

CORRESPONDENCE

THE IDEA AND THE MAN

In his interesting article: "Mahayana Buddhism and Japanese Culture," of the July issue of this Journal, 1931, Shugaku Yamabe has twice referred to passages as being of Hinayana Āgamas. I assume that by this is meant the Pali Tripitakas. He omits to locate these references, which is regrettable. One of them is fairly accurately quoted from the Anguttara-Nikāya, (Pali Text ed. IV, pp. 128 ff.); the other is quoted with no less inaccuracy from Vinaya-Piṭaka (Oldenberg ed. I, p. 22 f.). So inaccurately, that it seems possible he has had before him a later Sanskrit version. I am not contending that, in the Pali version either, we have a truly reported version, so corrupt it evidently is. But the opening words of this, the first lay-sermon of the Sakyamuni. are recorded as in a true Upanishadic vein, very different from the later vein of the version quoted, yet unquestionably one that *would have been used* by the Hīnayāna editors of the record, if it had been in their tradition.

The Pali version is, that certain kṣatriya gentlemen with their wives, at what we should call a picnic, find that a courtesan, included in the party, has made off with some property. (That she was as represented is probably a monkish error, so grotesque it is.) Seeking her, they meet with the solitary, as yet unknown religious, the kṣatriya Gotama, and ask: Has he seen a woman pass by? The reply is; What have you, kumāras, to do with woman? Were it not better that you sought the self, (*attānam*, or 'the man'; in the religious diction of the day *ātmā* and *puruṣa* would be equivalents)? That the Self, the Deity within, should be sought, be inquired after is a teaching in both the earlier Chāndogya¹ and the later Maitreya Upanishads, and as such,

¹ *Tad anveṣṭavyam, tad vijijñāsitavyam*. Cf. my *Sakya, or Origins of Buddhism*, 1931, pp. 201-13.

and as so worded, would not have been very palatable to Piṭaka monastic editors, and would in no case be a later gloss. Mr. Yamabe's version is: "Said the Buddha, Which is more important, the precious stones or the mind that seeks them? When they answered that the mind was more important, Buddha gave them a discourse on the subject. When this was finished, the men all abandoning their wives became at once homeless monks under the Buddha." Without dwelling on this deplorable termination, common to his version and the Pali, I would only add, the discourse in Pali was on "dhamma", not on "mind," but all we have in surviving records is alas! *not* the actual talk 'on seeking the Self', but a set piece of stereotyped formula on a variety of subjects. No Indian teacher of that day would have dreamed of starting a life-mission on so relatively secondary a subject as the mind. As to that, has Mr. Yamabe's version for "mind", *manas*, or *citta*, or *viññāna*? Each of these has a different force in the Piṭakas, and it is only the last that was then ever used to mean the man, and then only the man-in-survival. But as time went on *viññāna* came to mean merely the man as receptive of impressions. It was still later that it was used in the comprehensive way *we* use "mind".¹

But in the Vinaya version of this crucially important utterance, the word is not "mind", but *attānaṃ*, the self, or man. The significance of the word as used then and there has been quite obscured by translations having the relatively weak Western meaning (which was also the later Pali meaning) of "yourselves."

With the writer's general contention, that these Mantras were "winged words" beyond any power they may seem to have for us, I agree. Eloquence the Sakyamuni had not; he was not just orator, but his will-power must have been compelling. That, however, the early Mantra, spoken in a bookless world, had power transcending any dead *record* of it, belongs to the magic of the spoken word in such a world,

¹ E.g. in the manual *Abhidhammattha-sangaha*.

a power which will have been less of a rare phenomenon than it is now. Much more than it is now will it have been felt to be, not the words alone, not mind alone, but the very man,—let me use my word, the man-in-man—giving of himself to his fellowman. To call this-that-was-to-be-sought “the mind,” is to hold up, not, (as in Upanishadic teaching) “the most precious thing in all the world” to me, to you;¹ it is to hold up the man in a Less, not in a More, much less in the Most. And it is here that I chiefly join issue with the writer.

