

## THE BUDDHA.

### I. THE RENUNCIATION

AFTER the Enlightenment, thinking of his life before the Renunciation, said the Buddha, "My past was a life of indulgence. My father's palace stood surrounded by beautiful lakes, where, dressed in choice *kasi*, I lived. To protect me from cold and heat, a white umbrella was always held over my head. My dwellings were changed according to the three seasons. During the four months of the rainy season, my life was spent among dancing girls and I never left the palace. But seeing an old man, I realised the approach of dotage to myself and gave up the pride of youth; seeing a sick man, I realised that I too was liable to be sick and gave up the pride of health; seeing a dead man, I realised that I too was liable to be attacked by death, and gave up the pride of life."

Siddhartha who was born heir to a small dukedom in India, was a reflective child, and when he reached adolescence, his mind was greatly disturbed with the vicissitudes of human life even in the midst of pleasures. At the age of twenty-nine when his only son Rahula was born, he finally made up his mind to renounce the world and to enter upon the path of eternal peace. He became a monk. It was also about this time that Vardhamāna, founder of Jainism, detached himself from a worldly life. Sāriputta, Moggallāna, and Mahākassapa, who later became the prominent disciples of the Buddha, began to lead a homeless life also about this time. Especially, the facts that Yasa, son of a wealthy merchant of Benares, and Ratthapāla, of another wealthy family

in Kurū, left their worldly career which promised everything for their future as far as sensuous satisfactions and worldly honours were concerned, plainly show that the Indian youths of those days entertained deep feelings of pessimistic anguish over things of this earth. This was quite natural, seeing that the existing religions had no hold over the young growing minds who were groping in the dark how to find their way of salvation. But Siddhartha was surely not moved by the current waves of world-flying asceticism. As he was already twenty-nine years old and must have had some experience of the world, his native yearnings for a spiritual life were much deeper and farther reaching than any of his contemporaries. The pain attendant to a life of pleasures must have cut a very deep wound into his sensitive mind. So we read in the *Māgandiya*, of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, "Even heavenly enjoyments, if they are tainted with lusts and evil desires, I have no heart to accept." The result was inevitably his renunciation of the home life.

How did he spend the ten years between his marriage at the age of nineteen and his renunciation which took place when he was twenty-nine? We have at present no record, but it is impossible to imagine that those ten long years were spent to no purpose but for sensuous pursuits among dancers and musicians as described in the sutras. As the sole heir to a dukedom, his mind must have naturally been concerned with its administration and its relations, present and future, with the neighboring states. The dukedom of the Shakyas was then under the dominating shadow of Kosala. The dukedom enjoyed a sort of independence, but in any moment it might be over-thrown by an ambitious and evil-designing Kosala imperialist. However able and far-sighted the master of Kapilavastu might be his political status was far from being an enviable one. He could not control the general situation which had gone too far against him and beyond his power,

These considerations must have entered into the youthful mind of Siddhartha when he decided to devote himself to things spiritual. When he came to Rajagaha after the Renunciation, Bimbisara offered him the kingdom of Magadha in order to make him abandon his homeless life, (see the *Dhammapada Atthakathā*, Vol. I, and the *Sutta-Nipālā Atthakathā*); and after the Enlightenment he meditated once as to how to govern the world without resorting to warlike activities, (see the *Samyutta Nikāya*, IV, 2 and the *Dhammapada A.*, IV);—these allusions are not probably without significance when his political situation before the Renunciation is taken into account.

Whatever this may be, as soon as a son, Rahula, was born to his wife, he came to the final resolution that all worldly attachments should be severed before they grew too strong for him, as he thought the parental tie to be the knottiest of all entanglements. The so-called Great Renunciation (*mahānikkhamta*) was carried out that very night. This act, on the part of a man bearing a great spiritual message was praised by all the celestial beings whereas the evil ones were greatly disturbed who attempted to thwart Siddhartha from his resolution even on his way to solitude. After passing Rāmagāma, he tarried for a while by the river Anoma in the land of the Moriyas where he had his hair all shaved off. He then started for Rajagaha. This was one of the two main roads connecting Rajagaha and Sravastu, which were then the two great powers in India. While by the Anoma, Siddhartha saw Bhaggava, a mendicant ascetic, and realised that asceticism was not the road leading to final deliverance. He now came to Vesali and entered Rahagaha where he paid a visit to two hermits, Alālakālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, neither of whom however gave satisfaction to the seeker of enlightenment, for they talked about losing themselves in a mystic trance. His wanderings were renewed. One of the reasons

why he first came Rajagaha instead of going north, for instance to Takkasila, the then center of the orthodox Brahmanism, was because Rajagaha as a newly-risen kingdom was not only a political center but the birthplace of freethought.

