

# THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

## ENLIGHTENMENT AND IGNORANCE

STRANGE though it may seem, the fact is that Buddhist scholars are engrossed too much in the study of what they regard as the Buddha's teaching and his disciples' exposition of the Dharma, so called, while they neglect altogether the study of the Buddha's spiritual experience itself. According to my view, however, the first thing we have to do in the elucidation of Buddhist thought is to inquire into the nature of this personal experience of the Buddha, which is recorded to have presented itself to his inmost consciousness at the time of Enlightenment (*Sambodhi*). What the Buddha taught his disciples was the conscious outcome of his intellectual elaboration to make them see and realise what he himself had seen and realised. This intellectual outcome, however philosophically presented, does not necessarily enter into the inner essence of Enlightenment experienced by the Buddha. When we want, therefore, to grasp the spirit of Buddhism, which essentially develops from the content of Enlightenment, we have to get acquainted with the signification of the experience of the founder,—experience by virtue of which he is indeed the Buddha and the founder of the religious system which goes under his name. Let us see what record we have of this experience, and what were its antecedents and consequences.\*

---

\* The story of Enlightenment is told in the *Digha-Nikāya*, XIV, and also in the Introduction to the *Jātaka Tales*, in the *Mahāvastu*, and the *Majjhima-Nikāya*, XXVI and XXXVI, and again in the *Samyutta-Nikāya*, XII. In detail they vary more or less, but not materially. The Chinese translation of the *Sūtra on the Cause and Effect in the Past and Present*, which seems to be a later version than the Pali *Mahāpadāna*, gives a somewhat different story, but as far as my point of argument is concerned, the main issue remains practically the same. Asvaghosha's *Buddhacarita* is highly poetical. The *Lalitā Vistara* belongs to the Mahayana. In this article I have tried to take my material chiefly from *The Dialogues of the Buddha*, translated by Rhys Davids, *The Kindred Sayings*, translated by Mrs Rhys Davids, *Majjhima-Nikāya* translated by Silācāra, and the same by Neumann, the Chinese *Āgamas* and others.

## I

There is a Sutra in the Dīgha-Nikāya known as the *Mahā-padāna Suttanta*, in which the Buddha is represented as enlightening his disciples concerning the past six Buddhas prior to him. The facts relating to their lives as Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are almost identical in each case except some incidental details; for the Buddhas are all supposed to have one and the same career. When therefore Gautama, the Buddha of the present Kalpa, talks about his predecessors in this wise, he is simply recapitulating his own earthly life. Incidentally, the idea that there were some more Buddhas\* in the past seems to have originated very early in the history of Buddhism as we may notice here, and its further development, combined with the idea of the Jātaka, finally culminated in the conception of a Bodhisattva, which is one of the characteristic features of Mahayana Buddhism.

When the Bodhisattva, as the Buddha is so designated prior to his attainment of Buddhahood, was meditating in seclusion, the following consideration came upon him: "Verily this world has fallen upon trouble (*viccha*), one is born, and grows old, and dies, and falls from one state, and springs up in another. And from this suffering, moreover, no one knows of any way of escape, even from decay and death. O when shall a way of escape from this suffering be made known, from decay and death?" Thus thinking, the Bodhisattva reasoned out that decay and death arose from birth, birth from becoming,

---

\* The six Buddhas of the past later increased into twenty-three or four in the *Buddha-vamsa* and *Prajñā-Pāramitā* and even into forty-two in the *Lalitā-Vistara*. This idea of having predecessors or forerunners seems to have been general among ancient peoples. In China Confucius claimed to have transmitted his doctrine from Yao and Shun, and Laotzu from the Emperor Huang. In India Jainism which has, not only in the teaching but in the personality of the founder, so many similarities to Buddhism, mentions twenty-three predecessors, naturally more or less legendary. It is singular that the number of the Jaina forerunners corresponds to that of the Buddhist so closely.

becoming from grasping, grasping from craving, until he came to the mutual conditioning of name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*) and cognition (*viññāna*)\*. Then he reasoned back and forth from the coming-to-be of this entire body of evil to its final ceasing-to-be,—and at this thought there arose to the Bodhisattva an insight (*cakkhu*)\*\* into things not heard of before, and knowledge arose, and reason arose, wisdom arose, light arose. (*Bodhisattassa pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhum udapādi, ñānaṃ udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, aloka udapādi.*)

He then exclaimed: "I have penetrated this Dharma, deep, hard to perceive, hard to understand, calm, sublime, no mere dialectic, subtle, intelligible only to the wise. (*Dhammo gambhāro duddaso duranubodho santo panito atakkāvacaro nipuro pandito vedanīyo.*) But this is a race devoting itself to the things to which it clings, devoted thereto, delighting therein. And for a race devoting itself to the things to which it

---

\* It is highly doubtful that the Buddha had a very distinct and definite scheme for the theory of Causation or Dependence or Origination, as the *Paticca-samuppāda* is variously translated. In the present Sutra, he does not go beyond *Viññāna* (consciousness or cognition), while in its accepted form now the Chain starts with Ignorance (*avijjā*). We have however no reason to consider this tenfold Chain of Causation the earliest and most authoritative of the doctrine of *Paticca-samuppāda*. In many respects the Sutra itself shows evidence of a later compilation. The point I wish to discuss here mainly concerns itself with the Buddha's intellectual efforts to explain the realities of life by the theory of causation. That the Buddha regarded Ignorance as the principle of birth-and-death and therefore of misery in this world, is a well-established fact in the history of Buddhism.

\*\* *Cakkhu* literally means an eye. It is often found in combination with such terms as *paññā* (wisdom or reason), *buddha*, or *samanta* (all-round), when it means a faculty beyond ordinary relative understanding. As was elsewhere noticed, it is significant that in Buddhism, both Mahayana and Hinayana, seeing (*passato*) is so emphasised, and especially in this case the mention of an "eye" which sees directly into things never before presented to one's mind is quite noteworthy. It is this *cakkhu* or *paññā-cakkhu* in fact that, transcending the conditionality of the Fourfold Noble Truth or the Chain of Origination, penetrates (*sacchikato*) into the very ground of consciousness, from which springs the opposition of subject and object.

it clings, devoted thereto, delighting therein, this were a matter hard to perceive, to wit, that this is conditioned by that, and all that happens is by way of cause. This too were a matter hard to discern:—the tranquillisation of all the activities of life, the renunciation of all substrata of rebirth, the destruction of craving, the death of passion, quietude of heart, Nirvana.”

