



INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

BOOK II

BQ
4570.E3
P576i
1976
C. 1

MAHACHULA BUDDHIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya

BUDDHIST UNIVERSITY UNDER ROYAL PATRONAGE



INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

BOOK II

P.P.A.

MAHACHULA BUDDHIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya

BUDDHIST UNIVERSITY UNDER ROYAL PATRONAGE

First Published B.E. 2519 (1976)

Reprinted B.E.2531 2,000 Rcprinted B.E.2531 2,000

(All Rights Reserved)

MAHACHULALONGKORJIT	
101	BO 4570. E3 P576i
	1976
7	7 Sep 2008
101	E0048

PREFACE

This book is intended for upper secondary monastic school and advanced Buddhist Sunday school students. The passages included herein have been designed to form a continuous whole treatise, serving as an introduction to Buddhism. They can also be treated as exercises in English comprehension to help the students improve their reading ability. Teachers are advised to work out for each passage questions of various types to test the students' comprehension and general improvement in the language. In this way, the book will serve as an aid to the study both of Buddhism and of the English language, thus helping to achieve the purpose of incorporating an English subject into a Buddhist school curriculum. It is also hoped that this book will be found more suitable for the Buddhist English classes than 'Buddhism: A Layman's Guide to Life,' a collection of passages from the Pali Canon, which is now considered to be too heavy for the students of this level, and in place of which this book comes into use.

My special thanks are due to Mr. Stephen E. Edwards, a lecturer in English in Mahachula, who has read through the typescript from an English-speaking teacher's point of view, and most of whose suggestions for improvement I have adopted. For any defects that may remain I take full responsibility.

P.P.A.

Bangkok,

January 6, B.E. 2519 (1976)

THE PĀLI ALPHABET

VOWELS:

a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	e	o
अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ए	ओ

CONSONANTS:

k	kh	g	gh	ṅ
क	ख	ग	घ	ङ

c	ch	j	jh	ñ
च	छ	ज	झ	ण

t	th	d	dh	n
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	न

t	th	d	dh	n
त	थ	द	ध	न

p	ph	b	bh	m
प	फ	ब	भ	म

y	r	l	v	s	h	ḷ	m̐
य	र	ल	व	स	ह	ळ	ॠ

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	(iii)
<i>The Pali Alphabet</i>	(iv)
Early Development of Buddhism	1
Buddhism of the Southern School	3
Buddhism of the Southern School (cont.)	6
Buddhism of the Northern School	8
Buddhism Came to the West	10
Buddhism in the West	12
Western Buddhism and the Buddhist Revival in Asia	15
Buddhism and the West	17
Quotations from Some Great Minds	20

EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM

"Go ye forth, O Bhikkhus, on your journey, for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, the benefit, the bliss of gods and men."

The above saying of the Buddha, at the time of sending out the first group of sixty disciples to propagate the Doctrine in the second year of his preaching, is an explanation of how and why Buddhism has survived for so long and succeeded in converting a large part of mankind to its cause.

During the Buddha's lifetime, Buddhism spread rapidly through the great personality of the Buddha himself and through the spirit of renunciation, self-discipline and sacrifice of the disciples who formed the Sangha and followed the Buddha's example. After his death, the disciples, still living up to these ideals, continued to spread Buddhism far and wide.

In the first century of the Buddhist Era, two Buddhist Councils were held to protect and preserve the purity of the Buddha's teachings. The *First Council* was held by 500 Arahants at Rājagaha under the royal patronage of King Ajātasattu of Magadha three months after the passing away of the Buddha. The purpose of the Council was to fix the Doctrine and the Discipline as taught and laid down by the Buddha. At this Council the Venerable Kassapa was the president, while the Venerable Upāli and Ānanda were chosen to recite the Vinaya and the Dhamma respectively. One hundred years later, there lived at Vesālī a large number of monks who were lax in discipline. The elders of the Order then challenged them to an open debate. After the lax monks had been defeated, seven hundred Arahants held the *Second Council* to revise and confirm the Canon.

In B.E. 218 there came to the throne of India one of the greatest men in history, *King Asoka*, the first Buddhist emperor who ruled the Mauryan Empire for 41 years. In the early years of his reign, Asoka was a fierce king. In the eighth year of his reign, he invaded and conquered

Kalinga, a country of brave people in the south. The horrors of this conquest made him so remorseful over the suffering of the people that he gave up war completely. And it was at this time that King Asoka became converted to Buddhism. From this moment he adopted the policy of *Dharmavijaya* (conquest by righteousness or conquest of men's hearts by the Law of Duty or Piety) in place of *Saṅgāmvijaya* (conquest by war), and spent the rest of his life promoting the Dharma or the Law of Piety throughout his great empire. He was changed from *Caṇḍāsoka*, or Asoka the Fierce, to *Dharmāsoka*, or Asoka the Righteous, whose example all later great kings tried to follow.

