

A GENERAL OUTLINE

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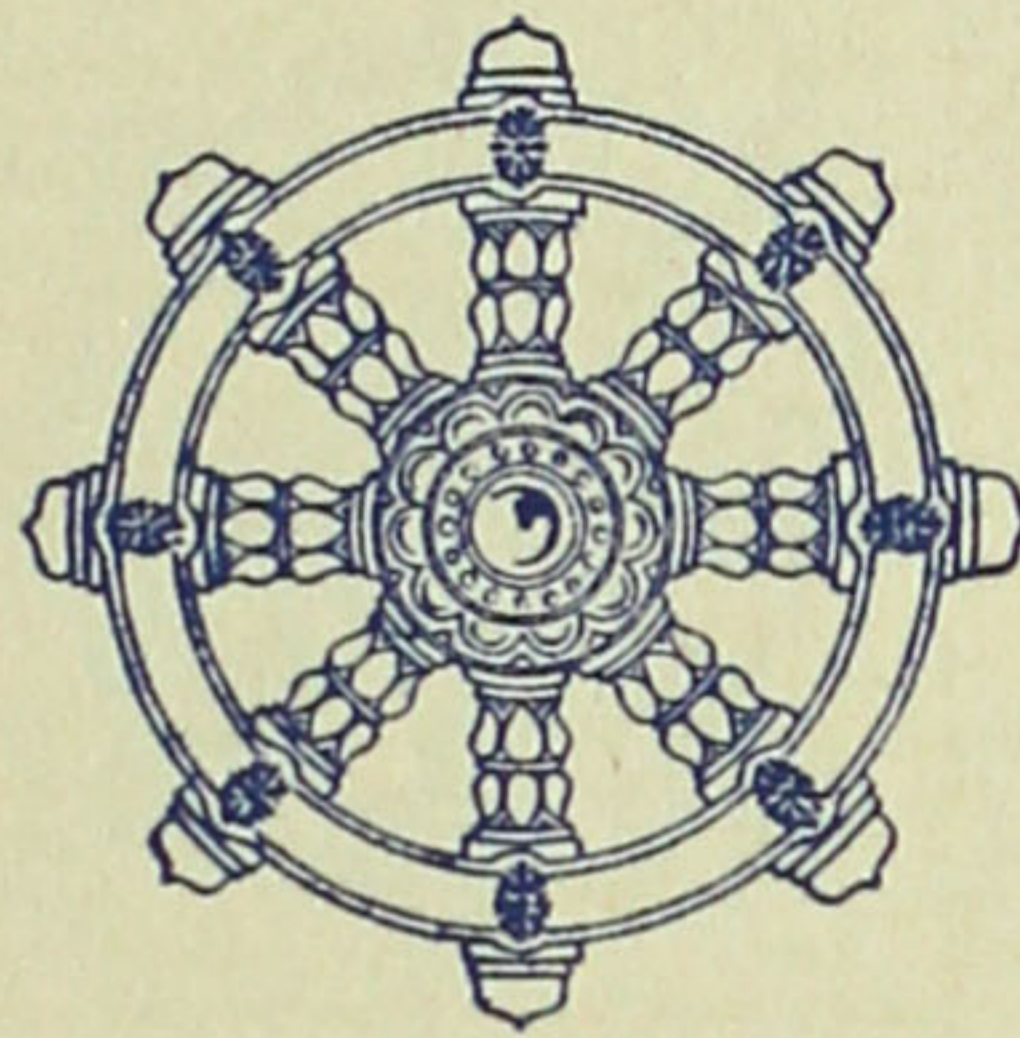
Life and Teachings

*of the*

Lord Buddha

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Buddhist Symbolism



*The Buddhist Brotherhood in America*

THE BUDDHIST HOUSE  
419 NORTH BELMONT AVE.  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