The Buddha then uttered the following verse in which he expresses his reluctance to teach the Dharma to the world at large,—the Dharma which he realised in himself by ñāna,—Dharma which he saw visibly, face to face, without any traditional instruction (*anītiha*):

“This that through many toils I've won—  
Enough! why should I make it known?  
By folk with lust and hate consumed  
Not this the Truth\* that can be grasped!  
Against the stream of common thought,  
Deep, subtle, difficult, delicate,  
Unseen 'twill be by passion's slaves  
Cloaked in the murk of Ignorance.”\*\*

According to this report transmitted by the compilers of the Nikayas, which is also confirmed by the other literature we have of the Buddha's Enlightenment, what flashed through his mind must have been an experience most unusual and not taking place in our everyday consciousness, even in the consciousness of a wise, learned, and thoughtful man. Thus, he naturally wished to pass away into Nirvana without attempting to propagate the Dharma, but this idea was abandoned when

\* Here as well as in the next verse, “the Truth” stands for Dharma.

\*\* We have, besides this, another verse supposed to have been uttered by the Buddha at the moment of Supreme Enlightenment; it is known as the Hymn of Victory. It was quoted in my previous article, “Zen Buddhism and the Doctrine of Enlightenment,” in *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. II, No. 6, 1923. The Hymn is unknown to the Mahayana literature. The *Lalitā-Vistara* has only this:

“Chinna vartmopasanta rajāḥ sushkā āsraṇā na punaḥ śravānti;  
Chinne vartmani vartata duḥkhasyaisho 'nta ucyate.”

煩惱悉已斷。諸漏皆空竭。更不復受生。是名盡苦際。

Great Brahma spoke to the Buddha in the following verse :

“As on a crag, on crest of mountain standing.  
 A man might watch the people far below,  
 E'en so do thou, O Wisdom fair, ascending,  
 O Seer of all, the terraced heights of Truth,  
 Look down, from grief released, upon the nations  
 Sunken in grief, oppressed with birth and age.  
 Arise, thou Hero ! Conqueror in the battle !  
 Thou freed from debt ! Lord of the pilgrim band !  
 Walk the world o'er, and sublime and blessed Teacher !  
 Teach us the Truth ; there are who'll understand.”

There is no doubt that it was this spiritual experience that converted the Bodhisattva into the Buddha, the Perfectly Wise, the Bhagavat, the Arhat, the King of the Dharma, the Tathagata, the All-knowing One, and the Conqueror. In this, all the records we have, Hinayana and Mahayana, agree. Here then arises the most significant question in the history of Buddhism. What was it in this experience that made the Buddha conquer Ignorance (*avijjā*) and freed him from the Defilements (*āsava*) ? What was his insight or vision he had into things, which had never before been presented to his mind ? Was it his doctrine of universal suffering due to Thirst (*taṇhā*) and Grasping (*upādāna*) ? Was it his causation theory by which he traced the source of pain and suffering to Ignorance ? It is quite evident that his intellectual activity was not the efficient cause of Enlightenment. “Not to be grasped by mere logic” (*atakkāvacara*) is the phrase we constantly encounter in Buddhist literature, Pali and Sanskrit. The satisfaction the Buddha experienced in this case was altogether too deep, too penetrating, and too far-reaching in result to be a mere matter of logic. The intellectual solution of a problem is satisfying enough as far as the blockage has been removed, but it is not sufficiently fundamental to enter into the depths of our soul-life. All scholars are not saints and all saints are by no means scholarly. The Buddha's intellectual survey of the Law of Origination (*paticca-samuppāda*), however perfect and thoroughgoing, could

not make him so completely sure of his conquest over Ignorance, Pain, Birth, and Defilements. Tracing things to their origin or subjecting them to a scheme of concatenation is one thing, but to subdue them, to bring them to subjection in the actuality of life, is quite another thing. In the one, the intellect alone is active, but in the other there is the operation of the will,—and the will is the man. The Buddha was not the mere discoverer of the Twelfthfold Chain of Causation, he took hold of the chain itself in his hands and broke it into pieces so that it would never again bind him to slavery.

The question then is, what is this act of breaking? And where does the feeling of release and freedom come from?

The Buddha's psychological experience of life as pain and suffering must have been quite intense and moved him to the very depths of his being, and naturally the emotional reaction he experienced at the time of Enlightenment was in proportion to this intensity. It is therefore all the more evident that he could not rest satisfied with an intellectual glancing or surveying of the facts of life. In order to bring a perfect state of tranquillity over the waves of turmoil surging in his heart, he had to have recourse to something more deeply and vitally concerned with his inmost being. For all we can say of it, the intellect is after all a spectator, and when it does some work it is as a hireling for better or for worse. Alone it cannot bring about the state of mind designated as enlightenment. The feeling of perfect freedom, the feeling that "aham hi arahā loke, aham satthā anuttaro," could not issue from the consciousness of an intellectual superiority alone. There must have been in the mind of the Buddha a consciousness far more fundamental which could only accompany one's deepest spiritual experience.

To describe this spiritual experience the Buddhist writers exhaust their knowledge of words relating to the understanding, logical or otherwise. "Knowledge" (*viññā*), "understanding" (*pajānanā*), "reason" (*ñāna*), "wisdom" (*paññā*), "penetration"

(*abhisameta*), "realisation" (*abhisambuddha*), "perception" (*sañ-jānanam*), "insight" (*dassana*), and what not,\* are the terms they use in describing the Buddha's consciousness at the time of Enlightenment. In truth as long as we confine ourselves to intellection, however deep, subtle, sublime, and enlightening, we fail to see into the gist of the matter. Therefore, even the so-called primitive Buddhists who are by some considered positivists, rationalists, and agnostics, though in fact I do not think they are, are obliged to assume something more than relative knowledge which deals only in knowledge of things as they appeal to our psychological ego, such as external objects, concepts, images, and so on. If not indeed for the assumption of something far deeper than mere knowledge, enlightenment would not be satisfactorily accounted for.

