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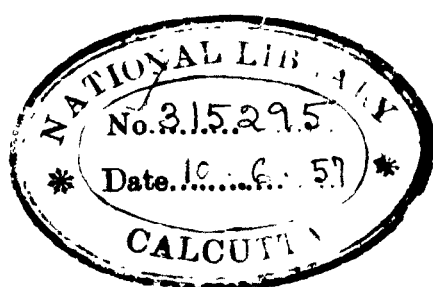
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MGIPC—S8—6 LNL/56—25-7-56—50,000.

**BUDDHADEVA**

**By Rabindranath Tagore**

**Published by the Santiniketan Press**



## BUDDHADEVA

Buddha, my Lord, my Master,  
thy birthplace, is truly here  
where cruel is the world of men,  
for thy mercy is to fill the blank  
of their utter failure, to help them  
who have lost their faith  
and betrayed their trust ;  
to forget themselves in thee  
and thus forget their malignant day.

*Robinranath Tagore*



HEAD OF BUDDHA  
from Sarnath : Early 6th Century  
Now in the National Museum : New Delhi

## O SERENE, O FREE

The world today is wild with the delirium of hatred,  
the conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish,  
crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds of greed.  
All creatures are crying for a new birth of thine,  
Oh thou of boundless life,  
save them, rouse thine eternal voice of hope,  
let love's lotus with its inexhaustible treasure of honey  
open its petals in thy light.

O Serene, O Free,  
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness  
wipe away all dark stains from the heart  
of this earth.

Thou giver of immortal gifts  
give us the power of renunciation  
and claim from us our pride.  
In the splendour of a new sunrise of wisdom  
let the blind gain their sight  
and let life come to the souls that are dead.

O Serene, O Free,  
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness  
wipe away all dark stains from the heart  
of this earth.

Man's heart is anguished with the fever of unrest,  
    with the poison of self-seeking,  
    with a thirst that knows no end.  
Countries far and wide flaunt on their  
foreheads the blood-red mark of hatred.  
Touch them with thy right hand,  
make them one in spirit,  
bring harmony into their life,  
bring rhythm of beauty.

O Serene, O Free.  
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness  
wipe away all dark stains from the heart  
    of this earth

## - BUDDHADEVA

Translated by SOMNATH MAITRA from the original Bengali address delivered by Rabindranath Tagore on 18th May 1935 at a function organised by the Mahabodhi Society at Sri Dharmarajika Caityavihara in Calcutta to observe the birthday of the Lord Buddha. This address forms part of an anthology of Rabindranath's writings on the Buddha and Buddhism, brought out by the Visvabharati to mark the 2500th Parinirvana Jayanti.

ON THIS FULL-MOON DAY of Vaisakh I have come to join in the birthday celebrations of the Lord Buddha, and to bow my head in reverence to him whom I regard in my inmost being as the greatest man ever born on this earth. This is no formal demonstration of adoration on my part, befitting the occasion. I offer him here, today, the homage I have offered him again and again in the deep privacy of my soul.

I had once gone on a visit to Buddha-Gaya, and it had thrilled me to think that he who had hallowed the earth by the touch of his feet had once come to that very place in the flesh. Why, I had thought with a pang, had I not been born in his day, that I might have received his holy influence directly with all my mind and all my body !

At the same time, it had occurred to me that the immediate present is extremely limited in its compass, and hazy with the dust raised by the whirlwind of contemporary events. History has proved again and again that nearness in time clouds our vision, so that we fail to realize fully the greatness of the supremely great among us. How often in his lifetime Buddha-deva was hurt and wronged by the spite and antagonism of petty minds ; how often they spread false calumny about him to belittle his transcendent greatness ! Hundreds of men who were near to him in the physical sense could never feel the immense distance that separated him from them in spirit ; in the common haunts of men his uncommon sublimity went unrecognized. It was just as well, therefore, that it had not been given to me to see him amid the dust and haze of current events.

