And from this point of view the European moralist is apt to criticize the Buddhist truths of suffering and the release from suffering as selfish. But Buddhism is as full as or fuller than Christianity of love, self-sacrifice and thought for others. It says that it is a fine thing to be a man and have the power of helping others: that the best life is that which is entirely unselfish and a continual sacrifice. But looking at existence as a whole, and accepting
the theory that the happiest and best life is a life of self-sacrifice, it declines to consider as satisfactory the world in which this principle holds good. Many of the best Europeans would probably say that their ideal is not continual personal enjoyment but activity which makes the world better. But this ideal implies a background of evil just as much as does the Buddha's teaching. If evil vanished, the ideal would vanish too.

There is one important negative aspect of the truth of suffering and indeed of all the four truths. A view of human life which is common in Christian and Mohammedan countries represents man as put in the world by God, and human life as a service to be rendered to God. Whether it is pleasant, worth living or not are hardly questions for God's servants. There is no trace of such a view in the Buddha's teaching. It is throughout assumed that man in judging human life by human standards is not presumptuous or blind to higher issues. Life involves unhappiness: that is a fact, a cardinal truth. That this unhappiness may be ordered for disciplinary or other mysterious motives by what is vaguely called One above, that it would disappear or be explained if we could contemplate our world as forming part of a larger universe, that "there is some far off divine event," some unexpected solution in the fifth act of this complicated tragedy, which could justify the creator of this dukkhamakkhandha, this mass of unhappiness—for all such ideas the doctrine of the Blessed One has nothing but silence, the courteous and charitable silence which will not speak contemptuously. The world of transmigration has neither beginning nor end nor meaning: to those who wish to escape from it the Buddha can show the way: of obligation to stop in it there can be no question.

Buddhism is often described as pessimistic, but is the epithet just? What does it mean? The dictionary defines pessimism as the doctrine which teaches that the world is as bad as it can be and that everything naturally tends towards evil. That is

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1 As a general rule suicide is strictly forbidden (see the third Pārājika and Milinda, rv. 13 and 14) for in most cases it is not a passionless renunciation of the world but rather a passionate and irritable protest against difficulties which simply lays up bad karma in the next life. Yet cases such as that of Godhika (see Buddhaghosa on the Dhammapada, 57) seem to imply that it is unobjectionable if performed not out of irritation but by one who having already obtained mental release is troubled by disease.
 emphatically not Buddhist teaching. The higher forms of
religion have their basis and origin in the existence of evil, but
their justification and value depend on their power to remove
it. A religion, therefore, can never be pessimistic, just as a
doctor who should simply pronounce diseases to be incurable
would never be successful as a practitioner. The Buddha states
with the utmost frankness that religion is dependent on the
existence of evil. "If three things did not exist, the Buddha
would not appear in the world and his law and doctrine would
not shine. What are the three? Birth, old age and death."
This is true. If there were people leading perfectly happy,
untroubled lives, it is not likely that any thought of religion
would enter their minds, and their irreligious attitude would be
reasonable, for the most that any deity is asked to give is
perfect happiness, and that these imaginary folk are supposed
to have already. But according to Buddhism no form of
existence can be perfectly happy or permanent. Gods and angels
may be happier than men but they are not free from the tyranny
of desire and ultimately they must fall from their high estate
and pass away.

The second Truth declares the origin of suffering. "It is,"
says the Buddha, "the thirst which causes rebirth, which is
accompanied by pleasure and lust and takes delight now here,
now there; namely, the thirst for pleasure, the thirst for another
life, the thirst for success." This Thirst (Taṅhā) is the craving
for life in the widest sense: the craving for pleasure which pro-
pagates life, the craving for existence in the dying man which
brings about another birth, the craving for wealth, for power,
for pre-eminence within the limits of the present life. What is
the nature of this craving and of its action? Before attempting
to answer we must consider what is known as the chain of
causation¹, one of the oldest, most celebrated, and most obscure
formule of Buddhism. It is stated that the Buddha knew it
before attaining enlightenment², but it is second in importance
only to the four truths, and in the opening sections of the
Mahāvagga, he is represented as meditating on it under the
Bo-tree, both in its positive and negative form. It runs as
follows: "From ignorance come the sankhāras, from the sank-

¹ Pali Paticca-samuppāda. Sanskrit Pratitya-samutpāda. ² Sam. Nik. xii. 10.
hārās comes consciousness, from consciousness come name-and-form, from name-and-form come the six provinces (of the senses), from the six provinces comes contact, from contact comes sensation, from sensation comes craving, from craving comes clinging, from clinging comes existence, from existence comes birth, from birth come old age and death, pain and lamentation, suffering, sorrow, and despair. This is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. But by the destruction of ignorance, effected by the complete absence of lust, the sankhāras are destroyed, by the destruction of the sankhāras, consciousness is destroyed "and so on through the whole chain backwards.

The chain is also known as the twelve Nidānas or causes. It is clearly in its positive and negative forms an amplification of the second and third truths respectively, or perhaps they are a luminous compendium of it.

Besides the full form quoted above there are shorter versions. Sometimes there are only nine links\(^1\) or there are five links combined in an endless chain\(^2\). So we must not attach too much importance to the number or order of links. The chain is not a genealogy but a statement respecting the interdependence of certain stages and aspects of human nature. And though the importance of cause (hetu) is often emphasized, the causal relation is understood in a wider sense than is usual in our idiom. If there were no birth, there would be no death, but though birth and death are interdependent we should hardly say that birth is the cause of death.

In whatever way we take the Chain of Causation, it seems to bring a being into existence twice, and this is the view of Buddhaghosa who says that the first two links (ignorance and the sankhāras) belong to past time and explain the present existence: the next eight (consciousness to existence) analyse the present existence: and the last two (birth and old age) belong to future time, representing the results in another existence of desire felt in this existence. And that is perhaps what the constructor of the formula meant. It is clearest if taken backwards. Suppose, the Buddha once said to Ānanda\(^3\), there were no birth,

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\(^1\) Dig. Nik. xv.

\(^2\) "Contact comes from consciousness: sensation from contact: craving from sensation: the sankhāras from craving: consciousness from the sankhāras: contact from consciousness" and so on ad infinitum. See Mil. Pan. 51.

\(^3\) Dig. Nik. xv.
would there then be any old age or death? Clearly not. That is the meaning of saying that old age and death depend on birth: if birth were annihilated, they too would be annihilated. Similarly birth depends on Bhava which means becoming and does not imply anything self-existent and stationary: all the world is a continual process of coming into existence and passing away. It is on the universality of this process that birth (jāti) depends. But on what does the endless becoming itself depend? We seem here on the threshold of the deepest problems but the answer, though of wide consequences, brings us back to the strictly human and didactic sphere. Existence depends on Upādāna. This word means literally grasping or clinging to and should be so translated here but it also means fuel and its use is coloured by this meaning, since Buddhist metaphor is fond of describing life as a flame. Existence cannot continue without the clinging to life, just as fire cannot continue without fuel.\footnote{Sam. Nik. xii. 53. Cf. too the previous suṭta 51. In the Abhidhamma Pitaka and later scholastic works we find as a development of the law of causation the theory of relations (paccaya) or system of correlation (patṭhāna-nāyo). According to this theory phenomena are not thought of merely in the simple relation of cause and effect. One phenomenon can be the assistant agency (upakāraka) of another phenomenon in 24 modes. See Mrs Rhys Davids' article Relations in E.R.E.}

The clinging in its turn depends on Taṇhā, the thirst or craving for existence. The distinction between taṇhā and upādāna is not always observed, and it is often said taṇhā is the cause of karma or of sorrow. But, strictly speaking, upādāna is the grasping at life or pleasure: taṇhā is the incessant, unsatisfied craving which causes it. It is compared to the birana, a weed which infests rice fields and sends its roots deep into the ground. So long as the smallest piece of root is left the weed springs up again and propagates itself with surprising rapidity, though the cultivator thought he had exterminated it. This metaphor is also used to illustrate how taṇhā leads to a new birth. Death is like cutting down the plant: the root remains and sends up another growth.

We now seem to have reached an ultimate principle and basis, namely, the craving for life which transcends the limits of one existence and finds expression in birth after birth. Many passages in the Pitakas justify the idea that the force which constructs the universe of our experience is an impersonal appetite, analogous to the Will of Schopenhauer. The shorter
formula quoted above in which it is said that the sankhāras come from taṇhā also admits of such an interpretation. But the longer chain does not, or at least it considers taṇhā not as a cosmic force but simply as a state of the human mind. Suffering can be traced back to the fact that men have desire. To what is desire due? To sensation. With this reply we leave the great mysteries at which the previous links seemed to hint and begin one of those enquiries into the origin and meaning of human sensation which are dear to early Buddhism. Just as there could be no birth if there were no existence, so there could be no desire if there were no sensation. What then is the cause of sensation? Contact (phasso). This word plays a considerable part in Buddhist psychology and is described as producing not only sensation but perception and volition (cetanā)\(^1\). Contact in its turn depends on the senses (that is the five senses as we know them, and mind as a sixth) and these depend on name-and-form. This expression, which occurs in the Upanishads as well as in Buddhist writings, denotes mental and corporeal life. In explaining it the commentators say that form means the four elements and shape derived from them and that name means the three skandhas of sensation, perception and the sankhāras. This use of the word nāma probably goes back to ancient superstitions which regarded a man's name as containing his true being but in Buddhist terminology it is merely a technical expression for mental states collectively. Buddhaghosa observes that name-and-form are like the playing of a lute which does not come from any store of sound and when it ceases does not go to form a store of sound elsewhere.

On what do name-and-form depend? On consciousness. This point is so important that in teaching Ānanda the Buddha adds further explanations. "Suppose," he says, "consciousness were not to descend into the womb, would name-and-form consolidate in the womb? No, Lord. Therefore, Ānanda, consciousness is the cause, the occasion, the origin of name-and-form." But consciousness according to the Buddha's teaching\(^2\) is not a unity, a thinking soul, but mental activity produced

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\(^1\) Mrs Rhys Davids, Dhamma-sanga, pref. p. lxi. "The sensory process is analysed in each case into (a) an apparatus capable of reaching to an impact not itself: (b) an impinging form (rūpaṃ): (c) contact between (a) and (b): (d) resultant modification of the mental continuum, viz. first, contact of a specific sort, then hedonistic result or intellectual result or presumably both."

\(^2\) See e.g. Maj. Nik. 38.
by various appropriate causes. Hence it cannot be regarded as
independent of name-and-form and as their generator. So the
Buddha goes on to say that though name-and-form depend on
consciousness it is equally true that consciousness depends on
name-and-form. The two together make human life: everything
that is born, and dies or is reborn in another existence\(^1\), is name-
and-form plus consciousness.

What we have learnt hitherto is that suffering depends
on desire and desire on the senses. For didactic purposes this
is much, but as philosophy the result is small: we have merely
discovered that the world depends on name-and-form plus
consciousness, that is on human beings. The first two links of
the chain (the last in our examination) do not leave the previous
point of view—the history of individual life and not an account
of the world process—but they have at least that interest which
attaches to the mysterious.

"Consciousness depends on the sankhâras." Here the sankhâras
seem to mean the predispositions anterior to consciousness
which accompany birth and hence are equivalent to one
meaning of Karma, that is the good and bad qualities and
tendencies which appear when rebirth takes place. Perhaps the
best commentary on the statement that consciousness depends
on the sankhâras is furnished by a Sutta called Rebirth according
to the sankhâras\(^2\). The Buddha there says that if a monk
possessed of the necessary good qualities cherishes a wish to be
born after death as a noble, or in one of the many heavens,
"then those predispositions (sankhâra) and mental conditions
(vihāro) if repeated\(^3\) conduce to rebirth" in the place he desires.
Similarly when Citta is dying, the spirits of the wood come
round his death-bed and bid him wish to be an Emperor in his
next life. Thus a personality with certain predispositions and
aptitudes may be due to the thought and wishes of a previous
personality\(^4\), and these predispositions, asserts the last article
of the formula, depend upon ignorance. We might be tempted

\(^1\) This does not mean that the same name-and-form plus consciousness which
dies in one existence reappears in another.

\(^2\) Maj. Nik. 120 Sankhâruppatti sutta.

\(^3\) He should make it a continual mental exercise to think of the rebirth which
he desires.

\(^4\) So too in the Sânkhya philosophy the samskâras are said to pass from one
human existence to another. They may also remain dormant for several existences
and then become active.
to identify this ignorance with some cosmic creative force such as the Unconscious of Hartmann or the Mâyâ of Šankara. But though the idea that the world of phenomena is a delusion bred of ignorance is common in India, it does not enter into the formula which we are considering. Two explanations of the first link are given in the Pitakas, which are practically the same. One\(^1\) states categorically that the ignorance which produces the sankhâras is not to know the four Truths. Elsewhere\(^2\) the Buddha himself when asked what ignorance means replies that it is not to know that everything must have an origin and a cessation. The formula means that it is ignorance of the true nature of the world and the true interests of mankind that brings about the suffering which we see and feel. We were born into the world because of our ignorance in our last birth and of the desire for re-existence which was in us when we died.

Of the supreme importance attached to this doctrine of causation there can be no doubt. Perhaps the best instance is the story of Sâriputta’s conversion. In the early days of the Buddha’s mission he asked for a brief summary of the new teaching and in reply the essential points were formulated in the well-known verses which declare that all things have a cause and an end\(^3\). Such utterances sound like a scientific dictum about the uniformity of nature or cosmic law. But though the Pitakas imply some such idea, they seem to shrink from stating it clearly. They do not emphasize the orderly course of nature or exhort men to live in harmony with it. We are given to understand that the intelligence of those supermen who are called Buddhas sees that the four Truths are a consequence of the nature of the universe but subsequent instruction bids us attend to the truths themselves and not to their connection with the universal scheme. One reason for this is that Indians were little inclined to think of impersonal laws and forces\(^4\).

\(^1\) Maj. Nik. 9 Sammādiṭṭhi sutta.  
\(^2\) Sam. Nik. xxii. 126.  
\(^3\) Mahāvag. i. 23. 4 and 5:  
Ye dhammā hetupphabhavā team hetum Tathāgato  
Āha teṣaṁca yo nirodho evamvādi Mahāvamano ti.  
The passage is remarkable because it insists that this is the principal and essential doctrine of Gotama. Compare too the definition of the Dhamma put in the Buddha’s own mouth in Majjhima, 79: Dhammam te desessāmi: imasmin sati, idam hoti: imass’uppādā idam upajjhati, etc.  
\(^4\) The Sāṅkhya might be described as teaching a law of evolution, but that is not the way it is described in its own manuals.
The law of karma and the periodic rhythm of growth and decay which the universe obeys are ideas common to Hinduism and Buddhism and not incompatible with the mythology and ritual to which the Buddha objected. And though the Pitakas insist on the universality of causation, they have no notion of the uniformity of nature in our sense. The Buddhist doctrine of causation states that we cannot obtain emancipation and happiness unless we understand and remove the cause of our distress, but it does not discuss cosmic forces like karma and Māyā. Such discussion the Buddha considered unprofitable and perhaps he may have felt that insistence on cosmic law came dangerously near to fatalism.

Though the number of the links may be varied the Buddha attached importance to the method of concatenation and the impersonal formulation of the whole and in one passage he objects to the questions, what are old age and death and who is it that has old age and death. Though the chain of causation treats of a human life, it never speaks of a person being born or growing old and Buddhaghosa observes that the Wheel of existence is without known beginning, without a personal cause or passive recipient and empty with a twelfefold emptiness. It has no external cause such as Brahmā or any deity “and is also wanting in any ego passively recipient of happiness and misery.”

The twelve Nidānas have passed into Buddhist art as the Wheel of Life. An ancient example of this has been discovered in the frescoes of Ajanta and modern diagrams, which represent the explanations current in mediæval India, are still to be found in Tibet and Japan. In the nave of the wheel are three female figures signifying passion, hatred and folly and in the spaces between the spokes are scenes depicting the phases of human life: round the felly runs a series of pictures representing the twelve links of the chain. The first two links are represented

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1 Take among hundreds of instances the account of the Buddha's funeral.
2 The Anguttara Nikāya, book iv. chap. 77, forbids speculation on four subjects as likely to bring madness and trouble. Two of the four are kamma-vipāko and loka-cintā. An attempt to make the chain of causation into a cosmic law would involve just this sort of speculation.
3 The Pitakas insist that causation applies to mental as well as physical phenomena.
4 Sam. Nik. xii. 35.
by a blind man or blind camel and by a potter making pots. The third, or consciousness, is an ape. Some have thought that this figure represents the evolution of mind, which begins to show itself in animals and is perfected in man. It may however refer to a simile found in the Pitakas where the restless, changeable mind is compared to a monkey jumping about in a tree.