The Mahayana account of Enlightenment as is found in the *Lalita-Vistara* (Chapter on "Abhisambodhana") is more explicit as to the kind of intellect or wisdom which converted the Bodhisattva into the Buddha. For it was through "*ekacit-tekshana-samyukta-prajñā*" that supreme perfect knowledge was realised (*abhisambodha*) by the Buddha. What is this Prajñā? It is the understanding of a higher order than that which is habitually exercised in acquiring relative knowledge. It is a faculty both intellectual and spiritual, through the operation of which the soul is enabled to break the fetters of consciousness. The latter is always dualistic inasmuch as it is cognisant of subject and object, but in the Prajñā which is exercised "in unison with one-thought-viewing" there is no separation of knower and known and knowledge, these are all viewed (*ikshana*) in one thought (*ekacitta*). Enlightenment is the outcome of this. It is therefore an absolute state of mind in which no "discrimination" (*parikalpana* or *vikalpa*) takes place. It requires a great mental effort to realise this state of viewing all things

\* The *Mahāvīryūtpatti*, CXLII, gives a list of thirteen terms denoting the act of comprehending with more or less definite shades of meaning: buddhi, mati, gati, matañ, dṛiṣṭaṃ, abhisamitāvī, samyagavabodha, supratividha, abhikṣhita, gatiṅgata, avabodha, pratyabhijñā, and menire.

in one thought; our logical as well as practical consciousness is too given up to analysis and ideation; that is to say, we cut up realities into elements in order to understand them, but when they are put together to make the original whole, its elements stand out too conspicuously defined and we do not view the whole "in one thought." And as it is only when "one thought" is reached that we have enlightenment, an effort is to be made to go beyond our relative empirical consciousness. We read in the *Katha-Upanishad*: "As rain water that has fallen on a mountain ridge runs down on all sides, thus does he who sees a difference between qualities run after them on all sides. As pure water poured into pure water remains the same, thus, O Gautama, is the self of a thinker who knows." This pouring of pure water into pure water is, as we have it here, the "viewing all qualities in one thought" which finally cuts off the hopeless tangle of logical mess by merging all differences and likenesses into the absolute oneness of the knower (*jñānin*) and the known (*jñeya*). Eckart, the great German mystic, is singularly one with the Buddhist view of enlightenment when he expresses his thus: "Das Auge darin ich Gott sehe, ist dasselbe Auge, darin Gott mich sieht. Mein Auge und Gottes Auge ist ein Auge und ein Gesicht und ein Erkennen und eine Liebe." (Martensen, p. 29.)

Enlightenment therefore must involve the will as well as the intellect. It is an act of intuition born of the will. The will wants to know itself as it is in itself, *yathābhūtam dassana*, free from all its cognitive conditions. The Buddha attained this end when a new insight came upon him at the end of his ever-circulatory reasoning from decay and death to Ignorance and from Ignorance to decay and death, through the twelve links of the *Paticca-samuppāda*. The Buddha had to go over the same ground again and again, because he was in an intellectual impasse through which he could not move further on. He did not repeat the process, as is originally imagined, for his own philosophical edification. The fact was that he did not



know how to escape this endless rotation of ideas ; at this end there was birth, there was decay and death, and at the other end there was Ignorance. The objective facts could not be denied, they boldly and uncomfortably confronted him, while Ignorance balked the progress of his cognitive faculty moving further onward or rather inward. He was hemmed in on both sides, he did not know how to find his way out, he went first this way and then that way, forever with the same result—the utter inutility of all his mental labour. But he had an indomitable will, he wanted, with the utmost efforts of his will, to get into the very truth of the matter, he knocked and knocked until the doors of Ignorance gave away ; and they burst open to a new vista never before presented to his intellectual vision. Thus he was able to exclaim to Upaka, the naked ascetic, whom he happened to meet on his way to Benares after Enlightenment (Majjhima-Nihāya, XXVI):

“All-conqueror I, knower of all,  
 From every soil and stain released,  
 Renouncing all, from craving ceased,  
 Self-taught ; whom should I Master call?  
 “That which I know I learned of none,  
 My fellow is not on the earth.  
 Of human or of heavenly birth  
 To equal me there is not one.  
 “I truly have attained release,  
 The world’s unequalled teacher I,  
 Alone, enlightened perfectly,  
 I dwell in everlasting peace.”\*

---

\* Translated by Bhikkhu Silācāra. The original Pali runs as follows :

Sabbābhibhū sabbaviḍū 'ham asmi,  
 Sabbesu dhammesu anūpalitto,  
 Sabbamājāho tanhakkhaye vimutto,  
 Sayam abhinñāya kam uddiseyyam.  
 Nā me ācariyo atthi, sadiso me na vijjati,  
 Sadevakasmim lokasmim atthi me paṭipuggalo.  
 Aham bi arabā loka, aham satthā anuttaro,  
 Eko 'mhi sammāsambuddho, stitbhūto 'smi nibbuto.

When we speak of enlightenment or illumination we are apt to think of its epistemological aspect and to forget the presence of a tremendous will-power behind it—the power in fact making up the entire being of an individual. Especially as in Buddhism the intellect stands forth prominently, perhaps more than it ought to, in the realisation of the ideal Buddhist life, the scholars are tempted to ignore the significance of the will as the essentially determinate factor in the solution of the ultimate problem. Their attention has thus been directed too much towards the doctrine of the *Paticca-samuppāda* or the *Ariya-sacca*, which they considered constituting the ultimate facts of Buddhism. But in this they have been sadly at fault, nor have they been right in taking Buddhism for a sort of ethical culture, declaring that it is no more than a system of moral precepts (*sīla*), without a soul, without a God, and consequently without a promise of immortality. But the true Buddhist ideas of Ignorance, Causation, and Moral Conduct had a far deeper foundation in the soul-life of man. Ignorance was not a cognitive ignorance, but meant the darkness of spiritual outlook. If Ignorance were no more than cognitive, the clearing-up of it did not and could not result in enlightenment, in freedom from the Fetters and Defilements, or Intoxicants as some Pali scholars have them. The Buddha's insight penetrated the depths of his being as the will, and he knew what this was, *yathābhūtam*, or in its *tathābhāva* (thatness or suchness), he rose above himself as a Buddha supreme and peerless. The expression "Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi," was thus used to designate this preeminently spiritual knowledge awakened in his inmost consciousness.

Ignorance which is the antithesis of Enlightenment, therefore, acquires a much deeper sense here than that which has hitherto been ascribed to it. Ignorance is not merely not knowing or not being acquainted with a theory, system, or law; it is not directly grasping the ultimate facts of life as expressive of the will. In Ignorance knowing is separated from acting,

and the knower from that which is to be known; in Ignorance the world is asserted as distinct from the self, that is, there are always two elements standing in opposition. This is, however, the fundamental condition of cognition, which means that as soon as cognition takes place there is Ignorance clinging to its every act. When we think we know something, there is something we do not know. The unknown is always behind the known, and we fail to get at this unknown knower, who is indeed the inevitable and necessary companion to every act of cognition. We want however to know this unknown knower, we cannot let this go unknown, ungrasped, without actually seeing what it is, that is, Ignorance is to be enlightened. This involves a great contradiction, at least epistemologically. But until we transcend this condition, there is no peace of mind, life grows unbearable. In his search for the "builder" (*gahā-kara*), the Buddha was always accosted by Ignorance, unknown knower behind knowing. He could not for a long time lay his hands on this one in a black mask until he transcended the dualism of knower and known. This transcending was not an act of cognition, it was self-realisation, it was spiritual realisation, and outside the ken of logical reasoning, and therefore not accompanied by Ignorance. The knowledge the knower has of himself, in himself, that is, as he is to himself, is unattainable by any proceedings of the intellect which is not permitted to transcend its own conditions. Ignorance is brought to subjection only by going beyond its own principle. This is an act of the will. Ignorance in itself is no evil, nor is it the source of evil, but when we are ignorant of Ignorance, of what it means in our life, then there takes place an unending concatenation of evils. *Tanha* (craving) regarded as the root of evil can be overcome only when Ignorance is understood in its deeper and proper signification.