The greatest among men take their place in eternity the



moment they are born ; from the present moment they reach far back into the past and forward into the distant future. This I realized that day in that temple to which I have referred. I saw a poor fisherman there who had come across the seas from far Japan to expiate for some misdeed. Evening passed slowly into the solitude and silence of midnight, and still he sat with folded hands repeating with intense concentration, *Buddham saraṇam gacchāmi* : In the Buddha do I seek my refuge. So many centuries had passed since the Śākya prince had left his palace home and gone out into the night to strive that men may be freed from sorrow ; and there, that night, before me was this pilgrim from Japan praying to him for refuge in his deep distress. To that humble penitent he was closer and more real than all else on the earth perceptible to the senses ; his deathless presence had touched the life of the poor sinner seeking deliverance. By the light of his spirit's flaming aspiration he could see him who was the Man Supreme. If Buddhadeva had appeared before his contemporaries as a powerful king or a victorious general, he could have easily impressed his age and won honour for himself ; but that honour, abundant as it might have been in his day, would have passed into oblivion with the passage of time. His subjects might have been awe-struck by his regal splendour, the indigent might have admired his riches, or the weak his power ; but it is the man striving for perfection of the human spirit who alone can acknowledge and acclaim the Supreme Man against the background of all time. That is why we see Buddhadeva the *Mahāyogi* seated, today, on the throne of men's hearts, the glory of his manifestation in the distant past crossing the bounds of his time and continuing beyond the present. It is to him that men still come, tormented by their passions and painfully conscious of their own shortcomings, and say : I seek refuge in the Buddha. It is in this intimate realization by the spirit of man of his presence through the ages, that we find his truest manifestation.

Ordinary persons like us express ourselves in our relations with one another : we are known by the class or race or community to which we belong. Very few have been born on earth who were self-luminous, whose light was not a borrowed light, who stood fully revealed in their own radiance of truth. We see partial expressions of Man in many persons renowned for their wisdom, learning, heroism or statesmanship, who have dominated others by their own will and moulded history in the pattern of their own desires. But the complete expression of Man is seen in him alone who represents in himself all men in all ages and lands, and whose consciousness has not been broken up by the customary walls of age or race or nation.

Man reveals himself in truth, the truth of which the Upanishad speaks : He alone knows the truth who knows all living creatures as himself. He is the complete man who has known the truth thus, and he shines in the glory of his own humanity. As the Upanishad says : He who sees himself in all and all in himself can never remain concealed.

He stands revealed for all time. But this manifestation is obscured in the majority of men today. We can catch glimpses of the truth in them, but much remains hidden from sight. When the earth was first created, the entire globe was wrapped in a thick vapour ; only the highest mountain-tops could be seen here and there rising above the mantle of vapour into the clear light. Similarly, most men today are wrapped in their self-interest and pride, with their consciousness obscured. The truth where the spirit has free play remains undeveloped in them.

The creations of men are still imperfect. How could we have recognized the truth in man behind this thick veil of imperfection if it had not suddenly revealed itself in some self-luminous and transcendent person ? To man's great good fortune his true self has flamed up in Buddhadeva, who showed himself as one who had accepted all humanity within his heart.

What then can hide him from view—what narrow walls of time or place or hankering for the fulfilment of petty immediate ends ?

At the end of his austerities Buddhadeva rose up and manifested himself to the world. In the glory of that manifestation, the true India was revealed. The light spread far beyond the geographical boundaries of India to eternize his advent in the history of mankind. India became a land of pilgrimage, that is to say, people of other lands were drawn to her by bonds of kinship ; for, through the words of the Buddha, India had accepted all men as kins. India ignored none and, therefore, remained unacknowledged by none. The barriers of race and country, were swept away by the flood of truth, and India's message reached men of all races in every land. To that invitation came response from China and Burma and Japan, Tibet and Mongolia ; the obstruction of seas and mountains gave way before that irresistible call. In far distant lands men proclaimed the epiphany ; they announced that they had seen the Supreme Man shining like the sun that had rent the veil of darkness. They gave lasting shape to this proclamation in a thousand images of stone in plain and desert. With infinite labour they gave expression to their adoration in image and picture and *stūpa*. They seemed to say that their adoration of one who was so far above the common run of men must be shown by achieving what appeared impossible. They were moved by a marvellous inspiration ; in deep darkness they painted pictures on the walls of caves, they carried enormous blocks of stone up to the tops of mountains to build temples there. Their skill crossed the seas and gave birth to exquisite works of art in far lands ; the artists chose to remain unknown, only transmitting to posterity the *mantra* that had inspired them : In the Buddha do I seek my refuge. In Borobudur in Java I saw the stories of Buddha's nativity, carved in hundreds of

