

# THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

## THE BACKGROUND AND EARLY USE OF THE BUDDHA-KṢETRA CONCEPT<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

“The obscurest period in the history of Buddhism,” wrote Sir Charles Eliot in 1921,<sup>2</sup> “is that which follows the reign of Asoka . . . .”

Now after more than ten years these post-Asokan “dark ages”—as he calls them—are still relatively unexplored, though the researches and insights of the great Buddhist scholars are gradually illuminating them. We are beginning to have some notion of what was going on in North India when the Mahāyāna came into being;<sup>3</sup> we are learning to find in primitive Buddhism many elements—ignored or unknown by earlier scholars acquainted only with monastic Hīnayāna—which contained the seeds of the Mahāyāna. We are beginning to have some vague ideas as to how these seeds developed into later doctrines and practices. But we have made as yet only a beginning. Many of the distinctive concepts of the Mahāyāna are still very incompletely understood and their origin and growth almost completely shrouded in darkness.

One of the most significant and least explored of such characteristic Mahāyāna concepts is the Buddha-Kṣetra or Buddha’s Field. There is hardly a Sanskrit Buddhist work but mentions it somewhere—usually tens of thousands of them. In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*<sup>4</sup> one of the basic scrip-

<sup>1</sup> This is the first part of a dissertation, presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Yale University, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. II, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> When the second volume of the Cambridge History of India is made accessible to the public we shall know more. Fortunately Professor de La Vallée Poussin had access to it for his *L’Inde aux Temps des Mauryas* (1930).

<sup>4</sup> Henceforth generally designated as the *Lotus*.

tures of the Greater Vehicle, we are almost wearied by the frequent repetitions of descriptions of the Buddha-fields which the various Bodhisattvas are to obtain—"thoroughly purified, charming, even, adorned with jewel-trees. . . ." etc. The Buddha-fields appear to be second only to Buddhahood itself in their importance in the future destiny of the Bodhisattvas. They appear also in this text in myriads as part of cosmic illuminations. The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*<sup>1</sup> and *Vimalakīrtinīrdeśa*<sup>2</sup> are full of them. The vastly popular *Sukkhāvativyūha* is centered in the idea of Amitāyas' Buddha-kṣetra, and the most popular sects of Buddhism today in the Far East are the Pure Land sects, which are based upon this idea.

In view of the great importance of the concept for an understanding of the Mahāyāna literature, it is strange how universally the Buddha-kṣetra has been neglected by writers on the Mahāyāna. Seldom have they even explained the term; much less thought of inquiring into its background and development—the problem which shall particularly concern us in the present study. Buddha himself, clearly, never mentioned such a thing as a "Buddha's field;" whence then did the idea come from? What are these Buddha-fields? *Where* are they? How do the Bodhisattvas attain them, and what do they do with them when each has acquired one of his own?

Kern in his translation of the *Lotus*, a scripture in which the Buddha-fields play a very significant part, gives us no light on their meaning. In his only relevant foot-note<sup>3</sup> he explains the Buddha-fields as "obviously the morning sky before dawn!"—an almost amusingly misleading interpretation, based upon the solar-myth theory in terms of which he understood (or misunderstood) the Buddhology of the *Lotus*.

<sup>1</sup> Henceforth generally designated as *Avataṃsaka*.

<sup>2</sup> Henceforth generally designated as *Vimalakīrti*.

<sup>3</sup> SBE XXI, p. 8.

The few other explanations which have been given are far from adequate. The occasional references to Buddha-kṣetra in Professor de la Vallée Poussin's invaluable articles in *ERE*, "Cosmogony and Cosmology, Buddhist," "Ages of the World," etc., mention it only in its purely cosmological use as a certain aggregate unit of world-systems (equal to the great chiliocosm which is made up of a thousand million world-systems). Burnouf, on page 363 of his notes on the *Lotus*, notes the three kinds of Buddha-fields according to a Singhalese authority but goes no further than that. Dr. Barnett's definition, in the introduction to his translation of Śāntideva's *Path of Light*,<sup>1</sup> gives a good idea of the ethical as well as purely cosmological meaning of the Buddha-field, including the Buddha's relationship to it: "Every Buddha," he explains, "has a domain of his own or Buddha-kṣetra, a universe under the rule of the Law preached by him. The magnificence of such a domain is proportionate to the nobility of the deeds performed by its ruling Buddha during his probation as a Bodhisattva." In a later note (p. 97) he defined the kṣetra more briefly as "the domain of a Buddha—the system of a thousand million worlds, each under the guardianship of a Buddha."

Even this definition, however, which is the best I have been able to discover, fails to give the reader much suspicion of the far-reaching ethical and philosophical implications which make the Buddha-kṣetra such a fascinating and complex problem to try to unravel.

The place of the Buddha-field and the Buddha-fields in the Mahāyāna scheme has up to this time never (so far as I can discover) been investigated, and the question of the origin of the concept has never been raised except in a single paragraph in a general book on *Religion in Various Cultures*,<sup>2</sup> where one would least expect an original sugges-

<sup>1</sup> *The Path of Light*, Wisdom of the East Series, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Religion in Various Cultures*, by Friess and Schneider, published late in 1932 (Holt, N. Y.), p. 154.

tion about an obscure matter of Buddhist doctrinal history which had not hitherto been even thought of as a problem. The authors refer to the field as a "new and distinctively Buddhist paradise-concept"<sup>1</sup> and suggest that it arose as a solution of conflicts between the idea of Nirvāṇa and the idea of heaven. This meaning of the Buddha-kṣetra was probably uppermost in later Mahāyāna; Messrs. Friess and Schneider are particularly to be commended for recognising the importance of the idea of Buddha's *merit* as helping all those in his field, and their suggestion concerning the origin of the concept is valuable. We shall see in Chapter III how the development of the kṣetra-concept was indeed fostered by people's need for a concrete realm in which to look forward to being reborn, and by the growing desire to worship Buddha and be with him in person. But this represents only one among many factors leading to the development of the concept which we propose to study. The very development of Buddhology, for example, which is implied in the notion of such a Buddha's field, implies a considerable evolution of beliefs about the Buddha, and this evolution must be investigated in order to understand how the notion of a Buddha's field arose. In this study we propose to investigate as far as possible all the factors which played a part in the development of the Buddha-kṣetra concept,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "It was held that each Buddha upon attaining Nirvāṇa acquires a field (*kṣetra*), a sphere throughout which his presence and his vast accumulation of merit continue to exert a saving influence upon all those who call upon him...."

<sup>2</sup> The chief sources used for the study of development are as follows:

(a) For early Buddhist thought of the third century B.C. and earlier, chiefly the *Dhammapāda*, *Sutta-Nipāta*, *Dīgha*, *Majjhima*, and *Saṃyutta-Nikāyas* (supplemented by the later *Āṅguttara*), and *Jātaka*: edicts of Asoka (273-231 B.C.) for lay Buddhism of that period;

(b) For orthodox Hīnayāna ideas: the *Visuddhi Magga*, *Attha-sālinī* and other commentaries by Buddhaghosa of Ceylon (fifth century A.D.);

(c) For the period from the third century, B.C. on, when the Mahāyāna was taking rise: *Kathā Vatthu* (for doctrinal controversies in the third century, and particularly for the Mahāsāṃghikas),

and to elucidate the various sides of its meaning as it is used in Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures<sup>1</sup> up to about 450 A. D.

At the outset of our inquiry into the *background* of the concept of a Buddha's field, we must go to the early Pali scriptures (see note on preceding page) and ask what conceptions or presuppositions we can find there which may

Vasumitra's *Treatise on the Sects, Milinda-pañha* (end of pre-Christian era and beginning of first century A. D.); supplemented by histories of contemporary India, translations from Chinese versions of scriptures (especially in Przyluski's "Concile de Rājagṛha"; "La Légende de l'Empereur Açoka"; "Le Parinirvāṇa et les Funérailles, JAS, 1918 ff. etc., and Levi and Chavannes' translation of the sixteen Aihats cycle), and the evidence of archaeology (*Mus*, "Le Buddha Paré," etc.). Articles and books consulted will be found listed in the Bibliography.

<sup>1</sup> The principal Sanskrit sources studied for the use of the Buddha-kṣetra are as follows, with the dates of their first translation into Chinese (or other dates where possible):

*Daśabhūmika Sūtra* (ed. Rahder) A. D. 297 (but some text on the bhūmis was translated between 68 and 70 A. D. and another certainly existed under the Parthian king An Shih Kao 148-170 A. D.)

*Saddharmapunḍarīka* (ed. Kern and Nanjio) A. D. 265-317.

*Sulhāvativyāha* (ed. Müller and Nanjio,) first tr. between 148 and 170 A. D., and often thereafter.

*Lalitavistara* (ed. Lefmann), containing some very old materials but largely representing Buddhist tradition of the second century A. D. (Winternitz).

*Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (ed. and tr. S. Lévi), by Asaṅga (fourth century A. D. or perhaps fifth; there is still disagreement on his dates.)

*Śikṣāsamuccaya* (ed. Bendall), compiled by Śāntideva in seventh century A. D. from earlier sources.

The following translations were made especial use of:

*Karuṇāpunḍarīka* (used in tr. from Tibetan) tr. into Chinese in sixth century.

*Avatamsakasūtra* (used in tr. from Chinese), 317-420 A. D.

*Viṃśatikīrtinirdeśa*, (used in tr. from Chinese), frequently quoted by Nāgārjuna (second century A. D.) so probably several centuries earlier. First tr. into Chinese 188 A. D. (this tr. lost.) Idzumi's tr. (*Eastern Buddhist*, Vols. III and IV) is based on the Chinese tr. by Kumārajīva (406 A. D. For this date see Idzumi—Intr. to *Viṃśatikīrtinirdeśa*, *Eastern Buddhist* II, p. 358-366.) For scholastic theory the *Abhidharma Kośa* of Vasubandhu (brother of Asaṅga) and the *Viññaptimātratā Siddhi* of Hsuan-tsang (seventh century A. D. compilation and Chinese tr. of commentaries on *Trimsikā* of Vasubandhu) were consulted in the French translations of de la Vallée Poussin.

have led to the notion of Buddha's having a "field" in any sense whatsoever. Accordingly we shall in the first chapter investigate the use of *khetta* (the Pali form of *kṣetra*) and related words (such as *visaya* and *gocara*) whose use may throw some light on this question. In such an inquiry it is important to remember the Hindu gift (not, however, confined to India!) for using a concrete word at once in a literal and in a symbolic sense, thus investing common expressions with profound ethical and philosophical overtones. This is admirably illustrated in the case of the word *bhūmi*, which meant first of all simply "earth," one of the five great elements (*mahābhūtāni*). Buddhaghosa explains (in *Atthasālinī*,—"The Expositor" II, p. 291) how it may mean "the great earth, or "a state of consciousness" or "the fruition of the religious life" because it is the *ground* or *soil* for associated states which are dependent upon it. It is somewhat in the latter sense that the word *bhūmi* came to mean one of the seven, or ten, *stages* in the career of a Bodhisattva, so that a description of the *bhūmis* (e.g. as in *Daśabhūmika*) covers almost all that matters in Mahāyāna ethics and even metaphysics. Similarly *kṣetra* was used in several ways—literal and physical, psychological, ethical, etc. It is familiar in non-Buddhist literature in the sense of the "body" as the "field" of the *kṣetra-jñā* or "soul" (see especially *Bhagavad Gītā* XIII).<sup>1</sup> In Pali it appears frequently in the phrase *puññakkhetta*—"field of merit" (Sanskrit *puṇya-kṣetra*), meaning an object of charity, usually some holy person, by *giving* to whom one produces merit for oneself. This use of *khetta* seems to have had nothing to do with "Buddha-khetta" (though the idea of *merit* is closely related to the Buddha-field, as we shall see). The use of *kṣetra* in the concept we propose to study combines psychological, ethical, and other uses, but its primary meaning is remarkably close to the literal, though on a cosmic scale: a Buddha's

<sup>1</sup> And the later *Upanisads*—e.g. *Śvet.* 6, 16; *Maitri* 2, 5, etc. See also *Mahāvastu* iii, p. 398, l. 14, 399, l. 2.

kṣetra in *his area of the universe*, his "field" in a *primarily spatial and cosmological sense*. Hence we must explore early conceptions of Buddha's relation to the world in order to discover the background of the Buddha-kṣetra notion. Then, having found that theories about the range of his *knowledge* were among the earliest ideas of the range of his powers, we shall examine the *implications* of his *knowledge of the world*, to try to discover what is the meaning of calling the whole cosmos "Buddha's domain" in this sense.