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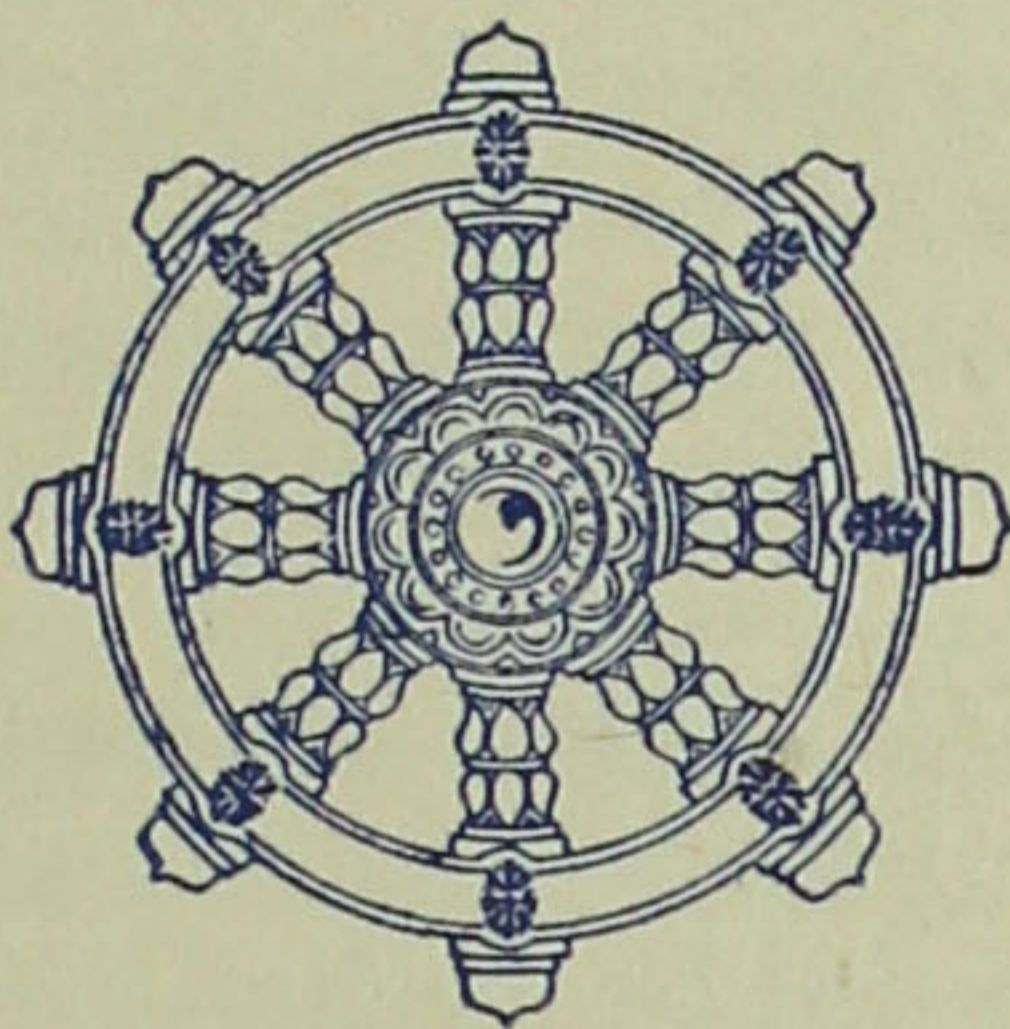
BY

*The Buddhist Brotherhood in America*

# *The Buddhist Brotherhood in America*

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REGULAR WED. MEETINGS 8 P. M.



## PURPOSE

The Buddhist Brotherhood in America has incorporated as a religious body for the purpose of establishing a focal point for all Buddhists who wish to join with us in the interests of preserving and unifying Buddhist thought in America.

The organization is non-sectarian, and will adhere to the teachings as handed down to us from the Shakyamuni Buddha, striving to present them in as simple and clear a manner as is possible and in American terminology.

We have no desire to inflict an arbitrary rule, but rather to make allowance for the natural growth and development of sects to come, which of necessity, will then make for a greater vitality within each at that time.

If, in presenting the Lord Buddha as a physical, mental and spiritual physician, some degree of advancement is made in overcoming the ills of hatred, greed, and self-hood, we will feel that the purpose of this Body has been amply fulfilled.

## BUDDHIST SYMBOLISM

Only with freedom of thought concentrated in the right direction can progress continue. Just as freedom is the essence of Americanism, so is it the prime character in Buddhism.

Well secure in their political freedom, Americans now look for a higher, spiritual liberty. Their search, however, is greatly impeded by the tyranny of antiquated ideas, dictated by convention.

Living in a world dominated by a quest for comfort, one finds it difficult to see clearly what path he is to follow in order that his ideals may not be confused with or displaced by others. One finds that even though his ideals and outward daily life are at variance, yet must he partake of and be a part of both.

The peace of mind and contentment which are the aims of the truth-seeker are found only in the ability to harmonize the two. The Buddhist in striving to do this puts into practice his ideals. In this way he not only makes his philosophy active, alive and part of himself, but he also raises the standards of human relationships and refines the coarseness of everyday living. Realizing that in order to practice one's philosophy, one must keep its principles foremost in mind, the Buddhist makes use of reminders, or symbols, to prevent his losing sight of the fundamental precepts.

Meditation before the shrine is an old Buddhist method of becoming prepared, through self-purification, for the problems of life. The symbols of the shrine are regarded by the Buddhist in the same manner that we all regard our flag.

When we salute our flag, we are not performing a meaningless ritual, but are renewing our pledge to the principles that guarantee our civil liberties. In just the same way does the Buddhist use the symbols of the shrine towards his spiritual emancipation when taking his Three Refuges.

### THE WHEEL OF LIFE

One of the most outstanding symbols used in Buddhism is that of the Wheel. We encounter it as the Wheel of Life, or the Wheel of the Law. The artist, writer, philosopher and decorator of Buddhist themes use the Wheel frequently in expositions on the doctrine of the Buddha. Turning the Wheel means to preach or set in motion the Law.

The spokes are the rules of Right Conduct

Their equi-length is Justice

The tire is all-encompassing Wisdom

The hub is Modesty and Thoughtfulness

The axle is the bar of Truth on which

The Wheel of Life inexorably turns.