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We have now examined three of the four Truths, for the Chain of Causation in its positive form gives us the origin of suffering and in its negative form the facts as to the extinction of suffering: it teaches that as its links are broken suffering disappears. The fourth truth, or the way which leads to the extinction of suffering, gives practical directions to this effect. The way is the Noble Eightfold Path consisting of: right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right rapture. This formula is comparable not with the Decalogue, to which correspond the precepts for monks and laymen, but rather with the Beatitudes. It contains no commands or prohibitions but in the simplest language indicates the spirit that leads to emancipation. It breathes an air of noble freedom. It says nothing about laws and rites: it simply states that the way to be happy is to have a good heart and mind, taking shape in good deeds and at last finding expression and fulfilment in the rapture of ecstasy. We may think the numerical subdivisions of the Path pedantic and find fault with its want of definition, for it does not define the word right (sammâ) which it uses so often, but in thus ignoring ceremonialism and legalism and making simple goodness in spirit and deed the basis of religion, Gotama rises above all his contemporaries and above all subsequent teachers except Christ. In detaching the perfect life from all connection with a deity or outside forces and in teaching man that the worst and best that can happen to him lie within his own power, he holds a unique position.

Indian thought has little sympathy with the question whether morality is utilitarian or intuitionist, whether we do good to benefit ourselves or whether certain acts and states are intrinsically good. The Buddha is a physician who prescribes

1 Sam. Nik. xii. 61. See too Theragâthâ, verses 125 and 1111, and for other illustrative quotations Mrs Rhys Davids, Buddhist Psychology, pp. 34, 35.
a cure for a disease—the disease of suffering—and that cure is not a quack medicine which pretends to heal rapidly but a regime and treatment. If we ask whether the reason for following the regime is that it is good for us or that it is scientifically correct; or why we want to be well or whether health is really good: both the Buddha and the physician would reply that such questions are tiresome and irrelevant. With an appearance of profundity, they ask nothing worth answering. The eightfold path is the way and the only way of salvation. Its form depends on the fact that the knowledge of the Buddha, which embraces the whole universe, sees that it is a consequence of the nature of things. In that sense it may be described as an eternal law, but this is not the way in which the Pitakas usually speak of it and it is not represented as a divine revelation dictated by other than human motives. “Come, disciples,” the Buddha was wont to say, “lead a holy life for the complete extinction of suffering.” Holiness is simply the way out of misery into happiness. To ask why we should take that way, would seem to an Indian an unnecessary question, as it might seem to a Christian if he were asked why he wants to save his soul, but if the question is pressed, the answer must be at every point, for the Christian as much as for the Buddhist, to gain happiness. Incidentally the happiness of others is fully cared for, since both religions make unselfishness the basis of morality and hold that the conscious and selfish pursuit of happiness is not the way to gain it, but if we choose to apply European methods of analysis to the Buddha’s preaching, it is utilitarian. But the fact that he and his first disciples did not think such analysis and discussion necessary goes far to show that the temper created in his Order was not religiously utilitarian. It never occurred to them to look at things that way.

The eightfold path is the road to happiness but it is the way, not the destination, and the action of the Buddha and his disciples is something beyond it. They had obtained the goal, for they were all Arhats, and they might, if they had been inspired by that selfishness which some European authors find prominent in Buddhism, have entered into their rest. Yet the Buddha bade them go among men and preach “for the gain and welfare of many” and they continued their benevolent activity although it could add nothing to the reward which they had already won.

1 But see Maj. Nik. 79, for the idea that there is something beyond happiness.
The Buddha often commented on the eightfold path, and we may follow one of the expositions attributed to him¹. What, he asks, is meant by right views (Sammaññathā)? Simply a knowledge of the four truths, and of such doctrines about personality and karma as are implied in them. But the negative aspects of this Sammaññathā are more striking than the positive. It does not imply any philosophical or metaphysical system: the Buddha has shaken off all philosophical theories². Secondly, it does not imply that any knowledge or belief is of efficacy in itself, as the lore of the Brahmans is supposed to be or those Christian creeds which save by faith. The Buddha has not a position such as the Church attributes to Christ, or later Buddhism to Amida. All that is required under the head of right belief is a knowledge of the general principles and programme of Buddhism.

The Buddha continues, What is right resolve? It is the resolve to renounce pleasures, to bear no malice and do no harm. What is right speech? To abstain from lying and slandering, harsh words and foolish chatter. What is right conduct? To abstain from taking life, from stealing, from immorality. What is right livelihood? To abandon wrong occupations and get one's living by a right occupation. This is elsewhere defined as one that does not bring hurt or danger to any living thing, and five bad occupations are enumerated, namely, those of a caravan-trader, slave-dealer, butcher, publican and poison seller. European critics of Buddhism have often found fault with its ethics as being a morality of renunciation, and in the explanation epitomized above each section of the path is interpreted in this way. But this negative form is not a peculiarity of Buddhism. Only two of the commandments in our Decalogue are positive precepts; the rest are prohibitions. The same is true of most early codes. The negative form is at once easier and more practical for it requires a mental effort to formulate any ideal of human life; it is comparatively easy to note the bad things people do, and say, don't. The pruning of the feelings, the cutting off of every tendril which can cling to the pleasures of sense, is an essential part of that mental cultivation in which the higher Buddhism consists. But the Pitakas say clearly that what is to be eliminated is only bad mental states. Desire for pleasure and striving after wealth are bad,

¹ Dig. Nik. 22.
² Sutta-Nipāta, 787.
but it does not follow that desire and striving are bad in themselves. Desire for what is good (Dhammachando as opposed to Kâmacchando) is itself good, and the effort to obtain nirvana is often described as a struggle or wrestling. Similarly though absolute indifference to pains and pleasures is the ideal for a Bhikkhu, this by no means implies, as is often assumed, a general insensibility and indifference, the harmless oyster-like life of one who hurts nobody and remains in his own shell. European criticisms on the selfishness and pessimism of Buddhism forget the cheerfulness and buoyancy which are the chief marks of its holy men. The Buddhist saint is essentially one who has freed himself. His first impulse is to rejoice in his freedom and share it with others, not to abuse the fetters he has cut away. Active benevolence and love are enjoined as a duty and praised in language of no little beauty and earnestness. In the Itivuttaka the following is put into the mouth of Buddha. "All good works whatever are not worth one sixteenth part of love which sets free the heart. Love which sets free the heart comprises them: it shines, gives light and radiance. Just as the light of all the stars is not worth one sixteenth of the light of the moon: as in the last month of the rains in the season of autumn, when the sky is clear and cloudless the sun mounts up on high and overcomes darkness in the firmament: as in the last hour of the night when the dawn is breaking, the morning star shines and gives light and radiance: even so does love which sets free the soul and comprises all good works, shine and give light and radiance." So, too, the Sutta-Nipâta bids a man love not only his neighbour but all the world. "As a mother at the risk of her life watches over her own child, her only child, so let every one cultivate a boundless love towards all beings." Nor are such precepts left vague and universal. If some of his acts and words seem wanting in family affection, the Buddha enjoined filial piety as emphatically as Moses or

1 Padhânam. But in later Buddhism we also find the idea that nirvana is something which comes only when we do not struggle for it.

2 Mettâ, corresponding exactly to the Greek ἀγάπη of the New Testament.

3 III. 7. The translation is abbreviated.

4 More literally, "All the occasions which can be used for doing good works."

5 Sutta-Nipâta, 1–8, S.B.E. vol. x. p. 25 and see also Ang. Nik. iv. 190 which says that love leads to rebirth in the higher heavens and Sam. Nik. xx. 4 to the effect that a little love is better than great gifts. Also Questions of Milinda, 4. 4. 16.
Confucius. There are two beings, he says, namely Father and Mother, who can never be adequately repaid\(^1\). If a man were to carry his parents about on his shoulders for a hundred years or could give them all the kingdoms and treasures of the earth, he still would not discharge his debt of gratitude\(^2\). But whereas Confucius said that the good son does not deviate from the way of his father, the Buddha, who was by no means conservative in religious matters, said that the only way in which a son could repay his parents was by teaching them the True Law.

The Buddha defines the sixth section of the path more fully than those which precede. Right effort, he says, is when a monk makes an effort, and strives to prevent evil states of mind from arising: to suppress them if they have arisen: to produce good states of mind, and develop and perfect them. Hitherto we have been considering morality, indispensable but elementary. This section is the beginning of the specially Buddhist discipline of mental cultivation. The process is apt to seem too self-conscious: we wonder if a freer growth would not yield better fruits. But in a comparison with the similar programmes of other religions Buddhism has little to fear. Its methods are not morbid or introspective: it does not fetter the intellect with the bonds of authority. The disciple has simply to discriminate between good and bad thoughts, to develop the one and suppress the other. It is noticeable that under this heading of right effort, or right wrestling as it is sometimes called, both desire and striving for good ends are consecrated. Sloth and torpor are as harmful to spiritual progress as evil desires and as often reprimanded. Also the aim is not merely negative: it is partly creative. The disciple is not to suppress will and feeling, but he is to make all the good in him grow; he should foster, increase and perfect it.

What is right-mindfulness\(^3\), the seventh section of the path? It is "When a monk lives as regards the body, observant of the body, strenuous, conscious, mindful and has rid himself of covetousness and melancholy": and similarly as regards the sensations, the mind and phenomena. The importance of this mindfulness is often insisted on. It amounts to complete self-

\(^1\) Ang. Nik. 1. 2. 4.
\(^2\) Cf. too Mahāvag. vin. 22 where a monk is not blamed for giving the property of the order to his parents.
\(^3\) Sati is the Sanskrit Smṛti.
mastery by means of self-knowledge which allows nothing to be done heedlessly and mechanically and controls not merely recognized acts of volition but also those sense-impressions in which we are apt to regard the mind as merely receptive. "Self is the lord of self: who else should be the lord? With self well subdued, a man finds a lord such as few can find."

Although the Buddha denies that there is any soul or self (attâ) apart from the skandhas, yet here his ethical system seems to assume that a ruling principle which may be called self does exist. Nor is the discrepancy fully explained by saying that the non-existence of self or soul is the correct dogma and that expressions like self being the lord of self are concessions to the exigencies of exposition. The evolution of the self-controlled saint out of the confused mental states of the ordinary man is a psychological difficulty. As we shall see, when the eightfold path has been followed to the end new powers arise in the mind, new lights stream into it. Yet if there is no self or soul, where do they arise, into what do they stream?

The doctrine of Gotama as expressed in his earliest utterance on the subject to the five monks at Benares is that neither the body, nor any mental faculty to which a name can be given, is what was called in Brahmanic theology âtman, that is to say an entity which is absolutely free, imperishable, changeless and not subject to pain. This of course does not exclude the possibility that there may be something which does not come under any of the above categories and which may be such an entity as described. Indeed Brahmanic works which teach the existence of the âtman often use language curiously like that of Buddhism. Thus the Bhagavad-gitâ² says that actions are performed by the Guṇas and only he who is deluded by egoism thinks "I am the doer." And the Vishnu Purâna objects to the use of personal pronouns. "When one soul is dispersed in all bodies, it is idle to ask who are you, who am I?" The accounts of the Buddhist higher life would be easier to understand if we could suppose that there is such a self: that the

¹ Dhammap. 160. ² Bhag-gitâ, 3, 27.
³ Vishnu Pur. π. 13. The ancient Egyptians also, though for quite different reasons, did not accept our ideas of personality. For them man was not an individual unity but a compound consisting of the body and of several immaterial parts called for want of a better word souls, the ka, the ba, the sekhem, etc., which after death continue to exist independently.
pilgrim who is walking in the paths gradually emancipates, develops and builds it up: that it becomes partly free in nirvana before death and wholly free after death. Schrader\(^1\) has pointed out texts in the Pitakas which seem to imply that there is something which is absolute and therefore not touched by the doctrine of anattâ. In a remarkable passage\(^2\) the Buddha says: Therefore my disciples get rid of what is not yours. To get rid of it will mean your health and happiness for a long time. Form, sensation, perception, etc., are not yours; get rid of them. If a man were to take away, or burn, or use for his needs, all the grass, and boughs, and branches and leaves in this Jeta wood, would it ever occur to you to say, the man is taking us away, burning us, or using us for his needs? Certainly not, Lord. And why not? Because, Lord, it is not our self or anything belonging to our self. Just in the same way, replies the Buddha, get rid of the skandhas. The natural sense of this seems to be that the skandhas have no more to do with the real being of man than have the trees of the forest where he happens to be\(^3\). This suggests that there is in man something real and permanent, to be contrasted with the transitory skandhas and when the Buddha asks whether anything which is perishable and changeable can be called the self, he seems to imply that there is somewhere such a self. But this point cannot be pressed, for it is perfectly logical to define first of all what you mean by a ghost and then to prove that such a thing does not exist. If we take the passages at present collected as a whole, and admit that they are somewhat inconsistent or imperfectly understood, the net result is hardly that the name of self can be given to some part of human nature which remains when the skandhas are set on one side.

But though the Buddha denied that there is in man anything permanent which can be called the self, this does not imply a denial that human nature can by mental training be changed into something different, something infinitely superior to the

\(^1\) *Ueber den Stand der indischen Philosophie zur Zeit Mahâvîra und Buddha*\(^2\), 1902. And On the problem of Nirvana in *Journal of Pali Text Society*, 1905. See too Sam. Nik. xxv. 15-17.

\(^2\) Maj. Nik. 22.

\(^3\) Compare also the sermon on the burden and the bearer and Sam. Nik. xxii. 15-17. It is admitted that Nirvana is not dukkha and not aniccam and it seems to be implied it is not anattam.
nature of the ordinary man, perhaps something other than the skandhas\(^1\). One of his principal objections to the doctrine of the permanent self was that, if it were true, emancipation and sanctity would be impossible\(^2\), because human nature could not be changed. In India the doctrine of the ātman was really dangerous, because it led a religious man to suppose that to ensure happiness and emancipation it is only necessary to isolate the ātman by self-mortification and by suppressing discursive thought as well as passion. But this, the Buddha teaches, is a capital error. That which can make an end of suffering is not something lurking ready-made in human nature but something that must be built up: man must be reborn, not flayed and stripped of everything except some core of unchanging soul. As to the nature of this new being the Pitakas are reticent, but not absolutely silent, as we shall see below. Our loose use of language might possibly lead us to call the new being a soul, but it is decidedly not an ātman, for it is something which has been brought into being by deliberate effort. The collective name for these higher states of mind is pañña\(^3\), wisdom or knowledge. This word is the Pali equivalent of the Sanskrit prajñā and is interesting as connecting early and later Buddhism, for prajñā in the sense of transcendental or absolute knowledge plays a great part in Mahayanaism and is even personified.

The Pitakas imply that Buddhas and Arhats can understand things which the ordinary human mind cannot grasp and human words cannot utter. Later Indian Buddhists had no scruples in formulating what the master left unformulated. They did not venture to use the words ātman or attā but they said that the saint can rise above all difference and plurality, transcend the distinction between subject and object and that nirvana is the absolute (Bhūtatathatā). The Buddha would doubtless have objected to this terminology as he objected to all attempts to express the ineffable but perhaps the thought which struggles for expression in such language is not far removed from his own thought.

One of the common Buddhist similes for human life is fire and it is the best simile for illuminating all Buddhist psychology.

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1. See the argument with Yamaka in Sam. Nik. xxii. 85.
3. Also paññākkhandha or vijjā.
To insist on finding a soul is like describing flames as substances. Fire is often spoken of as an element but it is really a process which cannot be isolated or interrupted. A flame is not the same as its fuel and it can be distinguished from other flames. But though you can individualize it and propagate it indefinitely, you cannot isolate it from its fuel and keep it by itself. Even so in the human being there is not any soul which can be isolated and go on living eternally but the analogy of the flame still holds good. Unseizable though a flame may be, and undefinable as substance, it is not unreasonable to trim a fire and make a flame rise above its fuel, free from smoke, clear and pure. If it were a conscious flame, such might be its own ideal.