images round the *stūpa*, each a perfect specimen of the sculptor's art, chiselled with loving care and infinite pains. This is at once an example of the cultivation of art and the practice of austerity—the *tapasyā* that eschews all desire for the fruits of work and for name and renown, and aims only at the dedication of all that is best in oneself to glorify him who is worthy of being adored and remembered for all time. Men have gone through great suffering and hardship to fulfil what their devotion to him demanded, saying that only by the supreme creations of that munificent genius which speaks in the language of universal humanity, could they truly proclaim that he had come for all men in all ages. That was what he had asked of men—that their self-expression should be through work that was arduous and enduring, work that would signify the victory and liberation of the spirit. So we find in those far-off days of the past, his worship established in all its vigour all over this great Eastern continent — even in remote and inaccessible corners of it — and his glory proclaimed in desert plains, in solitary caves and on mountain-tops. A still more precious offering was laid at his feet when the Emperor Asoka publicly confessed his own misdeeds in letters carved on stone, proclaimed the glory of the religion of love and non-violence, and left, in his stone pillars an abiding emblem of his reverential homage to the Master. Was there ever a king like him on earth?

The Master to whose inspiration he owed his greatness needs to be invoked today even more fervently than in his day. The cruel stupidity of wicked racial discriminations and caste and colour bars, parading as religion, has stained the earth with blood ; mutual hatred, more deadly than mutual violence, outrages humanity at every step. Today, in this hapless land poisoned by fratricidal malice, we yearn for a word from him who had proclaimed love and compassion for all creatures as the path to salvation. May that best of men appear again to save

what is best in man from destruction. He never cheated man of the greatest gift that one can give to another — the gift of respect. The charity which he called a virtue does not consist in the giving of alms from a safe distance, avoiding all contact with the receiver. The true giving is a giving of oneself. It has been said that whatever is given should be given with *śraddhā* : respect. A gift may become a wicked insult if it is tainted by a sense of sanctimonious superiority or pride of riches. That is why the Upanishad says, *Bhīyā deyam* : Give with awe. That religion is to be feared by the practice of which we may lose our respect for others. In India, of late, the practice of religion has proceeded along channels that spread disrespect for men in all directions. The danger of this is not only spiritual ; it is a fact of direct experience that this is the greatest obstacle in the way of political independence. Can politics ever solve this problem by extraneous means ? Buddhadeva forsook princely rank and riches to strive for the deliverance of men from sorrow and suffering. He did not discriminate among them on the basis of fitness ; not one did he scorn as a barbarian or a non-Aryan. He gave up his all for even the humblest and most ignorant of men ; his *tapasyā* was inspired by love for all men in all lands without distinction. Shall the glory of that *tapasyā* fade from India today ?

What evil have we succeeded in keeping out by raising barriers between man and man ? We had a full treasury, but what is left of it now ? Have not attacks from outside broken open its doors and razed its walls to the ground ? And yet, today, we are putting up wall after wall to keep the desire for kinship with all men, immured ; we have placed guards at the gates of temples to restrict meanly even the people's right of worship. We could not save the wealth that is diminished by giving and spending ; we have only locked up in a sectarian strong box the wealth of love that grows more the more it is given away. Our store of

righteousness has become indistinguishable from that of worldliness. The India that had once held before the world a shining example of humanity by her respect for all men has now narrowed down that ideal ; by her disrespect of men she has herself become unworthy of their respect. Man has become man's worst enemy, because he is divorced from truth and his manhood is obscured. That is why we see in men all over the world mutual suspicion, fear and animosity ; and that is why the time has come to invoke the Supreme Man in these words : Manifest thyself in order that Man may be manifested.

Buddhadeva had said : Conquer anger by compassion. The world saw the end of a terrible war only the other day. The victory that crowned one group of belligerents was a victory of armed might ; but because brute force is not man's supreme source of strength, that victory has proved unfruitful and is only sowing the seeds of fresh dissension. Man's strength lies in mercy and compassion. The brute in man that has not yet perished does not allow him to realize this truth to which the Master paid homage when he said that all anger, whether one's own or of others, must be conquered by non-anger. Unless man follows this injunction his life is bound to be a failure. The victory of anger and revenge by means of brute force does not bring peace, which mercy alone can confer. So long as man does not acknowledge this in his political and social life, the wicked will never cease from troubling, the fire of conflict between States will never be extinguished, the monstrous cruelty of prisons and the threatening frowns of army barracks will make life increasingly intolerable—there will be no end to all this misery and suffering.