The Wheel of Life is built upon the Twelve-linked Chain of Causation:

1. Upon ignorance depends karma
2. Upon karma depends consciousness
3. Upon consciousness depends name and form
4. Upon name and form depends the six organs of sense
5. Upon the six organs of sense depends contact
6. Upon contact depends sensation
7. Upon sensation depends desire
8. Upon desire depends attachment
9. Upon attachment depends existence
10. Upon existence depends birth
11. Upon birth depends old age, sorrow, lamentation, death
12. Upon old age, sorrow, lamentation, death, depends ignorance.

As Buddhists, we seek through understanding to transcend this Wheel of Life, this Chain of Causation, this seeming endless round of deaths and rebirths. The Buddha has made clear to us the way of Truth, namely the Noble Path.

## THE BUDDHA

The Buddhist Brotherhood in America has chosen for its shrine, a picture of Gautama which depicts him as an ascetic.

We have no actual picture of Gautama who became the Lord Buddha; but artists, drawing from racial types and the physical, mental and spiritual processes undergone which would produce just such an esthetic figure, have made this composite likeness.

We are happy to accept and use this concept as a focal point for our concentrative and meditative activities. After all, it is not the personality, glorified though it may be, which most concerns us, but rather the condition he exemplified, which was the highest degree of consciousness possible for the human mind to attain.

In consideration of this fact, we place the picture of Gautama at eye level, for it may be likened to a mirror which must be kept clean in order to reflect purely that which is before it.

We, in seeking to attain fulfillment, realize this can best be accomplished by the transcendence of our present condition through the condition itself.

## FLOWERS

The lotus, like the Wheel, has been greatly used as an artistic form to express Buddhist thought. While rooted in mire, it grows forth clean and clear to open purely towards the heavens. Buddhism as truth is comparable to the lotus as having inherent in it the power to rise above ignorance and a chaotic world.

The flowers used upon the shrine exhibit one of the most beautiful and yet most transient of the forms of nature. They bloom to full maturity, only to disintegrate. Flowers show in their odors, petal textures, shapes and variety of scents a vast diversity of form and natural

beauty. Yet in their life there is death, in their growth is decay and even in their beauty are the ashes to be. This is again a symbol illustrating dukkha: the transiency and sorrow of form. As a flower forms seeds for rebirth, we are reminded that by our own thoughts and acts we, too, form the karma for future rebirths.

## CANDLES

After the flowers, the flickering lights of the burning candles demand attention. Like the flowers, they are placed on each side of the shrine. Like man, they are assembled, a compounded object. Until they are lighted, the candles represent the illusion of self and self-interest. In passing away through the medium of the flame, they give off heat and become light, and in so doing, perform or fulfill the purpose for which they were assembled.

Also, they show light brought through darkness, not light outside of darkness and ignorance. As the candles burn, they not only show the instability of physical matter, by changing from a solid to a gaseous state, but also exhibit the illusion of having but one meaning when in reality there are many. The candles diffuse light on a dark world, bringing understanding through ignorance.

Symbolically, the candles burn away impurities; there remains but the pure element. We, too, should burn away the dross accumulating through the years of wrong thinking, so that we may have only thoughts of purest essence.

As the last bit of tallow or wax burns, the candle as such ceases to be; so does the illusion of identity dissolve, whether it be of candles, personalities or the illusion of self and self-importance.

When this veil of delusion is lifted, compassionate understanding of life in its myriad phases is exhibited. Again, the candles bring light through darkness, just as Buddhism brings enlightenment through ignorance.

All subjective knowledge has in Buddhism its complete objective understanding. As in the study of physics, we learn that without an object to reflect light, light would not be cognized. So this failure to recognize light we call darkness, and ignorance. In our Buddhistic studies we find that this ignorance or darkness is not a reality, but a negative condition that creates a seeming lack of light.

Given the proper object, the light of understanding is reflected in our lives. Its reflection will then shine forth through the Eight-Fold Path, on the rays of Highest Understanding, Highest, etc.

## INCENSE

Incense denotes transiency and dissolution, for while burning it loses its form, diffuses its scent and fulfills its destiny, or reason for being. Unburnt, in any form, the incense is worthless except for its potential usefulness. Just so, man as a component form is valueless except for

his potentialities, and like incense can become useful in the scheme of things and fulfill his reason for being.

Buddhists use such symbols as incense, either in stick or powder form, to clarify a mental image or impression. As we each clothe ourselves in tranquility, offering our Three Refuges quietly, sanely, happily and honestly, we see the disintegration of a so-called entity into the whole and thereby prove of value. At the same time, we may imagine the burning away of our own pettinesses, our self, so that we, too, no longer exist as self, but as a whole.

## GONG

Used during all Buddhist Gatherings is the large gong. Placed at one side of the shrine, within easy reach of one of the seated bhikshus, it is struck at frequent intervals to punctuate portions of the sutras. Bhikshu is a Sanskrit word meaning mendicant, and we in this country while perhaps not so homeless, yet prefer to use Buddhist terminology to the more usual Reverend. Sutra is also a Sanskrit word and is used to make known our scripture.

"And the deep gong sounding  
Bids us leave the self,  
And in Buddha's teaching  
Find the truest wealth."