The eighth and last section of the path is samāññamittā, right concentration or rapture. Mental concentration is essential to samāññha, which is the opposite of those wandering desires often blamed as seeking for pleasure here and there. But samāññha is more than mere concentration or even meditation and may be rendered by rapture or ecstasy, though like so many technical Buddhist terms it does not correspond exactly to any European word. It takes in Buddhism the place occupied in other religions by prayer—prayer, that is, in the sense of ecstatic communion with the divine being. The sermon¹ which the Buddha preached to King Ajātassatru on the fruits of the life of a recluse gives an eloquent account of the joys of samāññha. He describes how a monk² seats himself in the shade of a tree or in some mountain glen and then “keeping his body erect and his intelligence alert and intent” purifies his mind from all lust, ill-temper, sloth, fretfulness and perplexity. When these are gone, he is like a man freed from jail or debt, gladness rises in his heart and he passes successively through four stages of meditation³. Then his whole mind and even his body is permeated with a feeling of purity and peace. He concentrates his thoughts and is able to apply them to such great matters as he may select. He may revel in the enjoyment of supernatural powers, for we cannot deny that the oldest documents which we possess credit the sage with miraculous gifts, though they attach little importance to them, or he may follow the train of thought which led the Buddha himself to enlightenment. He

¹ Dig. Nik. ii. ² These exercises are hardly possible for the laity. ³ See chap. xiv. for details.
thinks of his previous births and remembers them as clearly as a man who has been a long walk remembers at the end of the day the villages through which he has passed. He thinks of the birth and deaths of other beings and sees them as plainly as a man on the top of a house sees the people moving in the streets below. He realizes the full significance of the four truths and he understands the origin and cessation of the three great evils, love of pleasure, love of existence and ignorance. And when he thus sees and knows, his heart is set free. "And in him thus set free there arises the knowledge of his freedom and he knows that rebirth has been destroyed, the higher life has been led, what had to be done has been done. He has no more to do with this life. Just as if in a mountain fastness there were a pool of water, clear, translucent and serene and a man standing on the bank and with eyes to see should perceive the mussels and the shells, the gravel and pebbles and the shoals of fish as they move about or lie within it."

Similar accounts occur in many other passages with variations in the number of stages described. We must not therefore insist on the details as essential. But in all cases the process is marked by mental activity. The meditations of Indian recluses are often described as self-hypnotism, and I shall say something on this point elsewhere, but it is clear that in giving the above account the Buddha did not contemplate any mental condition in which the mind ceases to be active or master of itself. When, at the beginning, the monk sits down to meditate it is "with intelligence alert and intent": in the last stage he has the sense of freedom, of duty done, and of knowledge immediate and unbounded, which sees the whole world spread below like a clear pool in which every fish and pebble is visible.

With this stage he attains Nirvāṇa\(^1\), the best known word and the most difficult to explain in all the vocabulary of Buddhism.

It is perhaps used more by western students than by oriental believers and it belongs to the same department of religious language as the word saint. For most Christians there is something presumptuous in trying to be a saint or in defining the

\(^1\) Sanskrit Nirvāṇa: Pali Nibbāna.
precise form of bliss enjoyed by saints in heaven and it is the same with nirvana. Yet no one denies that sanctity and nirvana are religious ideals. In a passage already quoted, Gotama described how in attaining Buddhahood he sought and arrived at the incomparable security of nirvana in which there is no birth, age, sickness, death, pain or defilement. This, confirmed by many other statements, shows that nirvana is a state attainable in this existence and compatible with a life of intellectual and physical exertion such as he himself led. The original meaning is the state of peace and happiness in which the fires of lust, hatred and stupidity are extinguished and the participle nibbuto apparently derived from the same root had passed into popular language in the sense of happy. Two forms of nirvana are distinguished. The first is upādi-sesā-nibbānam or nirvana in which the skandhas remain, although passion is destroyed. This state is also called arhatship, the condition of an arhat, meaning originally a worthy or venerable man, and the person enjoying it is alive. The idea that the emancipated saint who has attained the goal still lingers in the world, though no longer of the world, and teaches others, is common to all Indian religions. With the death of an arhat comes the state known as an-upādi-sesā-nibbānam in which no skandhas remain. It is also called Parinibbānam and this word and the participle parinibbuto are frequently used with special reference to the death of the Buddha. The difference between the two forms of nirvana is important though the second is only the continuation of the first. Nirvana in this life

2 E.g. the words addressed to Buddha, nibbutā nūna sā nari yassāyām idissapati. Happy is the woman who has such a husband. In the Anguttara Nikāya, III. 55 the Brahman Jāpuṇsoṇi asks Buddha what is meant by Sanditthikam nibbānam, that is nirvāṇa which is visible or belongs to this world. The reply is that it is effected by the destruction of lust, hatred and stupidity and it is described as akilikam, cīpāssikam opanayikam, paccoṭṭam vedissamb vaśilāḥ-difficult words which occur elsewhere as epithets of Dhamma and apparently mean immediate, inviting (it says “come and see”), leading to salvation, to be known by all who can understand. For some views as to the derivation of nibbana, nibbuto, etc. see J.P.T.S. 1919, pp. 53 ff. But the word nirvāṇa occurs frequently in the Mahābhārata and was probably borrowed by the Buddhists from the Brahmans.
3 Or sa-upādi.
4 But pariṇāṇa is not always rigidly distinguished from nirvāṇa, e.g. Sutta Nīpāta, 358. And in Cullavagga, vi. 4. 4 the Buddha describes himself as Brahmapho pariniḥbuto. Parinibbuto is even used of a horse in Maj. Nik. 66 ad fin.
admits of approximate definition: it is the goal of the religious life, though only the elect can even enter the struggle. Nirvana after death is not a goal in the same sense. The correct doctrine is rather that death is indifferent to one who has obtained nirvana and the difficulty of defining his nature after death does not mean that he has been striving for something inexplicable and illusory.

Arhatship is the aim and sum of the Buddha's teaching: it is associated in many passages with love for others, with wisdom, and happiness and is a condition of perfection attainable in this life. The passages in the Pitakas which seem to be the oldest and the most historical suggest that the success of the Buddha was due to the fact that he substituted for the chilly ideal of the Indian Munis something more inspiring and more visibly fruitful, something akin to what Christ called the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus we are told in the Vinaya that Bhaddiya was found sitting at the foot of a tree and exclaiming ecstatically, O happiness, happiness. When asked the reason of these ejaculations, he replied that formerly when he was a raja he was anxious and full of fear but that now, even when alone in the forest, he had become tranquil and calm, "with mind as peaceful as an antelope's."

Nirvana is frequently described by such adjectives as deathless, endless and changeless. These epithets seem to apply to the quality, not to the duration of the arhat's existence (for they refer to the time before the death of the body) and to signify that in the state which he has attained death and change have no power over him. He may suffer in body but he does not suffer in mind, for he does not identify himself with the body or its feelings¹.

Numerous passages could be quoted from the poetical books of the Pali Canon to the effect that nirvana is happiness and the same is stated in the more dogmatic and logical portions. Thus we hear of the bliss of emancipation and of the happiness which is based on the religious life² and the words "Nirvana is the greatest happiness" are put into Gotama's own mouth³.

¹ Sam. Nik. xxii. l. 18.
² Visuddhimagga and brahmacicaripadham sukham.
³ Maj. Nik. 139, cf. also Ang. Nik. n. 7 where various kinds of sukham or happiness are enumerated, and we hear of nekkhammasukham nirupadhis, upekkhās, aruparamanam sukham, etc.
The middle way preached by him is declared to be free from all distress, and those who walk in it make an end of pain even in this life¹. In one passage² Gotama is found meditating in a wood one winter night and is asked if he feels well and happy. The night is cold, his seat is hard, his clothes are light and the wind bitter. He replies emphatically that he is happy. Those who live in comfortable houses suffer from the evils of lust, hatred and stupidity but he has made an end of those evils and therefore is happy. Thus nirvana is freedom and joy: it is not extinction in the sense we give the word but light to them that sit in darkness, release to those in prison and torture. But though it is legitimately described in terms which imply positive happiness it transcends all human standards of good and evil, pleasure and pain. In describing the progress to it we all—whether Indians or Europeans—necessarily use such words as better, higher, happier, but in truth it is not to be expressed in terms of such values. In an interesting sutta³ a Jain argues that happiness is the goal of life. But the Buddha states categorically first that perfect happiness is only attainable by abandoning the conscious pursuit of happiness and secondly that even absolute happiness when attained is not the highest goal: there is a better state beyond, and that state is certainly not annihilation or extinction of feeling, for it is described in terms of freedom and knowledge.

The Dhamma-sangāni speaks of Nirvana as the Uncompounded Element⁴ and as a state not productive of good or evil. Numerous assertions⁵ are made about it incidentally but, though we hear that it is perfected and supramundane, most of the epithets are negative and amount to little more than that it transcends, or is absolutely detached from, all human experience. Uncompounded (asankhata) may refer to the passing away of all sankhāras but what may be the meaning of dhātu or element in this context, I do not presume to conjecture. But whatever else the word may mean, it clearly does not signify annihilation. Both here and in the Questions of Milinda an impression is produced in the mind of the reader, and perhaps was not absent

¹ E.g. Maj. Nik. 9 Ditthe dhamme dukkhaas' antakaro hoti.
² Ang. Nik. v. xxxii. ³ Maj. Nik. 70.
⁴ Asankhatadhātu, cf. the expression asankhārasparinibbāyi. Pugg. Pan. 1. 44.
⁵ Tabulated in Mrs Rhys Davida's translation, pp. 367-9.
in the mind of the writer, that nirvana is a sphere or plane of existence resembling though excelling space or ether. It is true that the language when carefully examined proves to be cautious and to exclude material interpretations but clearly the expositor when trying to make plain the inexplicable leaned to that side of error rather than towards annihilation. Somewhat similar is the language attributed to the Buddha in the Udāna. "There is a state (āyatana) where there is neither earth nor water, fire nor air, nor infinity either of space or of consciousness, nor nothingness, nor the absence of perception or non-perception, neither this world nor another, neither sun nor moon. That I call neither coming, going, nor standing, neither death nor birth. It is without stability, without movement, without basis: it is the end of sorrow, unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, uncompounded." The statements about nirvana in the Questions of Milinda are definite and interesting. In this work, Nāgasena tells King Milinda that there are two things which are not the result of a cause, to wit space and Nirvana. Nirvana is unproduceable (which does not mean unattainable) without origin, not made of anything and uncompounded. He who orders his life aright passes beyond the transitory, and gains the Real, the highest fruit. And when he has gained that, he has realized Nirvana.

The parts of the Pitakas which seem oldest leave the impression that those who heard and understood the Buddha's teaching at once attained this blissful state, just as the Church regards the disciples of Christ as saints. But already in the

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1 Such a phrase as Nibbānassa sacchikiriyā "for the attainment or realization of Nirvana" would be hardly possible if Nirvana were annihilation.
2 Udāna vii. near beginning.
3 These are the formless stages of meditation. In Nirvana there is neither any ordinary form of existence nor even the forms of existence with which we become acquainted in trances.
4 This negative form of expression is very congenial to Hindus. Thus many centuries later Kabir sung "With God is no rainy season, no ocean, no sunshine, no shade: no creation and no destruction: no life nor death: no sorrow nor joy is felt...there is no water, wind, nor fire. The True Guru is there contained."
5 rv. 7. 13 ff.
6 See also Book vii. of the Milinda containing a long list of similes illustrating the qualities necessary for the attainment of arhatship. Thirty qualities of arhatship are mentioned in Book vi. of the same work. See also Mahāparinib. Sut. iii. 65-60 and Rhys Davids' note.
Pitakas\textsuperscript{1} we find the idea that the struggle to obtain nirvana extends over several births and that there are four routes leading to sanctification. These routes are described by the names of those who use them and are commonly defined in terms of release from the ten fetters binding man to the world\textsuperscript{3}. The first is the Sotâpanno, he who has entered into the stream and is on his way to salvation. He has broken the first three fetters called belief in the existence of self, doubt, and trust in ceremonies or good works. He will be born again on earth or in some heaven but not more than seven times before he attains nirvana. He who enters on the next stage is called Sakadâgâmin or coming once, because he will be born once more in this world\textsuperscript{2} and in that birth attain nirvana. He has broken the fetters mentioned and also reduced to a minimum the next two, lust and hate. The Anâgâmin, or he who does not return, has freed himself entirely from these five fetters and will not be reborn on earth or any sensuous heaven but in a Brahmâ world once only. The fourth route is that of the Arhat who has completed his release by breaking the bonds called love of life, pride, self-righteousness and ignorance and has made an end of all evil and impurity. He attains nirvana here and is no more subject to rebirth. This simple and direct route is the one contemplated in the older discourses but later doctrine and popular feeling came to regard it as more and more unusual, just as saints grow fewer as the centuries advance further from the Apostolic age. In the dearth of visible Arhats it was consoling to think that nirvana could be won in other worlds.

The nirvana hitherto considered is that attained by a being living in this or some other world. But all states of existence whatever come to an end. When one who has not attained nirvana dies, he is born again. But what happens when an Arhat or a Buddha dies? This question did not fail to arouse

\textsuperscript{1} E.g. Dig. Nik. xvi. i. 7, Cullavag. ix. i. 4.
\textsuperscript{2} E.g. Pugg. Psn. i. 39. The ten fetters are (1) sakkâyadiṭṭhi, belief in the existence of the self, (2) vicikicchā, doubt, (3) sīlabbataparamāśo, trust in ceremonies of good works, (4) kāmarâgo, lust, (5) paṭigho, anger, (6) rûparâgo, desire for rebirth in worlds of form, (7) arûparâgo, desire for rebirth in formless worlds, (8) mano, pride, (9) uddhaccam, self-righteousness, (10) avijjā, ignorance.
\textsuperscript{3} There is some diversity of doctrine about the Sakadâgâmin. Some hold that he has two births, because he comes back to the world of men after having been born once meanwhile in a heaven, others that he has only one birth either on earth or in a devaloka.
interest during the Buddha's lifetime yet in the Pitakas the
discussion, though it could not be stifled, is relegated to the
background and brought forward only to be put aside as un-
practical. The greatest teachers of religion—Christ as well as
Buddha—have shown little disposition to speak of what follows
on death. For them the centre of gravity is on this side of the
grave not on the other: the all-important thing is to live a
religious life, at the end of which death is met fearlessly as an
incident of little moment. The Kingdom of Heaven, of which
Christ speaks, begins on earth though it may end elsewhere.
In the Gospels we hear something of the second coming of
Christ and the Judgment: hardly anything of the place and
character of the soul's eternal life. We only gather that a child
of God who has done his best need have no apprehension in this
or another world. Though expressed in very different phrase-
ology, something like that is the gist of what the Buddha
teaches about the dying Saint. But this reticent attitude did
not satisfy ancient India any more than it satisfies modern
Europe and we have the record of how he was questioned and
what he said in reply. Within certain limits that reply is quite
definite. The question, does the Tathâgata, that is the Buddha
or perfected saint, exist after death, which is the phraseology
usually employed by the Pitakas in formulating the problem,
belongs to the class of questions called not declared or un-
determined¹, because they do not admit of either an affirmative
or a negative answer. Other problems belonging to this class
are: Is the world eternal or not: Is the world infinite or not:
Is the soul² the same as the body or different from it? It is
categorically asserted that none of these questions admit of a
reply: thus it is not right to say that (a) the saint exists after
death, (b) or that he does not exist, (c) or that he both does
and does not exist, (d) or that he neither exists nor does not
exist. The Buddha's teaching about these problems is stated
with great clearness in a Sutta named after Mâlunkyaputta³,
an enquirer who visits him and after enumerating them says
frankly that he is dissatisfied because the Buddha will not

¹ Avyâkatâ. The Buddha, being omniscient, sâkaśa, must have known the
answer but did not declare it, perhaps because language was incapable of expressing
it
² Jiva not attâ.
³ Maj. Nik. 63.
answer them. “If the Lord answers them, I will lead a religious life under him, but if he does not answer them, I will give up religion and return to the world. But if the Lord does not know, then the straightforward thing is to say, I do not know.” This is plain speaking, almost discourtesy. The Buddha’s reply is equally plain, but unyielding. “Have I said to you, come and be my disciple and I will teach you whether the world is eternal or not, infinite or not: whether the soul is identical with the body, or separate, whether the saint exists after death or not?” “No, Lord.” “Now suppose a man were wounded by a poisoned arrow and his friends called in a physician to dress his wound. What if the man were to say, I shall not have my wound treated until I know what was the caste, the family, the dwelling-place, the complexion and stature of the man who wounded me; nor shall I let the arrow be drawn out until I know what is the exact shape of the arrow and bow, and what were the animals and plants which supplied the feathers, leather, shaft and string. The man would never learn all that, because he would die first.” “Therefore” is the conclusion, “hold what I have determined as determined and what I have not determined, as not determined.”