In the second part of the first chapter we shall see what is meant by calling the world (or a particular aggregate of worlds) "Buddha's field" in the sense of *sphere of his beneficent influence*.

In the second and third chapters we shall try to see what is meant by calling the world "Buddha's field" in the sense of *the realm of his authority*, asking:

A. What such authority entails in Buddha's relation to the creatures in his field;

B. How each "future Buddha" acquires such a realm, (i.e. what is the place of the kṣetra in the Bodhisattva-career, and in particular what is the meaning of "purifying the field"?)

C. How the notions of a Buddha's *duty to enlighten others*, and his *particular local responsibility for a particular world* arose and developed in the history of Buddhist thought.

This will involve consideration of the development of the "Bodhisattva-ideal" (one of the great problems in the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism), of the belief in many contemporary Buddhas<sup>1</sup> assigned to different parts of the universe, of the "Hinduizing" of Buddhism through such influences as those of the Cakravartin legend, the Hindu deva-paradises, bhakti-cults, etc.

In the fourth chapter and its appendices we shall see the part played by the myriad fields in cosmic apocalypses,

<sup>1</sup> One of the few really distinguishing marks of the Mahāyāna.

especially as described in the *Lotus*, and we shall try to understand the ontology expressed by these "appearances." This will involve some consideration of the meaning of the three *kāyas*—the Buddhist "trinity"—in their relation to the Buddha-kṣetra, which involves us deeply in one of the central problems of Mahāyāna origins: the growing tendency to believe in a cosmic *Buddha-kāya* or *Dharma-kāya*, of which the particular Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are thought to be only temporary manifestations. In the latter part of that chapter we shall see how this metaphysical doctrine of the Buddha-kṣetra is interpreted in a subjective and (epistemologically) "idealistic" sense which had far-reaching influence in the later Mahāyāna.

It will be seen that our problem is not an isolated one, but involves for its solution a large number of the most significant problems in the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the present state of Buddhist research it must be obvious that we cannot give a final answer to any single question which so largely involves the solution of others for its full explanation. While scholars of long standing are wrestling with the long-dark history of the early schisms, which must be dug out from the Tibetan and Chinese canon by such a combination of scholarship and imagination as men like Przyluski possess, while texts are still to be published, it would be presumptuous for a beginner to whom only Sanskrit and Pali are accessible to attempt a final solution of any phase of such a complex and relatively unexplored field. But the very fact of its being pioneer territory makes a beginning necessary, and so much can be gleaned from already published texts, with the aid of translations from Chinese and Tibetan and the invaluable work of Sylvain Lévi, La Vallée Poussin, Huber, Przyluski, Senart, and the rest, that it seems worth while to try to put together the data and conjectures that follow, in the hope that they may shed at least a preliminary light on this kṣetra which is so much in need of illumination.



## CHAPTER I. BUDDHA AND THE COSMOS

## A. AS FIELD OF HIS KNOWLEDGE

## B. AS RANGE OF HIS BENEVOLENT INFLUENCE

One idea of the relation of the Buddha-kṣetra to the cosmos is set forth in the story of how a certain Sada Kaiseki, afraid lest Copernican astronomy overthrow the Buddhist cosmology of the three worlds, tried to refute Copernican astronomy and to demonstrate Indian cosmology. He called upon the famous sage Yekidō and explained the scriptural construction of the three worlds and the dangers of the Copernican theory. But Yekidō replied:

*“Buddhism aims to destroy the three worlds and to establish Buddha’s Holy Kingdom throughout the universe. Why do you waste your energy in the construction of the three worlds?”*

Told in Nukariya Kaiten’s *The Religion of the Samurai*, p. 66.

## A. AS FIELD OF HIS KNOWLEDGE

Our problem is to try to understand what was meant by the term *Buddha-kṣetra* or “field of Buddha,” and particularly to elucidate its meaning in terms of its background and early development. Whence did the idea probably arise? What ideas are involved in the concept when we first meet it in Buddhist scripture; what relationships or functions exercised by the Buddha are expressed by the Buddhists in metaphorical terms as his relation to a “field?” What presuppositions underlie the notion of a Buddha’s field, and where in primitive doctrine may the roots of these presuppositions be sought?

Let us start our inquiry with the third question, for we must begin by asking what ideas underlie the very notion of Buddha’s having a “field” of any sort. The tentative answer to this question should give us a clew as to what realms of early Buddhist thought we must explore in order

to discover the pre-history of the Buddha-kṣetra concept.

We have seen already in the introduction that the Buddha-kṣetra seems to be primarily a cosmological concept: back of all the ethical and philosophical interpretations and metaphorical elaborations which cannot be neglected in exploring its history, lie certain primary conceptions about *Buddha's relation to the world*. In these primary conceptions there inhere implications, ethical, etc., which are expanded and developed and given concrete expression in the later complex picture of the Buddha-kṣetra. We shall see how later Buddhists described Buddha's functions and relationships in concrete and picturesque imagery, but our problem now is to find out what presuppositions about his relationships and functions lie back of that later imagery.

We must ask first what notions appear in early Buddhist thought concerning any *special and peculiar province* of influence or knowledge or action on the Buddha's part. Did his followers work out any theory about a *particular scope or range* of his influence or power or knowledge? If we can find any idea of limits to his power in the sense of *specialization* as well as spatial limitation, we should be on the track of ideas of considerable importance for the development of the conception of a Buddha-field.

#### *i. Hīnayāna Ideas of a Buddha's Scope or Range*

When we search through the Pali Piṭakas for an answer to these questions we find that what appears to be the earliest notion of a Buddha's scope or range is connected not so much with the *limitation* of his powers as with the particular and peculiar province of *his* powers as distinguished from those of the rest of mankind. We shall see that theories about the range of a Buddha's *knowledge* were probably among the very earliest to be formulated in any consideration of the *range* or *scope* of his powers; but on the way to investigating these theories and their implications, let us see what notions we can discover in the early

literature with regard to a *Buddha's particular province* or special ability or concern.

There are two suttas in the *Sutta Nipāta*—probably one of the earliest Buddhist scriptures—in which the idea of special power, or sphere of concern or knowledge on the part of the Buddha is implied, and Buddhaghosa in commenting upon these suttas calls this special province Buddha's *visaya*.

One is the "Kasibhāradvājasutta,"<sup>1</sup> in commenting upon which Buddhaghosa<sup>2</sup> labels as *Buddha's visaya* his ability to digest a certain food which no one in the realms of gods or men could digest.<sup>3</sup>

The other is the "Ālavakasutta," in which a certain Yakkha propounds to the Buddha a list of questions<sup>4</sup> concerning what is of most worth, how one "crosses over," what is the best life, etc.,—questions which in his commentary Buddhaghosa calls Buddha's *visaya*.<sup>5</sup> He probably includes the answers as well, meaning that problems such as these are the special province of the Buddhas.<sup>6</sup> And in so far as the Dhamma realised and preached by the Buddhas is concerned with just these questions, we can see here in Hīnayāna thought an expression of the Dhamma-content of the Buddha's domain which will take an added significance when

<sup>1</sup> *Sutta Nipāta*, Uravagga Sutta 4, Tr. SBE X, 2nd part, p. 11 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Paramatthajotikā* II, I, 4 p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> *Sutta Nipāta*, PTS ed. p. 15; tr. p. 13-14: "No one in the world of men and gods and Māra- and Brahmā-retinuees (*sabrahmāke*) . . . could digest this rice-milk with the exception of Tathāgata or a disciple of Tathāgata."

<sup>4</sup> SBE X, 2nd part, p. 30. "How lived do they call life lived the best? . . . How is one purified?" etc.

<sup>5</sup> "Evam ete buddhapañhā *buddhavisayā* eva honti." *Paramatthajotikā* II, I, 10 p. 228, l. 27.

<sup>6</sup> The father and mother of the questioner had, Buddhaghosa explains, learned these questions together with their answers from the Blessed One Kassapa. They are questions whose answers all Buddhas know. Cf. Childers (*Pali Dictionary*) who quotes *sub voce Visayo*: "te jānituṃ tava ca avisayo . . . buddhānam eva visayo. To know them is beyond (or not) your range; it is the peculiar province of the Buddhas." Childers refers to Dh. 183 for this quotation, but it does not appear in *Dhammapada* 183.

we come to consider similar conceptions in Mahāyāna texts.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Atthasālinī*<sup>2</sup> Buddhaghosa calls the *province of the Buddhas* their special business of ruling with regard to faults:

“Infinite rapturous joy arises in those Bhikkhus who learn the Vinaya text and reflect that it is *the province of the Buddhas and not of others* to lay down the rule for each fault or transgression according to its gravity.”

These scholastic interpretations of the *Buddha-visaya* do not of course tell us much about early ideas, but they are useful in calling our attention to ideas implied in early scriptures which were later formulated into more clearly defined concepts of a Buddha-province. The process of development they illustrate is instructive in suggesting how the idea of the Buddha-kṣetra may have developed, particularly because the ideas are so closely related that their pre-history must coincide. The meaning of *visaya* in early Buddhist literature may be very significant for the history of the Buddha-field notion, but here Buddhaghosa helps us scarcely at all. To us the most familiar use of *visaya* is in the psychological sense of sphere or object of sense-perception (see, for instance, *Samyutta* v. 218). In the *Dhammasaṅgani*, where one would expect its psychological meaning to be explained, I can find it used only once, and then<sup>3</sup> in the interesting but not particularly psychological phrase “Māra’s domain”<sup>4</sup> along with Māra’s fish-hooks and traps. More frequently in the Piṭakas is the use of *visaya* in quite a different connection—in the phrase *petavisaya*<sup>5</sup> and *pettivī-*

<sup>1</sup> See quotations from *Karunāpundarikā* later in this chapter and the discussion of its implications.

<sup>2</sup> 11, (*The Expositor* p. 14): *dosānurūpaṃ sikkhāpadapaññāpanam nāma imasmim̐ dose imasmim̐ vitikkame idam nāma hoti ti paññāpanmam aññesam avisayo buddhānam eva visayo ti.*

<sup>3</sup> *Dhammasaṅgani*, see 1059. *Buddhist Psychological Ethics*, p. 282.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Daśabhūmika*, M, p. 62, line 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Dīgha* iii. 234; *M.* i. 73; *S.* iii. 224, etc. The psychological use of the term seems to be confined almost entirely to later texts,—*Nettipākarāṇa* and works of Buddhaghosa, (except one reference in *Samyutta*).

*saya* (realm of the petas or of the manes,<sup>1</sup>)—significant as an illustration of the literal local and geographical connotations belonging to the word from early times.