—*Holy Day of Wesak.*

## MEDITATION BEADS

As part of the bhikshus' robes, we see he carries a long circle of beads. The full strand consists of 108 beads and is symbolic of the fifty-four progressive and fifty-four retrogressive original human instincts. We are admonished to consider all 108 and so transcend the limitation of all. Smaller strings of beads are carried by members of the Sangha and are used during the Gatherings and in concentration. They encircle the fingers of the two hands when placed together as in prayer position, to unite our forces, keep the mind from wandering and to center our attention on the subject under consideration. Unlike other strings of beads used in general religious worship, they are not for the counting of prayers, but serve only to remind us of the above mentioned as a means for meditation.

## A GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF THE LORD BUDDHA

No outline of the teachings known to the West as Buddhism would be complete without some idea of the religious concepts in India antecedent to the time of the Lord Buddha's Birth.

Previous to the Buddha's birth the principles of asceticism and sacrifice constituted religion in India. The Vedic literature was the religious scripture, and the Brahmanical teachers taught that the Gods might be

appeased by the singing of hymns, the sacrifice of animals, prayer and fasting. Many of these teachers had a private esoteric path of their own for which each claimed a superiority over those of his rivals. The Indians who followed that section of the Vedic literature known as the Brahmanas had innumerable gods and believed that those gods could be moved to grant petitions by means of certain ceremonies which could only be performed by the priests. These ceremonies were carried out to an extreme until it was believed that the more elaborate the ritual or ceremony the greater the chance of favorable results. Under this system a sinner was for the most part, nothing else than a man who failed to pay for praise, prayer and sacrifice. Favors were not obtained from the gods by good moral living, but by the observance of certain customary ceremonies and the offering of gifts. Thus the transaction was more or less commercial.

The priestly caste thereby gained a social supremacy and with many mystical and secret rites wielded immense power over its followers.

Hair splitting metaphysicians, logicians, agnostics, materialists, pantheists, polytheists, and monotheists were going to and fro, each proclaiming his views as the best. Yet strange to say the spirit of intolerance was hardly ever exhibited, and persecution was unknown. Researches into Aryan history fail to reveal atrocities such as the burning of witches or learned men. Philosophers lived in a friendly rivalry like the scientific men of today.

The doctrine of Karma, later the foundation of the Buddha's Teaching was, according to that part of the Vedic literature known as the Upanishads, taught in secrecy, and the doctrine of re-birth afterwards popularized by the Buddha, was known to the few.

While the early Aryan race was entirely free from the caste system, society gradually became more complicated and professions more specialized, until a custom developed through which certain families had the monopoly of particular professions or trades and so, by degrees, three main castes of priest, warrior and commoner were formed. These served as a basis for the most elaborate caste system the world has ever seen.

To the Indian of the Vedas then, religion consisted of the chanting of hymns in which natural powers were personified, and to whom sacrifices were offered. To the Indian of the Brahmanas the rite or ceremony was everything. To the Indian of the Upanishads it was knowledge that counted. The fact that, particularly at the time of the Buddha's birth, a great and general interest was taken in all questions of a religious or philosophical nature would seem to point to an alert mental life on the part of a large number of people.

Amid conditions such as these, Prince Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha of our era, was born.



## THE LORD BUDDHA

Chief among the leading minds of the sixth century before Christ, towers the intellect of Siddhartha Gautama afterwards known as The Buddha. The word Buddha—by the way—is a title and means the Knower or the Fully Enlightened One. The task of this man was the founding of a world religion which might be embraced by all men irrespective of caste, color or race.

That the Buddha was an actual living being, there is no doubt, and we know when and where he lived. The old reports in the scriptures are corroborated by other contemporaneous writings, even by those of adversaries. There exist also, rock inscriptions, whose antiquity and authenticity cannot be doubted, recording some of the principle teachings.

The Buddha was born in a grove in Lumbini Park in the suburbs of the city of Kapilavasthu not far from Benares in India. His Father Suddhodana and His Mother Mahamaya were probably royalties, although some claim that his father was a chieftain rather than a king. Be that as it may, he has come down to us historically as a prince. His birthplace has been traced and verified by a pillar or column erected by the great Emperor Asoka about 250 B. C. on which is engraved in the writings and language of the day: "Here the Buddha, The Sage of the Sakyas was born."

The Sakyas, the people over whom Suddhodana, the Buddha's father, reigned, lived on the borders of Nepal; they were a branch of the great family of which the Germanic and Slav peoples in Europe are also members. Hence the titles Sakya-muni, wise man of the Sakyas, and Sakya-sinha, lion of the Sakyas.

Seven days after the Buddha's birth his mother died and her sister Pajapati, Suddhodana's second wife, took care of him. She later became the first woman member of his order.

In due time the name Siddhartha, meaning the "All Successful One," was given him; his family name being Gautama, he is known to many as the Prince Siddhartha Gautama.

Going to school he developed with astonishing rapidity and soon astounded the masters by his remarkable faculty of intuition.

In early years he was married to Yasodhara, daughter of a neighboring ruler, the chief of Koli. One son was born, Rahula, who later entered the order but occupied no prominent place.

