

I

THE LIFE OF SAKYAMUNI BUDDHA

The date of Sākyamuni's birth is not definitely known, but it is conventionally agreed on as April 8, 565 (or 563) B.C., which is probably approximately correct. His father was Suddhodana, king of the Sākya clan or tribe; whose capital was the city of Kapilavastu, Central India, and whose center was Kapila Castle. Sākyamuni was a member of his father's clan, the Sākyas. Like his father also, he was a member of the ksatriya caste of rulers and warriors (although he later rejected the caste system).

Sākyamuni's lineage on his mother's side is not as clear, there being at least two distinct theories. Depending on which version is accepted, two different family constellations are visualized, as follows: I. His mother, Mahāmāyā, was a sister of King Suprabuddha of Devadaha (or variantly, Dandapāi of Koli Castle). Suprabuddha had a daughter, Yasodharā, who became Sākyamuni's wife (in a first-cousin marriage). II. His mother was a daughter of King Suprabuddha (or variantly, King Añjana, also of Devadaha). In both versions it is agreed that Mahāprajāpatī is Mahāmāyā's sister, that she married Suddhodana after Mahāmāyā's untimely death, and that Suddhodana and Mahāprajāpatī produced a son, Nanda, who was therefore the Buddha's half-brother, and later became one of his disciples.

According to legend, Mahāmāyā, great with child, was returning to her father's home, that she might give birth there,

when, having journeyed as far as Lumbinī Park she paused to rest and gave birth to Sākyamuni. It is told that at his birth, the future Buddha took seven steps in each of the four directions, each time saying, "I alone am honored, in heaven and on earth. This triple world is full of sufferings; I will be the savior from these sufferings."

Seven (or seventeen) days after his birth, his mother, Mahāmāyā, died. He was then put under the care of his aunt, Mahāprajāpatī. During his youth, Sākyamuni was given the conventional rearing of a crown prince, trained doubtless in the ways of the court, the letters, and the military arts.

As the young prince grew older, he tended to fall into deep meditation, and his father was concerned whether he could succeed to the throne. One story has it that because of his worry, his father decided it were wisest if he married and arranged his marriage to Yasodharā at the age of nineteen. (Another story has it, however, that Sākyamuni won Yasodharā at the age of sixteen in a test of arms with all rivals.) From their union came a son, Rāhula, who later became one of the Buddha's disciples.

The marriage, however, failed to deflect Sākyamuni from his course. His meditations became deeper and deeper every year, and his penetration became even keener. He was preoccupied with the mutability of life. In the end he decided that he must lead the life of a monk.

According to tradition, it was on December 8th at the age of twenty-nine, that in the night Sākyamuni mounted his white horse, Kaṇṭhaka, and accompanied only by a retainer, Chandaka, rode forth from the castle, renouncing the world. Next morning he reached the shore of the eastern branch of the Anuma River, and there shaved his head—the traditional act symbolizing leaving conventional social life and entering the life of the monk. There-

upon he dismissed his servant, and went on alone. (Another account says that Sākyamuni married at the age of eighteen, and left the castle on July 1st, in his nineteenth year.)

From that time, Sākyamuni pursued his enlightenment. First he visited several famous masters, such as Bhārgava of Valisālī, Arādakālama of Vaisālī, etc. But he found their teachings unsatisfactory and turned away.

Next Sākyamuni tried asceticism. He went into the forest at Uruvilvā-grāma, on the east shore of the Nairāñjanā River (Nirenzen-ga), and there earnestly followed ascetic practices for six years.

His father, now realizing that his son could not be swayed from his intent, sent five men to accompany him in his practice and at the same time protect him. Legend states that Sākyamuni continued his practice until his eyes retreated deep into his head, his bones showed through his skin, and his stomach touched his backbone. Then he realized that this torture of the body was oppressing, not freeing, his spirit, and rejected asceticism (just as he had earlier rejected philosophical speculation).

Scarcely surviving his ascetic experience, he went to the Nairāñjanā River and cleansed his body. Then he drank milk which a girl of the village gave him and gradually regained his strength.