## II

Therefore, it betrays an utter ignorance on the part of

Buddhist scholars when they relegate Ignorance to the past in trying to explain the rationale of the Twelvelfold Chain of Causation from the temporal point of view. According to them, the first two factors (*angāmi*) of the Paticca-samuppāda belong to the past while the following eight belong to the present and the last two to the future. Ignorance from which starts the series of the Nidānas has no time limits, for it is not of time, but of the will as is enlightenment. When time-conception enters, enlightenment which is negatively the dispelling of Ignorance loses all its character of finality, and we begin to look around for something going beyond it. The Fetters would ever be tightening around us, and the Defilements would be our eternal condition. No gods would sing of the Awakened One as “a lotus unsoiled by the dust of passion, sprung from the lake of knowledge; a sun that destroys the darkness of delusion; a moon that takes away the scorching heat of the inherent sins of existence.”\* If Enlightenment made the whole universe tremble in six different ways as is recorded in the Sutras, Ignorance over which it finally prevailed must have as much power, though diametrically opposed to it in value and virtue, as Enlightenment. To take Ignorance for an intellectual term and then to interpret it in terms of time-relation, altogether destroys its fundamental character as the first in the series of the Twelve Nidānas. The extraordinary power wielded by the Buddha over his contemporaries as well as posterity was not entirely due to his wonderful analytical acumen though we have to admit this in him; it was essentially due to his spiritual greatness and profound personality, which came from his will-power penetrating down into the very basis of creation. The vanquishing of Ignorance was an exhibition of this power which therefore was invincible and against which Māra with all his hosts was utterly powerless either to overwhelm or to entice. The failure to see into the true meaning of Ignorance in the

---

\* *The Buddhacarita*, Book XIV.

system of the Paticca-samuppāda or in the Ariya-sacca will end unavoidably in misconstruing the essential nature of Enlightenment and consequently of Buddhism.

In the beginning which is really no beginning and which has no spiritual meaning except in our finite life, the will wants to know itself, and consciousness is awakened, and with the awakening of consciousness the will is split into two. The one will, whole and complete in itself, is now at once actor and observer. Conflict is inevitable; for the actor now wants to be free from the limitations under which he has been obliged to put himself in his desire for consciousness. He has in one sense been enabled to see, but at the same time there is something which he as observer cannot see. In the trail of knowledge, Ignorance follows with the inevitability of fate, the one accompanies the other as shadow accompanies object, no separation can be effected between the two companions. But the will as actor is bent on going back to his own original abode where there was yet no dualism, and therefore peace prevailed. This longing for the home, however, cannot be satisfied without a long hard trying experience. For once divided into two the thing cannot be restored to its former unity until some struggle is gone through with. And the restoration is more than a mere going back, the original content is enriched by the division, struggle, and re-settlement.

When first the division takes place in the will, consciousness is so enamoured of its novelty and its apparent efficiency in solving the practical problems of life that it forgets its own mission which is to enlighten the will. Instead of turning its illuminating rays within itself, that is, towards the will from which it has its principle of existence, consciousness is kept busy with the objective world of realities and ideas; and when it tries to look into itself, there is a world of absolute unity where the object of which it wishes to know is the subject itself. The sword cannot cut itself. The darkness of Ignorance cannot be dispelled because it is its own self. At this point

the will has to make a heroic effort to enlighten itself, to redeem itself, without destroying the once-awakened consciousness. This was accomplished as we see in the case of the Buddha, and he became more than mere Gautama, he was the Awakened One and the Exalted and Supremely Enlightened. Willing is thinking and seeing. By thus seeing itself, the will is made really free and its own master; for it recognises itself through its own act. To know itself thus in the most fundamental sense of the term—here is the Buddhist redemption.

Ignorance prevails as long as the will remains cheated by its own offspring or its own image, consciousness, in which the knower always stands distinguished from the known. The cheating, however, cannot last, the will wishes to be enlightened, to be free, to be by itself. Ignorance always presupposes the existence of something outside and unknown. This unknown outsider is generally termed ego or soul, which is in reality the will itself in the state of Ignorance. Therefore, when the Buddha experienced Enlightenment, he at once realised that there was no Atman, no soul-entity as an unknown and unknowable quantity. Enlightenment dispelled Ignorance and with it all the bogies conjured up from the dark cave of ego disappeared. Ignorance in its general use is opposed to knowledge, but from the Buddhist point of view in which it stands contrasted to Enlightenment, it means the ego (*ātman*), which is so emphatically denied by the Buddha. This is not to be wondered at, seeing that the Buddha's teaching centered in the doctrine of Enlightenment, the dispelling of Ignorance.

Those who only see the doctrine of non-atman in Buddhism and fail to inquire into the meaning of Enlightenment, are incapable of appreciating the full significance of the Buddha's message to the world. If he simply denied the existence of an ego-entity from the psychological point of view after reducing it into its component factors, scientifically he may be called great as his analytical faculties stood far above those of his

contemporaries in this respect; but his influence as a spiritual leader would not have reached so far and endured so long. His theory of non-atman was not only established by a modern scientific method, but essentially was the outcome of his inner experience. When Ignorance is understood in the deeper sense, its dispelling unavoidably results in the negation of an ego-entity as the basis of all our life-activities. Enlightenment is a positive conception, and for ordinary minds it is quite hard to comprehend it in its true bearings. But when we know what it means in the general system of Buddhism, and concentrate our efforts in the realisation of it, all the rest will take care of themselves, such as the notion of ego, attachment to it, Ignorance, Fetters, Defilements, etc. Moral Conduct, Contemplation, and Higher Understanding—all these are meant to bring about the desired end of Buddhism, that is, enlightenment. The Buddha's constant reiteration of the theory of causation, telling his disciples how when this is cause that is effect and how when cause disappears, effect also disappears, is not primarily to get them acquainted with a kind of formal logic, but to let them see how enlightenment is causally related to all human happiness and spiritual freedom and tranquillity.