It is time, therefore, to remember him who sought to dissuade men from the folly of hoping to achieve success by violence, and asked them to conquer anger by kindness. In these days of the world-wide indignity of man it is meet that we should say : *Buddham śaraṇam gacchāmi*. He will be our refuge who manifested

the ideal of Man in himself, who spoke of the liberation which is not a negation but a positive reality — the liberation that comes not by abjuring work, but by the practice of self-giving through right action, and which consists not merely in the rejection of anger and malice but in the cultivation of immeasurable love and good-will towards all creatures. In these days, blinded as we are by motives of self-interest and by cruel, insatiate greed, we seek refuge in him who came into the world to reveal in his own person the real self of the Universal Man.

ମହନ କରୁଛ-ଦୟାମୟ ଯେ, କହ ଯେଉଁ ଗୁଣ କହ ।  
ଅମୃତଗାନ୍ଧି ମିଳନ କର, ନିଶିମୟ ପୁରଣ କର ।  
କହ ଯେଉଁ ଗୁଣ କହ !

କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ, କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ,  
କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ, କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ !

କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ-କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ  
କହ କହ କହ କହ କହ,  
କହ କହ କହ କହ କହ, ଅହ,  
କହ ଯେଉଁ ଗୁଣ କହ !  
କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ, କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ,  
କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ, କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ !

କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ କହ କହ କହ, କହ କହ କହ କହ,  
କହ କହ କହ କହ କହ କହ ।  
କହ କହ କହ, କହ କହ କହ,  
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କହ ଯେଉଁ ଗୁଣ କହ !  
କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ, କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ,  
କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ, କହ ଆମ୍ଭେ !

କହ କହ କହ  
୧୯୯୮

କହ କହ କହ କହ କହ କହ



## FOUNTAIN OF PEACE

Remove the blackness of all sins,  
victory be to thee.  
Sprinkle the world with the water  
of everlasting life ;  
thou who art the fountain of peace,  
of welfare, of holiness, of love.  
Let the gloom of despair and all evil dreams vanish  
with the radiance of the newly risen  
sun of wisdom.

The day is dark with delusions  
and the traveller is afraid.  
He is distraught with doubts  
at the intricacy of diverging paths.  
Merciful, rescue him from the peril of pitfalls,  
guide him into freedom from  
the meshes of tribulation ;  
thou who art the fountain of peace,  
of welfare, of holiness, of love.

## ON BUDDHA AND BUDDHISM : I

THE GREAT religion of the Buddha had once spread its living spirit of unity over the greater part of Asia. It drew races together and turned their hope and faith away from the turmoil of self-seeking.

True, the modern facilities of science have also established human communication across geographical barriers ; but in this, man has only utilised physical forces to overcome physical obstructions. Buddhism was the first spiritual force, known to us in history, which drew close together such a large number of races separated by most difficult barriers of distance, by differences of language and custom, by various degrees and divergent types of civilization. It had its motive power, neither in international commerce, nor in empire-building, nor in scientific curiosity, nor in a migratory impulse to occupy fresh territory. It was a purely disinterested effort to help mankind forward to its final goal.

I have lately been reading a book about Buddhism, written by one who professes this religion. Our Buddhist author has tried to prove, that though Buddhism had its origin in geographical India, neither did its seed come from the Indian culture, nor did its root draw sap from the Indian mind. In other words, he would make out that it was an accident, which had no previous history, no natural genesis in a continued line of ancestors. In his zeal, the author is acrimoniously violent in the assertion that Buddhism as a religion is absolutely contrary to whatever preceded it in the religious history of India.

The child in the very process of birth manifests an apparent antagonism to the mother. All the same, the birth can never be a repudiation of the parent. There can be no question that

Buddhism was one of the great products of the mother-heart of India.

We are free to admit that after centuries of its domination, there was outwardly a violent reaction against it. But when the history of that period is thoroughly investigated, I have no doubt that it will be found that what was forcibly thrown out was no part of the original idea of Buddhism, but a medley of miscellaneous aberrations, interpolated mostly from the dense tangle of non-Aryan superstitions.