In accordance with his policy of piety, King Asoka had his edicts inscribed on rocks and pillars which were scattered everywhere throughout his empire to carry his message to his people. In the 18th year of his reign, the *Third Buddhist Council* was held under his patronage at Pātaliputra (modern Patna), his capital, with the object of purging the Sangha of heretics and preserving the pure teachings. It is said that 1,000 Arahants participated in this Council and the Venerable Moggalliputta Tissa was the president.

After the Council, nine missions of elders were sent to preach the Dharma in various states and foreign countries. Of these, the first mission headed by the Elder Mahinda, son of King Asoka himself, carried the Message of Buddhism to Ceylon. The second mission headed by the Elders Soṇa and Uttara was sent to Suvarṇabhūmi which some scholars identified with Nakorn Pathom Province in central Thailand. According to the Edicts, King Asoka also sent his messengers and ambassadors to spread his message of the Law of Piety in the kingdoms of the West in Asia, Europe and Africa such as Egypt, Cyrene and Greece.

BUDDHISM OF THE SOUTHERN SCHOOL

In Ceylon, the Elder Mahinda and his companions succeeded in converting King Devānampiya Tissa and his people to Buddhism. When some ladies there wished to join the Saṅgha, King Asoka sent the nun Saṅghamittā, his own daughter, to found the order of nuns in Ceylon. A shoot from the sacred Bodhi tree at Gayā was also sent with her and planted at Anurādhapura, where it still stands today as the oldest historical tree in the world. Within a short time the whole of the island of Ceylon became a stronghold of Buddhism, from where, in later centuries, learned monks went to neighbouring countries such as Thailand, Burma, Laos and Cambodia to revive or strengthen Buddhism there.

A Council was said to be held in Ceylon soon after the arrival of the Elder Mahinda. Tradition says it was the *Fourth Council* participated in by 60,000 Arahants under the presidency of the Venerable Ariṭṭha, the first pupil of the Elder Mahinda. This Council is, however, not widely accepted.

The next Council of Ceylon was held by 500 monks in B.E. 432¹, in the reign of King Vaṭṭagāmanī Abhaya. The Sinhalese tradition takes this as the *Fifth Council* while generally it is regarded as the Fourth Council. The importance of this Council lies in the fact that the Tipiṭaka, the Pali Canon, which had been transmitted orally from the time of the Buddha was written down in books for the first time.

The *Pali Canon* called the Tipiṭaka or Tripiṭaka (lit., the Three Baskets) as recorded in its present form of writings consists of three parts. The first, called the Vinaya Piṭaka (Basket of Discipline), states the rules for the monks and consists of five books. The Second, the Sutta Piṭaka (Basket of Discourses), contains all the sermons or popular teachings of the Buddha and some great disciples, and is divided into five Nikāyas or Collections. The Third, the Abhidhamma Piṭaka (Basket of

1. Or, according to some other tradition, B.E. 514.

Further Doctrine), deals with the Buddhist system of thought, both psychological and philosophical in character, and consists of seven books.

Four other Councils were said to be held in Ceylon in later centuries, but they are not internationally accepted, except the Seventh, held in the reign of King Parakkamabāhu, which had an especial connection with the history of Buddhism in Thailand.

During the first nine centuries after the arrival of the Elder Mahinda, Buddhism made rapid progress and was firmly established in Ceylon through the active support of many pious kings and the devoted faith of the people. In B.E. 854 (319 A.D.) the tooth relic of the Buddha was brought from India and enshrined in the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy. In B.E. 956 (412 A.D.) *Buddhaghosa*, the great commentator, came to Ceylon from Gayā in northeast India, wrote the *Visuddhimagga*, and translated the commentaries back from Sinhalese into Pali. His example was followed by Dhammapāla who came from south India in the next century and wrote additional commentaries, giving the final form to the commentaries as we have them today.

The next five centuries (from the 12th to 17th centuries B.E. or the 6th to 11th centuries A.D.) were a period of disturbances due to Indian invasions and internal wars. During this period the capital was moved from Anurādhapura to Polonnaruwa or Puratthipura, the order of nuns ceased to exist, and the order of monks nearly perished.

In B.E. 1609 (1065 A.D.) King Vijayabāhu, having driven out the Indians, started the work of restoring Buddhism. He invited monks from Burma, then under King Anurudh the Great, to give ordination to Ceylonese people. A successor of his, *Parākramabāhu I the Great*, united all sects of Buddhism, appointed the first Saṅgharāja called Sāriputta, to rule the whole Saṅgha, and patronized the Seventh Council which was held in B.E. 1720 (1176 A.D.). Then Ceylon became again the centre of Buddhist studies and through its influence the Ceylonese ordination known as *Laṅkāvaṃsa* was adopted by Thailand in B.E. 1820.