In one standard and oft-repeated phrase, “*gocaro . . . sako pettiko visayo*,” the association of *visaya* with *gocara*, in the sense of sphere of application<sup>2</sup> suggests that the metaphor included an ethical meaning wider than just the application of one’s *mind*:

“Brethren, what is the lawful resort (*gocara*)<sup>3</sup> of a brother, his paternal province (*sako pettiko visayo*)? It is the four applications of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Pali word has both these meanings through confusion of the Skt. *pāitrya viṣaya* and *pitṛya viṣaya* with the word *peta* (Skt. *preta*).

<sup>2</sup> As in *Dīgha* iii. 58; “Keep to your own pastures (*gocare*), brethren, walk in the haunts where your fathers roamed (*sake pettike visaye*). If ye thus walk in them the Evil One will find no landing place, no basis of attack. It is precisely by the cultivation of good qualities that this merit grows.” Note the suggestion in the last sentence that *gocara* means something like character, in which merit grows by cultivation. *Gocara bhikkhava caratha sake pettike visaye. Gocare bhikkhava carataṃ sake pattike visaye na laechati Māro otārāṃ, na laechati Māro ārammaṇaṃ. Kusalānaṃ bhikkhava Dhammānaṃ samādāna-hetu evaṃ idam puññaṃ pavaḍḍhatī.*

<sup>3</sup> This is one of three kinds of *gocara* in Buddhaghosa’s classification: *upanissaya gocaro*—as a “sufficing condition: a good friend . . . owing to whom one hears the new, purifies the old. . . . increases in faith, virtue, learning, self-sacrifice, wisdom.”

*āraḅbhagocaro*—as a “guardian: a brother here on entering a village goes . . . looking before him not further than the distance of a plough, and is well-restrained. He does not go looking at an elephant, a horse, a chariot, . . . a woman, or a man. . . .”

*upanibandhagocaro*—as a “bond: the four applications of mindfulness. . . .”

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *Visuddhi Magga* 19 and elsewhere from *Samyutta* XLVI, 7 [v. 146]; e. g. *Jātaka* ii. 59 and vi. 193; *Milinda* 368 (tr. II 283). In the *Milinda* the same statement is quoted in illustration of the moral that one should never give up one’s *presence of mind*, that being the *home in which he dwells*. “And this, O king, has been said by the Blessed One, the god over all gods: ‘And which, O Bhikshu, is the Bhikshu’s resort, the realm which is his own by right? It is this, the four modes of being mindful and thoughtful (*satipaṭṭhāna*).’ The association of the *satipaṭṭhānas* with the phrase “*gocara—sako pettiko visaya*” seems to be familiar at least from the time of the Piṭakas, and is probably of long standing.

*Gocara* is interesting to us because of its close similarity to *khetta*, though it savors even more concretely of the soil, meaning literally, "cow's grazing" or "pasture." It is sometimes used in a purely psychological sense, practically synonymous with *visaya*, as in *Samyutta* v. 218 where both words appear. It is more familiar in the Piṭakas in an ethical sense as one's *sphere of conduct*, particularly in the phrase *ācāragocara-sampanna*.<sup>1</sup>

Similar is its use in *Dhammapada* 22,<sup>2</sup> where we read of the *ariyānaṃ gocara*, rendered "range of true-aristocrats" in Mrs. Rhys Davids' recent re-translation. And in verses 92 and 93<sup>3</sup> it appears in an interesting connection where its specific meaning is by no means easy to ascertain:

"They for whom (worldly) store is not, who understand the body's needs, *the men whose range is in the void*, th' unmarked, in liberty, as bourn of birds in air so hard it is to trace whither those men are bound."

This is important for our study, because in verses 179 and 180 we find the phrase *anantagocaram* applied to the Buddha. This must be one of the earliest suggestions of his having a "range"—so the content of the phrase should be significant. To judge from what we have seen of the early use of *gocara*, the phrase must mean something like "realm of conduct and application." The Chinese version from the *Udānavarga*<sup>4</sup> seconds this interpretation by translating: "*The field of whose activity is the void*, the uncharacteristic, and solitude" in verse 93, and in 179 and 180 "the Buddha, the field of whose activity is infinite." (*Udānavarga* XXIX. 54, Rockhill, p. 150.)

<sup>1</sup> *Dīgha* i, 63; *Majjhima* i. 33; *Samyutta* v. 187; *Itivuttaka* 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Etaṃ viśesato ṇatvā appamādaṃhi paṇḍitā appamāde pama-danti ariyānaṃ gacare ratā*, 22. PTS ed. of 1914.

<sup>3</sup> *Yesaṃ sannaicayo natthi, ye pariññātabhojanā, suññato animitto ca vimokho yesaṃ gocaro, ākāse va sakuntānaṃ gati tesam durannayā*. 92. *Yassāsavaṃ parikkhinaṃ, āhāre ca anissito suññato animitto ca vimokho yesaṃ gocaro, akāse*, etc. 93.

<sup>4</sup> *Udānavarga* XXIX. 25 translated in Rockhill, *The Udānavarga from the Buddhist Canon*, p. 146.

In the S.B.E. edition of the *Dhammapada*, Max Müller's rendering of these passages gives a definitely psychological twist to *gocara*, translating in 179 "the Awakened, the Omniscient" and in 92 "who has perceived void and unconditioned freedom." This interpretation, though wandering far from literalness, may have been right in so far as Buddha's peculiar sphere of activity is predominantly his *knowing*, as we shall see in a moment.

ii. *The Range of a Buddha's Knowledge*

We have considered the use of these various words in order to try to find the earliest reachings toward any notion of Buddha's having a particular scope or range, ideas which seemd to be closely related to the notion of his having a "field." We found that the early Buddhists had no clearly defined concepts of this sort, but that ideas leading up to such formulations seemed to be implied in the use of terms like *gocara* and *visaya*. The problem of the *range of Buddha's knowledge* they did however begin to discuss relatively early; phrases referring to the omniscience of the fully-enlightened One are familiar in the early *Dhammapada* and *Suttanipāta*.

*Dhammapada* 353. Sabbavidū' hamasmi.

*Suttanipāta* 176. "the all-knowing, the wise." (*sabbavidu sumedha*.)

344. "thou all-seeing." (*samantacakkhu*).

345. "thou all-seeing as the thousand-eyed Sakka of the gods."

And in the *Questions of King Milinda*<sup>1</sup> one of the principal

<sup>1</sup> Probably compiled, according to Rhys Davids (in the introduction to *The Questions of King Milinda* and in the Preface to *Dial. I*) "at or about the time of the Christian era," but perhaps going back to an earlier original (not earlier than the latter half of the second century B.C. when Milinda lived). It seems to be now agreed that Milinda was the Greco-Bactrian king, Menander, mentioned by Strabo and Justin and described in a list of the Greek kings of Bactria as a King of the Yonakas reigning at Sagala. See Rhys David's Introduction to his translation xviii ff. (SBE XXXV.)

“dilemmas” with regard to the Buddha is the problem of his universal knowledge. Apparently some unorthodox sects were teaching that he knew everything in one thought (*ekakṣana-cittena*). The orthodox view is explained by Nāgasena as follows: “Yes, Buddha was omniscient. But the insight of knowledge was not always and continually (consciously) present with him. The omniscience of the Blessed One was dependent on reflection.” But if he did reflect he knew whatever he wanted to know (I p. 154–160. Text 102 ff). Note that behind this answer lies the protest of developing Hinayāna orthodoxy against any tendency toward Lokotaravāda.

This problem of Buddha’s omniscience will prove to be of decided importance in the early history of the Buddha-ksetra. So it is particularly interesting to find the word *khetta* given in the fourth century B.C. *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*<sup>1</sup> as one of the received metaphors for the “sphere of vision”:

“This that is sight, the sphere of sight (*cakkhāyatanaṃ*), the element of vision (*cakkhudhātu*), the faculty of vision (*cakkhundriyam*), this that is “a world” (*loko*), “a door” (*dvārā*), “an ocean” (*samuddo*), “lucent” (*pañḍaram*), “a field” (*khettaṃ*),<sup>2</sup> “a basis” (*vatthum*),

<sup>1</sup> *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* §597. *Buddhist Psychological Ethics*, p.173 ff.

<sup>2</sup> This is the only metaphorical use of *khetta* which I have been able to find before Buddhaghosa. In the *Sutta Nipāta* verses 75–79, the figure of *ploughing* is used in an ethical sense suggesting strongly that the “fruit of immortality” grows out of a field, but the word *khetta* does not appear. (The word *khetta* does appear later in this sutta, but in the sense of *puñña khetta* which certainly fails to carry out the figure of the ploughing set forth so effectively just before. The point was to develop virtue by cultivating one’s own character, not to sow “roots of merit” by giving alms to another.) In implication, it would mean something like *character*, a meaning which corresponds interestingly with a similar figure in the popular Chinese *Yin Chih Wen*: “Unexpected blessings grow, as it were, in a very actual field which can be ploughed and harvested. The heart, though spiritual and mysterious, yet possesses a solid, tangible soil, which can be tilled and watered” (p. 31). “The Buddhists... will never relax their vigilant guard over the heart, which will by degrees become pure and bright, free from evil thoughts and ready to do good. This



'etc. . . .'" Mrs Rhys Davids notes that "this and the following similes will be quotations of metaphors applied to the senses in the *Sutta Piṭaka*."

This psychological use of *khetta*, considered in relation to the problem of the *limits of Buddha's knowledge*, is a more promising approach to the history of the Buddha-kṣetra than the search for unexpressed implications in such vague words as *gocara* and *visaya*, though they are useful in showing us early premonitions of the notion of his having any sort of a range or scope. The problem of his knowledge points more directly to later ideas of the Buddha-kṣetra, because the concept of his omniscience had from the very first a distinct "cosmic reference." He was not just vaguely "sabbavid," but more particularly "lokavid,"<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it seems to have been in the realm of his knowledge that Buddha's relation to the world was first discussed; in other words, his *knowing of the world* was probably the first formulated of his "cosmic relations." Because he was *completely enlightened* (*Sambuddha*) he must of course have known the *whole* world, all there was of it. All that exists comprised the object of his knowledge, his *visaya* (in the psychological sense of the word, with what practical and ethical implications we shall see further on).

In a sense this involves the notion of *limitation* which we have been looking for: though the Buddha's *powers* are limitless, still the extent of the existing world<sup>3</sup> does set enlightenment is called their *most happy land*." (p. 35. *Open Court*, 1906, tr. Carus and Suzuki.)

<sup>1</sup> *vattham* is given in the Pali Dictionary as "basis or ground, field, plot, site,"—a word nearly synonymous with *khetta* but even more literally "local."

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. *M.* i, 178; *Dīgha* iii, 76; *S.* i, 62; v. 167, 343; *A.* ii, 48.

<sup>3</sup> But even the whole world could not bound him—he was emphatically "*Lokottara*"—particularly in view of his omniscience. In this sense he was "*lokottara*" in the very earliest Buddhist thought, before the fantasies of popular mythology grafted themselves upon the Buddha-legend and made him "*lokottara*" in more spectacular and fantastic ways. But see above p. 214, for the distinction between the orthodox conception of his omniscience and the Lokottaravādin's interpretation. See Senart, *La Légende du Bouddha*.

certain bounds to the *range* of his empirical knowing. That "range" is the whole world. (Then with the multiplication of the world-systems, speculation would be necessary to formulate more precisely the meaning of his "cosmic range," perhaps involving real spatial limitation, but we are getting ahead of our story.)