Sākyamuni now proceeded to the north of the forest where he had practiced asceticism, to a place near the village of Buddhagayā, and sat down there under a certain pipala tree, later known as the Bodhi Tree. There, sitting alone and quietly, he once again entered meditation. The story has it that as he was meditating there, he was tempted by many devils, often presenting themselves in desirable disguises. But Sākyamuni was able to unmask and overcome all temptations. One morning, said to be February

8th, at the age of thirty-five, he finally attained his enlightenment—five, he finally attained his enlightenment—the enlightenment of the middle way, which subsequently changed history. (Another account holds that he practiced asceticism for twelve years and enlightenment on December 8th, at the age of thirty.)

On attaining enlightenment, Sākyamuni, now properly spoken of as the Buddha, faced another difficult inner struggle: whether to keep his enlightenment to himself, or whether to preach it to other beings in the effort to enlighten them as well.

He decided on the latter course, and thereupon left the forest and proceeded slowly across India until he reached the Deer Park near Benares (present Sārnāth). There were gathered the five men who had accompanied him in asceticism, who had withdrawn from him when he had rejected asceticism. He gathered these five men and preached to them his first sermon. It was the notable Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana, in which he expounded the middle way, the four noble truths, and the eightfold noble path. These men all became converts to Buddhism, and thereafter there were many others.

Then he journeyed to Magadaha, where he was received with great respect by King Bimbisāra, who became a convert. He stayed at Venuvana and taught the three Kāsyapa brothers. He obtained as disciples Sāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, Mahā-kāsyapa, etc., and his teaching gained adherents day by day.

His fame became great, and spread to his father's court. Thereupon, his father sent a messenger requesting him to return to his homeland, which he did. There he taught his father and many members of his family, converting such men as Ānanda, his cousin; Nanda, his half-brother; Rāhula, his son; Devadatta, another cousin; etc. Later, Mahāprajāpatī became a nun, and became the founder of the Buddhist order of nuns, which the

Buddha, somewhat hesitantly, it is said, eventually allowed to be established. In time Yasodharā also entered the female order.

After that, Sākyamuni taught at Jetavana-vihāra in Srāvastī, Gṛdhra-kūṭa in Magadha, etc., preaching many important sermons which, although not recorded at the time, form the basic groundwork for the written scriptures. He attracted to his movement sixteen major disciples (—jūroku-rakan, II), of whom Maudgalyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, Subbūti, and Sāriputra (or sometimes Kātyāyana) are considered the greatest. He founded the Buddhist community (the Saṃgha), with its ranks of monks and nuns, and lay-devotees, all regulated within a framework of precepts and rules, and with caste distinctions specifically discarded. In the later period of his teaching, he encountered some opposition, notably that led by Devadatta, an apostate monk (and his cousin), who sought to disrupt the saṃgha and (it is sometimes said) to kill Sākyamuni. However, all attacks from without were successfully overcome.

The Buddha's active preaching career lasted forty-five years (some say fifty-one years). Recognizing at last that his death was close at hand, he asked that his bed be placed in a clearing in the Sāla Grove outside of Kusinagara, bounded by four twin Sāla trees. He realized that nirvāṇa was coming near, and he preached his last sermon, the Nirvāṇa Sermon. Then, with his head pointing north, his face looking west, lying on his right side, he died. He was eighty years old (some say eighty-one) and the date is most usually given as February 15, 486 B.C.

After his death, the Malla Tribe, in whose territory he was, moved his body to a temple inside Kusinagara, and held a service for seven days. According to the law of the Wheel-Rolling King, they cremated his body. Ambassadors from eight great countries of the time arrived to claim his relics. Their conflicting

claims were settled by Droṇa-brāhmaṇa (Kōshō-baramon), who divided the relics into eight parts. Baramon obtained for himself the jar in which sarīra is put and gave to the representative of the Maurya Tribe, who arrived late, the ashes.