This sutta may be taken in connection with passages asserting that the Buddha knows more than he tells his disciples. The result seems to be that there are certain questions which the human mind and human language had better leave alone because we are incapable of taking or expressing a view sufficiently large to be correct, but that the Buddha has a more than human knowledge which he does not impart because it is not profitable and overstrains the faculties, just as it is no part of a cure that the patient should make an exhaustive study of his disease.

With reference to the special question of the existence of the saint after death, the story of Yamaka\(^1\) is important. He maintained that a monk in whom evil is destroyed (khīnāsavo) is annihilated when he dies, and does not exist. This was considered a grave heresy and refuted by Sāriputta who argues that even in this life the nature of a saint passes understanding because he is neither all the skandhas taken together nor yet one or more of them.

\(^1\) Sam. Nik. xvii. 85.
Yet it would seem that according to the psychology of the Pitakas an ordinary human being is an aggregate of the skandhas and nothing more. When such a being dies and in popular language is born again, the skandhas reconstitute themselves but it is expressly stated that when the saint dies this does not happen. The Chain of Causation says that consciousness and the sankhāras are interdependent. If there is no rebirth, it is because (as it would seem) there are in the dying saint no sankhāras. His nature cannot be formulated in the same terms as the nature of an ordinary man. It may be noted that karma is not equivalent to the effect produced on the world by a man’s words and deeds, for if that were so, no one would have died leaving more karma behind him than the Buddha himself, yet according to Hindu doctrine, whether Buddhist or Brahmanic, no karma attaches to the deeds of a saint. His acts may affect others but there is nothing in them which tends to create a new existence.

In another dialogue the Buddha replies to a wandering monk called Vaccha who questioned him about the undetermined problems and in answer to every solution suggested says that he does not hold that view. Vaccha asks what objection he has to these theories that he has not adopted any of them?

“Vaccha, the theory that the saint exists (or does not exist and so on) after death is a jungle, a desert, a puppet show, a writhing, an entanglement and brings with it sorrow, anger, wrangling and agony. It does not conduce to distaste for the world, to the absence of passion, to the cessation of evil, to peace, to knowledge, to perfect enlightenment, to nirvana. Perceiving this objection, I have not adopted any of these theories.” “Then has Gotama any theory of his own?” “Vaccha, the Tathāgata has nothing to do with theories, but this is what he knows: the nature of form, how form arises, how form perishes: the nature of perception, how it arises and how it perishes (and so on with the other skandhas). Therefore I say that the Tathāgata is emancipated because he has completely and entirely abandoned all imaginations, agitations and false notions about the Ego and anything pertaining to the Ego.” But, asks Vaccha, when one who has attained this

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1 Maj. Nik. 72.
emancipation of mind dies where is he reborn? "Vaccha, the word 'reborn' does not fit the case." "Then, Gotama, he is not reborn." "To say he is not reborn does not fit the case, nor is it any better to say he is both reborn and not reborn or that he is neither reborn nor not reborn." "Really, Gotama, I am completely bewildered and my faith in you is gone."

"Never mind your bewilderment. This doctrine is profound and difficult. Suppose there was a fire in front of you. You would see it burning and know that its burning depended on fuel. And if it went out (nibbāyeyya) you would know that it had gone out. But if some one were to ask you, to which quarter has it gone, East, West, North or South, what would you say?"

"The expression does not fit the case, Gotama. For the fire depended on fuel and when the fuel is gone it is said to be extinguished, being without nourishment."

"In just the same way, all form by which one could predicate the existence of the saint is abandoned and uprooted like a fan palm, so that it will never grow up in future. The saint who is released from what is styled form is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom, like the great ocean. It does not fit the case to say either that he is reborn, not reborn, both reborn and not reborn, or neither reborn nor not reborn." Exactly the same statement is then repeated four times the words sensation, perception, sankhāras and consciousness being substituted successively for the word form. Vaccha, we are told, was satisfied.

To appreciate properly the Buddha's simile we must concentrate our attention on the fire. When we apply this metaphor to annihilation, we usually think of the fuel or receptacle and our mind dwells sadly on the heap of ashes or the extinguished lamp. But what has become of the fire? It is hardly correct to say that it has been destroyed. If a particular fire may be said to be annihilated in the sense that it is impossible to reconstitute it by repeating the same process of burning, the reason is not so much that we cannot get the same flames as that we cannot burn the same fuel twice. But so long as there is, continuous combustion in the same fireplace or pile of fuel, we speak of the same fire although neither the flame nor the fuel remains

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1 Which is said not to grow up again.
the same. When combustion ceases, the fire goes out in popular language. To what quarter does it go? That question clearly does not "fit the case." But neither does it fit the case to say that the fire is annihilated.

Nirvana is the cessation of a process not the annihilation of an existence. If I take a walk, nothing is annihilated when the walk comes to an end: a particular form of action has ceased. Strictly speaking the case of a fire is the same: when it goes out a process ceases. For the ordinary man nirvana is annihilation in the sense that it is the absence of all the activities which he considers desirable. But for the arhat (who is the only person able to judge) nirvana after death, as compared with nirvana in life, may be quiescence and suspension of activity, only that such phrases seem to imply that activity is the right and normal condition, quiescence being negative and unnatural, whereas for an arhat these values are reversed.

We may use too the parallel metaphor of water. A wave cannot become an immortal personality. It may have an indefinitely long existence as it moves across the ocean, although both its shape and substance are constantly changing, and when it breaks against an obstacle the resultant motion may form new waves. And if a wave ceases to struggle for individual existence and differentiation from the surrounding sea, it cannot be said to exist any more as a wave. Yet neither the water which was its substance nor the motion which impelled it have been annihilated. It is not even quite correct to say that it has been merged in the sea. A drop of water added to a larger liquid mass is merged. The wave simply ceases to be active and differentiated.

In the Samyutta-Nikâya the Buddha's statement that the saint after death is deep and immeasurable like the ocean is expanded by significant illustration of the mathematician's inability to number the sand or express the sea in terms of

\[1\] It may be that the Buddha had in his mind the idea that a flame which goes out returns to the primitive invisible state of fire. This view is advocated by Schrader (Jour. Pali Text Soc. 1905, p. 167). The passages which he cites seem to me to show that there was supposed to be such an invisible store from which fire is born but to be less conclusive as proving that fire which goes out is supposed to return to that store, though the quotation from the Maitreyi Up. points in this direction. For the metaphor of the flame see also Sutta-Nipâta, verses 1074–6.

\[2\] xlv. 1.
liquid measure. It is in fact implied that if we cannot say he is, this is only because that word cannot properly be applied to the infinite, innumerable and immeasurable.

The point which is clearest in the Buddha’s treatment of this question is that whatever his disciples may have thought, he did not himself consider it of importance for true religion. Speculation on such points may be interesting to the intellect but is not edifying. It is a jungle where the traveller wanders without advancing, and a puppet-show, a vain worldly amusement which wears a false appearance of religion because it is diverting itself with quasi-religious problems. What is the state of the saint after death, is not as people vainly suppose a question parallel to, am I going to heaven or hell, what shall I do to be saved? To those questions the Buddha gives but one answer in terms of human language and human thought, namely, attain to nirvana and arhatship on this side of death, if possible in your present existence; if not now, then in the future good existences which you can fashion for yourself. What lies beyond is impracticable as a goal, unprofitable as a subject of speculation. We shall probably not be transgressing the limits of Gotama’s thought if we add that those who are not arhats are bound to approach the question with misconception and it is a necessary part of an Arhat’s training to get rid of the idea “I am.” The state of a Saint after death cannot be legitimately described in language which suggests that it is a fuller and deeper mode of life. Yet it is clear that nearly all who dispute about it wish to make out that it is a state they could somehow regard with active satisfaction. In technical language they are infected with arūparāgo, or desire for life in a formless world, and this is the seventh of the ten fetters, all of which must be broken before arhatship is attained. I imagine that those modern sects, such as the Zen in Japan, which hold that the deepest mysteries of the faith cannot be communicated in words but somehow grow clear in meditation are not far from the master’s teaching, though to the best of my belief no passage has been produced from the Pitakas stating that an arahat has special knowledge about the avyākatāni or undetermined questions.

1 Maj. Nik. 9, ad init. Aṣmiti ditthim āṇāṇusayam saṃuḥanitvā.
2 See especially Sutta-Nipāta, 1070 Atthan gataasa na pamāṇam atthi, etc.
Almost all who treat of nirvana after death try to make the Buddha say, is or is not. That is what he refused to do. We still want a plain answer to a plain question and insist that he really means either that the saint is annihilated or enters on an infinite existence. But the true analogues to this question are the other insoluble questions, for instance, is the world infinite or finite in space? This is in form a simple physical problem, yet it is impossible for the mind to conceive either an infinite world or a world stopping abruptly with not even space beyond. A common answer to this antinomy is that the mind is attempting to deal with a subject with which it is incompetent to deal, that the question is wrongly formulated and that every answer to it thus formulated must be wrong. The way of truth lies in first finding the true question. The real difficulty of the Buddha's teaching, though it does not stimulate curiosity so much as the question of life after death, is the nature and being of the saint in this life before death, raised in the argument with Yamaka.1

Another reason for not pressing the Buddha's language in either direction is that, if he had wished to preach in the subtest form either infinite life or annihilation, he would have found minds accustomed to the ideas and a vocabulary ready for his use. If he had wished to indicate any form of absorption into a universal soul, or the acquisition by the individual self of the knowledge that it is identical with the universal self, he could easily have done so. But he studiously avoided saying anything of the kind. He teaches that all existence involves suffering and he preaches escape from it. After that escape the words being and not being no longer apply, and the reason why some people adopt the false idea of annihilation is because they have commenced by adopting the false alternative of either annihilation or an eternal prolongation of this life. A man makes2 himself miserable because he thinks he has lost something or that there is something which he cannot get. But if he does not think he has lost something or is deprived of something he might have, then he does not feel miserable. Similarly, a man holds the erroneous opinion, "This world is the self, or soul and I shall become it after death and be eternal, and unchanging." Then he hears the preaching of a Buddha and he thinks "I shall be annihilated, I shall not exist any more," and he feels

1 Sam. Nik. xxii. 85.  
miserable. But if a man does not hold this doctrine that the soul is identical with the universe and will exist eternally—which is just complete full-blown folly—and then hears the preaching of a Buddha it does not occur to him to think that he will be annihilated and he is not miserable. Here the Buddha emphasizes the fact that his teaching is not a variety of the Brahmanic doctrine about the Ātman. Shortly afterwards in the same sutta he even more emphatically says that he does not teach annihilation. He teaches that the saint is already in this life inconceivable (anunuvejjo): "And when I teach and explain this some accuse me falsely and without the smallest ground saying ‘Gotama is an unbeliever; he preaches the annihilation, the destruction, the dying out of real being.’ When they talk like this they accuse me of being what I am not, of saying what I do not say."

Though the Buddha seems to condemn by anticipation the form of the Vedanta known as the Advaita, this philosophy illustrates the difficulty of making any statement about the saint after his death. For it teaches that the saint knows that there is but one reality, namely Brahman, and that all individual existences are illusion; he is aware that he is Brahman and that he is not differentiated from the world around him. And when he dies, what happens? Metaphors about drops and rivers are not really to the point. It would be more correct to say that nothing at all has happened. His physical life, an illusion which did not exist for himself, has ceased to exist for others.

Perhaps he will be nearest to the Buddha's train of thought who attempts to consider, by reflection rather than by discussion in words, what is meant by annihilation. By thinking of the mystery of existence and realizing how difficult it is to explain how and why anything exists, we are apt to slip into thinking that it would be quite natural and intelligible if nothing existed or if existing things became nothing. Yet as a matter of fact our minds have no experience of this nothing of which we talk and it is inconceivable. When we try to think of nothingness we really think of space from which we try to remove all content, yet could we create an absolute vacuum within a vessel, the interior of the vessel would not be annihilated. The man who

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1 Later in the same Sutta: Kevalo paripūto bāladhammo.
2 Four emphatic synonyms in the original.
has attained nirvana cannot be adequately defined or grasped even in this life: what binds him to being is cut\(^1\) but it is inappropriate and inadequate to say that he has become nothing\(^2\).

\(^1\) Dig. Nik. 1. 73 uccinna-bhava-nettiko.

\(^2\) I recommend the reader to consider carefully the passage at the end of Book iv. of Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (Haldane and Kemp's translation, vol. i. pp. 529-530). Though he evidently misunderstood what he calls "the Nirvana of the Buddhists" yet his own thought throws much light on it.
CHAPTER XI

MONKS AND LAYMEN

The great practical achievement of the Buddha was to found a religious order which has lasted to the present day. It is known as the Sangha and its members are called Bhikkhus. It is chiefly to this institution that the permanence of his religion is due.

Corporations or confraternities formed for the purpose of leading a particular form of life are among the most widespread manifestations, if not of primitive worship, at any rate of that stage in which it passes into something which can be called personal religion and at least three causes contribute to their formation. First, early institutions were narrower and more personal than those of to-day. In politics as well as religion such relatively broad designations as Englishman or Frenchman, Buddhist or Christian, imply a slowly widening horizon gained by centuries of cooperation and thought. In the time of the Buddha such national and religious names did not exist. People belonged to a clan or served some local prince. Similarly in religious matters they followed some teacher or worshipped some god, and in either case if they were in earnest they tended to become members of a society. Societies such as the Pythagorean and Orphic brotherhoods were also common in Greece from the sixth century B.C. onwards but the result was small, for the genius of the Greeks turned towards politics and philosophy. But in India, where politics had strangely little attraction for the cultured classes, energy and intelligence found an outlet in the religious life and created a multitude of religious societies. Even to-day Hinduism has no one creed or code and those who take a serious interest in religion are not merely Hindus but follow some sect which, without damning

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1 Sk. Bhikshu, beggar or mendicant, because they live on alms. Bhikshdcaryam occurs in Brihad Ar. Up. III. 5. 1.
what it does not adopt, selects its own dogmas and observances. This is not sectarianism in the sense of schism. It is merely the desire to have for oneself some personal, intimate religious life. Even in so uncompromising and levelling a creed as Islam the devout often follow special ṭariqas, that is, roads or methods of the devotional life, and these ṭariqas, though differing more than the various orders of the Roman Catholic Church, are not regarded as sects distinct from ordinary orthodoxy. When Christ died, Christianity was not much more than such a ṭariq. It was an incipient religious order which had not yet broken with Judaism.

This idea of the private, even secret religious body is closely allied to another, namely, that family life and worldly business are incompatible with the quest for higher things. In early ages only priests and consecrated persons are expected to fast and practise chastity but when once the impression prevails that such observances not only achieve particular ends but produce wiser, happier, or more powerful lives, then they are likely to be followed by considerable numbers of the more intelligent, emotional and credulous sections of the population. The early Christian Church was influenced by the idea that the world is given over to Satan and that he who would save himself must disown it. The gentler Hindus were actuated by two motives. First, more than other races, they felt the worry and futility of worldly life. Secondly, they had a deep-rooted belief that miraculous powers could be acquired by self-mortification and the sensations experienced by those who practised fasting and trances confirmed this belief.

The third cause for the foundation and increase of religious orders is a perception of the influence which they can exercise. The disciples of a master or the priests of a god, if numerous and organized, clearly possess a power analogous to that of an army. To use such institutions for the service and protection of the true faith is an obvious expedient of the zealot: ecclesiastical statecraft and ambition soon make their appearance in most orders founded for the assistance of the Church militant. But of this spirit Buddhism has little to show; except in Tibet and Japan it is almost absent. The ideal of the Buddha lay within his order and was to be realized in the life of the members. They had no need to strive after any extraneous goal.
The Sangha, as this order was called, arose naturally out of the social conditions of India in the time of Gotama. It was considered proper that an earnest-minded man should renounce the world and become a wanderer. In doing this and in collecting round him a band of disciples who had a common mode of life Gotama created nothing new. He merely did with conspicuous success what every contemporary teacher was doing. The confraternity which he founded differed from others chiefly in being broader and more human, less prone to extravagances and better organized. As we read the accounts in the Pitakas, its growth seems so simple and spontaneous that no explanation is necessary. Disciples gather round the master and as their numbers increase he makes a few salutary regulations. It is almost with surprise that we find the result to be an organization which became one of the great forces of the world.