In the light of our suspicion that the *visaya* in the sense of a Buddha's field of knowledge represents perhaps the first definite notion of his having any sort of a cosmic field, it is particularly interesting to discover, in the only Hīnayāna reference to the Buddha-field which, so far as I can discover, has come down to us, the *visaya-khetta* as one of the three kinds of Buddha-khetas! The list appears in the cosmological section of Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhi Magga*, where he enumerates the three kinds:<sup>1</sup> the *jāti-khetta*, or birth-field, which embraces ten thousand *cakravālas* or worlds and<sup>2</sup> which shakes at the coming to rebirth of a Tathāgata; the *āṇā-khetta* or field of authority, which embraces a hundred thousand *kotis* (sic) of worlds, where there functions (*vattati*) the power of the various kinds of *Pirit*;<sup>3</sup> and the *visaya-khetta* which is infinite and immeasurable, and of which it is said that as far as he may desire, there whatever the Tathāgata desires (to know), that he knows.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Buddhakketam nāma tividham hoti: jātikkhettam, anākkhetam, visayakhettañ ca. Tattha jātikkhettam dasasahassa cakkavālapariyantam hoti, yaṃ Tathāgatassa paṭisaudhiggahaṇādisu kampati.*

*Āṇākkhetam koṭisatasahassa cakkavālapariyantam, yattha Ratana-sattam Khandhaparittam, etc....ti imesaṃ parittānam ānubhāvo vattati.*

*Visayakkhetam anantam aparimāṇam. Yaṃ yāvataṃ vā pana ākankheyyā ti vuttam, yattha yaṃ yaṃ Tathāgato ākankhati, taṃ taṃ jānāti. (Vis. M. 414).*

<sup>2</sup> See p. 218-219 for discussion of cosmology involved here.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 244.

<sup>4</sup> Hardy's version (*Manual of Buddhism*, 1860, p. 2) supports our emphasis on the meaning of *visaya* as field of knowledge, even field of perception. He sets forth the threefold classification of the "Sakvala Systems":

1. *Wisaya-Sētra*—the systems that appear to Buddha;
2. *Agga-Sētra*—the systems (100,000 kelas in number) that

It seems that back of this scholastic theory of the Buddha's infinite *visaya-khetta* must lie those early speculations about his omniscience, about the infinite scope of his knowledge, which it was that peculiarly made him Buddha, i.e. 'enlightened.'<sup>1</sup>

Having explored the probable background of that phase of the Buddha-ksetra complex involved in the idea of a *visaya-khetta*, we must next inquire how the Buddha's relation to this cosmic field was conceived. It may be well to know something about the nature of the world which comprised the range of his knowledge, and something about the content of his knowing. What, in other words, is implied receive the ordinances of Buddha;

3. *Jammak-Sētra*—the systems (10,000 in number) in which a Buddha may be born (between the birth in which he becomes a claimant for the Buddhahship, or a Bodhisattva, and the birth in which he attains the supremacy,) or in which the appearance of a Buddha is known, and to which the power of spirit, or priestly exorcism, extends.

Turnour's translation (in the J. As. Soc. Bengal, August 1838, p. 691) explains the *Jātikhetta* as "10,000 *chakkavalāni* (or regions to which his birthright extends) which are bounded by the *Jātiksetra* belonging to the Jāti Buddha; which is subject to do homage in this world to the Tathāgata on all occasions from the day of his being conceived in the womb of his mother." The last phrase quoted in Pali he renders: "Whatever the Tathāgata may vouchsafe, that he can accomplish."

<sup>1</sup> This is supported by the use of *viṣaya* in *Daśabhūmika* as the sphere of Buddha's omniscient knowledge, e.g. in the phrase *sarvajñā-jñānaviṣaya* (p. 3, l.6). Cf p. 62, M. line 9: "Buddhajñānaviṣaya-koṣaprāpta". See also *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Ch. Vihāra, edited with *Daśabhūmika*), p. 21, "Surpassing by the sphere of his own buddhi the range (of understanding in the wider sense) of all śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas." The word is used also in a wider sense, e.g. *Daś.* p. 8, P, where it apparently includes the sphere of the magical as well as intellectual powers of a Buddha:

A ray from Śākyamuni's *ūrṇā*-sheath illumines all the world-systems and audience-assemblies, suppresses suffering, puts down Māra-existences and manifests "the power of the varieties or forms) of a *Buddha-province*." A similar use occurs *Daś.* p. 16 MM, line 4, and p. 85, line 18. On p. 82, C. line 3-5, *viṣaya* seems to be used just like our 'sphere' or 'realm' in the simplest metaphorical sense: "passing beyond the realm of all worlds, . . . passing beyond the realm of the divine . . ." Cf. *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, p. 6. line 28.

in calling him "lokavid"? Buddhaghosa gives a gloss on this word which succinctly sets forth its two aspects as probably conceived from very early times:

He knows the characteristics of people—therefore he knows the world of living beings in all respects,<sup>1</sup> and "by his infinite Buddha-knowledge (he) has known, understood, penetrated the infinite world-systems. Thus he has known the spatial world in all respects. . . ." Hence he is called *lokavidū*.<sup>2</sup> *Vis. M.* 207 (tr. II, 238).

The "spatial world" in Buddhist cosmology of Buddhaghosa's time was vastly different from the relatively small affair in which the early Buddhists believed. Buddhaghosa can, therefore, give us no help in understanding how they conceived the world which was Buddha's field of knowledge. They almost certainly had no notion of hundreds of thousands of crores of world-systems, and they may not have believed in the existence of more than one (though the common and early Hindu belief in various heavenly worlds indicates a tendency toward pluralizing the cosmos).

One "world-system" included this *Sahā*-world with Mt. Meru in the center, encircled by the wall of mountains called *Cakkavālu* (which later came to be the term for the whole of any one such world), lighted by one sun and moon and surrounded below and above by the various hells and heavens presided over by various divinities.<sup>1</sup> The whole scheme

<sup>1</sup> For an illustration of how Buddha's all-knowledge included the karma of creatures, see the charming tale in *Aśvaghōsa's Sūtrālamkāra* (Section 57, p. 283 ff. tr. by Huber) of how Śāriputra turned away a would-be convert as hopeless, but the Compassionate One knew that this man had a shred of good karma through once having cried "Adoration to Buddha!" when chased by a tiger. Śāriputra was not omniscient, says the *Sūtra*, and could not penetrate the nature of things, for the principle of karma is very subtle. Buddha alone understands it—

"Lui, qui est l'omniscience personnifiée,  
Lui, qui est compatissant et affectueux,  
Lui, le Bouddha, traverse les trois mondes  
Pour chercher qu'il puisse convertir."

<sup>2</sup> *Evam anantāni cakkavāḷāni, anantā lokadhātuyo Bhagavā anantena Buddhāññeṇa avedī, aññāsi, paṭivijjhi, evam assa okāsaloko pi sabbathā vidito; evam pi sabbathā viditalokattā lokavidū.*

divided into three realms of desire, form, and formlessness.<sup>2</sup> Each such universe has its own four world-guardians, its own Brahmā,<sup>3</sup> Indra (or Sakka), Māra, and all the other varieties of gods and spirits.

Such was one "triple-world," beyond which the imagination of the early Buddhists probably did not go, especially since they were supposed<sup>4</sup> to reject, as futile, all discussions of the infinity or non-infinity of the universe. But cosmological discussions soon found their way into Buddhism, and their picture of the make-up of the total cosmos soon out-reached the paltry ten-thousand world-systems which seem to have stood for the whole universe in the time of the earlier *Nikāyas* and the *Jātaka*. We cannot say just when the larger round numbers came into use; by the time of the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* the Tisahassīmahāsahassī-lokadhātu—the "Thrice-a-thousand, (i.e. 1000<sup>3</sup>) Mighty Thousandfold World-System,"<sup>5</sup> seems to have become standard for the inclusive cosmos. According to the *Āṅguttara*<sup>1</sup> a Buddha can make his voice heard throughout this latter area (a thousand-million-lokadhātus). It is this "great chiliocosm"

<sup>1</sup> See Przyluski, *Brahmā Sahāṃpati*, *J. As.*, July-Sept. 1924, p. 155 for an interesting presentation of the idea that in the earliest Buddhist cosmology the gods were thought of as all on one celestial level, not separated into respective heavenly realms. The dividing up and assorting of this originally "relatively homogeneous heaven" into respective domains under the sovereignty of different gods would, upon this theory, illustrate a tendency reflected also in the assigning of various regions of the universe to the sovereignty of different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, a tendency which would have important implications for the history of the Buddha-kṣetra. But Professor Edgerton points out to me that the notion of different heavenly regions presided over by all sorts of celestial or supernatural beings, is certainly older than Buddhism in India. See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4, 3, 33 which mentions a Gandharva-world, Brahmā-world, Prajāpati-world, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Kāmadhātu, rūpadhātu, arūpadhātu.

<sup>3</sup> In the same way later the Great Chiliocosm was supposed to have its Brahmā, who was called Mahā-Brahmā, as he might well be!

<sup>4</sup> E.g. *Dīgha* i. 23. <sup>5</sup> M. La Vallée Poussin's article in *ERE*, "Cosmogony and Cosmology, Buddhist" should be consulted for this whole subject. See especially p. 137b for the identification of this "great Chiliocosm" with Buddha-kṣetra.

which is later used as the equivalent of the Buddha-kṣetra in its purely numerical cosmological use. (However many world-systems were supposed to make up the cosmos, each one, of course, has its sun and moon, its hells and heavens, its four Great Kings—Guardians of the four quarters—its Māra and Indra and Brahmā).

We shall return later to the bearing of this “growth” of the Buddhist universe upon the theory of multiple Buddhas and their Buddha-fields; for the present we are concerned with it only to make clear to ourselves as far as possible what sort of a world and how inclusive a one the early Buddhists thought of Buddha as “knowing.”

But having pictured to ourselves the primitive Buddhist world-view, it becomes apparent that we have not progressed very far toward understanding “Buddha’s field” or what is meant by calling the universe his “field.” As a mere static object of vision it has little meaning; we must know more about his relation to it and the way it was conceived as working.

### *iii. The Implications of Buddha’s Knowledge of the Cosmos*

Probably the most remarkable fact about the Buddhist cosmos in its *dynamic* aspect, was the extent to which it was conceived as *interdependent* and closely knit together—whether it was thought of as embracing one lokadhātu or countless crores of them. Every part of it was linked to every other part; life in any one level was interchangeable with life in almost any other (though here as elsewhere *facilis descensus* applied); even without dying the sage could pass from realm to realm, and the ordinary person did in fact run the gamut of the many spheres of existence in the course of his repeated rebirths. The “chain” upon which it all hung together was Karma, the law of moral causation, the

<sup>1</sup> See *Anguttara* i. 227–228 (*Gradual Sayings* I, 207) for the explanation of the make-up of the larger cosmic units.

law of retribution, impersonal and automatic and hence absolutely just in assuring to each the fruit of his deeds. This law binds the world, or the worlds, together. Having understood the workings of Karma and the dependence of all existence upon this law of *spiritual causation*, one has understood the universe, however far it extends. One then knows the universe, and can control it.<sup>1</sup> The implications of this for Buddha's power are far-reaching. He has seen things as they are; he has understood the whole world as it is, or rather *as it works*, for the essential point of his Enlightenment is the understanding of Karma and the *universal moral causation* involved therein. And the *control* which his understanding makes possible is, as we shall see below, the *stopping* of Karma.