All through the prince's life there was enshrined deep in his heart a tremendous compassion for humanity and the thought of the sorrows of mankind constantly depressed him and gradually caused all the ordinary joy of life to die within him and so at the threshold of manhood's prime we see him relinquishing the glory and wealth that were rightly his as heir to the throne, renouncing family ties, in short giving up all that most men value, to wander forth to find the cure for humanities' ills. It is important to bear in mind the fact that this great renunciation

was made, not in old age but in youth; not from a satiety of worldly pleasures but with the full power to enjoy them; not from poverty, and, therefore, having no worldly loss, but with plenty and the means of satisfying all cravings.

Traveling as a mendicant and practising the strictest asceticism he went from one holy man to another asking each if he could shed a light on the mystery of life, but he found that while these teachers could argue and philosophise, they could not unravel the tangle of human fate.

After six years spent in this manner as a wandering ascetic he suffered from malnutrition to such an extent that his body was completely broken down and yet he found himself no nearer to a solution of Life's difficulties than when he started on his quest. He decided, therefore, to put an end to this self mortification, to take proper care of his body and to eat a decent meal at regular intervals, and accordingly he began again to partake of solid food. On seeing this, five men who had followed him in his quest, left him in disgust, saying "The Ascetic Gautama has become luxurious; he has ceased from striving and turned to a life of comfort." And so, weak, deserted but unconquered, he went along begging his food. Then having recovered in great measure his bodily strength, he came to the foot of the Bo-tree on the full moon day of the month of Vaisakha (May) and sitting down, vowed that even if his skin and bones wasted away, even if his flesh and blood dried up, he would never move until he had attained absolute wisdom. Here, so it is written, he devoted himself to profound meditation, and the stories tell how Mara the Lord of the five senses, the power of evil, attacked him and subjected him to temptation after temptation without avail. After this tremendous ordeal his mind became gradually clear, he attained Enlightenment and perceived the true meaning of the drama of human existence. He saw the cause of misery, the remedy, and experienced the bliss of complete emancipation.

Soon after his Enlightenment, which took place at the age of thirty-five, the Lord Buddha went to Benares to preach his first sermon, or, as he said, "To set in motion the wheel of the Law." For forty-five years he went to and fro teaching the doctrine that should make men free. Kings, Nobles, Brahmins, merchants, laborers, men and women of all classes became members of the brotherhood he founded. He passed away in his eightieth year with the following words on his lips: "All compound things are transitory; work incessantly at your emancipation."

## THE TEACHING

### A System of Thought

In simple words the teaching we of the West call Buddhism is an orderly arrangement of thought; a view, not of this world alone, but of the universe—the sum total of all that exists in space—a view leading to an insight and understanding of the nature of things. This system of thought was no special revelation to some favoured individual, but the outcome of a long continued endeavor on the part of a man to arrive at a correct comprehension of life and its mystery. The Buddha re-dis-

covered certain laws and set himself to understand their *modus operandi*. That he succeeded we know, for his findings are confirmed by every fresh discovery of importance made by modern science.

What the Buddha discovered was a method of attaining emancipation by Enlightenment, namely, by a complete understanding of and living in harmony with the laws that govern life.

## A Religion

There are many who maintain that Buddhism is a philosophy and not a religion, and the question naturally arises, is this so? It depends in great measure on what one means by religion. If by this word (religion) is meant the narrow Greco-Roman Christian cultural idea of religion, the belief in a personal God and certain dogmas, then Buddhism is not a religion. But if one means that innate feeling within a man, by which he experiences a certain relation to the Universe, which relation may be embodied in certain concepts on which he attempts to base his conduct; if the doctrine which expresses these concepts satisfies the heart and mind and gives consolation and assistance in all circumstances of life, then Buddhism is a religion, as its adherents in past and present times testify. A deep spiritual peace comes to those who "live the life."

## A Philosophy

But Buddhism is also a philosophy; it shows man the essential nature of his own being, does not demand from its adherents blind belief, but rather a personal conviction founded on investigation and analysis. It faces all the facts of life, even the most perturbing, without evasion, and accounts for more of these facts than any other religion or philosophy; for the Buddha's Teaching does not tell anyone to close their eyes in certain directions, but on the contrary invites all to open their eyes in all directions and to keep them open and to accept nothing that has not been fully tried and tested. Buddhism, then, must be called both a religion and a philosophy, combining the sublimest moral teaching with the profoundest philosophic truths.

## The Doctrine

There is only one way to begin an outline of the Lord Buddha's Teaching, and that is in the manner the Buddha himself adopted in his first sermon, called "The setting in motion the Wheel of the Law" or "The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness," preached to the five ascetics in the Deer Park at Ispatana in Benares.

## The Middle Way

"There are two extremes, O Brethren. A life given to pleasures and lusts; this is degrading, sensual, vulgar, ignoble and profitless.

"And a life given to mortifications; this is painful, unworthy and profitless. By avoiding these two extremes, the Tathagata (a title of the Buddha) has gained the knowledge of the Middle Path which leads to

insight, which bestows understanding, which conduces to calm and leads to peace, to Sambodhi (Supreme Enlightenment), to Nirvana.'

### **Eight-fold Path**

"It is the Noble Eight-fold Path, namely, Highest Understanding, Highest Mindedness, Highest Speech, Highest Action, Highest Livelihood, Highest Endeavor, Highest Recollectedness and Highest Meditation. This O Brethren, is the Middle Way which the Tathagata has discovered which enlightens the eye, conduces to calm and leads to Peace, to Supreme Enlightenment, to Nirvana."