From about B.E. 2050 to 2340 (1510-1796 A.D.) Ceylon suffered

foreign invasions and occupation by the Portuguese and the Dutch successively and Buddhism had to struggle hard for survival. There were two times during this period when the higher ordination nearly discontinued and had to be restored. The first time was under the Portuguese when monks were brought from Burma. The second time was under the Dutch when, in B.E. 2294 (1750 A.D.), ten monks headed by *Phra Upāli* were sent from Thailand and held the ordination ceremony at Kandy. Bhikkhu Saranaṅkara, one of more than three thousand persons who were ordained at this time, was appointed Saṅgharāja by the king.

Under the British rule from about B.E. 2340 till independence in B.E. 2491 (1796-1974 A.D.), Buddhism also suffered a lot from anti-Buddhist movements encouraged by the foreign government. This, however, made the Buddhist leaders more energetic in protecting their national religion and culture and led to the revival of Buddhism which continues in Ceylon to the present day.

BUDDHISM OF THE SOUTHERN SCHOOL

(cont.)

In Burma, Buddhism reached its golden era in the reign of *King Anurudh* (or *Anawrata*, B.E. 1588-1621 or 1044-1077 A.D.), when Burma was first united into one country and its capital city of Pagan became a great centre of Buddhist culture. After the end of the Mongol occupation under Kublai Khan (from B.E. 1831 to 1845; 1287-1301 A.D.), Buddhism flourished again under King *Dhammaceti* (B.E. 2004-2035; or 1460-1491 A.D.). During the next centuries, Burmese Buddhism contributed much to the stability and progress of Buddhism. Some monks came from Ceylon to be reordained and took the ordination procedure back to their country. The study of *Abhidhamma* flourished. Pali texts were translated into Burmese and a great number of Pali scriptures and books on Buddhism were written by Burmese scholars. A Council called the Fifth Great Council was held in Mandalay under King *Mindon* in B.E. 2415 (1871 A.D.) and the *Tipiṭaka* was inscribed on 729 marble slabs enshrined at the foot of Mandalay Hill.

The British rule from B.E. 2430 to 2492 (1886-1945 A.D.) caused in the Burmese a strong feeling of nationalism which combined political independence with the production of the national religion. After the independence, national and religious leaders were very active in supporting and encouraging the Buddhist causes and activities. In B.E. 2498 (1954 A.D.) the Burmese government in cooperation with the Burmese Sangha invited representatives of all neighbouring Buddhist countries and of Buddhist groups in various countries to participate in the *Sixth Great Council* which met in Rangoon to recite and revise the text of the Pali scriptures and to celebrate the 2500th anniversary of the Great Demise of the Buddha.

From ruins and art-objects, it is evident that Buddhism must have been introduced into the great kingdom of *Founan* (modern Cambodia) at least by the 10th century after the Buddha (5th Cent. A.D.) However, little is known about this early period, except that soon after

this time it lost ground to Hinduism which flourished under a series of Hindu rulers* from about the 7th to the 18th century after the Buddha (2nd-13th century A.D.). During this Brahmanical period, Mahayana Buddhism was found existing side by side with Hinduism, and sometime before the end of this period gained ground over Hinduism. The great king who first upheld Buddhism was Yasovarman who reigned in the 15th century B.E. (9th Cent. A.D.).

Three centuries later the ancient kingdom of Founan was at its height of power and prosperity under *Jayavarman VII* who reigned from B.E. 1724 to 1763 (1181-1120 A.D.). Jayavarman was a devoted Buddhist. Trying to follow the Buddhist ideal of the righteous king, he built numerous roads, 121 resthouses, and 102 hospitals and did other meritorious deeds. The next century saw the independence of the Thais. To this there was a royal reaction away from Buddhism back to orthodox Hinduism.

After the 18th century B.E., however, through the influence of the reform of Buddhism in Ceylon during the reign of Parākramabāhu I the Great, Theravada Buddhism returned, first through Thailand and then directly from Ceylon. Within the next two centuries, it replaced Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism and became the national religion of Cambodia. As in Thailand, traces of Hinduism can be found today only in public ceremonies and customs.

In Laos the history of Buddhism followed the same line as that of Cambodia and Thailand. The Laotians have been devoted adherents of Theravada Buddhism since the introduction of the Laṅkāvaṃsa tradition into these regions, and follow practices which are similar to those of Thailand and Cambodia.

* The Hindu king Bhavavarman is said to be responsible for the extermination of the Buddhism of the early period.