It is not without significance that in every version of the story it is the Twelvefold Pañiccasamuppāda or Chain of Dependent Origination which the Buddha is said to have

<sup>1</sup> This applies not only to the Buddha Śākyamuni but to anyone who can achieve the requisite knowledge. And the principle of control by knowledge holds good also for lesser degrees of understanding: early in his career the Sage is expected to acquire various sorts of "supernatural" powers (called significantly the "higher knowledges," *abhijñā*):—notably clairvoyance and clair-audience (which are known picturesquely in Pali as the "deva-eye" and "deva-hearing"). At a further stage the Sage is believed to be able to cause the earth to shake by his meditations—a doctrine which may make it easier for us to understand in their Hindu as well as in their cosmic perspective the phenomenal powers of a Buddha.

To us such manifestations belong in the realm of magic and crude supernaturalism, but on the basis of Buddhist beliefs about the world they are in the deepest sense consistent with natural law, for since *spiritual* or *moral causation* is the basis of the working of the universe, the Sage is simply using this power when he practises magical feats depending on the domination of matter by mind.

All such knowledge is quite definitely practical; it is sought because it confers *power*—a purpose which seems to be characteristic of all Indian search for knowledge. To the Hindu, knowledge is most decidedly power; it is the most significant of human faculties—not as an end in itself, but as a *means of control*, as a means of attaining other practical powers. This is true of all Hindu philosophy (see *The Upaniṣads: What do they Seek, and Why?* by Franklin Edgerton in JAOS, Vol. 49, 2, p. 97–121).

revolved in his mind and "completely realised" while sitting under the Bodhi tree. (See particularly *Jātaka, Nidāna Kathā* p. 102.) This metaphysical doctrine about the working of things is absolutely and primarily important in Buddhism. It is as knower of this sequence that Buddha is "Knower of the World,"<sup>1</sup> for all that lives is subject to and dependent upon this law for its very existences.

*All Dharmas are Dependent upon a Cause*—that is the root-word of Primitive Buddhism, that is its basic metaphysics and theory of the universe.

The reader will remember that whatever the Paṭiccasamuppāda is quoted in Buddhist scriptures, the second and more significant part is always its statement in reverse, showing how "by the *cessation* of the saṃskāras consciousness ceases" and so on up to "the *cessation* of birth, old age, death, grief, lamentation, sorrow, misery, and despair."

In this reverse statement of the chain of causation we see the practical and ethical implications of the metaphysical theory which we have just been considering. Buddha was,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Dhammapāda* 419 where the content of the knowledge of the "Awakened" (Buddha) is described as concerned particularly with "The destruction and return of beings everywhere"—a *concrete* expression of the invariable sequence put in abstract terms as the cycle of rebirth of the Paṭiccasamuppāda. This phrase in the *Dhammapāda* might well be a gloss on "lokavid" which would probably be taken here in the sense of knowing the world of living creatures rather than of knowing the spatial world (see above, p. 218). But in the latter sense also, Buddha's world-knowing means his knowledge of the order of causation, and in practice "the spatial world" meant little or nothing apart from living creatures.

In astronomy, presumably, Buddha was not interested; a cold planet, if there were such a thing, would interest him even less than a cold abstract metaphysical statement. But we must remember that there were no cold planets in the Buddhist universe; Sūrya, the sun, for instance, was a living being in the chain of Karma; so also was Chandra, the moon. Hence it is perhaps meaningless to speak of Buddha's knowledge of the spatial world apart from the creatures inhabiting it.

Cf. *Dīpavaṃsa* I 69, where an uninhabited island comes into the story, and into Buddha's ken, only as a potential dwelling place for creatures.



from the beginning, not interested in pure metaphysics. The Paṭiccasamuppāda as a cold abstract statement about reality would have made little difference to him. Emancipation, Release—these were what mattered,<sup>1</sup> and these could be achieved only by *stopping* the workings of Karma,<sup>2</sup> (beginning as it did with ignorance and desire), and so cutting off the very roots of old age and all the other miseries that make life full of *dukkha*.

Wherever the abstract law of causation is stated, the reverse statement is emphatically stated too:

“*Given That, This Comes to be; the rise of that makes this arise.*”

“*If that comes not to be, this comes not to be; The Stopping of That Makes This Stop.*”<sup>3</sup>

In the Vinaya<sup>4</sup> the moral of this is pointed with peculiar insistence:

“*Whatsoever has Causally Arisen is What may be Stopped.*”

Concrete applications of this are interesting:

“Neither self-made the puppet is, nor yet

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Rhys Davids to the contrary notwithstanding: She has done admirable service in emphasising the positive and in many cases joyous content of the salvation which the early Buddhists found, but we cannot follow her all the way. How far the negative phraseology is due to “monkish editing” is a far-reaching question; here we can say only that though the monks may have overemphasised the negative side of the doctrine that came down to them—stressing *retreat*—still our knowledge of contemporary Indian thought makes it seem likely that salvation, however positive its content, will have been formulated in negative terms.

<sup>2</sup> In quite another sense than the Platonic, virtue depends upon knowledge; here upon the knowledge of how to stop what is at the root of sin and evil, for the uprooting of craving depends upon an *understanding* of the chain of causation more than upon moral effort to stop wanting things. Both processes enter in, but it is interesting to note the predominantly intellectual rather than ethical *method* of achieving salvation.

<sup>3</sup> *K. S.* II, 23, 45, 46, etc. *Fur. Dial.* II, 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Vinaya Texts* i. 146.

By other wrought is this ill-plighted thing.  
*By reason of a cause it came to be;*<sup>1</sup>  
*By rupture of a cause it dies away."*

"So the five aggregates, the elements,  
 And the six spheres of sense, even all these,  
*By reason of a cause they came to be;*<sup>2</sup>  
*By rupture of a cause they die away."*

And again:

"Lo! when appear true doctrines to the saint  
 Zealous and thoughtful, all his doubts dissolve;  
*He knows that all Becoming is through Cause.*  
 Lo! when appear true doctrines to the saint  
 Zealous and thoughtful, all his doubts dissolve;  
*He knows the demolition of all cause."*

Particularly arresting is the *cosmic* application of the Four Truths:<sup>3</sup>

"The *world (loko)* hath been thoroughly understood by the Tathāgata. From the world the Tathāgata is wholly detached.

The origin of the world hath been thoroughly understood by the Tathāgata, and it hath been cast aside by him.

The Cessation of the world hath been thoroughly understood by the Tathāgata, and it hath been realised (*sacchikaroti*) by him;

*The Way leading to the Cessation of the world* hath been thoroughly understood by the Tathāgata, and hath been attained by him."

We see that *understanding of the chain of causation* constitutes the heart of Buddha's knowledge, both of the world and of men; this constitutes his Dharma, his Truth: understanding in particular of *how to stop* the wheel of rebirth. This is implicit in the earliest Buddhist doctrine, but is hardly ever stated outright. In only one scripture,

<sup>1</sup> Hetum paṭicca sambhūtam hetubhangā nirujjhati. *Samyutta* i. 134, § 9. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *K. S. I.* p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> *Itivuttaka* § 112, tr. p. 131. Tr. by J. H. Moore in *Columbia Indo-Iranian Series* Vol. V. (1908).

so far as I know, is the Karma-causation basis of Buddha's knowledge and Dharma, together with its practical implications, set forth *explicitly*, and in a cosmic setting—in what might be called astronomical perspective. This one scripture is the *Karuṇā-Puṇḍarīka*, which we know only from the Tibetan, translated by Féer in the *Annales du Musée Guimet* (t. V. p. 160 ff.). The most significant portion of the text is a dialogue between Buddha and Mahābrahmā (the Hindu Creator, personified form of the First-Cause) concerning the creator of the world. Mahābrahmā had been under the illusion (common to his orthodox Hindu worshippers: the humour in this dialogue is delightful) that he had created the world, but Buddha proceeds to ask him a long and very inclusive series of embarrassing questions. The course of this inquisition thoroughly roots up the "uncriticised assumptions" of Mahābrahmā; it also contains some very interesting remarks about the relation of Buddha's Dharma (which is the Truth he realised and hence practically the same thing as the "knowledge" which they have been discussing) to the workings of Karma—particularly, of course, in suppressing them. The whole discussion is particularly relevant to our larger subject as illuminating what is meant by calling the whole cosmos "Buddha's domain." It is all so pertinent that we shall quote from it at some length.<sup>1</sup>

"In the great thousand of three thousand world-systems<sup>2</sup> (hereafter Great Chiliocosm) Brahmā and the great Brahmā triumphant and invincible, who exercised over a thousand beings a sovereign power, said to themselves:

"'It is by us that these beings have been made, by us that they have been made to appear; it is by us that the world has been created, by us...made to appear.'"

"When the Brahmās and Mahābrahmā and the Lokapālas and Maheçvaras observed that their respective

<sup>1</sup> *Annales du Musée Guimet*, t. V. p. 160 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For the make-up of this cosmic unit, see note on p. 219.

realms were plunged in darkness by the power of Buddha (because he was about to go into Nirvāṇa) they were grieved. Then Mahābrahmā asked himself what this meant; he looked over the great chiliocosm and said to himself:

“ ‘Who is the creator, the Lord, the all-powerful master of this great chiliocosm? The Tathāgata, Arhat, Buddha, perfectly accomplished (in knowledge) has arrived today at Nirvāṇa; for what reason do these incomprehensible transformations, such prodigies, take place? It is surely the mark of his Nirvāṇa; it is his power which has produced all these manifestations.’ So Mahābrahmā with his escort of numerous Brahmās, afflicted in his heart, hurried to where Buddha was, revered the Buddha, and asked for instruction as to how he should conduct himself and what he should learn. Buddha replied:

“ ‘Brahmā, at this moment you triumph over all... you know all, you rule over a thousand beings—[or worlds]: well! if I were to say that it is by me that living beings have been made to appear, by me that the world was created... would this proposition be true?’

“Brahmā replied: ‘It is true, Bhagavat; it is true, Sugata.’

“Buddha said: ‘Brahmā, and you—by whom were you created?’

And the great Brahmā replied absolutely nothing, not a sole word, and Bhagavata added: ‘At the time of the fire caused by the end of the Kalpa, when the great chiliocosm was consumed, entirely consumed, consumed to being utterly, totally and completely, when all we reduced to being nothing more than a cinder, at that time... was that phenomenon your work, Brahmā, and these transformations, were they your work?’

“Brahmā replied: ‘No, Bhagavat.’

“Bhagavat asked: ‘Well! this earth which serves as a support for the mass of waters, while the waters support the wind, the wind supports the heaven, and while at the top at a height of 68,000 yojanas it all stays up without falling!—what do you think of all that? Is it you who have created that...?’

“Brahmā replied, ‘No, Blessed One.’

“Bhagavat returned: ‘Brahmā, and the incomparable

realms of the sun and of the moon, in which the gods dwell in majesty; these majestic and incomparable realms of the gods, what do you think of their apparition, when all was in the void? Brahmā, was it by you that these things were created and made to appear, by you that they were endowed with their properties and their virtues?’

“Brahmā replied: ‘No, blessed one.’

“Bhagavat returned: ‘And the spring, the summer, the autumn, the winter, the end of winter, the spring, these seasons, what do you think of them? [— etc.]... water, mirrors, reflections, moon, sun, stars, Ārāvakas, etc., earth, mountains, rivers, an Indra, a Brahmā, the Lokapālas, men and beings not human, voices and sounds, and their echoes, perceptions and feelings in dreams, the fears and miseries of beings...[etc.]...And the good and bad sides of life...diseases of various sorts... hunger, and deserts and mirage and the middle Kalpa... and the various griefs resulting from separation from loved ones...is it you by whom these were created?’