### **First Noble Truth**

"This, Brethren, is the Noble Truth of Sorrow; birth is sorrow; decay is sorrow; illness is sorrow; separation from objects we love is sorrow; not to obtain what we desire is sorrow."

### **Second Noble Truth**

"This, Brethren, is the Noble Truth concerning the origin of Sorrow; verily it originates in that craving which causes the renewal of becomings, is accompanied by sensual delight, and seeks satisfaction, now here, now there; that is to say, craving for pleasures, craving for becoming, craving for not becoming."

### **Third Noble Truth**

"This, Brethren, is the Noble Truth concerning the cessation of Sorrow. Verily it is passionlessness, cessation without remainder of this very craving; the laying aside of, the giving up, the being free from, the harbouring no longer of, this craving."

### **Fourth Noble Truth**

"This is the Noble Truth concerning the Path which leads to the cessation of Sorrow. Verily it is the Noble Eight-fold Path."

At first glance, these four truths look very trite and simple, the simplicity of their phraseology must not, however, be allowed to deceive us as to their general comprehensiveness, for to grasp them in their deeper significance requires a considerable amount of study.

To most people, to those who have the slightest knowledge of life, to those whose thoughts are not entirely self-centered, Sorrow is a self-evident fact.

### **Sorrow**

Take the body! We may feel perfectly well at any given moment but we have no guarantee that the next moment will not be full of pain, of sorrow in some form, and even if we do escape physical suffering for a number of years, eventually we cannot escape decay and death. "The strongest man that ever lived must sooner or later bend his knee to time which gradually nibbles away at his strength of mind and body like a mouse nibbling at a piece of cheese; till at length he owns himself out-mastered and drops out of sight."

Take our sensations! We all know that what one wants is often not forthcoming and even if it does come is often disappointing. One loves and never knows when one is going to lose the object loved. If something pleases us, even if the pleasure lasts a long time, it is liable at the end to turn to pain and no longer be pleasing. We see discord, jealousy and angry contention all around us; tragedy, early deaths, heart-breaks and oceans of tears every day, if our eyes are open. If we walk through the hospitals, insane asylums, slaughter houses, dwellings of the poor, or read divorce court statistics in any of our large cities, one aspect of sorrow will perforce be brought home to us. And even when there is a little joy it is so interwoven with suffering that it is difficult generally to say which predominates. As Shelly says: "Our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught." In this respect it is worthy of note that the Buddha is no casuist. He does not talk in high flown language about the necessity of sorrow or its uses. Also he does not preach resignation which merely means getting accustomed to things. He simply announces the fact that sorrow is inherent in all life, and because of the Oneness of Life, the greatest, the humblest, the richest, the poorest are all bound together in this common bond. This is the First Noble Truth, a fact so utterly self-evident that few will attempt to deny it.

### Cause of Sorrow

Is this pessimism? Taken by itself, yes. But the Buddha, like a good physician, not only diagnoses the case but proclaims the cause, the cure and the Way whereby the cure may be brought about. And what is the cause? To put it tersely, ignorance. Like a child, who, because he knows no better, places his finger on a hot stove, burns his finger and suffers, so we, through ignorance, strike a wrong note in the chord of life, get out of harmony with the Law and suffer. Not understanding aright the Oneness of all Life, thinking of themselves apart from other forms of life, ignorant of the transiency of all things even to the globe on which they live, men crave wealth and set about gaining it even at the expense of their fellow men. They lie, steal and take life, and on some flimsy excuse or no excuse whatever, make war and bring mental and physical suffering on hundreds of thousands of living sentient beings.

### The Cessation of Sorrow

Realizing then that the disease of sorrow with which we are afflicted is a symptom (effect), and knowing the cause to be ignorance, it now remains to remove the cause and the effect will cease forevermore. "Verily there is a cessation of sorrow."

There are two ways in which this craving and clinging, this selfishness, may be made to cease. One is by a tremendous effort of the will, to crush down by main force every desire; an almost impossible task, yet some have been able to accomplish it, for it was the method of some Indian Yogis when the Buddha lived and is still their method today. The other way is the contemplation of the nature of the object desired,

thereby coming to a clear understanding of the true nature of the object, realizing that it is transitory, empty and lacks substance and then of itself the desire will cease. The first method is that of Asceticism, the second that of the Fourth Noble Truth taught by the Lord Buddha, namely, "The Way which leads to the Cessation of Sorrow." The name of this Way is the Noble Eight-fold Path. "A Path," says the Bhikshu Silacara, "just because it is a Path, is something to be trodden, not something to be talked about, discussed, cogitated upon. One is putting a path to its single legitimate use only when one walks on it." There are thousands of questions the enquiring mind might ask concerning the world, life and destiny. The Buddha passed most of these questions by of deliberate purpose, to do what was far better, namely, to point out a sure and certain path on which he who walks may gain a vantage ground where all these questions will be found to have answered themselves. In the Eight-fold Path the Buddha indicates broadly but plainly the direction it is necessary to take.

### The Path

**Highest Understanding.** Sometimes translated Right Views, Right Comprehension; means that we must keep ourselves free from prejudices, superstition, and delusion and strive to understand aright the true nature of life.