## 2. THE ATTAINMENT OF BUDDHAHOOD

While Siddhartha was in Rajagaha, the king Bimbisara made him an offer of the kingdom, which he refused. Intently bent on the discovery of the most excellent truth, he went south to Gaya, and in the woods of Uruvela, along the pleasant white-sanded stream of Neranjana, he found a suitable spot for his spiritual workshop.

As the first step of his mental discipline, he practised ascetic exercises as were observed by Bhaggava and others. What they were, are recorded in the *Mahāsihanada Sutta* and in the *Mahāsaccaka Sutta*. (The Majjhima Nikāya, 12 and 36.) He was

“Burned in the sun,  
Frozen in the cold;  
In the forest of fear  
All alone,  
Without a robe,  
Without fire,  
Standing firm in his purpose,  
Sat the Muni.”

The six years' penance and mortification, however, failed to give him peace of mind. Convinced now of the uselessness of such practices he quitted them. He then thought of the exercises of Jhana, quiet meditation, of which he had once an experience when he was still with his father, and decided to walk along this new path. When he was seen abandoning the ascetic practises, his five medicant-friends judged him a backslider and left him all by himself. He felt as if he were thrust down into the bottom of an abyss. A spiritual crisis in which he now found himself with no human sym-

pathy shown him by any of his fellow-ascetics, grew more intense and unbearable than ever before, as the day advanced. The struggle indeed between light and dark lasted throughout that day. Siddhartha on the Diamond Seat was really a most desperate fighter in a spiritual warfare. As the dusk approached, however, the tempest subsided, the struggle was over, and he rose up triumphantly from the battle. He was the victor. Peace reigned over his mind even as water floweth. The universe with all its discords was now reflected serenely in his mind-mirror, where no agitating waves rose, calm and eternal as the ocean itself. The Shamana became the Buddha. "Passions are extinct, the moral deeds are accomplished, I have done what had to be done, there is no other existence than this." This state of Buddha's enlightened consciousness defies all literary description; but when it is considered a state in which no passions prevail, it is called Nirvana, and when regarded as freedom from all external bonds, it is Deliverance or Release. Bodhi or Enlightenment is a subjective term, showing the traditionally intellectual tendency of the Indian mind. This consciousness of enlightenment has since then become the ideal goal of every devout Buddhist endeavor and the source of salvation for all beings as well as the main subject of investigation for Buddhist scholars.

What is to be done by one who has finished doing his own work is the work of salvation, is to work for others, to save them from sinking further and further into the abyss of ignorance and misery. After being absorbed in the ecstatic enjoyment of blissful Nirvana for seven weeks, the Buddha began to think of preaching his Dharma to his fellow-beings. When however he realised how deep and difficult to comprehend it was for ordinary minds, he hesitated for a while until he was most urgently persuaded by Brahmadeva. His resolution to preach the great Law was expressed in the following lines :

“That those who have ears may hear and awaken the faith.  
This gate of immortality is open to them.”

Thereupon the Buddha directed his steps towards Baranasi religiously considered sacred by the Indians of those days. On his way he met Ajivaka Upaka who remarked, “How quiet your mien and how pure and radiant your face is! Tell me who your teacher is.” The Buddha told him that he had no teacher for his own enlightenment, for his attainment of Bodhi and Nirvana, and that he was bound for Benares to beat the drum of immortality. His Law was first preached to his former five friends at the Deer Park, Isipattana. This first sermon is preserved in the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta* (see Vinaya, *Mahavagga* I, 6, 17). These five monks who were first deeply impressed by the dignity of the Buddha, gradually came to understand the doctrine of the Mean as preached by him and finally attained an enlightenment equal to the master's, and all became Arhans, thus producing six Arhans in the body of the new religion. The trinity of Buddhism was now complete—Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha.