All religion worthy the name seeks to place before us man as a More. But we shall never worthily value man as that, if we quit hold of the man and glorify the idea. The Mahayanist, when he extols *tathatā*, suchness, thusness, has in mind “truth”, “reality”, but ultimately he means *Man as and in* what is true, real. He means man as a More in so far as he has these values. Drop the man and you have but an abstraction, an idea in a general way. World-religions do not begin with abstractions. Jesus never spoke of “brotherhood”, nor did the Sakyamuni of “becoming”, or of selfness, or of suchness. Prescind “such”, “real”, “true” from the man, and we have but a misty idea-world, a word-structure of what the man has been valuing “in” his minding. Ideas have in themselves no meaning, no reality save as works of Man, conceived, evolved by Man. It is only Plato and Platonists who would see in ideas a *prīus* to the Man; or are Mahayanists Platonists? They cannot be that if they are sincere in looking upon Sakya, the original teaching of Gotama Sakyamuni, as the cradle and foundation of their Buddhist faith. For then they must, as the reviewer of my *Gotama the Man* says in this issue, “turn back from,” I would say, get behind, “the monk-made Buddhism of the Analysts, and seek the true spirit of the Buddha’s doctrine.” And this they will find, not in Ceylon, not in Burma or Siam, but in that teaching of India which Gotama sought to expand in that seeking of

¹ Cf. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad: Saṃyutta-Nikāya (Kosala).

the Self, the Man, even the Divine Man, who is the innermost inner of every man. There will they find no ideas transcending the Man, but the Man mandating himself in ideas about the Highest, that is, the Most, *by way of ideas about the More*. Always it is the imperfect man of earth striving to advance to, to become a More, a Better, not by clinging to some abstraction, but by a beholding a higher Self: Witness, Inspirer, Urger, the perfect actual He, Who the man as yet only potentially is.

As yet he can only conceive a More, call It Highest though he may. And no absorption in any abstract idea, be it Emptiness or Suchness or other, will transport him, the imperfect, into the Perfect. He is in process of becoming That Who he is potentially, and no "leap" to escape from reasoning, although it may aid him in becoming, will do more than this. I would echo the writer's words, only with an inversion of emphasis: "it is in the human personality that the grasped abstraction reveals its true significance."

Mr. Yamabe goes on to compare the man who is tathagata—that is, as I understand the term, the Wayfarer, the man-in-the-Way, the Sakyamuni's Way¹—to the artist working as "instrument to a spirit," I agree, but I hold it a lazy way to be so vague as all that about "spirit." Mr. Yamabe could find out more as to sources of inspiration if he would try. Were such effort made with serious intelligent persistence, we should come to word our spiritual life more wisely. We should find, it may be, no encouragement to mistake abstractions as such for the true, the real. We might find, in both the artist's creations and our own inspirations, always the Man willing his instrument, the man willed.

Do I much offend if I say, that for me the weakness in Mahayana lies in the "more-worth" in which it holds abstractions, ideas? Herein it has strayed from the parent-

¹ That is, for me, not the late-interpolated "eightfold way," but the way-in-the-worlds, man's long process in Becoming, worded in the Suttas as *maggā* with *phala*.

stem of religion, and tends to lose itself, as do its Sūtras, in a maze of the Word. The writer does not so remain lost. Once more, in closing, he makes the Idea subservient to the Man, showing the man as in the last resort the builder of his own becoming, his own world. But let this be a world of real "things", not of the abstraction quâ abstraction: "reality".

I watch from our Pali Society with reverent sympathy the new piety in Japan seeking to know better the oldest records we yet have found of that Indian movement, which a monastic vogue, as it grew, bore along and sadly altered. Japan will do justice to the *moral* values always kept to the front in Hinayana, even though it needed Mahāyāna to expand its *ethical* values. But religious values are of the very Man, the man-in-man. And I look to Japan to realise this in the future, and to bring forward this, as the true heirs of the original Indian Sakya, and not rest content with abstract ideas. Then only will she place herself aright to conceive a More that is in man, in his nature and his destiny, while she awaits with the world the light that may yet come, the light that will be neither Hinayanism nor Mahayanism nor any other cultivated "ism", the light we shall one day be seeking in the new way, with the new values. Then indeed will she be, even in religion, the child of the Rising Sun.

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