Thus there were eight portions in all, and these were placed by the respective owners in eight stūpas erected on ground sacred to the Buddha in the various areas of India.

Four months after the Buddha's death, the First Buddhist Council, chaired by the senior monk, Mahā-kasyapa, was held at Saptapaṇṇa-gubā cave, near Rājagrha, the capital of Magadha. This marked the commencement of the effort to institutionalize the saṃgha and codify the scriptures, which has continued to this day. Impelled by the impetus deriving from the Buddha's personality, which was nurtured by succeeding generations of monks, Buddhism then spread throughout the world, having various effects and successes depending upon historical circumstances and the natures of the receiving cultures.

NOTE: Notes in parentheses designate a conflict of information, or variations, in the different sources utilized by the editors. Instead of selecting from the conflicting data, it has been decided to list all the variations found.

II

THE TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA

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 favored 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 rediscovered 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 a doctrine that 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

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 most sublime 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 of the Wheel of the Law" or "The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness," preached to the five ascetics of Deer Park in Benares.

FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

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 harboring 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.”

Sorrow

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.

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 outmastered 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, heartbreaks 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 Shelley 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 the Oneness of all Life, thinking of themselves apart from other forms of life, ignorant of the transience 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 whatsoever 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; on almost impossible task, yet some have been able to accomplish it, for it was the method of some Indian Yogi 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 men 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 Bhikkhu 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 inquiring 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 the direction it is necessary to take.

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 Tathâgatha (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.”

Noble Eight-fold Path

“It is the Noble Eight-fold Path, namely, Right Understanding, Right Mindfulness Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Endeavor, Right Thought and Right Meditation. This, O Brethren, is the Middle Way which the Tathâgata has discovered which enlightens the eye, conduces to calm and leads to Peace, to Supreme Enlightenment, to Nirvana.”

The Path

Right Understanding. We must keep ourselves free from prejudices, superstition and delusion and strive to understand aright the true nature of life.

Right Mindfulness. 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.

Right Speech. Kind, plain and truthful words.

Right Conduct. Sometimes translated Right Behavior. Deeds that are peaceable, righteous, benevolent and pure.

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

Right Endeavor. To direct our efforts incessantly to the overcoming of ignorance and craving desire.

Right Thought. It is the remembering in moments of weakness all resolutions taken and all past experience.

Right 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 Right Understanding of life and its aims, the practice of common uprightness and justice in ordinary affairs; and for those determined to follow to the end the attainment through Right Thought and Right 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.

Karma

The word *karma* or *karmaan* means “to work, action, rite, performance” from the Sanskrit root *kr*, “to make” and usually is translated as “activities.” Every thought, speech and act is *karma* and it entails one after another forming a link of cause and effect. At every moment, we *think*, we *act* and we *talk*. The moment we come into this world, our *karma* begins and thereafter, we continue this *karma* performance until we die. In Buddhism, we understand this physical world as not a permanent world. It is devoid of permanent entity so that it is all transient and nothing exists forever. However, only *karma* exists from moment to moment continually.

The law of *karma* makes the *Wheel of Life*. In other words, a man determines his own nature and existence by his own *karma* and he is “self-created.” The *karma* of “self creation” has always existed in the past and will continue in the future in the endless cycle of “life and death” due to the law of Cause and Effect.

Here, what we must remember is that this “self-creation” is regulated by the actions of each individual and not other people or beings, such as God, authorities, or any other forces.

The *karma* is briefly classified traditionally into three classes, namely, good, bad and indifferent deeds. Buddhism regards all things as “existence depending on a series of causes and conditions” and no existence is independent and exclusive. In this the theory presupposes the importance of *karma* which is entirely responsible for forming an individual being and his “becoming” since his “self-creation” as an individual being comes from his own *karma*.

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. Nothing can protect one from the result of one's own deeds, according to the Buddhist teaching. The Buddha merely shows the Way, which if a man follows, shall lead him to emancipation. That a guiltless one can take upon himself the sins of the guilty so that the evil doer may be released from the consequences of his deed is utterly unphilosophical and rests upon an ignorance of the Law of Karma.