That which I value most in my religion or my aspiration, I seek to find corroborated, in its fundamental unity, in other great religions, or in the hopes expressed in the history of other peoples. Each great movement of thought and endeavour in any part of the world may have something unique in its expression, but the truth underlying any of them never has the meretricious cheapness of utter novelty about it. The great Ganges must not hesitate to declare its essential similarity to the Nile of Egypt, or to the Yangtse-Kiang of China. Only a waterspout displays a sudden arrogance of singularity and vanishes in the void, leaving mother nature ashamed of so monstrous a production !

Whenever we find, in the immensity of the human mind the prototype of something which we hold most precious in ourselves, we should rejoice. The pride of special possession can cling only to those results of pot culture, which have merely market value. But great truths, like great monarchs of the forest, disdain to exhibit any extravagant speciality, which may offer temptation to those who are jealous of their proprietary right in rareness. The great is never alone ; it has its aristocracy of the sublime, its common kinship of the immortal.

This is why, because I consider Buddhism to be one of the greatest religious achievements of man, I find a delight in

discovering some of its essential similarities, not only to the spiritual thought of ancient India, but to that of other great religions as well. Is it right that we should have pride merely in some special production of man, but not in Man himself? Only those, who have no respect for humanity as a whole, can believe that truth, in its supreme aspect, has been reached only once by one chosen people, leaving no alternative to others but to borrow from it, or else to live in utter spiritual destitution.

I cannot accept from anybody the statement, that Buddhism was a freak of human nature, and that as a religion, utterly unlike any other religion in the world, it is not only unrelated, but contradictory to its spiritual surroundings; that it is the science and art of self-extinction referring to a world where there is no true principle of unity anywhere, within man, or outside him.

Once again I assert that no religion whatsoever can for a moment stand on the basis of negation. It must have some great truth in its heart which is positive and eternal, and for whose sake Man can offer all that he has, and be glad. And, in this, Buddhism must have its inherent relation and resemblance to that spiritual endeavour in ancient India which led men to leave aside their material possessions and seek the fulfilment of their life.

And what is this truth which the Buddha preached, which is eternal? It is Dharma, difficult to be rendered in English. Perhaps it may be translated as the 'highest ideal of perfection.' Certainly it is not a logical abstraction, nothing which is merely subjective. It is a reality which has to be reached; and according to the degree of our relationship with it, we attain the fulfilment of life. So this Dharma and the Brahma of our Upanishads are essentially the same, in regard to that which is Supreme Reality.

The Buddhist Dharma does not consist in mere reason, blind

and dark. It comprises within itself the highest spiritual enlightenment ; it is eternally true for all beings ; its laws are not restricted to any boundary of outward circumstances. Therefore it has the principle of reality, wisdom, and infinity. Likewise it has been said in the Upanishad : SATYAM, JNANAM, ANANTAM BRAHMA, — *Brahma is truth, wisdom and eternity*. Then again, Dharma has not merely its reality, like the universal force of gravitation ; it has its moral value, it leads us to peace, goodness and love. Similarly the Brahma of the Upanishad, who is SATYAM, is also SANTAM, SIVAM, ADVAITAM, which means that in Brahma is peace, goodness and union.

Dharma in Buddhism, or *Dharma-kāya*, as it has been termed in some of the Buddhist scriptures, is an eternal reality of Peace, Goodness and Love, for which man can offer up the homage of his highest loyalty, his life itself. This Dharma can inspire man with almost superhuman power of renunciation, and through the abnegation of self, lead him to the supreme object of his existence, a state that cannot be compared to anything we know in this world ; and yet of which we can at least have a dim idea, when we know that it is only to be reached not through the path of annihilation, but through immeasurable love. Thus, to dwell in the constant consciousness of unbounded love is named by Lord Buddha, BRAHMA-VIHARA,—*moving in Brahma*.

## THE BLESSED NAME

Bring to this country once again  
the blessed name  
which made the land of thy birth sacred  
to all distant lands !  
Let thy great awakening under the *bodhi* tree  
be fulfilled,  
sweeping away the veil of unreason  
and let, at the end of an oblivious night,  
freshly blossom out in India  
thy remembrance !