The Buddha said that he taught a middle path equally distant from luxury and from self-mortification, but Europeans are apt to be struck by his condemnation of pleasure and to be repelled by a system which suppresses so many harmless activities. But contemporary opinion in India criticized his discipline as easy-going and lax. We frequently hear in the Vinaya that the people murmured and said his disciples behaved like those who still enjoy the good things of the world. Some, we are told, tried to enter the order merely to secure a comfortable existence. It is clear that he went to the extreme limits which public opinion allowed in dispensing with the rigours considered necessary to the religious life, and we shall best understand his spirit if we fix our attention not so much on the regime, to our way of thinking austere, which he prescribed—the single meal a day and so on—as on his insistence that what is necessary is emancipation of heart and mind and the cultivation of love and knowledge, all else being a matter of indifference. Thus he says to the ascetic Kassapa that though a man perform all manner of penances, yet if he has not attained the bliss which comes of good conduct, a good heart and good mind, he is far from being a true monk. But when he has the heart of love that knows no anger nor ill-will, when he has destroyed lust and become emancipated even before death, then he deserves the name of monk. It is a

2 Dig. Nik. vnr.
common thing to say, he goes on, that it is hard to lead the
life of a monk. But asceticism is comparatively easy; what is
really hard is the conversion and emancipation of the heart.

In India, where the proclivity to asceticism and self-torture
is endemic, it was only natural that penance should in very
truth seem easier and more satisfactory than this spiritual
discipline. It won more respect and doubtless seemed more
tangible and definite, more like what the world expected from
a holy man. Accordingly we find that efforts were made by
Devadatta and others to induce the Buddha to increase the
severity of his discipline. But he refused\(^1\). The more ascetic
form of life, which he declined to make obligatory, is described
in the rules known as Dhuṭāṅgas, of which twelve or thirteen
are enumerated. They are partly a stricter form of the ordinary
rules about food and dress and partly refer to the life of a hermit
who lives in the woods or in a cemetery.

In the Pitakas\(^2\) Kassapa’s disciples are described as dhuta-
vādā and the advantages arising from the observance of the
Dhuṭāṅgas are enumerated in the Questions of Milinda. It is
probable that the Buddha himself had little sympathy with them.
He was at any rate anxious that they should not degenerate into
excesses. Thus he forbade\(^3\) his disciples to spend the season of
the rains in a hollow tree, or in a place where dead bodies are
kept, or to use an alms bowl made out of a skull. Now Kassapa
had been a Brahman ascetic and it is probable that in tolerating
the Dhuṭāṅgas the Buddha merely intended to allow him and
his followers to continue the practices to which they were
accustomed. They were an influential body and he doubtless
desired their adhesion, for he was sensitive to public opinion\(^4\)
and anxious to conform to it when conformity involved no
sacrifice of principle. We hear repeatedly that the laity com-
plained of some practice of his Bhikkhus and that when the
complaint was brought to his ears he ordered the objectionable
practice to cease. Once the king of Magadha asked the congre-
gation to postpone the period of retreat during the rains until
the next full moon day. They referred the matter to the
Buddha: “I prescribe that you obey kings,” was his reply.

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\(^{1}\) Cullavag. i. 1. 3.
\(^{2}\) Sam. Nik. xiv. 15. 12, Ang. Nik. i. xiv.
\(^{3}\) Mahāvag. iii. 12.
\(^{4}\) Or the opinion of single persons, e.g. Visākhā in Mahāvag. iii. 13.
One obvious distinction between the Buddha's disciples and other confraternities was that they were completely clad, whereas the Ājivikas, Jains and others went about naked. The motive for this rule was no doubt decency and a similar thought made Gotama insist on the use of a begging bowl, whereas some sectaries collected scraps of food in their hands. Such extravagances led to abuses resembling the degradation of some modern fakirs. Even the Jain scriptures admit that pious householders were disgusted by the ascetics who asked for a lodging in their houses—naked, unwashed men, foul to smell and loathsome to behold\(^1\). This was the sort of life which the Buddha called anariyam, ignoble or barbaric. With such degradation of humanity he would have nothing to do. He forbade nakedness, as well as garments of hair and other uncomfortable costumes. The raiment which he prescribed consisted of three pieces of cloth of the colour called kāsāva. This was probably dull orange, selected as being unornamental. It would appear that in mediæval India the colour in use was reddish: at present a rather bright and not unpleasing yellow is worn in Burma, Ceylon, Siam and Camboja. Originally the robes were made of rags collected and sewed together but it soon became the practice for pious laymen to supply the Order with raiment.

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In the Mahâ and Culla-vaggas of the Vinaya Pitaka we possess a large collection of regulations purporting to be issued by the Buddha for the guidance of the Order on such subjects as ceremonial, discipline, clothes, food, furniture and medicine. The arrangement is roughly chronological. Gotama starts as a new teacher, without either followers or a code. As disciples multiply the need for regulations and uniformity of life is felt. Each incident and difficulty that arises is reported to him and he defines the correct practice. One may suspect that many usages represented as originating in the injunctions of the master really grew up gradually. But the documents are ancient; they date from the generations immediately following the Buddha's death, and their account of his activity as an

\(^1\) Acārāṅgasaút, ii. 2. 2.
organizer is probably correct in substance. One of the first reasons which rendered regulations necessary was the popularity of the order and the respect which it enjoyed. King Bimbisāra of Magadha is represented as proclaiming that "It is not permitted to do anything to those who join the order of the Sakyaputtiya." Hence robbers, debtors, slaves, soldiers anxious to escape service and others who wished for protection against the law or merely to lead an idle life, desired to avail themselves of these immunities. This resulted in the gradual elaboration of a code of discipline which did much to secure that only those actuated by proper motives could enter the order and only those who conducted themselves properly could stay within it.

We find traces of a distinction between those Bhikkhus who were hermits and lived solitary lives in the woods and those who moved about in bands, frequenting rest houses. In the time of the Buddha the wandering life was a reality but later most monks became residents in monasteries. Already in the Vinaya we seem to breathe the atmosphere of large conventual establishments where busy superintendents see to the lodging and discipline of crowds of monks, and to the distribution of the gifts made by pious laymen. But the Buddha himself knew the value of forests and plant life for calming and quickening the mind. "Here are trees," he would say to his disciples at the end of a lecture, "go and think it out."

In the poetical books of the Tripitaka, especially the collections known as the Songs of the Monks and Nuns, this feeling is still stronger: we are among anchorites who pass their time in solitary meditation in the depths of forests or on mountain tops and have a sense of freedom and a joy in the life of wild things not found in cloisters. These old monkish poems are somewhat wearisome as continuous reading, but their monotonous enthusiasm about the conquest of desire is leavened by a sincere and observant love of nature. They sing of the scenes in which meditation is pleasant, the flowery banks of streams that flow through reeds and grasses of many colours as well as

\[1\] Mahāv. i. 42.
\[2\] But converted robbers were occasionally admitted, e.g. Angulimāla.
\[3\] Sam. Nik. iv. xxxv., Maj. Nik. 8 ad fin. On the value attached by mystics in all countries to trees and flowers, see Underhill, Mysticism, p. 231.
the mysterious midnight forest when the dew falls and wild beasts howl; they note the plumage of the blue peacock, the flight of the yellow crane and the gliding movements of the water snake. It does not appear that these amiable hermits arrogated any superiority to themselves or that there was any opposition between them and the rest of the brethren. They preferred a form of the religious life which the Buddha would not make compulsory, but it is older than Buddhism and not yet dead in India. The Sangha exercised no hierarchical authority over them and they accepted such simple symbols of union as the observance of Uposatha days.

The character of the Sangha has not materially changed since its constitution took definite shape towards the end of the master’s life. It was and is simply a body of people who believe that the higher life cannot be lived in any existing form of society and therefore combine to form a confraternity where they are relieved of care for food and raiment, where they can really take no thought for the morrow and turn the cheek to the smiter. They were not a corporation of priests and they had no political aims. Any free man, unless his parents or the state had a claim on him and unless he suffered from certain diseases, was admitted; he took no vows of obedience and was at any time at liberty to return to the world.

Though the Sangha as founded by the Buddha did not claim, still less exact, anything from the laity, yet it was their duty, their most obvious and easy method of acquiring merit, to honour and support monks, to provide them with food, clothes and lodging and with everything which they might lawfully possess. Strictly speaking a monk does not beg for food nor thank for what he receives. He gives the layman a chance of doing a good deed and the donor, not the recipient, should be thankful.

At first the Buddha admitted converts to the order himself, but he subsequently prescribed two simple ceremonies for admission to the novitiate and to full privileges respectively. They are often described as ordinations but are rather applications from postulants which are granted by a Chapter consisting of at least ten members. The first, called pabbajjā or going forth—that is leaving the world—is effected when the would-be novice, duly shorn and robed in yellow, recites the three refuges
and the ten precepts. Full membership is obtained by the further ceremony called upasampadā. The postulant, who must be at least twenty years old, is examined in order to ascertain that he is sui juris and has no disqualifying disease or other impediment. Then he is introduced to the Chapter by "a learned and competent monk" who asks those who are in favour of his admission to signify the same by their silence and those who are not, to speak. If this formula is repeated three times without calling forth objection, the upasampadā is complete. The newly admitted Bhikkhu must have an Upajjhāya or preceptor on whom he waits as a servant, seeing to his clothes, bath, bed, etc. In return the preceptor gives him spiritual instruction, supervises his conduct and tends him when sick.

The Chapter which had power to accept new monks and regulate discipline consisted of the monks inhabiting a parish or district, whose extent was fixed by the Sangha itself. Its reality as a corporate body was secured by stringent regulations that under no excuse must the Bhikkhus resident in a parish omit to assemble on Uposatha days. The Vinaya represents the initiative for these simple observances as coming not from the Buddha but from King Bimbisāra, who pointed out that the adherents of other schools met on fixed days and that it would be well if his disciples did the same. He assented and ordered that when they met they should recite a formula called Pātimokkha which is still in use. It is a confessional service, in which a list of offences is read out and the brethren are asked three times after each item "Are you pure in this matter?" Silence indicates a good conscience. Only if a monk has anything to confess does he speak. It is then in the power of the assembly to prescribe some form of expiation. The offender may be rebuked, suspended or even expelled. But he must admit his guilt. Otherwise disciplinary measures are forbidden.

What has been said above about the daily life of the Buddha applies equally to the life of his disciples. Like him

1 They are abstinence from (1) destroying life, (2) stealing, (3) impurity, (4) lying, (5) intoxicants, (6) eating at forbidden times, (7) dancing, music and theatres, (8) garlands, perfumes, ornaments, (9) high or large beds, (10) accepting gold or silver.
2 These are practically equivalent to Sundays, being the new moon, full moon and the eighth days from the new and full moon. In Tibet however the 14th, 16th, 29th and 30th of each month are observed.
3 Mahāvag. ii. 1-2.
4 Chap. viii. Sec. 3.
they rose early, journeyed or went to beg their only meal until about half-past eleven and spent the heat of the day in retirement and meditation. In the evening followed discussion and instruction. It was forbidden to accept gold and silver but the order might possess parks and monasteries and receive offerings of food and clothes. The personal possessions allowed to a monk were only the three robes, a girdle, an alms bowl, a razor, a needle and a water strainer\(^1\). Everything else which might be given to an individual had to be handed over to the confraternity and held in common and the Vinaya shows clearly how a band of wandering monks following their teacher from place to place speedily grew into an influential corporation possessing parks and monasteries near the principal cities. The life in these establishments attained a high level of comfort according to the standard of the times and the number of restrictive precepts suggests a tendency towards luxury. This was natural, for the laity were taught that their duty was to give and the Order had to decide how much it could properly receive from those pious souls who were only too happy to acquire merit. In the larger Vihāras, for instance at Sāvatthi, there were halls for exercise (that is walking up and down), halls with fires in them, warm baths and store rooms.

The year of the Bhikkhus was divided into two parts. During nine months they might wander about, live in the woods or reside in a monastery. During the remaining three months, known as Vassa\(^2\) or rainy season, residence in a monastery was obligatory. This custom, as mentioned, existed in India before the Buddha’s time and the Pitakas represent him as adopting it, chiefly out of deference to public opinion. He did not prescribe any special observances for the period of Vassa, but this was the time when people had most leisure, since it was hard to move about, and also when the monks were brought into continual contact with the inhabitants of a special locality. So it naturally became regarded as the appropriate season for giving instruction to the laity. The end of the rainy season was marked by a ceremony called Pavâraṇâ, at which the monks

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\(^1\) Required not so much to purify water as to prevent the accidental destruction of insects.

\(^2\) It might begin either the day after the full moon of Asālha (June–July) or a month later. In either case the period was three months.Mahāvag. III. 2.
asked one another to pardon any offences that might have been committed, and immediately after it came the Kathiṇa ceremony or distribution of robes. Kathiṇa signifies the store of raw cotton cloth presented by the laity and held as common property until distributed to individuals.

It would be tedious to give even an abstract of the regulations contained in the Vinaya. They are almost exclusively concerned with matters of daily life, dwellings, furniture, medicine and so forth, and if we compare them with the statutes of other religious orders, we are struck by the fact that the Buddha makes no provision for work, obedience or worship. In the western branches of the Christian Church—and to some extent, though less markedly, in the eastern—the theory prevails that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do" and manual labour is a recognized part of the monastic life. But in India conditions and ideals were different. The resident monk grew out of the wandering teacher or disputant, who was not likely to practise any trade; it was a maxim that religious persons lived on alms, and occupations which we consider harmless, such as agriculture, were held to be unsuitable because such acts as ploughing may destroy animal life. Probably the Buddha would not have admitted the value of manual labour as a distraction and defence against evil thoughts. No one was more earnestly bent on the conquest of such thoughts, but he wished to extirpate them, not merely to crowd them out. Energy and activity are insisted on again and again, and there is no attempt to discourage mental activity. Reading formed no part of the culture of the time, but a life of travel and new impressions, continual discussion and the war of wits, must have given the Bhikkhus a more stimulating training than was to be had in the contemporary Brahmanic schools.

The Buddha's regulations contain no vow of obedience or recognition of rank other than simple seniority or the relation of teacher to pupil. As time went on various hierarchical expedients were invented in different countries, since the management of large bodies of men necessitates authority in some form, but except in Lamaism this authority has rarely taken the form familiar to us in the Roman and Oriental Churches, where the Bishops and higher clergy assume the right to direct both the belief and conduct of others. In the Sangha,
no monk could give orders to another: he who disobeyed the
precepts of the order ceased to be a member of it either ipso
facto, or if he refused to comply with the expiation prescribed.
Also there was no compulsion, no suppression of discussion, no
delegated power to explain or supplement the truth. Hence
differences of opinion in the Buddhist Church have largely taken
the shape of schools of thought rather than of separate and
polemical sects. Dissension indeed has not been absent but of
persecution, such as stains the annals of the Christian Church,
there is hardly any record. The fact that the Sangha, though
nearly five hundred years older than any Christian institution,
is still vigorous shows that this noble freedom is not unsuccessful
as a practical policy.

The absence of anything that can be called worship or cultus
in Gotama’s regulations is remarkable. He not merely sets
aside the older religious rites, such as prayer and sacrifice; he
does not prescribe anything whatever which is in ordinary
language a religious act. For the Pātimokkha, Pavaṟanā, etc.,
are not religious ceremonies, but chapters of the order held with
an ethical object, and the procedure (the proposal of a resolution
and the request for an expression of opinion) is that adopted in
modern public meetings, except that assent is signified by
silence. It is true that the ceremonial of a religion is not likely
to develop during the life of the founder, for pious recollection
and recitation of his utterances in the form of scripture are as
yet impossible. Still, if the Buddha had had any belief whatever
in the edifying effect of ritual, he would not have failed to
institute some ceremony, appealing if not to supernatural beings
at least to human emotions. Even the few observances which
he did prescribe seem to be the result of suggestion from others
and the only inference to be drawn is that he regarded every
form of religious observance as entirely superfluous.

At first the Sangha consisted exclusively of men. It was not
until about five years after its establishment that the entreaties
of the Buddha’s fostermother, who had become a widow, and
of Ánanda prevailed on him to throw it open to women as well¹
but it would seem that the permission was wrung from him
against his judgment. His reluctance was not due to a low
estimate of female ability, for he recognized and made use of

¹ Cullavag. x. 1.
the influence of women in social and domestic life and he admitted that they were as capable as men of attaining the highest stages of spiritual and intellectual progress. This is also attested by the Pitakas, for some of the most important and subtle arguments and expositions are put into the mouths of nuns. Indeed the objections raised by the Buddha, though emphatic, are as arguments singularly vague and the eight rules for nuns which he laid down and compared to an embankment built to prevent a flood seem dictated not by the danger of immorality but by the fear that women might aspire to the management of the order and to be the equals or superiors of monks.