The Five 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 (rebirth) 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 being. 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 con-

ditioned 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”, “Anatta”, “Duhkha.”

The Three Dharma Mūdra

Anicca and Duhkha

“Anicca” is a summarized 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.”

That “Duhkha”, 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 is again, inevitably, sorrow. For it means even in the best and dearest lives, some degree of ignorance 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 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 there feeling?" Nevertheless, as the Buddhist well knows, not by intellect, 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 every one 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, we reach the goal. But is there no positive side to Nirvana? Surely, 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."

Live the Life

Perhaps the most striking thing regarding the Buddha's Teaching is its practical tendency. He absolutely refused to ponder upon the beginning and end of things, considering that the time and energy given to speculation on things unknowable should be directed towards, Right Living, which means to do right because it is right and not from fear of punishment or hope of reward, knowing that the after effect of Right Living must be right.

Oneness of Life

Buddhism teaches the "Oneness of Life"—that the same stream of life energy runs through all the veins of the universe. It is this stream that binds all forms of life together, making them one, each being governed by its own particular laws which it must obey. So that while human life is the highest form of life known to us, mineral life, plant life, animal life and human life are all one in their essence. Surely this truth is a fine foundation upon which to build a true democracy, its realization would do much towards eliminating all forms of discrimination, especially racial, color and caste prejudice.

Democratic Buddhism

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. 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.

Justice

The Lord Buddha's message is one of absolute justice, for the Unswerving Law he proclaimed is utterly impartial.

"It seeth everywhere and marketh all;
Do right it recompenseth! Do one wrong—
The equal retribution must be made.
Though Dharma tarry long."

Each man's character is entirely self made, the outcome of his former living. For all life being One, the Law of Cause and Effect works in every manifestation of life equally. For this reason, "What we sow, we reap."

Constructiveness

Lord Buddha's message is constructive. He constantly stresses Right Thinking, which surely leads to Right Conduct. "All that we are is the result of what we have thought; it is founded upon our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts." Buddhistic thinking is not based on revelation or a revealed religion but is a Right Thinking that develops with the state of evolution reached by the thinker. Ethical standards therefore become higher and higher as we unfold, for as the Lord Buddha implied, evolution is the only safe basis for morality.

Common Sense

Lord Buddha's message is one of common sense, a practical message for every day life. Dealing strictly with the here and now, without speculation concerning things unknowable, it aims at the reformation of mankind without the sacrifice of reason.

Prayer

On this account there is no such thing as petitionary prayer, but meditation, reading of the scriptures, listening to discourses are of immense value as they strengthen the courage of the follower and teach him self-reliance.

Miracle

As everything happens in strict conformity with the laws of nature there are no miracles. A miracle would be an arbitrary violation of the laws of nature by a superhuman being. There are however natural phenomena as yet unexplained. These of course follow natural physical laws still hidden from us, but these unexplained phenomena are in no way related to the subject of miracles.

Love and Compassion

Lord Buddha's message is one of pure love and tolerance. He says, "As a mother, even at the risk of her life, protects her son, so let a man cultivate love without measure towards all beings. Let him cultivate towards the whole world above, below,

around—a heart of love unlimited unmixed with the sense of differing or opposing interests.” “Hatred is not overcome by hatred, hatred is overcome by love.”

Altruism

The Altruistic Ideal contained in the Lord Buddha's Message is to do right, not for fear of punishment or hope of reward, but simply because it is right. It is 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 Buddha's Teaching, can Universal Brotherhood be built.

No better words can be used to close this little outline of the Teaching 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.”

Thought Waves

“We surround all men and all forms of life with infinite Love and Compassion. Particularly do we send out compassionate thoughts to those in suffering and sorrow, and to all those in doubt and ignorance, to all who are striving to attain Truth; and to those whose feet are standing close to the great change men call death, we send forth oceans of Wisdom, Mercy and Love.”
—From the Buddhist Vade Mecum.