### 3. THE MEANING OF THE TERM “BUDDHA”

Henceforth, the Law of the Buddha spread with great rapidity in the neighboring lands and became a great religious force in India. After the five monks, Yasa took refuge under Buddha with his friends, fifty-four in all, and in the second year of his Enlightenment, the three Kassapa brothers who were already well-known figures in the kingdom of Magadha, came to Buddha, with their one thousand followers. Sariputta and Moggallana accompanied by their two hundred and fifty adherents were converted to Buddhism. The spread of the new religion was so rapid and universal in Rajagaha that its founder was reproached by the inhabitants for carrying away their children and turning them into monks. Two external causes may be assigned to this generous reception of

the Law of the Buddha: one is freedom of thought which was then entertained by the Indians generally, and the other is the economical prosperity that was enjoyed by the people.

As the Indians of the Buddha's time were living in a state of intellectual confusion, they had perfect freedom of thought and boldly expressed their views, even against the traditional authority of Brahmanism. As the latter had yet no ecclesiastical organisation, there was no means for its followers to exercise their suppressive policies over the opponents or dissenters. The Brahmins themselves were dissatisfied with their own ancestral teachings and naturally welcomed any light that might give them a new life. There was evidently no fight between the traditional orthodox faith and new attempts at spiritual rejuvenation. More than that the kings and rich merchants seem to have vied with one another to give shelter to any freethinkers, providing them with food, clothes, and schools which they visited and they were pleased to listen to the discourses of a master. Thus, not only Shakya-muni, but other spiritual teachers wandered from one place to another, freely expounding their beliefs and with no fear of persecution. The general public who fully appreciated freedom of faith took refuge in the greatest spiritual leader as eagerly as the thirsty take to water. The material prosperity of the time also had a great deal to do with the spread of Buddhism. A greater part of the people then living in Central India were land-owners, cultivating their own farms, and they were not burdened with too heavy a taxation, for no more than a tithe was demanded of them. To feed, clothe, and shelter the wandering mendicants was easily within their power. Earnest seekers of truth thus found themselves free to become homeless monks in order to devote themselves exclusively to their spiritual calling.

Of the internal causes that helped the wonderfully rapid propagation of Buddhism, we must first and last mention the

supreme personality of its founder himself in which the Law of the Middle Way was realised as a living principle. His doctrine therefore was not a mere intellectual concoction, but the outgrowth of personal experience. The Fourfold Noble Truth was not a theory but a practical insight into the nature of things, and the Eightfold Path of Righteousness did not stop at merely enumerating certain items of recommendable virtues, but it was an analysis of perfect personality. The secret of Buddhist influence therefore to come in direct contact with the radiant face of Shyacamuni and to listen to his resonant and well-modulated voice. His "Ehi" (Come unto me) was like Christ's "Follow me!"—the outburst of his whole personality, and those who once heard it were so fascinated by his spirituality as to abandon everything to be embraced by the Master. When we experience how the disciples came to take refuge in the Buddha, we notice (1) that they first heard his voice and then desired to see him; (2) that when they came to his presence they were deeply impressed with his personality; and (3) that finally they listened to his discourses full of deep meaning and loving thought. Let us cite a few instances from the Scriptures.

Sudatta, of Sravastu, was surnamed Anāthapindika because of his charitable deeds towards the helpless. He came one day to Rajagaha and stayed with a friend of his who happened to mention the name of Buddha. This awakened Sudatta at once and made him desire to see him in spite of an already advanced night. He was thus converted into the faith. Sela, a Brahman, who was struck with the word "Buddha" which came from the mouth of his teacher, Keniya, repeated the question for three times, "Did you say the 'Buddha'?" and he was also converted. It is wonderful to see how many ascetics were deeply moved by hearing the name "Buddha" and raised their worshipful hands towards heaven, crying, "O Buddha, O Buddha!" Mahākappina,