“ ‘Brahmā, are there not also various kinds of moral and immoral acts on the part of living beings, their liability to suffering, hell, animal birth, the Yama-world, *the chain of divine and human manifestations which proceed from a cause*...bad actions...desires...and this law of the world, whose working is so disgraceful in all the world-systems and which consists in birth, old age, discontent, unhappiness, the law in virtue of which all changes, all passes,...the law by virtue of which friendship and all joys are changed into their opposites... these things again, Brahmā, is it you who have caused them all to appear?’

“ ‘And ignorance, laziness...whose presence causes people to surrender themselves to passion, to attachment, to hate, to folly, and which causes the accumulation of the fruits of one’s deeds to pile up—and the five phases by which one passes (from this life to another)—birth, death, departure, appearance, perishing...and the circle of the future which ever grows and where revolves the world with Brahmā and the gods, creatures and ascetics, like a conjured web, like a muddled ball of thread, this circle in perpetual movement, by which one passes from

this world to the other, and from the other world to this; the ignorance produced by this circular notion, these things, what do you think of them? Was it you who created them?

“ ‘No, Blessed One.’

“ ‘Very well, why did you have this thought: “it is by me that the world has been created”?’

“ ‘Blessed One, I had no sense: I have always kept the notions that I have arrived at and have not rejected them—so I am in error. In fine, Blessed One, since I have never heard in a consecutive fashion the discipline of the Dharma preached by the Tathāgata, I said to myself that it was by me that these beings had been created. . . . And now I ask the blessed Tathāgata concerning the true and precise meaning of these matters.’

“ ‘It is by Karma that the world has been created. . . . made to appear; by Karma that beings have been created; it is from Karma, arising from Karma as a cause that the distinctions (of being) come to be.

“ ‘And why so? From ignorance arise the saṃskāras, from the saṃskāras consciousness, etc. Thus is produced this great mass of suffering. . . . This being so, Brahmā, if one suppresses ignorance, one suppresses all the rest—this great mass of suffering. . . . and the intermediates. Brahmā, when Karma and Dharma are mixed with each other, beings are manifested and produced; *when Karma and the Law are not mixed, beings are not produced*; then nothing is produced, then there is no longer one who acts or one who provokes action. . . . Brahmā, *it is thus that the Karma of this world disappears*, that natural corruption disappears, that sorrow disappears (to give place to) the pacification of sorrow, (to deliverance, to absolute repose, to Nirvāṇa. Yes, Brahmā, everything which is Karma is thus used up (épuisé); everything which is moral corruption is taken away, all that is suffering is appeared, all that is sickness is stopped; it is then complete Nirvāṇa. *And all this exists by the power of the Buddhas*; it is by the properties and virtues conferred by the Buddhas that the Law itself, this Law has appeared.

“ ‘Why so? You will say. Brahmā, when the blessed do not appear, such a teaching of the Law does not appear.

When the blessed Buddhas appear in the world, then, in order to give calm, the categories of the Law are completely taught, so profound, which scintillate in their depth, difficult to understand and to remember. So, in hearing it, beings subject to the law of birth, old age, etc., attain to complete freedom from birth, etc.

“ ‘Yes, Brahmā, it is thus; accordingly all component things<sup>1</sup> (or the saṃskāras) are like an image, none is eternal, they are fluctuating and changing . . . they perish and undergo the law of change. That, Brahmā, is what the Buddhas teach . . . such are the properties and virtues (communicated by) the Buddhas. Even when the blessed Buddhas have entered into complete Nirvāṇa<sup>2</sup> and when their law is in the decline, it is still thus: all the components are like a reflected image; such is the principle; it is in this that their property and their virtue consist . . . It is *because the Tathāgatas know* that all the saṃskāras are like a dream . . . are without duration and subject to the law of change, *it is for that reason that the Tathāgatas teach* that every component thing is nothing but a dream, etc.

“ ‘When one has been instructed on this point . . . when one has unravelled the characteristic signs, by these evident and obvious signs of *causes and consequences* one grasps the principle that the saṃskāras are without duration and like a dream, etc.

“ ‘Thus wise and learned men, recognising that things do not endure, become sad, and as a result of considering causes and consequences will leave their home and wander as religious mendicants . . . and will obtain Bodhi. Having seen in the water the disc of the moon . . . , whether the Tathāgata has taught them or whether some other teacher than the Tathāgata, having realised by their own intelligence that the saṃskāras are like a dream, etc. . . . they will leave home and . . . will obtain the fruit of Crotā-āpatti . . . Sakrāgāmi . . . Bodhisattva . . . the Greater Vehicle . . . .

<sup>1</sup> On the *Samṣkṛta dharmas*—see p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Samyutta* ii. 24. K. S. II. p. 21: “Whether . . . there be an arising of Tathāgatas, or whether there be no such arising, this nature of things just (*eva?*) stands, this causal status, this causal orderliness, his relatedness of this to that.”

“ ‘Brahmā, is it thus that one must understand what are the properties and virtues of the Buddhas: Brahmā, *that by which* creatures are wise, *that by which* one comes to say that the saṃskṛtas . . . are like a dream, etc. . . . so that having seen these signs one comes to be plunged in the greatest misery, *that is the domain of the Buddhas*, that is the property and the virtue of the Buddha. Born from a previous Karma and former actions, beings, by virtue of a pre-existing cause, must come to complete maturity; it is that which the law proclaims. When one has heard this word, one states that the saṃskṛtas are like a dream, etc. . . . ; then one does homage to the Tathāgata, one arrives at the perfect law. The beings who have learned in the society of the blessed Buddhas to practise purity, or who in leaving home have come to grasp completely the bases of the teaching, they also, by this ‘*enchainment*’ of *causes and effects*, say to themselves: the saṃskṛtas are suffering, they perish . . . etc. Coming to reason in this fashion, believing *because of this series of causes and effects*, leaving home, etc., even although no blessed Buddhas had appeared in the world, nevertheless, thanks to the power and properties and virtues (communicated by) the Buddha, thanks to the roots of merit produced toward the Buddha, will come to obtain Bodhi. Brahmā, it is by such deductions and thus that one must know that the *domain of Buddha* exists. Brahmā, this great chiliocosm, *Belonging to the Buddha, is the domain of Buddha.*’ ”

Having entrusted it to Brahmā he tells him to follow the road of virtue and to have an understanding with Maitreya as he has had with him—Maitreya the compassionate who is to rule over the great chiliocosm by the Law as the present Buddha has done. “ ‘Do you then, see to it that nothing shall be interrupted—neither these Ways of merit [“*chemins*” in the French translation] nor the Law of Buddha, the Dharma, the Order. And why? As long as the rule of virtue shall be perpetuated thus without interruption, the rule of Indra, Brahmā, the Lokapālas, etc. . . . will not be interrupted. Consequently, Brahmā, *this great thousand of three-thousand world-systems, the field of Buddha, Yes, of Buddha*, I entrust it to you, Brahmā.’ ”



So the world is Buddha's domain and belongs to the Buddha—but in precisely what sense? If it is only *extinction* of the ordinary world which his Law “produces” what is left to be his domain? What the Buddhas teach is, clearly, *cessation* of the cycle created by Karma, extinction of the pernicious “determinations” made to appear by Karma; but the logical result of this cessation would be a complete denuding of the world: is it this bare (and to us barren, though sorrowless) universe which is the Buddha's domain? Three questions should help to clarify our perplexity:

What is the content, if any, of what remains when Karma has been used up?

What is the relation of this residue to the elements of existence in the ordinary world?

And, finally, what are the full implications of Dharma as here used?

First, as to what remains over when Karma has been “used up.” This question must be considered concomitantly with the second one, for obviously if there are any factors in the world not dependent upon Karma, it is they which will survive when Karma has been utterly extinguished. For a formal answer to this question we must turn to technical Buddhist metaphysics. In the standard list of seventy-five dharmas in the *Abhidharma Kośa*, seventy-two are *saṃskṛta*—“composed”—put together (hence liable to change and dissolution); three are *asaṃskṛta*—non-component, not subject to change and hence eternal. These three are *ākāśa* and the two kinds of *nirodha*.

This classification does little more than give us the formal background for our problem, leaving untouched the eternal question of the positive or negative character of *Nirvāṇa*, an issue which we have touched upon in our first question. We may be able to shed some light upon it if we approach it from the angle of our second query, asking what exists (besides the Karmic chain) in the ordinary state of things. Now our text states that salvation consists in

*the separation of Dharma and Karma, i.e. Dharma must have been there all the time! and Dharma will remain when Karma has been extinguished.* Then Dharma must be synonymous with the apparently negative concepts: Nirvāṇa, pacification, extinction, etc. But Dharma has a decidedly positive content. Dharma is the one thing that *is* real, in fact, for the saṃskṛtas (as we are reminded almost *ad nauseam!*) are like dreams and reflected images and echoes. Observe, however, that it is *not* said that the saṃskṛtas are entirely unreal, but only that they are as echoes, images, dreams—figures which imply the existence of some Reality to be dreamed and echoed and reflected. This sounds extraordinarily like the familiar language of Hindu thought, according to which the shifting wheel of birth and death, due to the workings of Karma, is but the illusory reflection of the one Imperishable Reality which is Brahman.

It is extremely interesting to find these common Hindu ideas implied in this Buddhist text, particularly for their significance in the development of the Mahāyāna. It has long been recognised that the Mahāyāna represents in large measure the re-absorption of Hindu ideas into Buddhism, but texts like this, illustrating intermediary stages in the process, are not often discovered. Particularly significant are the ideas about the *Dharma* implied in the *Karuṇā-Puṇḍarīka*, for the notion of Dharma as the Reality underlying shifting phenomena and surviving their dissolution contains all the elements of the Dharmakāya doctrine<sup>1</sup> though this doctrine seems not to have been formulated at the time of the *Karuṇā-Puṇḍarīka*.

Most significant for future doctrine is the further statement that this cosmic Dharma "*exists by the power of the Buddhas: It is by the properties and virtues conferred by the Buddhas that this Law itself, this Law has appeared.*"

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion of this doctrine see Chapter IV and Appendices. Note how the phrase "of the Buddhas" suggests a reaching toward the notion of a Buddha-principle in the universe.

The Buddhas are the ultimate basis of what is Real in the universe. This is the profound meaning which is implied in the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka* in calling this great thousand of three thousand world-systems the domain of Buddha, the field of Buddha.

This belief involves assumptions about the relation of Buddha to the universe which go far deeper into metaphysics than the Hīnayāna belief in the world as object of his knowledge. There he was set over against the world as its knower; here "the Buddhas" are part of the fundamental Reality of the world itself, or rather the world is part of their Reality. The world belongs to them.

Our third question on the full implications of Dharma has been partially elucidated in the discussion of the other two. It remains to remind ourselves of its more limited use as the *Teaching* of the Buddhas,—the Truth about the universe which they realised. Even in this sense Dharma is ultimately identified with cosmic law, as suggested in the following picturesque statement of the dependability of Buddha's "word," comparing it with the most regular and dependable sequences in the realm of "natural causation":<sup>1</sup>

120. "As a clod cast into the air doth surely fall to the ground,  
So the word of the glorious Buddhas is sure and everlasting.

121. "As the death of all mortals is sure and constant,  
So the word of the glorious Buddhas is sure and everlasting.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Bhaiṣajyaguruvaidūryaprabharāja Sūtra* (Śikṣ. 174. tr. 170) where the Word of the Buddhas is said to be even more dependable than nature:

"Yonder sun and moon, so mighty and strong, might  
fall to earth;  
Sumeru king of mountains might move from his place.  
But the word of the Buddhas could not fail."