Bring life to the mind that is inert,  
thou Illimitable Light and Life !  
Let the air become vital with  
thy inspiration !  
Let open the doors that are barred,  
and the resounding conch shell  
proclaim thy arrival at Bharat's gate.  
Let, through innumerable voices,  
the gospel of an immeasurable love  
announce thy call.

The spiritual illumination in India  
which ages ago shed its radiance over  
the Continent of Asia, raised its memorial  
on the sacred spot near Benares where  
Lord Buddha had proclaimed to his disciples  
his message of love's supreme fulfilment.  
Though this monument representing the  
final hope of liberation for all peoples  
was buried under dust and forgotten in  
India the voice of her greatest son still  
waits in the heart of silent centuries  
for a new awakening to hearken to  
his call.

Today when in spite of a physical  
closeness of all nations a universal moral  
alienation between races has become  
a fearful menace to all humanity,  
let us in this threatening gloom of a  
militant savagery, before the widening  
jaws of an organised greed, still rejoice  
in the fact that the resplending of the

ancient monastery of Saranath is  
being celebrated by pilgrims from the West  
and the East.

Numerous are the triumphal towers  
built to perpetrate the memories of injuries  
and indignities inflicted by one marauding  
race upon another, but let us once for all,  
for the sake of humanity restore to its full  
significance this great memorial of a  
generous past to remind us of an  
ancient meeting of nations in India  
for the exchange of love, for the establishment  
of spiritual comradeship among races  
separated by distance and historical tradition,  
for the offering of the treasure of immortal  
wisdom left to the world by the Blessed one  
to whom we dedicate our united homage.

Rabindranath Tagore

Nov. 11,  
1931

Message sent on the occasion of the consecration  
of Mulagandha Kuti Vihara at Saranath.



## TO SIAM

When the thunder-voiced Prayer of the Three Refuges  
rang from sky to sky across deserts and hills and distant shores,  
the awakened countries poured their rejoicings,  
in great deeds, and noble temples,  
in the rapture of self-dedication,  
in mighty words,  
in the breaking of the bond of self.

At an unheeded, unconscious moment,  
that prayer, wafted by some sudden wandering breeze,  
touched thy heart, O Siam, lived in thy life  
and shaded it with a branching wealth of well-being.

A centre to thy revolving centuries,  
an end to thy endeavours, which is Freedom of Spirit,—  
it helped to bind thy people in a common bond of hope,  
to strengthen them with the power of a single-pointed devotion  
to one Dharma, one Sangha, and one immortal Teacher.

Let those words, potent with an inexhaustible creative urge,  
ever direct thee to the adventures of new ages,  
light up new truths with their own radiant meaning,  
and in one single garland string all the gems of knowledge,  
newly gathered.

I come to-day to the living temple that is one with thee,—  
to the altar of united hearts  
in which is seated on his lotus seat Lord Buddha,  
whose silence is peace, whose voice consolation.

I come from a land where the Master's words  
lie dumb in desultory ruins, in the desolate dust,  
where oblivious ages smudged the meaning of the letters  
written on the pages of pillared stones,  
the records of a triumphant devotion.

I come, a pilgrim, at thy gate, O Siam,  
to offer my verse to the endless glory of India  
sheltered in thy home, away from her own deserted shrine,  
to bathe in the living stream that flows in thy heart,  
whose water descends from the snowy height of a sacred time  
on which arose, from the deep of my country's being,  
the Sun of Love and Righteousness.

## ON BUDDHA AND BUDDHISM : II

### I

IN HISTORICAL time the Buddha comes first of those who declared salvation to all men, without distinction, as by right man's own. What was the special force which startled men's minds and, almost within the master's lifetime, spread his teachings over India? It was the unique significance of the event, when a man came to men and said to them, "I am here to emancipate you from the miseries of the thralldom of self." This wisdom came, neither in texts of scripture, nor in symbols of deities, nor in religious practices sanctified by ages, but through the voice of a living man and the love that flowed from a human heart.