who reigned over a kingdom near Peshawar was so overwhelmed with joy when he heard of the Buddha from a merchant coming from Central India that he did not hesitate to abandon his royalty and to join the holy congregation of the Buddha. The propagation of the faith seems to have taken place not only through the Scriptures but through the very word "Buddha." It was like the sun rising to dispel darkness, the name had a most mysterious power over human minds. They said, "The homeless Gotama is of the Shakyas, and being a Shakya he left his family, and he is now the Bhagavan, Arhan, Sammāsambuddha, Vijjācaranasampanna, Sugata, Lokavit, Anuttara, Purisadammasārathī, Sattādevamanussānām, and Buddha. All the worlds he knows by himself, all the worlds he understands by himself, and he preaches his doctrine to all the worlds, inhabited by the celestial beings, evil ones, Brahmadeva, mendicants, and Brahmans. The doctrine he preaches is perfect in the letter and in the spirit, and it is excellent in the beginning, in the middle, and in the ending. He teaches a life of holiness, pure and perfect." His fame now reached as far south as among the people living along the river Godhāvārī, and the venerable Bāvārī made his disciples call on the Buddha, among whom there were Ajita, Tissa, Mogharāja, and others. From the north, Mahākappina, of Peshawar, came to Buddha whose faith he embraced, while Punna of Suppāraka, after being converted into Buddhism, went back to his town where he was engaged in preaching. The modern site of Bombay and its vicinity thus also became a local center of Buddhism. This rapid propagation of the name of Buddha and his doctrine drew from various quarters of India a constant stream of people to the Vihara where the Buddha stayed, and how eager they were to see him face to face!

"To preach with one's body" is quite an expressive phrase frequently used in Buddhism, and means that a great

personality is naturally so dignified as to gain the heart of his people even before a word comes out of his mouth. In this respect Buddha seems to have been great. Upaka, a non-believer, was first struck, as was already referred to, by the beauty and grace of Buddha's form before he was converted to the faith. Vacchagotta, a Brahman, sang highly of Buddha's face and became an upāsaka. In the *Samyutta Nikāya*, 1, 5, we read that a celestial being made an inquiry as to the reason of Buddha and his disciples having such a clear and joyful expression in spite of their one meal a day. Pāsenadi, king of Ujjayini, made another such inquiry concerning the Buddha's countenance. That Bhikkhu, Vakkali, always wished to see Buddha whose physical beauty enraptured him is recorded in various Sutras. When Māgandiya, a Brahman, saw the Muni of Shakya he was so attracted by him that he proposed to Buddha a marriage in behalf of his daughter. The Buddha's sermon, however, awakened his faith in the Law. Jenta who was a son of the Purohita (teacher) to the king of Kosala was vain about his descent, wealth, and personal attractions; but when one day he saw Buddha surrounded by his monks, he felt as if he were standing before the splendor of the sun, all his petty pride vanished, and he became a disciple of the Buddha. (*Thera Gāthā*, 423-8.) The *Brahma-Sutta* (the Middle Agama, 161) records Uttara's most eulogical report concerning the Buddha's personal dignity, which he made to his own teacher Brahmāyu. In short, the spirituality and inner consciousness of Buddha could not but flow over its external encasement and impart to his features and movements an inexplicable air of dignity, loveing-kindness, and irresistibility. Thus he was likened by his disciples to a lion, or to a great elephant, glorious, living in the Himālayas.

As regards the voice of the Buddha, mention is made of it, as far as my knowledge extends, only in the *Sonadanda-Sutta*, of the Digha-Nikaya, where his voice is described as

beautiful, his wording full of grace, and his tone as mild and gentle. But as the possessor of the four forms of fearlessness, it goes without saying that the Buddha had an eloquence and authority, in whatever gatherings, to win the heart of the audience and to awaken their faith in the Law. The Buddha was, besides, a born arguer; he would sometimes be direct in attacking the opponent, but sometimes most kindly and thoroughly go over the whole ground to convince his audience. He was a great rhetorician, skilled in construction and exquisite in the mastery of words, which is evinced in the Scriptures. Those, therefore, who listened to him remarked, "When Gotama discourses on various subjects, the fallen are raised, the hidden are made manifest, the lost are directed to their way, and into the midst of darkness is brought a light so that those who have eyes can see." Or they would express their complete satisfaction with the Buddha's sermons by comparing them to "a great sala tree, whose core alone is left while its leaves, barks, branches, and all its outer parts are gone." (Majjhima Nikāya, 72.)