The teachings of the Buddha seem to be synonymous in this passage with the profound *Buddha-gocara*:

122. "As the rising of the sun is certain when night has faded,  
So the word of the glorious Buddhas is sure and everlasting.
123. "As the roaring of a lion who has left his den is certain,  
So the word of the glorious Buddhas is sure and everlasting.
124. "As the delivery of women with child is certain,  
So the word of the glorious Buddhas is sure and everlasting."<sup>1</sup>

The idea of Dharma as the *way* to emancipation, we have seen in studying the practical implications of Buddha's knowledge, how understanding of the causal chain is necessary for release. The *understanding* is, of course, Dharma. As we read in the *Karuṇā-Puṇḍarīka*:

"That by which creatures are wise, that by which they realise that all saṃskṛta are like nothing but a dream," etc.—"that is the domain of the Buddhas."

It is interesting to find this idea in a relatively early Hīnayāna work—the *Saṃyutta*—where the conception of the reality of the world being based or found upon the Buddha is expressed in a positive but quite abstract form:

"For us, Lord, things have the Exalted One as their roots, their guide, their resort."<sup>2</sup> (*KS* II. 133)

This conception is clearly not confined to the Mahāyāna. Its roots go back much earlier, as we have just seen; but in the Mahāyāna this conviction was given concrete form in the *series of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas* who represented—to use the term made popular by Professor Whitehead—a "conrescence" in personal form of the eternal Buddha-

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka* tr. p. 18. This and other passages quoted from the *Nidāna-kathā* are from Rhys Davids' translation in *Buddhist Birth Stories*, Vol. I.

<sup>2</sup> *Bhagavānmūlakā* no bhante dhammā bhagavannettikā bhagavampatisarapā. (*S.* ii. 198, xvi, 3, 5.)

principle which is the basic reality of the universe and which is ever active in the world bringing creatures to enlightenment.

#### B. AS SPHERE OF HIS BENEVOLENT INFLUENCE

This magnificent Buddhist faith in the essential Buddha-ness of "things"—this confidence that the fundamental reality or "nature of things" is working toward universal enlightenment,<sup>1</sup> must have given great dignity and courage to man's struggle for full realisation of the truth. In the light of this belief we can better sense how the occasional "conrescence" of this universal Buddha-principle is in the fullest sense a cosmic event: cosmic in its *cause*, since it arises from the cosmic Enlightenment-nature; cosmic in its *result*, in that it forwards by concrete teaching and preaching the enlightening of creatures. It is somewhat surprising to us to realise how literally the appearance of a Buddha is thought of as a cosmic event; how it is classed, for instance, with the destruction of world-systems in the "Great Proclamations," as told in the Avidūre Nidāna of the *Nidāna Kathā* of the *Jātaka*:<sup>2</sup>

"It was when the Bodisat was thus dwelling in the city of Delight, that the so-called 'Buddha proclamation' took place. For three such 'Proclamations' (*Halāhalan*) take place on earth. These are the three: When they realise that at the end of a hundred thousand years a new dispensation will begin, the angels called Lokabyūha, with their hair flying and dishevelled, with weeping faces, wiping away their tears with their hands, clad in red garments, and with their clothes all in disorder, wander among men, and make proclamation, saying,

" 'Friends, one hundred thousand years from now there will be a new dispensation; this system of worlds will be destroyed; even the mighty ocean will dry up; this great earth, with Sineru [sic.] the monarch of moun-

<sup>1</sup> Though the enlightenment does involve first a negative cessation of the natural world.

<sup>2</sup> Rhys Davids tr. p. 58-59. *Jātaka* I, p. 47-48 in Fausböll's edition.

tains, will be burned up and destroyed; and the whole world up to the realms of the immaterial angels, will pass away. Therefore, O friends, do mercy, live in kindness, and sympathy, and peace, cherish your mothers, support your fathers, honour the elders in your tribes.<sup>1</sup> This is called the proclamation of a new Age (*Kappahalāhan*.)

“Again when they realise that at the end of a thousand years an omniscient Buddha will appear on earth, the angel-guardians of the world (*lokapāladevatā*) go from place to place and make proclamation, saying, ‘Friends, at the end of a thousand years from this time a Buddha will appear on earth.’ This is called the proclamation of a Buddha (*Buddha-halāhan*).’<sup>2</sup>

It is particularly because of the tremendous significance for the cosmos in terms of the enlightenment to result from it, that the coming to birth of a Buddha is welcomed with such manifestations of joy on the part of all creatures. So the Suddha angels are declared in *Aśvaghosa’s Buddhacarita* to have rejoiced at the birth of Buddha “with no selfish or partial joy, but for the sake of religion,—because creation was now to obtain perfect release.” (P. 297 of Beal’s tr.)<sup>3</sup>

Not only creatures but the very earth itself participates in the cosmic joy. As we read in the *Jātaka (Nidānakathā* —tr. p. 64):

“Now at the moment when the future Buddha made himself incarnate in his mother’s womb, the constituent elements of the ten thousand world-systems quaked, and trembled, and were shaken violently.”

If we had not been warned beforehand, we might have expected that only one cakkavāla, that in which the Buddha actually appeared, would shake at his arrival, but we re-

<sup>1</sup> Note the simple pre-Buddhist tribal morality inculcated here! The *Buddha-halāhan* would seem to have been tacked on to an old doctrine.

<sup>2</sup> The third kind of proclamation is the *cakkavattihalāhan* or proclamation of a universal-emperor.

<sup>3</sup> In *The World’s Great Classics*, ed. Dwight, Stoddard, Marsh, etc. Volume entitled *Sacred Books of the East*.

member that according to Buddhaghosa even the birthfield, the Jāti-khetta, which shakes at the coming to rebirth of a Buddha, embraces ten thousand world-systems. But it will be noticed that “the ten thousand world-systems” seems to mean something rather different in Buddhaghosa from what it means in the *Jātaka*. In the *Visuddhi Magga* it is obviously a relatively small group—a sort of aggregate unit—in a cosmos consisting of infinite world-systems. In the *Jātaka* it is quite otherwise. There the phrase the “ten thousand world-systems” seems quite clearly to cover the whole cosmos. I have not found anywhere in the *Jātaka* any mention of *more* than ten thousand lokadhātus or cak-kavālas as making up the cosmos, and the use of the phrase in the quoted passage from the *Nidāna Kathā* and throughout the *Jātaka* makes it seem evident to me that this was a round number signifying the whole of the universe. It follows then that the compiler or authors of the *Jātaka* thought of the *whole universe* as shaking at the appearance of a Buddha. Their cosmos included 10,000 world-systems,—and all 10,000 shook; the whole cosmic scheme naturally joined in the general rejoicing. Why then does Buddhaghosa, whose cosmos includes crores of world-systems, limit the earthquaking to 10,000 worlds—a mere infinitesimal section of the grand cosmos which had by his time come to be standard even in Hīnayāna orthodoxy?

The conjecture seems to me unavoidable that from the time when “the ten thousand world systems” meant the total universe, some standard phrases about the shaking of the ten thousand cak-kavālas at the birth of Buddha<sup>1</sup> had

<sup>1</sup> Standardization of “jāti-khetta” as equivalent to 10,000 world-systems (or 10 chiliocosms) in a purely numerical sense is shown in *Paramatthadīpāni* (Petavatthu Commentary, by Dhammapāla) III, 138: “The divinities from 10 lokadhātus having assembled,” it is said, “from jātikhettsas so called, (that is) from 10,000 cak-kavālas (literally from 10 “thousand-cak-kavālas” or chiliocosms), the gods of the realms of desire and the Brahmā-divinities,” etc. Dasasu lokadhātusu sammipativāna devatā ti jātikhettasānñitesu dasasu Cakkavālasahassesu kāmavacaradevatā brahmādevatāca. . . .

been imprinting themselves upon the tenacious memories of Buddhist monks, who did not always ponder deeply the meaning of the rigamaroles which they passed on into oral tradition (than which no form of orthodoxy is more conservative). Thus in later days when the Buddhist cosmos had expanded, there will still have survived the hoary phrase about ten thousand cakkavālas shaking at Buddha's birth! It was never the way of Buddhism to reject old and apparently inconsistent traditions—it kept them all, giving them if necessary new meanings. So Buddhaghosa, having probably heard in his youth this old tradition that ten thousand world-systems comprise the area—or “field”—which shakes at Buddha's birth, not realising how the contents of the universe had “grown” since the time when that old tradition first took root, will have fitted the phrase as he knew it into his scheme, with the result that we have seen above.

The shaking of these ten thousand worlds was only the beginning of the mighty cosmic éclat which heralded the Buddha's incarnation:<sup>1</sup>

“The Thirty-two Good Omens also were made manifest. In the ten thousand world-systems an immeasurable light appeared. The blind received their sight (as if from very longing to behold this his glory). The deaf heard the noise. The dumb spake one with another. The crooked became straight. The lame walked. All prisoners were freed from their bonds and chains. In each hell the fire was extinguished. The hungry ghosts received food and drink. The wild animals ceased to be afraid. The illness of all who were sick was allayed. All men began to speak kindly. Horses neighed, and elephants trumpeted gently. All musical instruments gave forth each its note, though none played upon them. Bracelets and other ornaments jingled of themselves. All the heavens became clear. A cool soft breeze wafted pleasantly for all. Rain fell out of due season. Water, welling up from the very earth, overflowed. The birds forsook their flight on high.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the expectations of a reign of kindness and cosmic bloom at the birth of a divine child, expressed in Vergil's Messianic (IVth) Eclogue and in Deutero-Isaiah.



The rivers stayed their waters' flow. The waters of the mighty ocean became fresh. Everywhere the earth was covered with lotuses of every colour. All flowers blossomed on land and in water. . . . The ten-thousand world-systems revolved, and rushed as close together as a bunch of gathered flowers; and became as it were a woven wreath of worlds, as sweet-smelling and resplendent as a mass of garlands, or as a sacred altar decked with flowers." (*Jātaka, Nidānakathā* tr. p. 64.)

Now this cosmic éclat cannot, obviously, be thought of as entirely a *conscious* reaction to the appearance of a Buddha: it is rather the almost automatic reaction of all things to his beneficent influence. Not only is he the one who is to realise the way to emancipation; not only will he proclaim that way "for the welfare of gods and men," but he irradiates such a beneficent influence that within its range evil ceases *now*, and creatures become benevolent. It is by virtue of Buddha's Dharma that men learn how, *consciously*, to overcome hate and delusion and death, and it is only a slight extension of this belief, in mythological garb, to say that at his mere coming to birth these miseries are temporarily, as it were in anticipation, suppressed. Even at the *prophecy* of his future attainment of Buddhahood similar miracles take place—foretastes for a day of what can be accomplished for ever with the knowledge of his Law:

"All flowers blossom on land and sea,  
This day they all have bloomed, verily thou shalt be Buddha.

"In hell the fires of ten thousand worlds die out,  
This day these fires are quenched, verily thou shalt be Buddha.

"Then diseases are dispelled and hunger ceases,  
This day these things are seen, verily thou shalt be Buddha.

"Then Desire wastes away, Hate and Folly perish,  
This day all these are dispelled, verily thou shalt be Buddha.

“Then walls, and doors, and rocks are no impediment,  
This day they have melted into air, verily thou shalt be  
Buddha.

“At that moment death and birth do not take place,  
This day these things are seen, verily thou shalt be Bud-  
dha.” (*Nidānakathā* § 91–116, *Jātaka*, tr. p. 16–17).