BUDDHISM OF THE NORTHERN SCHOOL

Buddhism spread also to countries to the north and northeast of its homeland. But there it developed into a separate form quite different from that practised in the south. To get an idea of it, let us turn back to India, the country of its origin.

The division of Buddhism can be traced back to the time of the *Second Council*, a century after the Buddha, when the Sangha began to split into two groups of monks. One came to be called *Theravādins* and others, *Mahāsaṅghikas*. By the time of King Asoka in the third century B.E. there had arisen out of the two eighteen different sects: eleven out of the Theravāda and seven out of the Mahāsaṅghikas. None of these sects, however, survived long except the two major sects which, about two or three centuries later, were found advancing along different courses of development, quite apart from each other.

The form of Buddhism which flourished under King Asoka was the Theravāda. As this form spread to the south, it is also called the Southern School of Buddhism. The other, the Mahāsaṅghikas, later developed into the Mahāyāna, the term the later Mahāsaṅghikas call themselves. The Mahāyāna prevails in northern countries: Nepal, Tibet, China, Korea, Mongolia and Japan, and is, therefore, known also as the Northern School. The Mahāyānists call the Theravāda the Hinayāna, meaning the lesser vehicle of salvation in contrast to their own Mahāyāna, which means the greater vehicle. But the Southern School prefers to be known as the Theravāda, the "Teaching of the Elders," which is a more accurate and nonprejudicial term.

Generally speaking, the fundamental principles of the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Dependent Origination, the Law of Karma, Nirvana and the like remain the focal points of both schools. The spirit of non-violence, tolerance, liberality and friendliness are also retained. But their difference is in the emphasis and interpretation. While the *Theravāda* keeps faithfully to the original teachings as preserved in the Pali Canon and holds together in a single unified

tradition, the *Mahāyāna* has made free and varied interpretations of the Doctrine and the Discipline under differing circumstances, turned the original scriptures into Sanskrit incorporating in them later texts by later teachers, and continued to divide into many new sects and subsects.

While the Theravāda is an intellectual religion that requires personal self-effort, the *Mahāyāna* believes in salvation through faith and devotion. In the Theravāda the Buddha is a discoverer who points out the Path, but in the *Mahāyāna* he becomes a saviour by whose grace beings can hope to be redeemed. The emphasis of the Theravāda is on wisdom and practical insight as the key virtue on the path of self-reliance towards the ideal state of being an Arahant. The *Mahāyāna* stress is on compassion, the key virtue of the Bodhisattvas, the ideal persons who vow to save all beings and work for the good of suffering beings. Moreover, the *Mahāyāna* takes much interest in philosophical speculation and ritualism, while the original doctrine of the Theravāda regards these as useless.

BUDDHISM CAME TO THE WEST

It is said that at present Buddhism is firmly established in England, Germany, France, and the United States. The religion of the Buddha has taken firm roots in Western soil, and only time is needed for the roots to go deep. And it was through the efforts of Western scholars, not Buddhist missionaries, that the seeds were sown for the growth of Buddhism in the West.

The earliest knowledge of Buddhism came to the West in the early part of the 19th century, when European scholars, mostly for academic reasons, began an earnest study of Buddhism which attracted their attention as a branch of oriental studies or as a part of Indian thought and culture. Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan then became subjects of their study. A number of Buddhist texts were published and then translated. Some scholars wrote learned books on the history and doctrine of Buddhism. Through works of these scholars interest was roused both in Buddhism and in Buddhist studies. Some of these scholars, while taking up a scholarly study of Buddhism, accepted the message of the Buddha and became themselves professed Buddhists. Then there were to be distinguished two kinds of scholars, those who studied and wrote on Buddhism with a Buddhist inspiration, and those who did the same for purely academic purposes. Moreover, reading the writings of these scholars, many Western people became converted to Buddhism. This state of affairs went on in the period when Asian Buddhism was stagnating in the form of habits, or was suffering from persecution or suppression under or in the face of colonialism. With the lack of missionary activity on the part of the Buddhist communities, Buddhist books filled the role of Buddhist missions.

The West's greatest contribution to the spread of Buddhism and Buddhist studies has been made by England. In 1837, the Pali text of the Mahāvamsa (the Great Chronicle of Ceylon) together with a translation was published by George Turner, a civil servant in Ceylon. Meanwhile (1821-1841), B.H. Hodgson collected Buddhist Sanskrit

