

## THE NEW BUDDHIST MOVEMENT IN GERMANY

**B**EFORE the War, in Germany there were a number of Buddhist journals and magazines and quite a successful propaganda was carried on. The German Pali Society issued a journal, published books, and held meetings. During the War most of this work seems to have been given up and the magazines suspended. But of late it seems that interest has revived in Buddhism; at least two magazines are being issued and a number of books on Buddhism are being published.

There is a publishing house calling itself the New Buddhist Publishing Company (Neu-Buddhistischer Verlag, Zehlendorf, West bei Berlin, Linden Allee 17-19). This publishing company issues a quarterly magazine called the *Neu-Buddhistische Zeitschrift*. The articles are all unsigned and we do not as yet know who the author of them is. In the two copies of the Quarterly which the Editors of this magazine have seen, we find articles on "Suicide in Buddhism," "About New Buddhism," "The Buddha's Last Meal," "Study of the World War," "Indian Sketches," "Right Speech," etc., and translations from the *Mahaparinibbana-Sutta* and from the *Channovada-Sutta*. The author of this magazine seems to be also the author of three Buddhist books issued by the same publishing house; *Was ist Buddhismus und Was Will er? Ueber den Pali-Kanon*, and *Staat und Kirche*.

In the circular issued with the magazine, it states that the goal which is held out to readers is that it wishes to teach through the magazine true Buddhism as the religion of Truth and Reality (*Wirklichkeitslehre*) to be used for these times for all spiritual and social problems. The writer says

that he may be accused of exhibiting his own view of the world rather than that of Buddhism since Buddhism is not known to the general public in this light of a modern way of life, but in the writer's opinion Buddhism can be adapted to every life problem.

The writer himself has for years travelled in Buddhist countries especially in Ceylon and Burma where in his opinion the Buddhist doctrine is the purest, and he asserts that the Buddhism which he presents is the ancient, pure, and unadulterated teaching which is adaptable to all the problems of modern life. Besides presenting Buddhism in this light each number of the magazine contains original translations from the Pali in order that the reader may become acquainted with the true teaching of the Buddha. What is new in this new Buddhist teaching is the application of it to the problems of today making it a living vital religion for these modern times.

In his book, *Was ist Buddhismus und Was Will er?* the writer gives an exposition of what Buddhism is. He explains the world of suffering, the non-soul theory, the middle way, karma, and rebirth, in short the *welt-anschauung* of Buddhism. In the second part, he takes up the ethics and religion of Buddhism. Life is an individual value, the individual makes his own character, his own life.

The Buddhist view of the world asks, "What am I?" the Buddhist ethics, "How must I conduct myself?" the Buddhist religion, "Whither does this life tend?" He considers it one of the great mistakes of the West that it identifies religion with belief in God, but he asserts that belief in God is only one form of religion. Religion he believes is the need for a goal in life and not necessarily the belief in God. The author proceeds to the Nirvana teaching: it is the conquering of the will to live in this world, in other words, freedom. Freedom is the *leitmotif* of Buddhism.

In all this, we find the true Hīnayāna teaching, the Buddhism of the Southern School. The author feels that Northern Buddhism or Mahāyāna is a degeneration for having given a positive element to Nirvana. Love, knowledge, pity are emphasised in the Mahāyāna and Nirvana or freedom which in the true Buddhist teaching is for the few, in Mahāyāna becomes the goal for the whole world. In short, he feels that man in Mahāyāna comes under the yoke of empty abstract conceptions from which the Buddha tried to free man. The writer here is a true Hinayanist. He could not possibly accept the doctrine of the Bodhisattva, rather the goal of Arhatship is the perfect one. Buddhism he says is a way of life which gives man a goal for which he must individually strive. To give up, to renounce, to become free, this is Buddhism.

The writer feels that on Buddhism, the Buddhism that is found of course in the Hīnayāna presentation of it, hangs the cultural future of man. There is the path, the path of truth, the path to freedom! The doctrine of rebirth and karma shows that Buddhism is not a teaching of death, but of life. True morality can only come again when the rebirth theory of Buddhism has become a part of man's spiritual thought, this wonderful teaching which teaches man to give up thoughts of self only, which does not take refuge in God or in conventional morals, but takes refuge in self only. Not warring against Christianity, not trying to convert Christians, this teaching is presented to the thoughtful unbeliever who is looking for a path. Buddhism wars against no one, it has no propaganda, it simply is a light held up in the darkness as a guide.

The writer is convinced that the future of man in the West will develop for the best only if Buddhist teachings are observed. It is a pity that more do not see it so, still the larger a ship the slower it sets up speed. The path is before. Let him who will tread it.

To criticise this book is to criticise Hīnayāna. This is an admirable exposition of Hīnayāna Buddhism written with earnestness and sincerity. With much, the Mahāyānist would heartily agree but not with all. The Mahāyānist as we well know upholds the doctrine of the Bodhisattva. He does believe that salvation is for the whole world and that treading the path for individual freedom only is selfish. He would not agree that love, knowledge, and pity are mere abstractions, but that they are living realities. He glories in the positive element to his conception of Nirvana. Here the Hīnayānist and the Mahāyānist part ways; the Hīnayāna ideal is that of the Arhat, the one who seeks his own freedom, the Mahāyānist stands with the blessed Bodhisattva who himself upon the path holds out his arms filled with love and wisdom, welcoming all, caring naught for his own salvation, his own freedom, but caring everything for the salvation and freedom of others, so much indeed that he is willing to sacrifice his own freedom to secure that of others. It is indeed in this conception that the Hīnayānist and the Mahāyānist differ. The Mahāyānist feels that the Hīnayānist does not penetrate deeply enough into the truth of Buddhism. "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy," said Hamlet. The Mahāyānist might say, "There is more in Buddhism, in its truth, its depth, its height than is to be found in the doctrine of the Arhat. He who has ears to hear, let him listen to the doctrine of the Bodhisattva!"

BEATRICE SUZUKI