**Highest Mindedness.** A realization that we have come of age spiritually and a consequent determination to put away childish things and interest ourselves in the larger issues.

**Highest Speech.** Kind, plain and truthful words.

**Highest Action.** Sometimes translated Right Behaviour, Right Conduct. Deeds that are peaceable, righteous, benevolent, and pure.

**Highest Livelihood.** To earn our living in such a way that we do no harm to any sentient being.

**Highest Recollectedness.** This may be called Right Thought. It is the remembering in moments of weakness all resolutions taken and all past experience.

**Highest Endeavor.** To direct our efforts incessantly to the overcoming of ignorance and craving desires.

**Highest Meditation.** A complete withdrawal of perception from and thinking about external objects, a concentration of the will and an intense attention to the thought processes found to be taking place within.

There is nothing mysterious about this Path, it is the Middle Way between the two extremes of a life addicted to pleasure and a life given over to self mortification. It merely requires of us at the first step to strive for an honest, normal viewpoint, a Highest Understanding of life and its aims, the practise of common uprightness and justice in ordinary affairs; and for those determined to follow to the end, the attainment through Highest Recollectedness and Highest Meditation to the Wisdom that shall make men free. It requires mental alertness, self control, a willingness to profit by past mistakes, a daily progress towards the goal, Emancipation.

## Emancipation

Emancipation in Buddhism means freedom from ignorance, the attainment to a state of enlightenment which each must work out for himself. No one can be saved by another. No God nor Saint, such is the teaching of the Buddhist Canon, can protect one from the result of one's own deeds, because justice is a fundamental principle of that teaching. The Buddha merely shows the Way, which if a man follow, shall lead him to emancipation. That a guiltless one can take upon himself the sins of the guilty so that the evildoer may be released from the consequences of his deed is utterly unphilosophical and rests upon an ignorance of the Law of Karma.

## Karma

Karma is the application of the law of causality to the ethical sphere, a recognition of the fact that one must reap as one has sown. This law operates unfailingly. The present is the child of the past and the parent of the future, which is only another way of saying that we are always the result of our thoughts, words and actions in the past. No God or priest can interfere with a man's karma. Good karma elevates man, and his thinking power is purified and strengthened by it.

Every evil thought is reborn as also every good thought. Evil karma generated in the past can only be destroyed by an accumulation of good karma. But, as Ananda Coomaraswamy says, "Karma must not be confused with mechanical predestination. It does not eliminate responsibility nor invalidate effort; it merely asserts that the order of nature is not interrupted by miracles. It is evident that I must lie on the bed I have made. I cannot effect a miracle and abolish the bed at one blow; I must reap as I have sown, and the recognition of this fact I call Karma. It is equally certain that my own present efforts repeated and well directed will in course of time bring into existence another kind of bed. So far, then, from inhibiting effort, the doctrine of karma teaches that no result can be attained without 'striving hard'."

## The Skandhas

Karma is as the Buddha said, "the doctrine of becoming by way of cause." The action that gives rise to reaction. It is this Karmic action which weaves together and manifests through the five skandhas or elements of being—form, sensation, perception, discrimination, consciousness.

## Rebirth

It is karma then that causes one existence to arise out of another (re-birth) for birth and death are the flowing transition of life energy. When this body changes (dies) the invisible life force expresses itself elsewhere in exactly the manner it has already prepared for itself during its previous manifestation.

The being which is reborn is not the same which died nor is it another. It only seems to be another to a man still in a state of ignorance, who wrongly identifies the personal ego-consciousness with his true be-

ing. He who has attained Wisdom knows that his real being is his *tanha* (desire to live) and his *karma*, but that the recurring ego-consciousness is only a transient phenomenon to be compared to the torch lit by a wanderer at night to find his way. When he does not need it any more he extinguishes it, to light it again for a later wandering. Thus, though the ego-consciousness may change, it is in a sense, by the tie of *karma*, always the same individuality which in one birth does the good or bad deeds and in the next reaps the fruit of those deeds. To put it plainly, when a man dies he takes his character away with him. When he returns to earth, he brings his character back with him, a character that determines the very nature of his material surroundings, for the re-incarnating life consciousness seeks or is drawn to the particular environment which is its heritage and most suitable for its further development. This continues until perfect wisdom and moral purification—Nirvana—is attained.

## Nirvana

Perhaps the meaning of no other Buddhist word has been so misrepresented, so misunderstood by those who do not think the Buddha-thought, as the word Nirvana. The West has been quick to interpret. It is extinction says Europe. It is annihilation says America, for the Buddha said it was a going out; and the East says in reply, "True, it is extinction, it is annihilation, but not in the sense implied in the West, it is a quenching of lust, hatred, prejudice, superstition, craving, desire, and a consequent annihilation of sorrow. It is a Right Understanding of the nature of life, that is, of the three qualities or characteristics of all conditioned existence. These three principles, interdependent with each other and with the Law of Causation already mentioned, contain the very heart and core of the Teaching. Too much attention cannot be given to them by those who really wish to understand what Buddhism is. They are usually expressed by Buddhists in three Pali words:

"Anicca," "Dukkha," "Anatta."