Like the religion of the Upanishads, Buddhism also generated two divergent currents; the one impersonal, preaching the abnegation of self through discipline, and the other personal, preaching the cultivation of sympathy for all creatures, and devotion to the infinite truth of love; the other, which is called the Mahayana, had its origin in the positive element contained in the Buddha's teachings, which is immeasurable love. It could never, by any logic, find its reality in the emptiness of the truthless abyss. And the object of Buddha's meditation and his teachings was to free humanity from sufferings. But what was the path that he revealed to us? Was it some negative way of evading pain and seeking security against it? On the contrary, his path was the path of sacrifice — the utmost sacrifice of love. The meaning of such sacrifice is to reach some ultimate truth, some positive ideal, which in its greatness can accept suffering and transmute it into the profound peace of self-renunciation. True emancipation from suffering, which is the inalienable condition of the limited life of the self, can never be attained by fleeing from it, but rather by changing its value in the realm of truth — the truth of the higher life of love.

We have learnt that, by calculations made in accordance with

the law of gravitation, some planets were discovered exactly in the place where they should be. Such a law of gravitation there is also in the moral world. And when we find men's minds disturbed, as they were by the preaching of the Buddha, we can be sure, even without any corroborative evidence, that there must have been some great luminous body of attraction, positive and powerful, and not a mere unfathomable vacancy. It is exactly this which we discover in the heart of the Mahayana system ; and we have no hesitation in saying that the truth of Buddhism is there. The oil has to be burnt, not for the purpose of diminishing it, but for the purpose of giving light to the lamp. And when the Buddha said that the self must go, he said at the same moment that love must be realised. Thus originated the doctrine of the *Dharma-kāya*, the Infinite Wisdom and Love manifested in the Buddha. It was the first instance, as I have said, when men felt that the Universal and the Eternal Spirit was revealed in a human individual whom they had known and touched. The joy was too great for them, since the very idea itself came to them as a freedom — a freedom from the sense of their measureless insignificance. It was the first time, I repeat, when the individual, as a man, felt in himself the Infinite made concrete.

What was more, those men who felt the love welling forth from the heart of Buddhism, as one with the current of the Eternal Love itself, were struck with the idea that such an effluence could never have been due to a single cataclysm of history — unnatural and therefore untrue. They felt instead that it was in the eternal nature of truth, that the event must belong to a series of manifestations ; there must have been numberless other revelations in the past and endless others to follow.

The idea grew and widened until men began to feel that this Infinite Being was already in every one of them, and that it rested with themselves to remove the sensual obstructions and reveal

him in their own lives. In every individual there was, they realised, the potentiality of Buddha — that is to say, the Infinite made manifest.

We have to keep in mind the great fact that the preaching of the Buddha in India was not followed by stagnation of life — as would surely have happened if humanity was without any positive goal and his teaching was without any permanent value in itself. On the contrary, we find the arts and sciences springing up in its wake, institutions started for alleviating the misery of all creatures, human and non-human, and great centres of education founded. Some mighty power was suddenly roused from its obscurity, which worked for long centuries and changed the history of man in a large part of the world. And that power came into its full activity only by the individual being made conscious of his infinite worth. It was like the sudden discovery of a great mine of living wealth.

During the period of Buddhism the doctrine of deliverance flourished, which reached all mankind and released man's inner resources from neglect and self-insult. Even to-day we see in our own country human nature, from its despised corner of indignity, slowly and painfully finding its way to assert the inborn majesty of man. It is like the imprisoned tree finding a rift in the wall, and sending out its eager branches into freedom, to prove that darkness is not its birthright, that its love is for the sunshine. In the time of the Buddha the individual discovered his own immensity of worth, first by witnessing a man who united his heart in sympathy with all creatures, in all worlds, through the power of a love that knew no bounds ; and then by learning that the same light of perfection lay confined within himself behind the clouds of selfish desire, and that the Bodhi-hridaya — “the heart of the Eternal Enlightenment” — every moment claimed its unveiling in his own heart. Nāgārjuna speaks of this Bodhi-hridaya ( another of whose names is Bodhi-

citta ) as follows : One who understands the nature of the Bodhi-hridaya, sees everything with a loving heart ; for love is the essence of the Bodhi-hridaya.

2

IN HIS sermon to Sādhusimha the Buddha says : It is true, Simha, that I denounce activities, but only the activities that lead to the evil in words, thoughts, or deeds. It is true, Simha, that I preach extinction, but only the extinction of pride, lust, evil thought, and ignorance, not that of forgiveness, love, charity, and truth.