manuscripts from Nepal and distributed them to various libraries in India and Europe. Two other civil servants of the British government came to Ceylon in 1864 and became prominent Pali and Buddhist scholars. One was Robert C. Childers who published in 1872-1875 his Dictionary of the Pali Language, a great contribution to the study of Pali. The other, seemingly the greatest contributor to Pali and Buddhist studies, was Professor T.W. Rhys Davids who founded the *Pali Text Society* in 1881 and set to work in 1916 on his most-consulted Pali-English Dictionary, which was to be completed by his assistant, Dr. W. Stede, in 1925. Prof. Rhys Davids also wrote, translated and edited voluminous works in the field of Buddhist studies. After the death of its founder, the affairs and activities of the Pali Text Society were conducted by his wife and co-worker Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids, whose large contributions to Pali studies crowned her husband's work. The work of the Pali Text Society has been continued to the present day by its current devoted and energetic President, Miss I.B. Horner. With the assistance of eminent Pali and Buddhist scholars of various nationalities, the Society has published the Pali texts, in Roman characters, of all the works in the Tripitaka, most of the Commentaries, and many post-canonical works. A large number of the English translations of these texts have also been published. In the field of lexicography, the Pali-English Dictionary, English-Pali Dictionary, Dictionary of Pali Proper Names and the Pali Tripitakam Concordance are publications of the Society. It can be said that the Pali Text Society has done the most for the spread of Theravada Buddhism in the Western world and is surpassed by none in the progress of international Buddhist studies.

BUDDHISM IN THE WEST

It is estimated that there are now over 190,000 Buddhists in the United States. Most of these, however, are Americans of Chinese and Japanese origin who belong to the Pure Land Sect and are organized under the name The Buddhist Churches of America.¹ The majority of these Churches, over fifty in number, are largely in Hawaii and on the West Coast. The second largest Japanese sect is Zen, the various groups of which include the First Zen Institute of America in New York City, the World Zen Center in Virginia and the Zen Mission Society in California. Among other Japanese groups are the San Francisco Nichiren Buddhist Church, the Chicago Jodo Mission, the Shingon Buddhist Church in Chicago and the Nichiren Shoshu of America (Soka Gakkai) in Los Angeles.

Though Buddhism in the States is predominantly Mahāyāna, and Theravāda missions are smaller in number, the study of Theravāda Buddhism has become increasingly popular among Americans of European origin. Theravāda Buddhists are also united into societies, centres, groups and Vihāras. There are "Friends of Buddhism" groups in such cities as Washington D.C., New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and San Francisco. The American Buddhist Academy in New York City and other Buddhist groups by different names and in various places are also active in Buddhist study, propagation and, for a few organizations, training activities. According to the statistics available in 1969,² there were altogether about 254 Buddhist groups, centres, missions and societies, both Mahāyāna and Theravāda, in the United States. Of these,

1. In 1970 members of the Buddhist Churches of America numbered 100,000 (*Americana Annual* 1974).

2. The mailing list and lists of Buddhist groups and Buddhist publications in the United States may be obtained from active Buddhists such as Dr. Kurt F. Leidecker, President of "The Washington Friends of Buddhism," 306 Caroline Street, Fredericksburg, Va. 22401, and Miss M. Sentnor, 2200 Walton Ave., Bronx, N.Y. 10453.

about 84 were in Hawaii, while the other 170 were on the American subcontinent.

Like the Mahāyāna groups, a number of Theravāda centres in the United States are not American organizations but activities of Asian Buddhists. The Washington Buddhist Vihāra houses a Theravāda mission from Ceylon and it has a plan to establish centres in the major cities and train American monks to staff them. Thai Buddhists have organized the Theravāda Buddhist Center in North Hollywood in Los Angeles and the Buddhist Study Center, recently changed to the Buddha Sāsana Temple,¹ in New York.

In Europe, while the Buddhist Society of Great Britain is still the biggest Buddhist organization, a number of local associations have been founded in cities, towns and universities in various parts of other countries. Ceylonese Buddhists contribute to this development by supporting their mission at the London Buddhist Vihāra in England and the Dhammadūta Society (Buddhistisches Haus) in West Germany. Besides the Buddhapadipa Temple in London, which was officially opened by his Majesty the King of Thailand on August 1, 1966, Thai Buddhists have been developing missions in some other parts of Europe such as the Dhammasucharitanucharee Temple in Waalwijk in the Netherlands and the Vipassanā Centre at Surrey in England.