As long as Ignorance is understood as logical inability to know, its disappearance can never bring out the spiritual freedom to which even the earliest known literature of Buddhism makes so frequent and so emphatic allusions. See how the Arhat's declaration of spiritual independence reads in the Agamas: "There arose in me insight, the emancipation of my heart became unshakeable, this is my last birth, there is now no rebirth for me."\* This is quite a strong statement showing how intensely and convincingly one has seized the central facts of life. The passage is indeed one of the characterisations of

---

\* *Nānañ ca pana me dassanañ udapādi akuppā me ceto-vimutti ayañ antima jāti natthi dāni punabbhavo.*

Arhatship, and when a fuller delineation of it is made, we have something like the following: "To him, thus knowing, thus seeing,\* the heart is set free from the deadly taint of lust, is set free from the deadly taint of Ignorance. In him, thus set free, there arises the knowledge of his emancipation, and he knows that rebirth has been destroyed, that the Higher Life has been fulfilled, that what had to be done has been accomplished, and after this present life there will be no beyond." \*\*

In essence the Arhat is the Buddha and even the Tathagata, and in the beginning of the history of Buddhism the distinction between these terms did not seem quite sharply marked. Thus to a great extent they may be qualified in the same terms. When the Buddha was talking with his disciples concerning various speculations prevalent in his days, he made the following remarks\*\*\* about the knowledge of things in command by the Tathagata:

"That does he know, and he knows also other things far beyond, far better than those speculations; and having that knowledge he is not puffed up; and thus untarnished he has, in his own heart, realised the way of escape from them, has understood, as really they are, the rising up and passing away of sensations, their sweet taste, their danger, how they cannot

---

\* "Thus knowing, thus seeing," (*evam jānato evam passato*) is one of the set phrases we encounter throughout Buddhist literature, Hinayana and Mahayana. Whether or not its compilers were aware of the distinction between knowing and seeing in the sense we make now in the theory of knowledge, the coupling is of great signification. They must have been conscious of the inefficiency and insufficiency of the word "to know" in the description of the kind of knowledge one has at the moment of enlightenment. "To see" or "to see face to face" signifies the immediateness and utmost perspicuity and certainty of such knowledge. As was mentioned elsewhere, Buddhism is rich in terminology of this order of cognition.

\*\* *Tassa evam jānato evaṃ passato kāmāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccati bhavā savāpi cittaṃ vimuccati avijjāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccati, vimuttasmiṃ vimuttamī nāpaṃ hoti. Khīna jāti vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ kataṃ karanīyam nāparaṃ itthattāyāti pajanāti.*

\*\*\* *The Brahmajāla Sutta.* Translation by Rhys Davids. p. 43.



be relied on, and not grasping after any of those things men are eager for, he the Tathagata is quite set free. These are those other things, profound, difficult to realise, and hard to understand, tranquillising, sweet, not to be grasped by logic, subtle, comprehensible only by the wise, which the Tathagata, having himself realised and seen face to face, hath set forth; and it is concerning these that they who would rightly praise the Tathagata in accordance with the truth, should speak."

These virtues for which the Tathagata was to be praised were manifestly not derived from speculation and analytical reasoning. His intellectual sight was just as keen and far-reaching as any of his contemporaries, but he was endowed with a higher faculty, will-power, which was exercised to its fullest capacity in order to bring about all these virtues which belonged to the entire being of Tathagatahood. And naturally there was no need for him to face these metaphysical problems that agitated the philosophers of his days; they were solved in him, when he attained his spiritual freedom and serenity, in their entirety, in their synthetic aspect, and not partially or fragmentarily,—which should be the case if they were presented to the Buddha's cognition as philosophical problems. In this light is to be read the *Mahāli Sutta*. Some scholars wonder why two entirely disconnected ideas are treated together in one body of the Sutra, which however shows scholarly ignorance in regard to matters spiritual, as they fail to notice the true import of enlightenment in the system of Buddhist faith. To understand this, we need imaginative intuition directly penetrating the centre of life, and not always do mere literary and philological talents succeed in unravelling its secrets.

The *Mahāli Sutta* is a Pali Sutra in the Dīgha-Nikāya, in which Mahāli asks the Buddha as to the object of the religious life practised by his disciples, and the following is the gist of his answer: The Buddhists do not practise self-concentration in order to acquire any miraculous power such as hearing

heavenly sounds or seeing heavenly sights.\* There are things higher and sweeter than that, one of which is the complete destruction of the Three Bonds (delusion of self, doubt, and trust in the efficacy of good works and ceremonies) and the attainment of such a state of mind as to lead to the insight of the higher things in one's spiritual life. When this insight is gained the heart grows serene, is released from the taint of Ignorance, and there arises the knowledge of emancipation. Such questions as are asked by you, O Mahāli, regarding the identity of body and soul, are idle ones; for when you attain to the supreme insight and see things as they really are in themselves, that is, emancipated from the Bonds, Taints, and Deadly Flows, those questions that are bothering you at the

---

\* The idea of performing miracles systematically through the power acquired by self-concentration seems to have been greatly in vogue in India even from the earliest days of her civilisation, and the Buddha was frequently approached by his followers to exhibit his powers to work wonders. In fact, his biographers later turned him into a regular miracle-performer, at least as far as we may judge by the ordinary standard of logic and science. But from the Prajñā-pāramitā point of view, according to which "because what was preached by the Tathagata as the possession of qualities, that was preached as no-possession of qualities by the Tathagata, and therefore it is called the possession of qualities," (yaishā bhagavan lakṣhaṇasampat tathāgatena bhāṣitā alakṣhaṇasampad eṣhā tathāgatena bhāṣitā; tenocyate lakṣhaṇasampad iti,) the idea of performing wonders acquires quite a new signification spiritually. In the *Kevalādhā Sutta*, three wonders are mentioned as having been understood and realised by the Buddha: the mystic wonder, the wonder of education, and the wonder of manifestation. The possessor of the mystic wonder can work the following logical and physical impossibilities: "From being one he becomes multiform, from being multiform he becomes one: from being visible he becomes invisible: he passes without hindrance to the further side of a wall or a battlement or a mountain, as if through air: he penetrates up and down through solid ground as if through water: he walks on water without dividing it, as if on solid ground: he travels cross-legged through the sky like the birds on wing: he touches and feels with the hand even the moon and sun, beings of mystic power and potency they be: he reaches even in the body up to the heaven of Brahmā." Shall we understand this literally and intellectually? Cannot we interpret it in the spirit of the Prajñā-pāramitā idealism? Why? *Taccittam yacittam acittam.* (Thought is called thought because it is no-thought.)

moment will completely lose their value and no more be asked in the way you do. Hence no need of my answering your questions.