So far as we can tell, his fears were not realized. The female branch of the order showed little vigour after its first institution but it does not appear that it was a cause of weakness or corruption. Women were influential in the infancy of Buddhism, but we hear little of the nuns when this first ardour was over. We may surmise that it was partly due to personal devotion to Gotama and also that there was a growing tendency to curtail the independence allowed to women by earlier Aryan usage. The daughters of Asoka play some part in the narratives of the conversion of Ceylon and Nepal but after the early days of the Church female names are not prominent; subsequently the succession became interrupted and, as nuns can receive ordination only from other nuns and not from monks, it could not be restored. The so-called nuns of the present day are merely religious women corresponding to the sisters of Protestant Churches, but are not ordained members of an order. But the right of women to enjoy the same spiritual privileges as men is not denied in theory and in practice Buddhism has done nothing to support or commend the system of the harem or zenana. In some Buddhist countries such as Burma and Siam women enjoy almost the same independence as in Europe. In China and Japan their status is not so high, but one period when Buddhism was powerful in Japan (800–1100 A.D.) was marked by the number of female writers and among the Manchus and Tibetans women enjoy considerable freedom and authority.

Those who follow the law of the Buddha but are not members of the Sangha are called Upāsakas\(^1\), that is worshippers or adherents. The word may be conveniently rendered by laymen although the distinction between clergy and laity, as understood in most parts of Europe, does not quite correspond to the distinction between Bhikkhus and Upāsakas. European clergy are often thought of as interpreters of the Deity, and whenever they have had the power they have usually claimed the right to supervise and control the moral or even the political administration of their country. Something similar may be found in Lamaism, but it forms no part of Gotama’s original institution nor of the Buddhist Church as seen to-day in Burma, Siam and Ceylon. The members of the Sangha are not priests or mediators. They have joined a confraternity in order to lead a higher life for which ordinary society has no place. They will teach others, not as those whose duty it is to make the laity conform to their standard but as those who desire to make known the truth. And easy as is the transition from this attitude to the other, it must be admitted that Buddhism has rarely laid itself open to the charge of interfering in politics or of seeking temporal authority. Rather may it be accused of a tendency to indolence. In some cases elementary education is in the hands of the monks and their monasteries serve the purpose of village schools. Elsewhere they are harmless recluses whom the unsympathetic critic may pity as useless but can hardly condemn as ambitious or interfering. This is not however altogether true of Tibet and the Far East.

It is sometimes said that the only real Buddhists are the members of the Sangha and there is some truth in this, particularly in China, where one cannot count as a Buddhist every one who occasionally attends a Buddhist service. But on the other hand Gotama accorded to the laity a definite and honourable position and in the Pitakas they notify their conversion by a special formula. They cannot indeed lead the perfect life but they can ensure birth in happy states and a good layman may even attain nirvana on his death-bed. But though the pious householder “takes his refuge in the law and in the order of

\(^1\) Feminine Upāsikā.
monks" from whom he learns the law, yet these monks make no attempt to supervise or even to judge his life. The only punishment which the Order inflicts, to turn down the bowl and refuse to accept alms from guilty hands, is reserved for those who have tried to injure it and is not inflicted on notorious evil livers. It is the business of a monk to spread true knowledge and good feeling around him without enquiring into the thoughts and deeds of those who do not spontaneously seek his counsel. Indeed it may be said that in Burma it is the laity who supervise the monks rather than vice versa. Those Bhikkhus who fall short of the accepted standard, especially in chastity, are compelled by popular opinion to leave the monastery or village where they have misbehaved. This reminds us of the criticisms of laymen reported in the Vinaya and the deference which the Buddha paid to them.

The ethical character of Buddhism and its superiority to other Indian systems are shown in the precepts which it lays down for laymen. Ceremony and doctrine have hardly any place in this code, but it enjoins good conduct and morality: moderation in pleasures and consideration for others. Only five commandments are essential for a good life but they are perhaps more comprehensive and harder to keep than the Decalogue, for they prescribe abstinence from the five sins of taking life, drinking intoxicants, lying, stealing and unchastity. It is meritorious to observe in addition three other precepts, namely, to use no garlands or perfumes: to sleep on a mat spread on the ground and not to eat after midday. Pious laymen keep all these eight precepts, at least on Uposatha days, and often make a vow to observe them for some special period. The nearer a layman can approximate to the life of a monk the better for his spiritual health, but still the aims and ideals, and consequently the methods, of the lay and religious life are different. The Bhikkhu is not of this world, he has cut himself loose from its ties, pleasures and passions; he strives not for heaven but for arhatship. But the layman, though he may profitably think of nirvana and final happiness, may also rightly aspire to be born in some temporary heaven. The law merely bids him be a kind, temperate, prudent man of the world. It is only when he speaks to the monks that the Buddha really speaks to his own and gives his own thoughts: only for them are the high
selfless aspirations, the austere counsels of perfection and the promises of bliss and something beyond bliss. But the lay morality is excel'nt in its own sphere—the good respectable life—and its teaching is most earnest and natural in those departments where the hard unsentimental precepts of the higher code jar on western minds. Whereas the monk severs all family ties and is fettered by no domestic affection, this is the field which the layman can cultivate with most profit. It was against his judgment that the Buddha admitted women to his order and in bidding his monks beware of them he said many hard things. But for women in the household life the Pitakas show an appreciation and respect which is illustrated by the position held by women in Buddhist countries from the devout and capable matron Visâkhâ down to the women of Burma in the present day. The Buddha even praised the ancients because they married for love and did not buy their wives.

The right life of a layman is described in several suttas and in all of them, though almsgiving, religious conversation and hearing the law are commended, the main emphasis is on such social virtues as pleasant speech, kindness, temperance, consideration for others and affection. The most complete of these discourses, the Sigâlovâda-sutta, relates how the Buddha when starting one morning to beg alms in Râjagaha saw the householder Sigâla bowing down with clasped hands and saluting the four quarters, the nadir and the zenith. The object of the ceremony was to avert any evil which might come from these six points. The Buddha told him that this was not the right way to protect oneself: a man should regard his parents as the east, his teachers as the south, his wife and children as the west, his friends as the north, his servants as the nadir and monks and Brahmans as the zenith. By fulfilling his duty to these six classes a man protects himself from all evil which may come from the six points. Then he expounded in order the mutual duties of (1) parents and children, (2) pupils and teachers, (3) husband and wife, (4) friends, (5) master and servant, (6) laity and clergy. The precepts which follow show how much

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1 Sutta-Nipâta, 289.
3 Dig. Nik. 31.
common sense and good feeling Gotama could bring to bear on the affairs of every-day life when he gave them his attention and the whole classification of reciprocal obligations recalls the five relationships of Chinese morality, three of which are identical with Gotama's divisions, namely parents and children, husband and wife, and friends. But national characteristics make themselves obvious in the differences. Gotama says nothing about politics or loyalty; the Chinese list, which opens with the mutual duties of sovereigns and subjects, is silent respecting the church and clergy.

The Sangha is an Indian institution and invites comparison with that remarkable feature of Indian social life, the Brahman caste. At first sight the two seem mutually opposed, for the one is a hereditary though intellectual aristocracy, claiming the possession of incomunicable knowledge and power, the other a corporation open to all who choose to renounce the world and lead a good life. And this antithesis contains historical truth: the Sangha, like the similar orders of the Jains and other Kshatriya sects, was in its origin a protest against the exclusiveness and ritualism of the Brahmans. Yet compared with anything to be found in other countries the two bodies have something in common. For instance it is a meritorious act to feed either Brahmans or Bhikkhus. Europeans are inclined to call both of them priests, but this is inaccurate for a Bhikkhu rarely deserves the title and nowadays Brahmans are not necessarily priests nor priests Brahmans. But in India there is an old and widespread idea that he who devotes himself to a religious and intellectual life (and the two spheres, though they do not coincide, overlap more than in Europe) should be not only respected but supported by the rest of the world. He is not a professional man in the sense that lawyers, doctors and clergymen are, but rather an aristocrat. Though from the earliest times the nobles of India have had a full share of pride and self-confidence, the average Hindu has always believed in another kind of upper class, entered in some sects by birth, in others by merit, but in general a well-defined body, the conduct of whose members does not fail to command respect. The do ut des principle is certainly not wanting, but

1 It may seem superfluous to insist on this, yet Warren in his Buddhism in Translations uniformly renders Bhikkhu by priest.
the holy man is honoured not so much because he will make an immediate return by imparting some instruction or performing some ceremony but because to honour him is a good act which, like other good acts, will sooner or later find its reward. The Buddha is not represented as blaming the respect paid to Brahmans but as saying that Brahmans must deserve it. Birth and plaited hair do not make a true Brahman any more than a shaven head makes a Bhikkhu, but he who has renounced the world, who is pure in thought, word and deed, who follows the eight-fold path, and perfects himself in knowledge, he is the true Brahman. Men of such aspirations are commoner in India than elsewhere and more than elsewhere they form a class, which is defined by each sect for itself. But in all sects it is an essential part of piety to offer respect and gifts to this religious aristocracy.

1 The same idea occurs in the Upanishads, e.g. Brīh.-Ār. Up. iv. 4. 23, “he becomes a true Brahman.”
CHAPTER XII

ASOKA

1

The first period in the history of Buddhism extends from the death of the founder to the death of Asoka, that is to about 232 B.C. It had then not only become a great Indian religion but had begun to send forth missionaries to foreign countries. But this growth had not yet brought about the internal changes which are inevitable when a creed expands far beyond the boundaries within which it was a natural expression of local thought. An intellectual movement and growth is visible within the limits of the Pali Canon and is confirmed by what we hear of the existence of sects or schools, but it does not appear that in the time of Asoka the workings of speculation had led to any point of view materially different from that of Gotama.

Our knowledge of general Indian history before the reign of Asoka is scanty and the data which can be regarded as facts for Buddhist ecclesiastical history are scantier still. We hear of two (or including the Mahâsangiti three) meetings sometimes called Councils; scriptures, obviously containing various strata, were compiled, and eighteen sects or schools had time to arise and some of them to decay. Much doubt has been cast upon the councils\(^1\) but to my mind this suspicion is unmerited, provided that too ecclesiastical a meaning is not given to the word. We must not suppose that the meetings held at Râjagaha and Vesâli were similar to the Council of Nicaea or that they produced the works edited by the Pali Text Society. Such terms as canon, dogma and council, though indispensable, are misleading at this period. We want less formal equivalents for the same ideas. A number of men who were strangers to those conceptions

\(^1\) Especially in R. O. Franke's article in the J.P.T.S. 1908. To demonstrate the "literary dependence" of chapters XI, XII. of the Cullavagga does not seem to me equivalent to demonstrating that the narratives contained in those chapters are "air-bubbles."
of a hierarchy and a Bible\(^1\) which are so familiar to us met
together to fix and record the opinions and injunctions of the
Master or to remove misapprehensions and abuses. It would be
better if we could avoid using even the word Buddhist at this
period, for it implies a difference sharper than the divisions
existing between the followers of Gotama and others. They
were in the position of the followers of Christ before they
received at Antioch the name of Christians and the meeting
at Rājagaha was analogous to the conferences recorded in the

The record of this meeting and of the subsequent meeting
at Vesāli is contained in Chapters xi. and xii. of the Cullavagga,
which must therefore be later than the second meeting and
perhaps considerably later. Other accounts are found in the
Dipavaṃsa, Mahā-Bodhi-Vamsa and Buddhaghosa's com-
mentaries. The version given in the Cullavagga is abrupt and
does not entirely agree with other narratives of what followed
on the death of the Buddha\(^2\). It seems to be a combination of
two documents, for it opens as a narrative by Kassapa, but it
soon turns into a narrative about him. But the clumsiness in
compilation and the errors of detail are hardly sufficient to
discredit an event which is probable in itself and left an im-
pression on tradition. The Buddha combined great personal
authority with equally great liberality. While he was alive he
decided all questions of dogma and discipline himself, but he
left to the Order authority to abolish all the minor precepts.
It seems inevitable that some sort of meeting should have been
held to consider the position created by this wide permission.
Brief and confused as the story in the Cullavagga is, there is
nothing improbable in its outline—namely that a resolution
was taken at Kosinārā where he died to hold a synod during
the next rains at Rājagaha, a more central place where alms
and lodgings were plentiful, and there come to an agreement
as to what should be accepted as the true doctrine and discipline.
Accordingly five hundred monks met near this town and en-
quired into the authenticity of the various rules and suttas. They

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\(^1\) The mantras of the Brahmans were hardly a sacred book analogous to the
Bible or Koran and, besides, the early Buddhists would not have wished to imitate
them.

\(^2\) *E.g.* Dig. Nik. xvi.
then went on to ask what the Buddha had meant by the lesser and minor precepts which might be abolished. Ānanda (who came in for a good deal of blame in the course of the proceedings) confessed that he had forgotten to ask the Master for an explanation and divergent opinions were expressed as to the extent of the discretion allowed. Kassapa finally proposed that the Sangha should adopt without alteration or addition the rules made by the Buddha. This was approved and the Dhamma and Vinaya as chanted by the assembled Bhikkhus were accepted. The Abhidhamma is not mentioned. The name usually given to these councils is Sangiti, which means singing or chanting together. An elder is said to have recited the text sentence by sentence and each phrase was intoned after him by the assembly as a sign of acceptance. Upāli was the principal authority for the Vinaya and Ānanda for the Dhamma but the limits of the authority claimed by the meeting are illustrated by an anecdote\(^1\) which relates that after the chanting of the law had been completed Pūrṇa and his disciples arrived from the Southern Hills. The elders asked him to accept the version rehearsed by them. He replied, "The Dhamma and Vinaya have been well sung by the Theras, nevertheless as they have been received and heard by me from the mouth of the Lord, so will I hold them." In other words the council has put together a very good account of the Buddha's teaching but has no claim to impose it on those who have personal reminiscences of their own.

This want of a central authority, though less complete than in Brahmanism, marks the early life of the Buddhist community. We read in later works\(^2\) of a succession of Elders who are sometimes called Patriarchs\(^3\) but it would be erroneous to think of them as possessing episcopal authority. They were at most the chief teachers of the order. From the death of the Buddha to Asoka only five names are mentioned\(^5\). But five names can fill the interval only if their bearers were unusually long-lived. It is therefore probable that the list merely contains the names of prominent Theras who exercised little authority

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\(^1\) Cullav. xii. i. 11.  
\(^2\) Especially in Chinese works.  
\(^3\) Upāli, Dassaka, Sonaka, Siggava (with whom the name of Candravajji is sometimes coupled) and Tissa Moggaliputta. This is the list given in the Dipavamsa.
in virtue of any office, though their personal qualities assured them respect. Upâli, who comes first, is called chief of the Vinaya but, so far as there was one head of the order, it seems to have been Kassapa. He is the Brahman ascetic of Uruvelâ whose conversion is recorded in the first book of the Mahâvagga and is said to have exchanged robes with the Buddha\(^1\). He observed the Dhutângas and we may conjecture that his influence tended to promote asceticism. Dasaka and Sonaka are also designated as chiefs of the Vinaya and there was perhaps a distinction between those who studied (to use modern phrases) ecclesiastical law and dogmatic theology.

The accounts\(^2\) of the second Council are as abrupt as those of the first and do not connect it with previous events. The circumstances said to have led to its meeting are, however; probable. According to the Cullavagga, a hundred years after the death of the Buddha certain Bhikkhus of Vajjian lineage resident at Vesâlî upheld ten theses involving relaxations of the older discipline. The most important of these was that monks were permitted to receive gold and silver, but all of them, trivial as they may seem, had a dangerous bearing for they encouraged not only luxury but the formation of independent schools. For instance they allowed pupils to cite the practice of their preceptors as a justification for their conduct and authorized monks resident in one parish to hold Uposatha in separate companies and not as one united body. The story of the condemnation of these new doctrines contains miraculous incidents but seems to have a historical basis. It relates how a monk called Yasa, when a guest of the monks of Vesâlî, quarrelled with them because they accepted money from the laity and, departing thence, sought for support among the Theras or elders of the south and west. The result was a conference at Vesâlî in which the principal figures are Revata and Sabbakâmi, a pupil of Ânanda, expressly said to have been ordained one hundred and twenty years earlier\(^3\). The ten theses

\(^1\) Sam. Nik. xvi. 11. The whole section is called Kassapa Samyutta.