In Australia, the Buddhist societies in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane are incorporated under the Buddhist Federation of Australia. Of these societies, the New South Wales Society at Sydney is noted for its most active work. A Thai Buddhist mission was invited to Melbourne in 1974 and a Thai Buddhist Vihāra will be opened in Sydney in the latter part of the year 1975.²

Besides books, booklets and pamphlets, Buddhist journals and periodicals have made a great contribution to the spread of Buddhism

1. It was reported that another temple called "Wat Vajiradharma-Padipa" was opened in New York on July 20, 1975.

2. This Vihāra was opened on May 25, 1975 under the name "Wat Buddharamsi"

internationally. A number of such publications issued by Buddhist groups and organizations in America, Europe and Asia have a world-wide circulation. "World Buddhism", printed in Ceylon, and the News Bulletin distributed from the WFB headquarters in Bangkok are probably the best known and most widely read Buddhist monthly periodicals. Other publications include the Vesak Sirisāra, the Buddhist annual of the Sri Saddharmadāna Samitiya in Ceylon; Visākha Pūjā, the annual publication of the Buddhist Association of Thailand; The Middle Way and the Friendly Way, quarterlies of the Buddhist Society and the Buddhapadīpa Temple in London respectively; The Maha Bodhi Journal of the Maha Bodhi Society; Voice of Buddhism of the Buddhist Missionary Society in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; "Mettā," the journal of the Buddhist Federation of Australia; and The Golden Lotus, mimeographed magazine published in Philadelphia. It would not be practical to name here all the Buddhist journals and periodicals issued in the various countries. In the United States alone, twenty-three Buddhist bulletins, newsletters, monthly magazines and annuals were on the list in 1969.

WESTERN BUDDHISM AND THE BUDDHIST REVIVAL IN ASIA

The growing interest in Buddhism and the progress of Buddhist studies in the West have greatly influenced the Buddhist revival in Asian Buddhist countries. As stated above, when Asia entered the modern period, Buddhism had stagnated in a state of habits and become a popular religion burdened with ceremonials and superstition. Then, in the face of Western civilization, it lost ground. But, with the rise in the interest among Western people, Asian Buddhists turned to revalue their traditional heritage. Asian interest in Buddhism, especially its intellectual aspect and meditation, then came to develop, following Western steps in many ways. What the following Western scholars say in this connection is worth appreciative consideration.

As Dr. Ernst Benz says in "Buddhism and Communism, Which Holds the Future of Asia?": In all Buddhist countries the revival has been greatly sparked by the work of European scholars and educators who have come to Buddhism with the enthusiasm of discoverers, and have made it their own.¹

In "The Buddhist Religion" Professor Richard H. Robinson writes: Some decades ago meditation was commonly neglected by Buddhists who were trying to be modern, because until recently Westerners have scorned it, alleging that quietism and subjectivism are morbid and sap the will to act.....And now that psychiatry has sparked a cult of self-awareness in the West, meditation is coming back into fashion in every part of Buddhist Asia that Marxism does not hold in thrall to 19th century European attitudes.²

Dr. Donald K. Swearer confirms this in his "Buddhism in Transition": Yet, if one could prognosticate the future, it might well be

1. The work quoted, p. 12.

2. The work quoted, p. 116.

predicted that a significant dimension of a Buddhist renaissance will take shape not in Asia but in the West. There are evidences to this effect already. Most students of Japanese Buddhism, for instance, contend that the interest in Zen Buddhism in America stimulated by the English writings of D.T. Suzuki has been partially responsible for a renewed interest in Zen in Japan.¹

And, as far as politics is concerned, the following words of observation on Asian Buddhist situations deserve much attention.

"Buddhism, inherently Asian, has provided a mirror in which the Asian can perceive his uniqueness and worth. In Buddhism he retains a tradition of individual integrity and humanist values that owes nothing to the West".²

"Yet in both Japan and Vietnam, as earlier in Ceylon and Burma, the political response and organization of Buddhism has come as a result of the search for national identity. The search continues throughout Asia and the face of Buddha will change with the challenge of modernization. Throughout history, images of the Buddha have reflected the real faces of the people who created them. The new face of the Buddha continues to change as it reflects the new face of Asia."³

"Yet Buddhism has shown its ability to adapt and develop. (Buddhist monks) are a powerful pressure group."⁴

"If Buddhism does not adapt, it will become a cultural fossil. If it adapts too much, it becomes adulterated and loses its essence and integrity."⁵

Thus have been described the Buddhist conditions and situations in the West today, some Western estimations of Buddhism, and the relation between Western Buddhism and Buddhist Asia. These conditions, situations and estimations can, however, be best described by Western scholars themselves or, in some cases, by international scholars. Hence the following quotations.

1. The work quoted, p. 121.

2. Jerrold Schechter, p. 274.

3.-4.-5. Jerrold Schechter, pp. 277, 276, and XVIII respectively.