This dialogue between the Buddha and Mahāli well illustrates the relation between enlightenment and the problem of the soul. There is no need of wondering why the Buddha did not definitely solve the ever-recurring question instead of ignoring it in the manner as he did and talking about something apparently in no connection with the point at issue. This is one of the instances by which we must try to see into the meaning of Ignorance.

### III

One of the reasons, however, why the Buddha left some metaphysical questions unanswered or indeterminate (*avyākata*) was due to the fact that Buddhism is a practical system of spiritual discipline and not a metaphysical discourse. The Buddha naturally had his theory of cognition, but this was secondary inasmuch as the chief aim of Buddhist life was to attain enlightenment from which spiritual freedom ensues. Enlightenment vanquishes Ignorance lying at the root of birth-and-death and laying fetters of every description, intellectual as well as affective. And this vanquishing of Ignorance cannot be achieved except by the exercise of one's will-power; all the other attempts, especially merely intellectual, are utterly futile. Hence the Buddha's conclusion: "These questions\* are not calculated to profit, they are not concerned with the Dharma, they do not redound to the elements of right conduct, nor to detachment, nor to purification from lusts, nor to quietude, nor to tranquillisation of heart, nor to real knowledge, nor to the insight of the higher stages of the Path, nor to Nirvana. Therefore is it that I express no opinion upon them." What the Buddha on the other hand expounded was: "What pain

---

\* The questions are: Is the world eternal? Is the world not eternal? Is the world finite? Is the world infinite? *Potthapāla-Sutta*.

is, what the origin of pain is, what the cessation of pain is, and the method by which one may reach the cessation of pain." For these are all practical matters to be not only fully understood and realised but actively mastered by any one who really desires to accomplish the great deed of emancipation.

That the Buddha was very much against mere knowledge and most emphatically insisted on actually seeing and personally experiencing the Dharma, face to face, is in evidence everywhere in the Agamas as well as the Mahayana texts. This has been indeed the strongest point in the teaching of Buddhism. When a Brahman philosopher was referring to his knowledge of the Three Vedas and a union with that which he has not seen, the Buddha ridiculed him in one of his strong phrases: "So you say that the Brahmans are not able to point the way to union with that which they have seen, and you further say that neither any one of them, nor of their pupils, nor of their predecessors even to the seventh generation has ever seen Brahma. And you further say that even the Rishis of old, whose words they hold in such deep respect, did not pretend to know, or to have seen where, or whence, or whither Brahma is. Yet these Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas say, forsooth, that they can point out the way to union with that which they know not, neither have seen . . . . . They are like a string of blind men clinging one to the other, neither can the foremost see, nor can the middle one see, nor can the hindmost see. The talk of those Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas is but blind talk: the first sees not, the middle one sees not, nor can the last see."

Enlightenment or the dispelling of Ignorance which is the ideal of the Buddhist life, we can see now most clearly, is not an act of the intellect, but the transforming or remodelling of one's whole being through the exercise of the most fundamental faculty innate in every one of us. Mere understanding has something foreign in it and does not seem to come so intimately into life. If enlightenment had really such a tremendous effect

on our spiritual outlook as we read in the Sutras, it could not be the outcome of just getting acquainted with the doctrine of Causation. Enlightenment is the work of Paññā which is born of the will when it wants to see itself and to be in itself. Hence the Buddha's emphasis on the importance of personal experience; hence his insistence on meditation in solitude as the means of leading to the experience. Meditation, through which the will endeavours to transcend the condition it has put on itself in the awakening of consciousness, is therefore by no means the simple act of cogitating on the theory of Origination or Causation, which forever moves in a circle starting from Ignorance and ending in Ignorance. This is the one thing that is most needed in Buddhism. All the other metaphysical problems involve us in a tangled skein, in a matted mass of thread.

Ignorance is thus not to be got rid of by metaphysical means but by the struggle of the will. When this is done, we are also freed from the notion of an ego-entity which is the product or rather the basis of Ignorance, on which it depends and thrives. The ego is the dark spot where the rays of the intellect fail to penetrate, it is the last hiding lair of Ignorance, where the latter serenely keeps itself from the light. When this lair is laid bare and turned inside out, Ignorance vanishes like frost in the sun. In fact, these two are one and the same thing, Ignorance and the idea of ego. We are apt to think that when Ignorance is driven out and the ego loses its hold on us, we have nothing to lean against and are left to the fate of a dead leaf blown away hither and thither as the wind listeth. But this is not so; for enlightenment is not a negative idea meaning simply the absence of Ignorance. Indeed, Ignorance is the negation of enlightenment and not the reverse. Enlightenment is affirmation in the truest sense of the word, and therefore it was stated by the Buddha that he who sees the Dharma sees the Buddha and he who sees the Buddha

sees the Dharma, and again that he who wants to see the Buddha ought not to seek him in form, nor in voice, etc. When Ignorance ruled supreme, the ego was conceived to be a positive idea, and its denial was nihilistic. It was quite natural for Ignorance to uphold the ego where it found its original home. But with the realisation of Enlightenment, the whole affair changes its aspect, and the order instituted by Ignorance is reversed from top to bottom. What was negative is now positive, and what was positive now negative. Buddhist scholars ought not to forget this revaluation of ideas that comes along with enlightenment. Since Buddhism asserts enlightenment to be the ultimate fact of Buddhist life, there is in it nothing negativistic, nothing pessimistic.

#### IV

Ignorance is departure from home and enlightenment is returning. While wandering we lead a life full of pain and suffering and the world wherein we find ourselves is not a very desirable habitat. This is however put a stop to by enlightenment as thus we are enabled once more to get settled at home where reign freedom and peace. The will negates itself in its attempt to get an insight into its own life, and dualism follows. Consciousness cannot transcend its own principle. The will struggles and grows despondent over its work. Why? This is a mystery deeply inherent in the will. Why did the Heavenly Father have to send his only child to redeem the creation which was his own handwork and yet went further astray from its home? Why had Christ to be so dejected over the destiny of the erring children of God? This is an eternal mystery, and no relative understanding is made to grapple with these questions. But the very fact that such questions are raised and constantly threaten one's spiritual peace shows that they are not idle metaphysical problems to be solved by professional philosophers, but that they are addressed directly to one's inmost soul who must struggle and make effort to subdue them

by a higher and deeper power native to itself—far higher and deeper than mere dialectic of cognition.