\(^2\) They are to be found chiefly in Cullavagga, xii., Dipavamsa, iv. and v. and Mahâvamsa, iv.

\(^3\) The Dipavamsa adds that all the principal monks present had seen the Buddha. They must therefore all have been considerably over a hundred years old so that the chronology is open to grave doubt. It would be easier if we could suppose the meeting was held a hundred years after the enlightenment.
were referred to a committee, which rejected them all, and this rejection was confirmed by the whole Sangha, who proceeded to rehearse the Vinaya. We are not however told that they revised the Sutta or Abhidhamma.

Here ends the account of the Cullavagga but the Dipavamsa adds that the wicked Vajjian monks, to whom it ascribes wrong doctrines as well as errors in discipline, collected a strong faction and held a schismatic council called the Mahāsangīti. This meeting recited or compiled a new version of the Dhamma and Vinaya. It is not easy to establish any facts about the origin and tenets of this Mahāsangītiya or Mahāsanghika sect, though it seems to have been important. The Chinese pilgrims Fa Hsien and Hsüan Chuang, writing on the basis of information obtained in the fifth and seventh centuries of our era, represent it as arising in connection with the first council, which was either that of Rājagaha or some earlier meeting supposed to have been held during the Buddha’s lifetime, and Hsüan Chuang intimates that it was formed of laymen as well as monks and that it accepted additional matter including dhāranīs or spells rejected by the monkish council. Its name (admitted by its opponents) seems to imply that it represented at one time the opinions of the majority or at least a great number of the faithful. But it was not the sect which flourished in Ceylon and the writer of the Dipavamsa is prejudiced against it. It may be a result of this animus that he connects it with the discreditable Vajjian schism and the Chinese tradition may be more correct. On the other hand the adherents of the school would naturally be disposed to assign it an early origin. Fa Hsien says that the Vinaya of the Mahāsanghikas was considered “the most complete with the fullest explanations.” A translation of this text is contained in the Chinese Tripitaka.

1 They are said to have rejected the Parivāra, the Patisambhidā, the Niddesa and parts of the Jātaka. These are all later parts of the Canon and if the word rejection were taken literally it would imply that the Mahāsangīti was late too. But perhaps all that is meant is that the books were not found in their Canon. Chinese sources (e.g. Fa Hsien, tr. Legge, p. 99) state that they had an Abhidhamma of their own.


3 Cap. xxxvi. Legge, p. 98.

Early Indian Buddhism is said to have been divided into eighteen sects or schools, which have long ceased to exist and must not be confounded with any existing denominations. Fa Hsien observes that they agree in essentials and differ only in details and this seems to have been true not only when he wrote (about 420 A.D.) but throughout their history. In different epochs and countries Buddhism presents a series of surprising metamorphoses, but the divergences between the sects existing in India at any given time are less profound in character and less violent in expression than the divisions of Christianity. Similarly the so-called sects in modern China, Burma and Siam are better described as schools, in some ways analogous to such parties as the High and Low Church in England. On the other hand some of the eighteen schools exceeded the variations permitted in Christianity and Islam by having different collections of the scriptures. But at the time of which we are treating these collections had not been reduced to writing: they were of considerable extent compared with the Bible or Koran and they admitted later explanatory matter. The record of the Buddha’s words did not profess to be a miraculous revelation but merely a recollection of what had been said. It is therefore natural that each school should maintain that the memory of its own scholars had transmitted the most accurate and complete account and that tradition should represent the successive councils as chiefly occupied in reciting and sifting these accounts.

It is generally agreed that the eighteen schools were in existence during or shortly before the reign of Asoka, and that six others arose about the same period, but subsequently to them. The best materials for a study of their opinions are afforded by the text and commentary of the Kathâ-vatthu, a treatise attributed to Tissa Moggaliputta, who is said to have been President of the Third Council held under Asoka. It is

1 An exception ought perhaps to be made for the Japanese sects.
2 The names are not quite the same in the various lists and it seems useless to discuss them in detail. See Dipavamsa, v. 39-48, Mahâvamsa, v. ad in., Rhys Davids, J.R.A.S. 1891, p. 411, Rockhill, Life of the Buddha, chap. vi., Geiger, Trans. of Mahâvamsa, App. B.
3 The Hemavatikas, Râjagirikas, Siddhattas, Pubbaselikas, Aparaselikas and Apararâjagirikas.
4 Published in the J.P.T.S. 1889. Trans. by S. Z. Aung and Mrs Rhys Davids, 1915. The text mentions doctrines only. The names of the sects supposed to hold them are supplied by the commentary.
an examination and refutation of heretical views rather than a description of the bodies that held them but we can judge from it what was the religious atmosphere at the time and the commentary gives some information about various sects. Many centuries later I-ching tells us that during his visit to India (671–695 A.D.) the principal schools were four in number, with eighteen subdivisions. These four\(^1\) are the Mahásanghika, the Sthavira (equivalent to the old Theravāda), the Mūlasarvāstivāda and the Sammitiya, and from the time of Asoka onwards they throw the remaining divisions into the shade\(^2\). He adds that it is not determined which of the four should be grouped with the Mahāyāna and which with the Hinayāna, that distinction being probably later in origin. The differences between the eighteen schools in I-ching's time were not vital but concerned the composition of the canon and details of discipline. It was a creditable thing to be versed in the scriptures of them all\(^3\). It is curious that though the Kathāvatthu pays more attention to the opinions of the six new sects than to those held by most of the eighteen, yet this latter number continued to be quoted nearly a thousand years later, whereas the additional six seem forgotten. It may be that they were more unorthodox than the others and hence required fuller criticism. Five of their names are geographical designations, but we hear no more of them after the age of Asoka.

The religious horizon of the heretics confuted in the Kathāvatthu does not differ materially from that of the Pitakas. There are many questions about arhatship, its nature, the method of obtaining it and the possibility of losing it. Also we find registered divergent views respecting the nature of knowledge and sensation. Of these the most important is the doctrine attributed to the Sammitiyas, that a soul exists in the highest and truest sense. They are also credited with holding that an arhat can fall from arhatship, that a god can enter the paths or the Order, and that even an unconverted man can get rid of all lust and ill-will\(^4\). This collection of beliefs is possibly

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\(^1\) They must not be confused with the four philosophic schools Vaibhāshika, Sautrāntika, Yogācāra and Mādhyamika. These came into existence later.

\(^2\) But the Vetulyakas were important in Ceylon.

\(^3\) See Paramārtha's *Life of Vasabandhu*, Toung Pao, 1904, p. 290.

\(^4\) See Rhys Davids in *J.R.A.S.* 1892, pp. 8–9. The name is variously spelt. The P.T.S. print Sammitiya, but the Sanskrit text of the Madhyamakavṛtti (in
explicable as a result of the view that the condition of the soul, which is continuous from birth to birth, is stronger for good or evil than its surroundings. The germs of the Mahāyāna may be detected in the opinions of some sects on the nature of the Buddha and the career of a Bodhisattva. Thus the Andhakas thought that the Buddha was superhuman in the ordinary affairs of life and the Vetulyakas\(^1\) held that he was not really born in the world of men but sent a phantom to represent him, remaining himself in the Tusita heaven. The doctrines attributed to the Uttarāpathakas and Andhakas respectively that an unconverted man, if good, is capable of entering on the career of a Bodhisattva and that a Bodhisattva can in the course of his career fall into error and be reborn in state of woe, show an interest in the development of a Bodhisattva and a desire to bring it nearer to human life which are foreign to the Pitakas. An inclination to think of other states of existence in a manner half mythological half metaphysical is indicated by other heresies, such as that there is an intermediate realm where beings await rebirth, that the dead benefit by gifts given in the world\(^2\), that there are animals in heaven, that the Four Truths, the Chain of Causation, and the Eightfold Path, are self-existent (asankhata).

The point of view of the Kathā-vatthu, and indeed of the whole Pali Tripitaka, is that of the Vibhajjavadins, which seems to mean those who proceed by analysis and do not make vague generalizations. This was the school to which Tissa Moggali-putta belonged and was identical with the Theravāda (teaching of the elders) or a section of it. The prominence of this sect in the history of Buddhism has caused its own view, namely that it represents primitive Buddhism, to be widely accepted. And this view deserves respect for it rests on a solid historical basis, namely that about two and a half centuries after the

\(Budd.\) has Sāmmītya. Sanskrit dictionaries give Sammatiya. The Abhidharma section of the Chinese Tripitaka (Nanjio, 1272) contains a śāstra belonging to this school. Nanjio, 1139 is apparently their Vinaya.

\(^1\) Kern (Verh. en Med. der K. Akad. van Wetenschappen Letterk. 4. R. D. vln. 1907, pp. 312–319, cf. J. R. A. S. 1907, p. 432) suggested on the authority of Kashgarian mss. that the expression Vaiśpulya śūtra is a misreading for Vatulya śūtra, a śūtra of the Vatulyakas. Ananda was sometimes identified with the phantom who represented the Buddha.

\(^2\) It is remarkable that this view, though condemned by the Kathā-vatthu, is countenanced by the Khuddaka-pātha.
Buddha's death and in the country where he preached, the Vibhajjavādins claimed to get back to his real teaching by an examination of the existing traditions. This is a very early starting-point. But the Sarvāstivādins were also an early school which attained to widespread influence and had a similar desire to preserve the simple and comparatively human presentation of the Buddha's teaching as opposed to later embellishments. Only three questions in the Kathā-vatthu are directed against them but this probably means not that they were unimportant but that they did not differ much from the Vibhajjavādins. The special views attributed to them are that everything really exists, that an arhat can fall from arhatship, and that continuity of thought constitutes Samādhi or meditation. These theses may perhaps be interpreted as indicative of an aversion to metaphysics and the supernatural. A saint has not undergone any supernatural transformation but has merely reached a level from which he can fall; meditation is simply fixity of attention, not a mystic trance. In virtue of the first doctrine European writers often speak of the Sarvāstivādins as realists but their peculiar view concerned not so much the question of objective reality as the difference between being and becoming. They said that the world is whereas other schools maintained that it was a continual process of becoming. It is not necessary at present to follow further the history of this important school. It had a long career and flourished in Kashmir and Central Asia.

Confused as are the notices of these ancient sects, we see with some clearness that in opposition to the Theravāda there was another body alluded to in terms which, though hostile, still imply an admission of size and learning, such as Mahāsanghika or Mahāsangītika, the people of the great assembly, and Ācāryavāda or the doctrine of the Teachers. It appears to have originated in connection with some council and to embody a popular protest against the severity of the doctrine there laid down. This is natural, for it is pretty obvious that many found the argumentative psychology of the Theravādins arid and

1 The Kathā-vatthu constantly cites the Nikāyas.
2 Pali Sabbatthivādins.
3 Cf. the doctrine of the Sāṅkhya. For more about the Sarvāstivādins see below, Book IV, chap. XXII.
wearisome. The Dipavamsa accuses the Mahāsanghikas of garbling the canon but the Chinese pilgrims testify that in later times their books were regarded as specially complete. One well-known work, the Mahāvastu, perhaps composed in the first century B.C., describes itself as belonging to the Lokuttara branch of the Mahāsanghikas. The Mahāsanghikas probably represent the elements which developed into the Mahāyāna. It is not possible to formulate their views precisely but, whereas the Theravāda was essentially teaching for the Bhikkhu, they represented those concessions to popular taste from which Buddhism has never been quite dissociated even in its earliest period.

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For some two centuries after Gotama’s death we have little information as to the geographical extension of his doctrine, but some of the Sanskrit versions of the Vinaya represent him as visiting Muttra, North-west India and Kashmir. So far as is known, the story of this journey is not supported by more ancient documents or other arguments: it contains a prediction about Kanishka, and may have been composed in or after his reign when the flourishing condition of Buddhism in Gandhāra made it seem appropriate to gild the past. But the narratives about Muttra and Kashmir contain several predictions relating to the progress of the faith 100 years after the Buddha’s death and these can hardly be explained except as references to a tradition that those regions were converted at the epoch mentioned. There is no doubt of the connection between Kashmir and the Sarvāstivādins nor anything improbable in the supposition that the first missionary activity was in the direction of Muttra and Kashmir.

But the great landmark in the earlier history of Buddhism is the reign of Asoka. He came to the throne about 270 B.C. and inherited the vast dominions of his father and grandfather. Almost all that we know of the political events of his reign is that his coronation did not take place until four years later, which may indicate a disputed succession, and that he rounded off his possessions by the conquest of Kalinga, that is the country between the Mahanadi and the Godavari, about 261 B.C.

This was the end of his military career. Nothing could be gained by further conquests, for his empire already exceeded the limits set to effective government by the imperfect communications of the epoch, seeing that it extended from Afghanistan to the mouths of the Ganges and southwards almost to Madras. No evidence substantiates the later stories which represent him as a monster of wickedness before his conversion, but according to the Dipavamsa he at first favoured heretics.

The general effect of Asoka's rule on the history of Buddhism and indeed of Asia is clear, but there is still some difference of opinion as to the date of his conversion. The most important document for the chronology of his reign is the inscription known as the first Minor Rock Edict. It is now generally admitted that it does not state the time which has elapsed since the death of the Buddha, as was once supposed, and that the King relates in it how for more than two and a half years after his conversion to Buddhism he was a lay-believer and did not exert himself strenuously, but subsequently joined the Sangha and began to devote his energies to religion rather more than a year before the publication of the edict. This proclamation has been regarded by some as the first, by others as the last of his edicts. On the latter supposition we must imagine that he published a long series of ethical but not definitely Buddhist ordinances and that late in life he became first a lay-believer and then a monk, probably abdicating at the same time. But the King is exceedingly candid as to his changes of life and mind: he tells us how the horrors of the war with Kalinga affected him, how he was an easygoing layman and then a zealous monk. Had there been a stage between the war and his acceptance of Buddhism as a layman, a period of many years in which he devoted himself to the moral progress of his people without being himself a Buddhist, he would surely have explained it. Moreover in the Bhābrū edict, which is distinctly ecclesiastical and deals with the Buddhist scriptures, he employs his favourite word Dhamma in the strict Buddhist sense, without indicating that he is giving it an unusual or new meaning.


2 Asoka's statement is confirmed (if it needs confirmation) by the Chinese pilgrim I-ching who saw in India statues of him in monastic costume.
I therefore think it probable that he became a lay Buddhist soon after the conquest of Kalinga, that is in the ninth or tenth year after his accession, and a member of the Sangha two and a half years later. On this hypothesis all his edicts are the utterances of a Buddhist.

It may be objected that no one could be a monk and at the same time govern a great empire: it is more natural and more in accordance with Indian usage that towards the end of his life an aged king should abdicate and renounce the world. But Wu Ti, the Buddhist Emperor of China, retired to a monastery twice in the course of his long reign and the cloistered Emperors of Japan in the eleventh and twelfth centuries continued to direct the policy of their country, although they abdicated in name and set a child on the throne as titular ruler. The Buddhist Church was not likely to criticize Asoka’s method of keeping his monastic vows and indeed it may be said that his activity was not so much that of a pious emperor as of an archbishop possessed of exceptional temporal power. He definitely renounced conquest and military ambitions and appears to have paid no attention to ordinary civil administration which he perhaps entrusted to Commissioners; he devoted himself to philanthropic and moral projects “for the welfare of man and beast,” such as lecturing his subjects on their duties towards all living creatures, governing the Church, building hospitals and stūpas, supervising charities and despatching missions. In all his varied activity there is nothing unsuitable to an ecclesiastical statesman: in fact he is distinguished from most popes and prelates by his real indifference to secular aspirations and by the unusual facilities which he enjoyed for immediately putting his ideals into practice.

Asoka has won immortality by the Edicts which he caused to be engraved on stone. They have survived to the present day and are the most important monuments which we possess for the early history of India and of Buddhism. They have a character of their own. A French writer has said “On ne bavarde pas sur la pierre,” and for most inscriptions the saying holds good, but Asoka wrote on the rocks of India as if he were

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1 For a bibliography of the literature about these inscriptions see Vincent Smith, Early History of India, 3rd ed. 1914, pp. 172-4.
dictating to a stenographer. He was no stylist and he was somewhat vain although, considering his imperial position and the excellence of his motives, this obvious side of his character is excusable. His inscriptions give us a unique series of sermons on stones and a record, if not of what the people of India thought, at least of what an exceptionally devout and powerful Hindu thought they ought to think.