It is Buddha's Dharma which makes a Utopia possible at all, and so even the anticipation of his Enlightenment causes the world to appear as a Utopia for a short space of time; and his first physical appearance on earth in his mother's womb starts the beneficent influences working. These fanciful descriptions of cosmic *éclat* express in mythological form what the coming of Buddha means to the world; but the mythological form was probably not consciously elaborated by adoring Buddhists. It represents, rather, a quite literal belief in the possibility of what we should call magical inversions of the natural order of things, but which to the Buddhists seem quite rational and explicable within the total scheme of things because the appearance of a Buddha is a sort of irruption of the *spiritual power* which is incalculably superior to matter and the ordinary modifications of matter. It is then in the deepest sense “natural” that wonders should occur in the physical world at the appearance of a Being who is absolutely without equal among gods or men. He incarnates the true Reality of the world; is it then strange that the world should alter its ordinary course when he appears in it? There is in all common humanity a tendency to build up myth around the birth of its gods and to express the greatness of the occasion by a cosmic *éclat* and inversion of normal order: the Buddhists simply have a better metaphysical basis for this sort of myth than have other religions which have done just the same thing. The reader may remember the story (charmingly retold by Selma Lagerlöf in her “Christ Legends”) of how wild animals and even spears and arrows refused to do any injury on the night of Christ's birth. This tale illus-

trates almost exactly the same half-magical notion of the benevolent influence of the Great Being—thought of often literally as a sort of physical emanation.

This “range of benevolent influence” expressed in the *jāti-* and also, as we shall see, in the *āṇā-khetta*, is quite different from the range of the Buddha’s knowledge which we considered first (and which was probably the first kind of “field” he was thought of as having). The *visaya-khetta* represents an abstract and intellectual relationship to the world, common to all the Buddhas and including all the known universe with its one or ten or infinite world-systems. The “range of beneficent influence” on the contrary represents a *concrete*, almost physical (really spiritual, due to beneficent moral or spiritual causation, but thought of as a physical) relationship of a *particular Buddha* to a *limited range of world-systems*. The personal presence of a Buddha (somewhere within ten thousand world-system!) is indispensable to this kind of influence, whereas, as stated in the *Karuṇā-Puṇḍarīka*,<sup>1</sup> “even when the blessed Buddhas are entered into complete Nirvāṇa and their Law is in the decline, it is *still* thus in this matter: all component things are like a reflected image; such is the principle; it is in this that their property and their virtue consist”—that is, the whole universe is still in an intellectual and metaphysical sense the *domain of the Buddhas* in that it is truly represented by their Dharma which alone leads to the cessation of ill and to the attainment of Nirvāṇa. Quite otherwise with the sphere of a Buddha’s beneficent influence: when he disappears it is overcome by grief:<sup>2</sup>

“Dans le temps où le Tathāgata vint de se coucher . . . , en ce temps-là dans le grand millier de trois mille régions du monde les arbres, les herbes, les branches des arbres, les bois, les forêts, tout autant qu’il y en a, se tournant du côté où s’accomplisse le Nirvāṇa du Tathā-

<sup>1</sup> See above, page 229. Based on *Aṅguttara* i, 286, § 134. (*Gradual Sayings*, I, 264–265.)

<sup>2</sup> *Karuṇā-Puṇḍarīka*, tr. Féer, Musée Guimet Annales t. V. p. 160.

gata, s'inclinèrent profondément avec empressement et respect, et se tournèrent vers lui en se penchant.

“Dans le grand millier de trois mille régions du monde, les fleuves, les cours d'eau, les citernes, les lacs, les étangs, les sources, les réservoirs, les lotus rouges qui suivent le courant, tout autant qu'il y en a, bénis (Tib. “byin” corresponding to Skt. adhiṣṭhāna) et doués par la puissance du Bouddha, cessèrent de couler... la lumière du soleil et de la lune, des étoiles, des pierres précieuses, du feu, les vers luisant, toutes les choses qui ont l'éclat, tout cela par la puissance du Bouddha cessa d'être visible et de briller; tout perdit sa clarté, sa magnificence et sa splendeur.”

This is but a mythological clothing of the Buddhist feeling that all the splendor of the world has vanished with the death of the Tathāgata. . . . In Aśvaghosa's *Buddhacarita* the same feeling is beautifully expressed in its philosophical and cosmic perspective but quite without entering any realm of supernatural or magic :

“This world was everywhere asleep, when Buddha setting forth his law caused it to awake; but now he has entered on the mighty calm, and all is finished in an unending sleep. For man's sake he had raised the standard of his law, and now, in a moment, it has fallen; the sun of Tathāgata's wisdom spreading abroad the lustre of its 'great awakening,' increasing ever more and more in glory, spreading abroad the thousand rays of highest knowledge, scattering and destroying all the gloom of earth, why has the darkness great come back again? His unequalled wisdom lightening the three worlds, giving eyes that all the world might see, now suddenly the world is blind again, bewildered, ignorant of the way; in a moment fallen the bridge of truth that spanned the rolling stream of birth and death, the swelling flood of lust and rage and doubt, and all flesh overwhelmed therein, forever lost.” (S. Beal tr., op. cit. p. 449.)

The positive reaction to Buddha's appearance—i.e., the positive side of his influence upon the world—was probably believed in more literally than the abnormal manifestations

at his death, for these latter are little more than a fanciful or metaphorical garb for deep grief and loss, while, as we suggested above, belief in the cosmic éclat at Buddha's birth contains magical as well as metaphorical elements which lie deep in the undug history of human thinking. The magical element—that is, the belief is a sort of *physical influence* irradiated from the Buddha's person, is illustrated significantly in the description of what happens when Buddha enters a city. On a small scale there occurs an éclat and universal benevolence similar to what happened in the ten thousand world-systems when Buddha first appeared in them!

“And thus, being arrived at the city, he touched with his foot the threshold of the gate. Immediately the earth trembled six times.”

(Verses by the reciter): “The earth which has the ocean for its wall as well as the mountains and cities, everything everywhere leaped and shook when the MUNI had touched the doorsill with his foot. When he enters thus into the city, men and women obtain the pure faith; in the city everything transforms itself like the waves of the sea when the wind blows: everything gives forth such a harmonious sound as had never been known in the world before. When the Buddha entered the city, the hills became level; there was no more gravel or rubbish; thorns and ordure disappeared entirely from the earth; the blind saw, the deaf heard, the mute spoke. The envious changed their ways, the foolish became sensible, the poor became enriched; the sick were cured; all the instruments of music resounded without being played. . . . The light which the Buddha projects radiates into the world like a hundred suns; it illumines everything within and without with a clarity like the colour of gold. The light which the Buddha spreads about eclipses the sun and moon. Radiating on creatures, it refreshes them and delights them in great measure; just as when one waves sandal-wood over the fevered, there is not one of them who is not satisfied (apaisé) with it.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Agokāvadāna*: A-yu-Wang Tehouan, *Avadāna de la Terre*, (cf. *Divyāvadāna* p. 364–365) from J. Przyluski, *Le Légende de l'Empereur*

What the first appearance of the Buddha did to the whole world, his entry into a particular city does to the powers of nature and to the human beings therein. This seems to imply a very literal and *spatial* notion of the Buddha's influence, which is apparently thought of as pervading a certain area about his person.

We are reminded of primitive ideas of influence as a sort of physical emanation which is the endowment of beings more highly empowered than their fellows with *Mana*, or powers of black magic. Such ideas are closely bound up with the notion of *moral causation* which we found centrally important in the Buddhist theory of the world. We shall continue to find in Buddhist thought examples of this kind of primitive thinking.

This really magical notion of a physical sphere of beneficent influence seems to lie back of the Buddhist concept of Pirit, which is significant for our study because Buddhaghosa's second kind of khetta—the *Ānā-khetta*—(which embraced 100,000 koṭis of cakkavālas) was characterised as the realm within which functioned the power of the various *Parittās*. Now *parittā* is a "warding-charm" or protection—a way of keeping off evil by the exercise of benevolence combined with a formula or some magic object.<sup>1</sup>

And the benevolence is thought of as belonging not to the person in danger but to the Buddha, as is shown convincingly by the Canda Pirit Sutta from the *Saṃyutta* (translated by Gogerly in his interesting section on Pirit in "*Ceylon Buddhism*" and *K. S. I*, 71). When the moon is seized by Rāhu (the demon of Eclipse), she takes refuge in the Buddha as "conquering" and "free from evil." Buddha thereupon addresses Rāhu:

*Açoka dans les Textes Indiens et Chinois.* (Musée Guimet Annales, t. 32) p. 225-226. Cf. Ch. II, Avadāna du Roi Açoka, for what happens when Buddha touches the earth with his foot. See also *Vimalakīrti* quotation on last page of chapter IV.

<sup>1</sup> Which works like our rabbit's foot, or the Italian crooked bow

“Rāhu! Canda has taken refuge in the holy Tathāgata. Release Canda! Buddha compassionates the world!”

If he had not released Canda, the text tells us, Rāhu’s head would have split.

In the *Milinda* (II, 215. text 152) the results of the use of Parittā are set forth in language reminding us of what happens at the Buddha’s birth: Snakes won’t bite,<sup>1</sup> robbers won’t harm, etc.

“When Pirit has been said over a man, a snake, ready to bite, will not bite him, but close its jaws—the club which robbers hold aloft to strike him will never strike; they will let it drop, and treat him kindly—the enraged elephant rushing at him will suddenly stop—the burning fiery conflagration surging towards him will die out—the malignant poison he has eaten will become harmless, and turn to food—assassins who have come to slay him will become as the slaves who wait upon him—and the trap into which he has trodden will hold him not.”

A parittā fails through the obstructions of Karma, or of unbelief—another reminder of Buddhist belief in moral causation.

Buddhaghosa apparently believed that around the Buddha to the distance of so many world-systems there is a pervading moral force which protects those who take refuge in it. The power of Pirit is effective within that region, but not outside it. The power seems to rest in the beneficent influence of Buddha, which is ready as it were to be crystallised upon call.<sup>2</sup> It pervades 100,000 koṭis of world—to ward off the evil eye, though our charms are in theory more purely magical.

<sup>1</sup> *Cullavagga* v. 6, only alleged use of word Parittā by the Buddha of charm against snake bite.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the Mahāyāna idea of the availability of Buddha’s merit to all in his field. (See Chapter II.) Transfer of merit becomes one of the most characteristic ideas connected with the Buddha-kṣetra. A Buddha’s merit helps to “save” all those in his field. Recognition is due to Messrs. Schneider and Friess for being probably the first to call attention to this association. *Religion in Various Cultures*, p. 154 (N.Y., Winter 1932).

systems; there must be a Buddha somewhere within that distance of the creature in need of protection if the Parittā is to work!

Just why Aṇā-khetta would be supposed to embrace this precise (!) number of cakkavālas I cannot imagine, unless, along the line of our former reasoning, this round number represents the next stage after the 10,000 in the growth of the Buddhist universe, and may perhaps mark the period when the theory of Pirit and āṇā-khettsas was first committed to memory.

This Buddha's *field of authority* (or *āṇā-khetta*), with its curious magical associations, is obviously more closely connected with the Jāti-khetta and its cosmic éclats than with the more psychological and philosophical Visaya-khetta (*field of knowledge*) which we dealt with first. The āṇā-khetta is more magical and physical than the visaya-khetta and has less to do with "cosmic perspective" (though as we have already seen it did concern the sun and the moon!). It is particularly interesting as an illustration of the way Buddhism took to itself popular charms and exorcisms, but this does not concern us here except to provide a background for understanding other kinds of magic power and emanations and other illustrations of spiritual causation which shall concern us in the next chapter in connection with Buddha's relation, as *lokanātha*, to the creatures in his "field."

(*To be continued*)

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