The story of the prodigal son\* is such a favourite theme both for Buddhists and Christians, and in this do we not discover something eternally true, though tragic and unfathomable, which lies so deep in every human heart? Whatever this may be, the will finally succeeds in recognising itself, in getting back in its own original abode. The sense of peace one finds in enlightenment is indeed that of a wanderer getting safely home. The wandering seems to have altogether been unnecessary from the logical point of view. What is the use of losing oneself if one has to find oneself again? What boots it after all—this going over from one to ten and from ten to one? Mathematically, all this is nonsensical. But the spiritual mystery is that returning is not merely counting backwards so many figures that were counted before in a reverse way. There is an immense difference here between physics and psychology. After returning one is no longer the same person as before. The will, back from his excursion through time-consciousness, is God himself.

In the *Vajrasamādhi Sutra*, the Bodhisattva Apratisthita (無住菩薩) asks the Buddha why the father was so unkind as not to recall his wandering son before fifty years expired, to which the Buddha answers, "Fifty years is not to be understood as indicating time-relation here; it means the awakening of a thought." As I would interpret, this means the awakening of consciousness—a split in the will, which now, besides being actor, is knower. The knower, however, gradually grows to be the spectator and critic, and even aspires to be the director and ruler. With this arises the tragedy of life, which the Buddha makes the basis of the Fourfold Noble Truth. That pain (*duḥkha*) is life itself as it is lived by most of us, is the plain, undisguised statement of facts. This all comes from

---

\* See the *Saddharma-pundarikā Sutra*, chapter 4, and the *Vajrasamādhi Sutra*, chapter 4, (Chinese translation, 金剛三昧經).

Ignorance, from our consciousness not being fully enlightened as to its nature, mission, and function in relation to the will. Consciousness must first be reduced to the will when it begins to work out its "original vows" (*pūrvapranidhāna*) in obedience to its true master. "The awakening of a thought" marks the beginning of Ignorance and is its condition. When this is vanquished, "a thought" is reduced to the will, which is enlightenment. Enlightenment is therefore returning.

In this respect Christianity is more symbolic than Buddhism. The story of Creation, the Fall from the Garden of Eden, God's sending Christ to compensate for the ancestral sins, his Crucifixion, and Resurrection—they are all symbolic. To be more explicit, Creation is the awakening of consciousness, or the "awakening of a thought"; the Fall is consciousness going astray from the original path; God's idea of sending his own son among us is the desire of the will to see itself through its own offspring, consciousness; Crucifixion is transcending the dualism of acting and knowing, which comes from the awakening of the intellect; and finally Resurrection means the will's triumph over the intellect, in other words, the will seeing itself in and through consciousness. After Resurrection the will is no more blind striving, nor is the intellect mere observing the dancer dance. In real Buddhist life these two are not separated, seeing and acting, they are synthesised in one whole spiritual life, and this synthesis is called by Buddhists Enlightenment, the dispelling of Ignorance, the loosening of the Fetters, the wiping-off of the Defilements, etc. Buddhism is thus free from the historical symbolism of Christianity; transcending the category of time, Buddhism attempts to achieve salvation in one act of the will; for returning effaces all the traces of time.

The Buddha himself gave utterance to the feeling of return when his eye first opened to the Dharma unheard of before at the realisation of Enlightenment. He said: "I am like a



wanderer who, after going astray in a desolate wilderness, finally discovers an old highway, an old track beaten by his predecessors, and who finds, as he goes along the road, the villages, palaces, gardens, woods, lotus-ponds, walls, and many other things where his predecessors used to have their dwellings."\* Superficially, this feeling of returning to an old familiar abode seems to contradict the statement made concerning "an insight to things never before presented to one's mind"; but the contradiction is logical and not spiritual. As long as the Buddha was going over the Chain of Origination from the epistemological point of view, that is, as long as he attempted to get back to his native will through the channel of empirical consciousness, he could not accomplish his end. It was only when he broke through the wall of Ignorance by the sheer force of his will that he could tread the ancient path. The path was altogether unrecognisable by his intelligent eye which was one of the best of the kind; even the Buddha could not ignore the law governing its usage; the Chain was not to be cut asunder by merely reckoning its links of cause and effect backward and forward. Knowledge, that is, Ignorance drove Adam from the Garden of Eden to the world of pain and patience (*sahaloka*), but it was not knowledge that would reconcile him to his Father, it was the Will dispelling Ignorance and ushering Enlightenment.

The sense of return or that of recognising old acquaintances one experiences at the time of enlightenment is a familiar fact to the students of Zen Buddhism. To cite one instance, Chih-I (智顛, 530-597) generally known by his honorary title, Chih-chê Tai-shih (智者大師), is the founder of the T'ien-tai school of Buddhist philosophy in China. He was also trained in meditation by his teacher Hui-szu (慧思, 513-577), and though not belonging to the orthodox lineage of the Zen masters, he is reckoned as one. When he came to the master, he was set to exercise himself in a Samadhi known as 'Fa-hua San-

\* 雜阿含經, 辰二, 六十五丁

mei" (法華三昧, *saddharma-pundarīka-samādhi*). While exercising himself in it, he came across a certain passage in the Sutra, and his mind was opened, and at once realised the statement referred to by his master. It was this, that he with the master personally attended the Buddha's congregation at the Vulture Peak where the Buddha discoursed on the Sutra. Then said the master, "If not for you no one could see the truth; and if not for me no one could testify it." It is often remarked by Zen masters that the holy congregation at the Vulture Peak is still in session. This however ought not to be confounded with the remembering of the past which is one of the miraculous gifts of the Buddhist saints. It has nothing to do with such memory, for in enlightenment there are more things than are implied in mere time-relations. The sense of return to something thoroughly familiar, really means the Will getting settled once more in its old abode, after many a venturesome wandering, with an immense treasure of experience, and full of wisdom that will light up its unending career.

## V

It may not be altogether out of place here to make a few remarks concerning the popular view which identifies the philosophy of Schopenhauer with Buddhism. According to this view, the Buddha is supposed to have taught the negation of the will to live, which was insisted upon by the German pessimist, but nothing is further from the correct understanding of Buddhism than this negativism. The Buddha does not consider the will blind, irrational, and therefore to be denied; what he really denies is the notion of ego-entity due to Ignorance, from which notion comes craving, attachment to things impermanent, and giving away to the egotistic impulses. The object the Buddha always has in view and never forgets to set forth whenever he thinks opportune, is the enlightenment of the will and not its negation. His teaching is based upon affirmative propositions. The reason why he does not countenance life as it is lived by

most of us is because it is the product of Ignorance and egoism, which never fail to throw us into the abyss of pain and misery. The Buddha pointed the way to escape this by enlightenment and not by annihilation.