BUDDHISM AND THE WEST

John Walters, a British journalist converted to Buddhism, writes in his *The Essence of Buddhism*: "This, in the West, is a period of gigantic material and economic progress.....It is often boasted that everything in America has, with her amazing material progress, changed for the better. But what of man ? Everything may appear happier; yet man himself is no happier. Today, as statistics prove, a bigger proportion of people than ever before worry themselves into insanity. Psychiatry has become a big business because of the fears of men and women that they are going mad."¹ "An increasing number of men and women, bewildered by the material and ideological chaos of today, are finding that the teaching of the Buddha brings them back to sense and clarity, to serenity and peace."²

Trevor Ling, Senior Lecturer at the University of Leeds, writes: "In other quarters there is a suspicion that religion in the West has betrayed man at the most important point in life, and consequently a tendency to find meaning in Eastern Religion."³

"There is plenty of evidence that in Western Europe people desire to find a coherent and meaningful system of values.....It may be that the words and the way of the Buddha have much to contribute at this moment of history to the religious life of the West."⁴

According to *Dr. Donald K. Swearer*, "Among American college students at this time there is an active and increasing interest in Asian religions. While acknowledging the esoteric appeal of Buddhism and other Asian religions, this interest is not simply part of the youthful rebellion against the religious establishment. Rather, much student

1. John Walters, *The Essence of Buddhism*, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., New York, 1961, p. 119.

2. Ibid., p. 140.

3. Trevor Ling, *A History of Religion, East and West*, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, 1968, p. 429.

4. Ibid., pp. 426, 429,

involvement in these areas reflects a genuine quest for a meaningful set of values and a viable life-style. Nor is the growing interest in Buddhism simply the preserve of the young. John Cobb, an outstanding contemporary theologian, has observed that Buddhism offers one of the most compelling religious alternatives today, and Christian ministers utilizing Buddhist insights and practices are becoming less and less rare. Indeed, a United Church minister friend of mine recently wrote requesting information on Zen Buddhism to be used in a senior high church school class."¹

"Buddhism is becoming increasingly popular in the United States. Its popularity rests not only on the appeal it has among college students or the role it has played in influencing "hip" culture. It offers a serious religious option for many Westerners, and it may well prove to have a significant impact on Judaeo-Christian thought and practice. Alan Watts exemplifies those whose thinking has been decisively influenced by Buddhism, and even as devout a Catholic mystic as Thomas Merton was deeply involved in Buddhism before his untimely death in Asia while visiting Buddhist centers."²

"Yet, among all the varieties of Buddhism one can find in America today and all the forms of Buddhist practice, no aspect of Buddhism has a stronger appeal than meditation, especially among younger people."³

"Buddhist meditation is attractive for many reasons, to be sure. For some it offers a retreat from the chaos and complexity of today's world. For others it may serve as a means of introspective self-understanding; and, for still others it is the means for attempting seriously to grasp the truth of Buddhism."⁴

In the words of *another American writer*: "Today Buddhism and Buddhist art have spread round the world, from Japan east to America,

1. Donald K. Swearer, *Buddhism in Transition*. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1970, p. 123.

2. Donald K. Swearer, *Secrets of the Lotus*. New York, the Macmillan Company, 1971, p. 1.

3.-4. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

from India west to Europe.”¹

“With the advance of science and psychology many of the older faiths have suffered. Their beliefs went against the new knowledge and the new knowledge won. But in this conflict the teaching of Buddha required no adjustments. Its wisdom has encompassed everything that modern thought can devise. Over 2500 years ago the Buddhists had already solved many of the problems that modern psychology is still discovering.”²

“It is perhaps significant that while mighty empires built upon greed and oppression have never lasted for more than a few centuries, the selfless life of the Buddhist community has carried it safely through 2,500 years.....knowledge of Buddhism is being sought with increasing interest in the West, for it offers a personal philosophy to counteract the fragmented condition of Western society where many individuals no longer feel part of, or responsible for, the community in which they live. Expressions of this distress are seen in the demonstrations of students, flower people, hippies, and others who wish to drop out of, or change a society which they feel no longer supplies their needs.”³

As it was written by a German scholar, *Ernst Benz*: “Many of these European students of Buddhism became converts to the new faith. They were also active in the creation and guidance of Buddhist organizations – matters in which the Asiatic Buddhists are less inclined to engage.”⁴

1.-2.-3. William Macquitty, *Buddha*. New York, the Viking Press, 1969, pp. 123-125.

4. Ernst Benz, pp. 13-14.

QUOTATIONS FROM SOME GREAT MINDS and Some Eminent Persons

Bertrand Russell, one of the most original and significant minds of the 20th century, in answer to the question, "Which of the existing religions do you most respect, and why?" says, "Of the great religions of history, I prefer Buddhism, especially in its earliest forms, because it has had the smallest element of persecution."

Albert Einstein, the great scientist of the atomic age, says: "The religion in the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God and avoid dogma and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual, as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description." And he further says, "If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism."

Schopenhauer, the German philosopher, says: "If I am to take the results of my philosophy as the standard of truth I should be obliged to concede to Buddhism the pre-eminence over the rest."