Between thirty and forty of these inscriptions have been discovered, scattered over nearly the whole of India, and composed in vernacular dialects allied to Pali\(^1\). Many of them are dated by the year of the King’s reign and all announce themselves as the enactments of Piyadassi, the name Asoka being rarely used\(^2\). They comprise, besides some fourteen single edicts\(^3\), two series, namely:

(1) Fourteen Rock Edicts, dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth years of Asoka’s reign\(^4\) and found inscribed in seven places but the recensions differ and some do not include all fourteen edicts.

(2) Seven Pillar Edicts dating from the 27th and 28th years, and found in six recensions.

The fourteen Rock Edicts are mostly sermons. Their style often recalls the Pitakas verbally, particularly in the application of secular words to religious matters. Thus we hear that righteousness is the best of lucky ceremonies and that whereas former kings went on tours of pleasure and hunting, Asoka prefers tours of piety and has set out on the road leading to true knowledge. In this series he does not mention the Buddha and in the twelfth edict he declares that he reverences all sects. But what he wished to preach and enforce was the Dhamma.

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\(^1\) The dialect is not strictly speaking the same in all the inscriptions.

\(^2\) Piyadassi, Sanskrit Priyadarsin. The Dipavamsa, vrs. 1 and 14, calls Asoka Piyadassi and Piyadassana. The name Asoka has hitherto only been found in one edict discovered at Hyderabad, *J.R.A.S* 1916, p. 573.

\(^3\) The principal single edicts are (1) that known as Minor Rock Edict i. found in four recensions, (2) The Bhābrū (or Bhābrā) Edict of great importance for the Buddhist scriptures, (3) Two Kalinga Edicts. (4) Edicts about schism, found at Sarnath and elsewhere, (4) Commemorative inscriptions in the Terāi, (5) Dedications of caves.

\(^4\) Asoka came to the throne about 270 B.C. (268 or 272 according to various authorities) but was not crowned until four years later. Events are generally dated by the year after his coronation (abhiseska), not after his accession.
It is difficult to find an English equivalent for this word\(^1\) but there is no doubt of the meaning. It is the law, in the sense of the righteous life which a Buddhist layman ought to live, and perhaps religion is the simplest translation, provided that word is understood to include conduct and its consequences in another world but not theism. Asoka burns with zeal to propagate this Dhamma and his language recalls\(^2\) the utterances of the Dhammapada. He formulates the law under four heads:\(^a\):

"Parents must be obeyed: respect for living creatures must be enforced: truth must be spoken...the teacher must be reverenced by the pupil and proper courtesy must be shown to relations." In many ways the Sacred Edict of the Chinese Emperor K'ang Hsi resembles these proclamations for it consists of imperial maxims on public morality addressed by a Confucian Emperor to a population partly Buddhist and Taoist, just as Asoka addressed Brahmans, Jains and other sects as well as Buddhists. But when we find in the thirteenth Rock Edict the incidental statement that the King thinks nothing of much importance except what concerns the next world, we feel the great difference between Indian and Chinese ideas whether ancient or modern.

The Rock Edicts also deal with the sanctity of animal life. Asoka's strong dislike of killing or hurting animals cannot be ascribed to policy, for it must have brought him into collision with the Brahmans who offered animals in sacrifice, but was the offspring of a naturally gentle and civilized mind. We may conjecture that the humanity of Buddhism was a feature which attracted him to it. In Rock Edict i. he forbids animal sacrifices and informs us that whereas formerly many thousand animals were killed daily for the royal kitchens now only three are killed, namely two peacocks and a deer, and the deer not always. But in future even these three creatures will not be slaughtered. In Rock Edict ii. he describes how he has cared for the comfort of man and beast. Wells have been dug; trees, roots and healing herbs have been planted and remedies—possibly hospitals—have been provided, all for animals as well

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\(^1\) I must confess that Law of Piety (Vincent Smith) does not seem to me very idiomatic.


\(^a\) The Second Minor Rook Edict.
as for men, and this not only in his own dominions but in neighbouring realms. In the fourteenth year of his reign he appointed officers called Dhamma-mahāmātā, Ministers or Censors of the Dhamma. Their duty was to promote the observance of the Dhamma and they also acted as Charity Commissioners and superintendents of the households of the King's relatives. We hear that "they attend to charitable institutions, ascetics, householders and all the sects: I have also arranged that they shall attend to the affairs of the Buddhist clergy, as well as the Brahmans, the Jains, the Ājīvikas and in fact all the various sects." Further he tells us that the local authorities\(^1\) are to hold quinquennial assemblies at which the Dhamma is to be proclaimed and that religious processions with elephants, cars, and illuminations have been arranged to please and instruct the people. Similar processions can still be seen at the Perahera festival in Kandy.

The last Rock Edict is of special interest for the light which it sheds both on history and on the King's character. He expresses remorse for the bloodshed which accompanied the conquest of Kalinga and declares that he will henceforth devote his attention to conquest by the Dhamma, which he has effected "both in his own dominions and in all the neighbouring realms as far as six hundred leagues (\(?\)), even to where the Greek King named Antiochus dwells and beyond that Antiochus to where dwell the four kings named Ptolemy, Antigonus, Magas and Alexander\(^2\), and in the south the kings of the Colas and Pandyas\(^3\) and of Ceylon and likewise here in the King's dominions, among the Yonas\(^4\) and Kāmbojas\(^5\) in Nābhaika of the Nābhitis\(^6\) among the Bhojas and Pitnikas, among the Āndhras and Pulindas\(^7\). Asoka thus appears to state that he has sent missionaries to (1) the outlying parts of India, on the borders of his own dominions, (2) to Ceylon, (3) to the Hellenistic Kingdoms of Asia, Africa and Europe.

This last statement is of the greatest importance, but no

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\(^1\) Rājūka and pradesika.

\(^2\) \textit{i.e.} Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, Cyrene and Epirus.

\(^3\) Kingdoms in the south of India.

\(^4\) The inhabitants of the extreme north-west of India, not necessarily Greeks by race.

\(^5\) Possibly Tibet.

\(^6\) Or Nābhapamti. In any case unknown.

\(^7\) All these appear to have been tribes of Central India.
record has hitherto been found of the arrival of these missionaries in the west. The language of the Edict about them is not precise and in fact their despatch is only an inference from it. Of the success of the Indian missions there is no doubt. Buddhism was introduced into southern India, where it flourished to some extent though it had to maintain a double struggle against Jains as well as Brahmans. The statement of the Dīpa and Mahā-vamsas that missionaries were also sent to Pegu (Suvaṇṇabhūmi) is not supported by the inscriptions, though not in itself improbable, but the missions to the north and to Ceylon were remarkably successful.

The Sinhalese Chronicles\(^1\) give the names of the principal missionaries despatched and their statements have received confirmation in the discoveries made at Sanchi and Sonari where urns have been found inscribed with the names of Majjhima, Kassapa, and Gotiputta the successor of Dundhubhissara, who are called teachers of the Himalaya region. The statement in the Mahā and Dīpa-vamsas is that Majjhima was sent to preach in the Himalaya accompanied by four assistants Kassapa, Mālikādeva, Dundhābhinossa and Sahassadeva.

About the twenty-first year of his reign Asoka made a religious tour and under the guidance of his preceptor Upagupta, visited the Lumbini Park (now Rumminden) in the Terāi, where the Buddha was born, and other spots connected with his life and preaching. A pillar has been discovered at Rumminden bearing an inscription which records the visit and the privileges granted to the village where “the Lord was born.” At Niglīva a few miles off he erected another inscribed pillar stating that he had done reverence to the stūpa of the earlier Buddha Konāgamana and for the second time repaired it.

During this tour he visited Nepal and Lalitpur, the capital, founding there five stūpas. His daughter Cārumatī is said to have accompanied him and to have remained in Nepal when he returned. She built a convent which still bears her name and lived there as a nun. It does not appear that Asoka visited Kashmir, but he caused a new capital (Srinagar) to be built there, and introduced Buddhism.

In the 27th and 28th year of his reign he composed another series of Edicts and this time had them carved in pillars not

\(^1\) Dīpa. viii.; Mahāv. xii.
on rocks. They are even more didactic than the Rock Edicts and contain an increasing number of references to the next world, as well as stricter regulations forbidding cruelty to animals, but the King remains tolerant and says\textsuperscript{1} that the chief thing is that each man should live up to his own creed. It is probable that at this time he had partially abdicated or at least abandoned some of the work of administration, for in Edict rv. he states that he has appointed Commissioners with discretion to award honours and penalties and that he feels secure like a man who has handed over his child to a skilful nurse.

In the two series of Rock and Pillar Edicts there is little dogmatic Buddhism. It is true that the King’s anxiety as to the hereafter of his subjects and his solicitude for animals indicate thoughts busy with religious ideas, but still his Dhamma is generally defined in terms which do not go beyond morality, kindness and sympathy. But in the Bhābrū (less correctly Bhābrā) Edict he recommends for study a series of scriptural passages which can be identified more or less certainly with portions of the Pali Pitakas. In the Sarnath Edict he speaks not only as a Buddhist but as head of the Church. He orders that monks or nuns who endeavour to create a schism shall put on lay costume and live outside their former monastery or convent. He thus assumes the right to expel schismatics from the Sanghā. He goes on to say that a similar edict (\textit{i.e.} an edict against schism) is to be inscribed for the benefit of the laity who are to come and see it on Uposatha days. “And on the Uposatha days in all months every officer is to come for the Uposatha service to be inspired with confidence in this Edict and to learn it.” Thus the King’s officers are to be Buddhists at least to the extent of attending the Uposatha ceremony, and the edict about schismatics is to be brought to the notice of the laity, which doubtless means that the laity are not to give alms to them.

It is probable that many more inscriptions remain to be discovered but none of those known allude to the convening of a Council and our information as to this meeting comes from the two Sinhalese Chronicles and the works of Buddhaghosa. It is said to have been held two hundred and thirty-six years.

\textsuperscript{1} Pillar Edict vi.
after the death of the Buddha\(^1\) and to have been necessitated by the fact that the favour shown to the Sangha induced heretics to become members of it without abandoning their errors. This occasioned disturbances and the King was advised to summon a sage called Tissa Moggaliputta (or Upagupta) then living in retirement and to place the affairs of the church in his hands. He did so. Tissa then composed the Kathā-vatthu and presided over a council composed of one thousand arhats which established the true doctrine and fixed the present Pali Canon.

Even so severe a critic of Sinhalese tradition as Vincent Smith admits that the evidence for the council is too strong to be set aside, but it must be confessed that it would be reassuring to find some allusion to it in Asoka’s inscriptions. He did not however always say what we should expect. In reviewing his efforts in the cause of religion he mentions neither a council nor foreign missions, although we know from other inscriptions that such missions were despatched. The sessions of the council may be equally true and are in no way improbable, for in later times kings of Burma, Ceylon and Siam held conventions to revise the text of the Tripitaka. It appeared natural that a pious King should see that the sacred law was observed, and begin by ascertaining what that law was.

According to tradition Asoka died after reigning thirty-eight or forty years but we have no authentic account of his death and the stories of his last days seem to be pure legends. The most celebrated are the pathetic tale of Kunāla which closely resembles a Jātaka\(^2\), and the account of how Asoka vowed to present a hundred million gold pieces to the Sangha and not being able to raise the whole sum made a gift of his dominions instead.

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Asoka had a decisive effect on the history of Buddhism, especially in making it a world religion. This was not the

\(^1\) Perhaps meant to be equivalent to 251 a.c. Vincent Smith rejects this date and thinks that the Council met in the last ten years of Asoka’s reign. But the Sinhalese account is reasonable. Asoka was very pious but very tolerant. Ten years of this regime may well have led to the abuse complained of.

\(^2\) Jātaka, no. 472.
accidental result of his action in establishing it in north-west India and Ceylon, for he was clearly dominated by the thought that the Dhamma must spread over the whole world and, so far as we know, he was the first to have that thought in a practical form. But we could estimate his work better if we knew more about the religious condition of the country when he came to the throne. As it is, the periods immediately before and after him are plunged in obscurity and to illuminate his reign we have little information except his own edicts which, though copious, do not aim at giving a description of his subjects. Megasthenes who resided at Pataliputra about 300 B.C. does not appear to have been aware of the existence of Buddhism as a separate religion, but perhaps a foreign minister in China at the present day might not notice that the Chinese have more than one religion. On the other hand in Asoka’s time Buddhism, by whatever name it was called, was well known and there was evidently no necessity for the King to explain what he meant by Dhamma and Sangha. The Buddha had belonged to a noble family and was esteemed by the aristocracy of Magadha; the code of morality which he prescribed for the laity was excellent and sensible. It is therefore not surprising if the Kshatriyas and others recognized it as their ideal nor if Asoka found it a sound basis of legislation. This legislation may be called Buddhist in the sense that in his edicts the King enjoins and to some extent enforces silam or morality, which is the indispensable beginning for all spiritual progress, and that his enactments about animals go beyond what is usual in secular law. But he expressly refrains from requiring adherence to any particular sect. On the other hand there is no lack of definite patronage of Buddhism. He institutes edifying processions, he goes on pilgrimages to sacred sites, he addresses the Sangha as to the most important parts of the scriptures, and we may infer that he did his best to spread the knowledge of those scriptures. Though he says nothing about it in the Edicts which have been discovered, he erected numerous religious buildings including the Sanchi tope and the original temple at Bodh-Gaya. Their effect in turning men’s attention to Buddhism must have been greatly enhanced by the fact that so far as we know no other sect had stone temples at this time. To such influences, we must add the human element. The example and well-known
wishes of a great king, supported by a numerous and learned clergy, could not fail to attract crowds to the faith, and the faith itself—for let us not forget Gotama while we give credit to his follower—was satisfying. Thus Asoka probably found Buddhism in the form of a numerous order of monks, respected locally and exercising a considerable power over the minds and conduct of laymen. He left it a great church spread from the north to the south of India and even beyond, with an army of officials to assist its progress, with sacred buildings and monasteries, sermons and ceremonies. How long his special institutions lasted we do not know, but no one acquainted with India can help feeling that his system of inspection was liable to grave abuse. Black-mailing and misuse of authority are ancient faults of the Indian police and we may surmise that the generations which followed him were not long in getting rid of his censors and inspectors.

Christian critics of Buddhism are apt to say that it has a paralyzing effect on the nations who adopt it, but Asoka's edicts teem with words like energy and strenuousness. "It is most necessary to make an effort in this world," so he recounts the efforts which he has himself made and wants everybody else to make an effort. "Work I must for the public benefit—and the root of the matter is in exertion and despatch of business than which nothing is more efficacious for the general welfare." These sound like the words of a British utilitarian rather than of a dreamy oriental emperor. He is far from pessimistic: indeed, he almost ignores the Truth of Suffering. In describing the conquest of Kalinga he speaks almost in the Buddha's words of the sorrow of death and separation, but instead of saying that such things are inevitable he wishes his subjects to be told that he regrets what has happened and desires to give them security, peace and joy.

Asoka has been compared with Constantine but it has been justly observed that the comparison is superficial, for Constantine (more like Kanishka than Asoka) merely recognized and regulated a religion which had already won its way in his empire. He has also been compared with St Paul and in so far as both men transformed a provincial sect into a religion for all mankind the parallel is just, but it ends there. St Paul was a constructive theologian. For good or evil he greatly developed
and complicated the teaching of Christ, but the Edicts of Asoka if compared with the Pitakas seem to curtail and simplify their doctrines. No inscription has yet been found mentioning the four truths, the chain of causation and other familiar formulæ. Doubtless Asoka duly studied these questions, but it was not theology nor metaphysics which drew him towards religion. In the gallery of pious Emperors—a collection of dubious moral and intellectual value—he stands isolated as perhaps the one man whose only passion was for a sane, kindly and humane life, neither too curious of great mysteries nor preoccupied with his own soul but simply the friend of man and beast.

For the history of doctrine the inscription at Rummindie is particularly important. It merely states that the King did honour or reverence to the birthplace of the Buddha, who receives no titles except Sakyamuni and Bhagavan here or elsewhere in the inscriptions. It is a simple record of respect paid to a great human teacher who is not in any way deified nor does Asoka’s language show any trace of the doctrines afterwards known under the name of Mahayana. He does not mention nirvana or even transmigration, though doubtless what he says about paradise and rewards hereafter should be read in the light of Indian doctrines about karma and samsåra.