The will as it is in itself is pure act, and no taint of egotism is there; this is awakened only when the intellect through its own error grows blind as to the true working of the will and falsely recognises here the principle of individuation. The Buddha thus wants an illumined will and not the negation of it. When the will is illumined, and thereby when the intellect is properly directed to follow its original course, we are liberated from the fetters which are put upon us by a wrong understanding, and purified of the defilements which ooze from the will not being correctly interpreted. Enlightenment and emancipation are the two central ideas of Buddhism.

The argument Aśvaghosha puts into the mouth of the Buddha against Arada (or Ālāra Kālāma), the Samkhya philosopher, is illuminating in this respect. When Arada told the Buddha to liberate the soul from the body as when the bird flies from the cage or the reed's stalk is loosened from its sheath, which will result in the abandonment of egoism, the Buddha reasons in the following way: "As long as the soul continues there is no abandonment of egoism. The soul does not become free from qualities as long as it is not released from number and the rest; therefore, as long as there is no freedom from qualities, there is no liberation declared for it. There is no real separation of the qualities and their subject; for fire cannot be conceived apart from its form and heat. Before the body there will be nothing embodied, so before the qualities there will be no subject; how, if it was originally free, could the soul ever become bound? The body-knower (the soul) which is unembodied, must be either knowing or unknowing; if it is knowing, there must be some object to be known, and if there is this object, it is not liberated. Or if the soul be declared to be unknowing, then what use to you

is this imagined soul? Even without such a soul, the existence of the absence of knowledge is notorious as, for instance, in a log of wood or a wall. And since each successive abandonment is held to be still accompanied by qualities, I maintain that the absolute attainment of our end can only be found in the abandonment of everything.”\*

As long as the dualistic conception is maintained in regard to the liberation of the soul, there will be no real freedom as is truly declared by the Buddha. “The abandonment of everything” means the transcending of the dualism of soul and body, of subject and object, of that which knows and that which is known, of “it is” and “it is not”, of soul and soul-lessness; and this transcending is not attained by merely negating the soul or the will, but by throwing light upon its nature, by realising it as it is in itself. This is the act of the will. An intellectual contemplation which is advocated by the Samkhya philosophers does not lead one to spiritual freedom, but to the realm of passivity which is their “realm of nothingness.” Buddhism teaches freedom and not annihilation, it advocates spiritual discipline and not mental torpor or emptiness. There must be a certain turning away in one’s ordinary course of life, there must be a certain opening up of a new vista in one’s spiritual outlook if one wants to be the true follower of the Buddha. His aversion to asceticism and nihilism as well as to hedonism becomes intelligible when seen in this light.

The Majjhima-Nikaya’s account of the Buddha’s interview with the Samkhya thinkers somewhat differs from the Mahayana poet’s, but in a way gives a better support to my argument as regards the Buddha’s Enlightenment. The reason why he was not satisfied with the teaching and discipline of Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka is stated to be this: “This doctrine does not lead to turning away, to dispassion, to cessation, to quietude, to perfect penetration, to supreme awakening, to

---

\* *Budhacarita*, translated by E. E. Cowell, pp. 131-132.

Nirvana, but only to attainment to the Realm of Nothingness." What did then the Buddha understand by Nirvana which literally means annihilation or cessation, but which is grouped here with such terms as awakening, turning away (that is, revaluation), and penetration, and contrasted to nothingness? There is no doubt, as far as we can judge from these qualifications, that Nirvana is a positive conception pointing to a certain determinable experience. When he came up to the bank of the Nairanjana and took his seat of soft grass on a shady, peaceful spot, he made up his mind not to leave the place until he realised in himself what he had been after ever since his wandering away from home. According to the *Lalita-Vistara*,\* he at that moment made this vow (*pranidhāna*):

"Let my body be dried up on this seat,  
Let my skin and bones and flesh be destroyed:  
So long as Bodhi is not attained, so hard to attain for many a  
kalpa,  
My body and thought will not be removed from this seat."

Thus resolved, the Buddha finally came to realise Supreme Enlightenment for which he had belaboured for ever so many lives. How does this vary from his former attainments under Uddaka and Alāra Kālāma? Let him express himself:

"Then, disciples, myself subject to birth, but perceiving the wretchedness of things subject to birth and seeking after the incomparable security of Nirvana which is birthless, to that incomparable security I attained, even to Nirvana which is birthless.

"Myself subject to growth and decay, but perceiving the wretchedness of things subject to growth and decay and seeking after the incomparable security of Nirvana which is free from growth and decay, to that incomparable security I attained, even to Nirvana which is free from growth and decay.

"Myself subject to disease, but perceiving the wretchedness

---

\* Lefmann's edition, p. 289.

of things subject to disease and seeking after the incomparable security of Nirvana which is free from disease, to that incomparable security I attained, even to Nirvana which is free from disease.

“ Myself subject to death, but perceiving the wretchedness of things subject to death and seeking after the incomparable security of Nirvana which is deathless, to that incomparable security I attained, even to Nirvana which is deathless.

“ Myself subject to sorrow, but perceiving the wretchedness of things subject to sorrow and seeking after the incomparable security of Nirvana which is sorrowless, to that incomparable security I attained, even to Nirvana which is sorrowless.

“ Myself subject to stain, but perceiving the wretchedness of things subject to stain and seeking the incomparable security of Nirvana which is stainless, to that incomparable security I attained, even to Nirvana which is stainless.

“ Then I saw and knew : ‘ Assured am I of deliverance ; this is my final birth ; never more shall I return to this life ! ’ ”\*

When Nirvana is qualified as birthless, deathless, stainless, sorrowless, and free from growth and decay and disease, it looks negativistic enough. But if there was nothing affirmed even in these negations, the Buddha could not rest in “ the incomparable security ” (*anuttaram yogakkhemam*) of Nirvana and been assured of final emancipation. What thus the Buddha denied, we can see, was Ignorance as to the true cause of birth and death, and this Ignorance was dispelled by the supreme effort of the will and not by mere dialectic reasoning and contemplation. The will was asserted and the intellect was awakened to its true significance. All the desires, feelings, thoughts, and strivings thus illuminated cease to be egotistic and are no more the cause of defilements and fetters and many other hindrances, of which so many are referred to in all Buddhist literature, Mahayana and Hinayana. In this

---

\* *Ariyapariyesana-sutta*, Majjhima-Nikaya, XXVI, p. 167.

sense the Buddha is Conqueror, not an empty conqueror over nothingness, but the conqueror of confusion, darkness, and Ignorance.

DAISETZ TEITARO SUZUKI