Now let me ask what is after all meant by "Buddha." This is not an honorific title given by others to the Muni of the Shakyas, but it designates his own conviction in himself. When the wheel of the Law was first made to revolve, his former companions of five ascetics addressed him as their friend, who however were reprimanded by Gotama, and the latter now declared himself to be the Tathagata, Arhan, and Sammasambuddha. Against the question of Dona, a Brahman, he said, "I am not a deva, nor a yaksha, nor a gandharbha; nor am I a human being, but the Buddha. Because in me there is no longer any residue of evil karma." Etymologically, "Buddha" comes from the root "budh," and when used as noun, it denotes "one who is enlightened," or "one who is awakened." I believe the original sense of the term is, in opposition to "supito" (sleeping) or "matto"

(drunk), *to be wakeful*, or *awakened*. When the word "Buddha" as one who is awakened was first used by Shakyamuni in contradistinction to the rest of mankind who are all deeply drunk in the superficiality of things, this must have started them from a long night's dream and filled their hearts with mixed feelings of surprise, inspiration, and reverence. This meaning was gradually extended so as to include ancient sages or saints,—the seven or twenty-four Buddhas of the past, thus came to be enumerated. When the term was made to denote any degree of wakefulness, such technical words as Pacceka-Buddha or Savaka-Buddha came into use. Finally, with us, Buddhahood now signifies a being who is himself enlightened and is able to enlighten others and whose enlightenment and conduct are in perfect harmony, but as to the Dharamanaka-Buddha or Buddha in living form, this applies only to the Venerable Muni of the Shakyas.

This Buddha is in possession of the four sorts of fearlessness, the ten powers, and the eighteen unique virtues. He knows what is fit to know, sees what is fit to see, has an eye, has an intelligence, the Law, Brahma, and the power of speech, and he teaches, leads people to righteousness, and gives immortality. He is the Tathāgata. He is the perfect one with the knowledge of five things: he knows righteousness, the Law, moderation, time, and the object. He is the one who, being pure in heart, acts without conscious efforts in accordance to the norm of things (*sila*); he is the one who, perfectly disciplined in mind, abides in the depths of self-reflection (*jhana*); he is the one who through the power of self-reflection has an insight into the true nature of all things (*viija*). As he has truly reached where is the goal of all things, he is called the Tathāgata; as he is supremely qualified to receive offerings by others, he is the Arhan; as he thoroughly comprehends the nature of all things, he is the Sammāsambuddha; as his understanding (*viija*) is in perfect

accord with his conduct (*carana*), he is the *Vijjacarana-sampanna*; as he is blessed, he is the *Sugata*; as he knows all that is in the world, he is the *Lokavid*; as he knows no peers among human beings, he is the *Anuttara*; as he is the most skilful manager of humanity, he is the *Purisadamma-saratthi*; as he is the teacher of men and celestial beings, he is the *Sattadevamanussanam*; as he is awakened and enlightened, he is the *Buddha*; and finally as he is most revered he is the *Bhagava*. These are what is known as the ten appellations of the *Tathagata*. He is then again known as the conqueror (*jina*), because he won the battle; he is sometimes called the possessor of ten powers (*dasabala*); lastly, he is the *Devatideva* since there are no gods even in the heavens claiming superiority to the *Buddha*. In the *Mahavyupatti*, eighty-one titles are mentioned of him, and in the *Abhidhappadipika* thirty-two.

In short, "Buddha" signifies one who alone is awakened from the long dream of ignorance while the rest of the world is heavily drunk with the wine of desire (*kama*), and one who out of the fulness of his heart does all he can to call others back from their uninterrupted sleep in ignorance. When he was, in the first year after the Enlightenment, sending out sixty missionaries to various quarters of the world, he addressed them as follows: "O ye *Bhikkhus*! I am released from the earthly and heavenly bondages, and you are also released from the earthly and heavenly bondages. O ye *Bhikkhus*! go now out into the world for the benefit and happiness of many, and wander in the world out of the fulness of your hearts for the benefit and happiness of men and devas. O ye *Bhikkhus*! preach the Law that is perfect in the letter as well as in the spirit, and excellent in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end; also propagate the life of purity and holiness. There are some whose mental eyes are not yet wholly covered with dust. If the Law were not

preached, they might know no way of deliverance. For such will understand the doctrine." When we know that the Buddha looked upon his enemies such as Angulimala or Devadatta, or the maddened elephant, Dhanapala, in the same way as his only son Rahula, we recognise a new center of religious movement now known as Buddhism to be the Buddha's boundless love and compassion. No wonder wherever the Buddha moved, he at once became the rallying-point of a crowd, even like unto all rivers flowing into one great ocean.

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