

A REJOINDER TO MRS RHYS DAVIDS'S
COMMENT

Regarding my article, "Mahayana Buddhism and Japanese Culture", Mrs Rhys Davids wrote a sympathetic comment for which I am thankful. While I have to own my use of certain terms not in a very scientific way, I also wish to express what I think of Mrs Rhys Davids's view of Mahayana Buddhism.

It is delightful to find that her Mahayana view is generally in agreement with mine; the difference however between us seems to lie in the differences of emphasis, which comes from a difference of standpoint, or from the different use of the same material.

First of all, I regret I was not quite exact in the use of the word "mind", which caused Mrs Rhys Davids to make unnecessary inquiries into the original sources. The word "mind" occurs in the following passage of mine: "Which is more important, the precious stones or the mind that seeks them?"—this being my English version of the sermon of Śākyamuni given to the thirty-seven young men. If this question on the part of the Buddha is to be literally translated, "the mind" should be "yourself" as my critic suggests. For not only in the Pali Vinaya-pitaka, but in its Chinese version "yourself" is used. But my use of "mind" is justified, for my intention was not a scholarly study of the text, but to inquire into the thought of the Buddha which he had at the moment. "Yourself" in this case will not lend itself generally to the understanding of the real meaning which is behind his question, hence my interpretative phrase "the mind which seeks them". This may not be, strictly speaking, in harmony with the Buddhist idea, but when the general intelligibility of the statement is concerned I think my phrasing is clear enough.

What I wished to emphasise in my telling the story of

the young men was the following two points: 1. That Gotama's idea was to turn the attention of the young men from the stolen objects to what was going on within themselves, that is, from being troubled with earthly things to the consideration of the inner world; 2. That while the sermon taken in itself was not apparently sufficient to make all those thirty-seven young men join the Brotherhood abandoning their family life, there was something behind the sermon emanating from the personality of the Buddha himself, which had a far greater spiritual effect on their young minds.

Mahayana Buddhism generally endeavours to explain why from an apparently plain discourse given by the Buddha which does not seem to be so very pregnant of weighty meaning such grave consequences result as, for instance, the abandonment of the family life. The Pali-pitaka is in a sense too fond of giving "a set piece of stereotyped formula", which fails to make one see into the inner meaning. I wish therefore to emphasise from the point of view of Mahayana Buddhism the significance of the events. The Mahayana is always intent on the inner value, which often makes it too neglectful of the outwardness of things.

As to Mrs Rhys Davids's criticism of the conception of Mahayana Buddhism, I am sorry I have to express my complete disagreement. For the idea that the Mahayana is concerned only with abstract or metaphysical arguments and artistic inspirations and lacking in morality, seems to miss the mark. So long as she rests with this preconceived idea, it is very hard for her to accept the real teaching of Mahayana Buddhism. I cannot however help feeling delighted to know that Mrs Rhys Davids who has profound knowledge of the Hinayana Tripitaka tries to come in touch with the great personality of Gotama Buddha himself, which, according to her, is far above "the monk-made Buddhism". This is important, for it is also the Mahayana point of view to think more of his personality than of the Brotherhood devoted to the so-called Buddhist speculation. Being so, the

Mahayana is very far from being Platonic or merely idealistic; those who take the Mahayana for metaphysical abstraction fail really to know what it stands for.

As I understand Buddhism, it not only teaches morality as defining human relationships but considers humanity in its broadest sense. It disciplines us to have a thorough control over our own small selves, which is equivalent to the abandonment of an ego-centred idea; it does this because it wants us to experience such religious feelings as joy, humility, and contentment, which are the outcome of spiritual regeneration. When viewed from these experiences the entire world assumes quite a different aspect from what it used to be, and this new aspect of existence presenting itself to the Mahayanist eye is technically termed Suchness (*tathatā*). The moral life therefore in Mahayana Buddhism is something that grows out of such religious experiences, and there is in it no feeling of constraint or restraint, the conscious and the unconscious work harmoniously, which is a feeling of spiritual freedom, emancipation, that is to say, of having been released from the bondage of birth and death. While realising that we are Buddhas even as human beings, we also know or feel that we are taking refuge in the great universal soul which is Buddha-nature (*buddhatā*). This is where the impersonal Dharma and the personal Dharmakāya are unified in the form of the Tathagata. This Mahayana conception of the Buddha or Tathagata is more positive than Mrs Rhys Davids's idea of "a More", and is also more personal and therefore of more effective significance.

Mahayana Buddhism as we have it to-day is the result of a steady evolution of the religious consciousness nourished in the Orient by the great experiences of so many strong Buddhist souls for so many years since its introduction to China and Japan. These souls have left records of the utmost spiritual importance in the form of literature, part of which can be viewed in the great Taisho edition of the Chinese Tripitaka edited by Drs Takakusu and Watanabe.

I regret that this short and therefore necessarily imperfect rejoinder to Mrs Rhys Davids's comment on my article does by no means justice to my conception of Mahayana Buddhism as a whole and my sincere wish is that someday I shall be allowed to give a much fuller expression in the present magazine as regards what Mahayana Buddhism really means to us people of the Orient.

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