## The Three Characteristics

### Anicca

Anicca is a summarised statement that in all existence there is no such thing as permanence. Life is transient, all of us know that: but the Anicca principle signifies far more than the "three score years and ten" and then a passing. Life, in its sense, becomes a never ceasing passing, a flux, a changing, a thing in its very inner essence passing, never the same for two successive instants of its time. Of the physical bases of life we now know this full well: concerning the psychical life most of us have it yet to learn. Yet the mind is, if possible, more "Anicca" than the body. That which is called mind, intellect, consciousness, keeps up an incessant round by day and by night of perishing as one thing and springing up as another.



## Dukkha

That "Dukkha," Suffering, or better, dissatisfaction, is involved in life, we have already stated in the first of the Four Noble Truths. But the Sorrow-Truth is recapitulated here as one of the three "Characteristics" because it is a direct inference from the first, the "Anicca," the Transience-Characteristic. For, if life be Change, then must it also be desire, either to retain some state which will not last, or to achieve some other state, the present one having become undesirable. And desire implies dissatisfaction. The separateness of individual existence, again, involves inevitably, sorrow. For it means even in the best and dearest lives, some degree of ignorance each of the other, and that means imperfect sympathy, and that is suffering.

## Anatta

The third characteristic, the "Anatta" principle, is that in all life, even in the highest sentient life, there is nothing that can be regarded as psychic substance, thing, or "soul."

This is the central doctrine of the teaching, it is also the teaching's only real difficulty. Not because of any difficulty in the idea itself, but because, having been for centuries untold brought up to see in life an "anima" or "soul", we import this "anima" into our interpretation of the teaching itself, thereby making the whole system inconsistent and apparently absurd. Nearly all the failures of Westerners to apprehend the Buddha's Teaching can be traced to the inability to grasp this central doctrine of Anatta.

Yet, is it not an intellectual corollary of the far more easily understood Anicca? For, if psychic life be change, then the idea of substance vanishes from within it altogether. Strictly speaking, "I" am my thoughts, there is no other "I". It is no fit question to ask who it is that feels. This is the right way to question. "How conditioned is their feeling?" Nevertheless, as the Buddhist well knows, not by intellection pure and simple can the full apprehension of Anatta come.

What, however, has all this got to do with Nirvana? Everything, for all craving depends upon the three thoughts. "There is such and such a desirable thing, position or state. It can be got and held. I am here to take and hold it. It will bring me satisfaction." But it will be easily seen by him to whom all things, within as well as without, are Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta, that everyone of these thoughts falls forthwith to the ground. To such an one there is no longer the possibility of grasping. The power of craving begins to dissolve and in its train go sensuality, pride, selfishness, ill-will, anger, in fact all the deadly and all the venial sins as well, and quietly, without a single "Thou shalt not" pronounced against them. Seeing all states as transitory, momentary, we realize that any pleasure that they seem to offer begins to pass even in the very act of its achievement. Seeing sorrow interwoven with all conditions we cease to seek our happiness in those conditions. And so, nothing holding, nothing craving, we reach the goal. But is there no

positive side to Nirvana? Surely, for if as the learned Abbot Sonyu Ohtani says, "Nirvana is the apex of our human endeavor, the state of perfection, where no evil thought or deed can arise," it can hardly remain a negative condition; rather it is an eternal activity for the purification and Enlightenment of all sentient beings in the ten quarters of the universe, for all are endowed with the Buddha nature and with an inherent capacity to attain Buddhahood.

And when we begin to ask for a more precise definition, language fails, for did not the Lord Buddha say:

"When they curiously question thee seeking to know what it is,  
Do not affirm anything, and do not deny anything.  
How shall anyone say truly what is or what is not  
While as yet he has not himself fully won to What is?  
And after he has won, what word is to be sent from a state  
Where the chariot of speech finds no track on which to go?  
Therefore to their questionings offer them silence only,  
Silence,—and a finger pointing the Way to that state."

### Altruism

The Altruistic Ideal contained in the Lord Buddha's Message has never been excelled. To do right, not for fear of punishment or hope of reward, but simply because it is right. To put into the stream of life only that which is good solely in order to do our share to keep that life stream clear and healthy. To attain Enlightenment, freedom from ignorance, emancipation and finally Nirvana in order that we may be able to rescue our fellow men and bring them to the same state of freedom and bliss. Only on altruistic motives such as these, based on the Master's Teaching, can Universal Brotherhood be built.

### Buddhism Democratic

The Lord Buddha's message is essentially democratic, for he proclaimed two thousand five hundred years ago that all men are born free and equal and that deeds alone determine high birth or low birth, for he said: "Not by birth does one become a high caste, not by birth does one become a low caste; by deeds one becomes a high caste, by deeds one becomes a low caste." The only nobility he acknowledged was the nobility of a well lived life.

No better words can be used to close this little outline of the Teaching that has more followers than any other, than those used by Sir Edwin Arnold in his preface to that immortal work, *The Light of Asia*. "This venerable religion (Buddhism) has in it the Eternity of an Universal Hope, the Immortality of a Boundless Love, an element of Faith in Final Good and the proudest assertion ever made of Human Freedom."



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