Professor Carl Gustav Jung, the outstanding psychologist of Zurich, wrote: "As a student of comparative religion, I believe that Buddhism is the most perfect one the world has ever seen. The Philosophy of the Buddha, the theory of evolution and the law of Karma were far superior to any other creed."

As *Dr. Graham Howe*, an eminent British psychiatrist, puts it: "To read a little Buddhism is to realize that the Buddhists knew, 2,500 years ago, far more about modern problems of psychology than they have been given credit for. They studied these problems long ago and found the answers also. We are now rediscovering the ancient wisdom of the East."

H. G. Wells, a distinguished historian, says these words in praise of Buddhism: "Buddhism has done more for the advance of world civilization than any other influence in the chronicles of mankind". He

further says: "It is possible that in contact with Western science, and inspired by the spirit of history, the original teaching of Gotama, revived and purified, may yet play a large part in the direction of human destiny."

The great poet, *Sir Edwin Arnold*, expressed this appreciation of Buddhism: "I have often said, and I shall say again and again, that between Buddhism and modern science there exists a close intellectual bond."

According to *Francis Story*, a British exponent of Buddhism, "The doctrines of Buddha Dhamma stand today, as unaffected by the march of time and the expansion of knowledge as when they were first enunciated. No matter to what lengths increased scientific knowledge can extend man's mental horizon, within the framework of the Dhamma there is room for the acceptance and assimilation of further discovery."

The great Pali scholar *Professor Rhys Davids* spoke of his conviction in Buddhism in these words: "I have examined every one of the great religions of the world, and in none of them have I found anything to surpass the beauty and comprehensiveness of the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha. I am content to shape my life according to that path."

Miss I.B. Horner who succeeded Professor Rhys Davids as the President of the Pali Text Society also says the following words of appreciation: "Many people in the West can no longer believe in a creator God who is both all powerful and all merciful for the tragic events they see all around them; the ocean of suffering and distress do not support such a hypothesis. At the same time many people have a strong wish for a rational way of life; something they can turn to use as a barrage against the almost overwhelming materialism of our times. This is what early Buddhism gives."

Another Western writer expressed his view of Buddhism in these words: "Buddhism is a plan for living in such a way as to derive highest benefit from life. It is a religion of wisdom where knowledge and intelligence predominate. The Buddha did not preach to win converts

but to enlighten listeners.”

Anatole France, a famous French poet and novelist of the 19th century, made this appreciative reference to the Buddha: “It seemed that the kindly aesthetic, eternally young, seated cross-legged on the lotus of purity with his right hand raised in admonition, answered in these two words: If you wish to escape from suffering, from fear, practise wisdom and compassion.”

This beauty of Buddhism is even more stressed by *Hermann Keyserling*, a German philosopher, who says: “I know nothing more grand in the world than the figure of Buddha. This grandest creation of art, the figure of the Buddha, surely could not have been produced by a pessimistic religion.”

Now, the last and longest quotations here will be those of *Nehru*, the late Prime Minister of India. As a leader of Hindu India, his impression of Buddhism is particularly interesting. In his well-known book, *The Discovery of India*, he says:

“The Buddha story attracted me even in early boyhood, and I was drawn to the young Siddhartha who, after many inner struggles and pain and torment, was to develop into the Buddha. Edwin Arnold’s ‘Light of Asia’ became one of my favourite books. In later years when I travelled about a great deal in my province, I liked to visit the many places connected with the Buddha legend, sometimes making a detour for the purpose.”

“Was Buddhism passive and pessimistic? Its interpreters may say so.....But when I think of the Buddha no such feeling arises in me.....”

“Seated on the lotus flower, calm and impassive, above passion and desire, beyond the storm and strife of this world, so far away he seems, out of reach, unattainable. Yet again we look and behind those still, unmoving features there is a passion and an emotion, strange and more powerful than the passions and emotions we have known. His eyes are closed, but some power of the spirit looks out of them and a vital energy fills the frame. The ages roll by and Buddha seems not so far away after all; his voice whispers in our ears and tells us not to run away from the

struggle, but, calm-eyed, to face it, and to see in life ever greater opportunities for growth and advancement.”

“His message was one of universal benevolence, of love for all. It was an ideal of righteousness and self-discipline. Buddha relies on reason and logic and experience and asks people to seek the truth in their own minds. It is remarkable how near this philosophy of the Buddha brings us to some of the concepts of modern physics and modern philosophic thought. Buddha’s method was one of psychological analysis and, again, it is surprising to find how deep was his insight into this latest of modern science.”

Elsewhere he says:

“It is essentially through the message of the Buddha that the individual, national and international problems of today can be looked at from the right perspective.”

จรรยา (การพิมพ์)

37/44 ซอยเทียนทรัพย์ 4 ถ.จอมทอง
อ.บางขุนเทียน กทม. 10150
โทร. 4688848

1976