The doctrine of deliverance that the Buddha preached was the freedom from the thralldom of *avidyā*. *Avidyā* is the ignorance that darkens our consciousness, and tends to limit it within the boundaries of our personal self. It is this *avidyā*, this ignorance, this limiting of consciousness that creates the hard separateness of the ego, and thus becomes the source of all pride and greed and cruelty incidental to self-seeking. When a man sleeps he is shut up within the narrow activities of his physical life. He lives, but he knows not the varied relations of his life to his surroundings, — therefore he knows not himself. So when a man lives the life of *avidyā* he is confined within his own self. It is a spiritual sleep ; his consciousness is not fully awake to the highest reality that surrounds him, therefore he knows not the reality of his own soul. When he attains *bodhi* i. e. the awakening from the sleep of self to the perfection of consciousness, he becomes the Buddha.

3

When we find that the state of *nirvāna* preached by the Buddha is through love, then we know for certain that *nirvāna* is the highest culmination of love. For love is an end unto itself. Everything else raises the question “Why ?” in our mind, and we require a reason for it. But when we say, “I love,” then there is no room for the “Why” ; it is the final answer in itself.

## 4

The emancipation of our physical nature is in attaining health, of our social being in attaining goodness, and of our self in attaining love. This last is what the Buddha describes as extinction — the extinction of selfishness. This is the function of love, and it does not lead to darkness but to illumination. This is the attainment of *bodhi*, or the true awakening ; it is the revealing in us of the infinite joy by the light of love.

## 5

The human soul is on its journey from law to love, from discipline to liberation, from the moral plane to the spiritual. The Buddha preached the discipline of self-restraint and moral life ; it is a complete acceptance of law. But this bondage of law cannot be an end by itself, by mastering it thoroughly we acquire the means of getting beyond it. It is going back to Brahma, to the infinite love, which is manifesting itself through the finite forms of law. Buddha names it *Brahma-Vihāra*, the joy of living in Brahma. He who wants to reach this stage, according to the Buddha, "shall deceive none, entertain no hatred for anybody, and never wish to injure through anger. He shall have measureless love for all creatures, even as a mother has for her only child, whom she protects with her own life. Up above, below, and all around him he shall extend his love, which is without bounds and obstacles, and which is free from all cruelty and antagonism. While standing, sitting, walking, lying down, till he falls asleep, he shall keep his mind active in this exercise of universal goodwill."

The above excerpts are from : 1 An Indian Folk Religion — Creative Unity ; 2 Soul Consciousness — Sadhana ; 3 & 4 The Problem of Self — Sadhana and 5 The Realisation in Love — Sadhana.

## BORO-BUDUR

The sun shone on a far away morning,  
    while the forest murmured its hymn of praise to light ;  
and the hills, veiled in vapour,  
    dimly glimmered like earth's dream in purple.  
The King sat alone in the coconut grove,  
    his eyes drowned in a vision,  
    his heart exultant with the rapturous hope  
        of spreading the chant of adoration  
        along the unending path of time :  
            "Let Buddha be my refuge."

His words found utterance in a deathless speech of delight,  
        in an ecstasy of forms.  
The island took it upon her heart ;  
        her hill raised it to the sky.  
Age after age, the morning sun daily illumined its great meaning.

While the harvest was sown and reaped  
    in the near-by fields by the stream,  
and life, with its chequered light,  
    made pictured shadows on its epochs  
        of changing screen,  
the prayer, once uttered in the quiet green of an ancient morning,  
    ever rose in the midst of the hide-and-seek of  
        tumultuous time :  
            "Let Buddha be my refuge."

The King, at the end of his days,  
    is merged in the shadow of a nameless night  
        among the unremembered,  
leaving his salutation in an imperishable rhythm of stone  
which ever cries :  
            "Let Buddha be my refuge."



Generations of pilgrims came  
 on the quest of an immortal voice for their worship ;  
 and this sculptured hymn, in a grand symphony of gestures,  
 took up their lowly names and uttered for them :  
 "Let Buddha be my refuge."

The spirit of those words has been muffled in mist  
 in this mocking age of unbelief,  
 and the curious crowds gather here  
 to gloat in the gluttony of an irreverent sight.  
 Man to-day has no peace,—  
 his heart arid with pride.  
 He clamours for an ever-increasing speed  
 in a fury of chase  
 for objects that ceaselessly run, but never reach a meaning.

And now is the time when he must  
 come groping at last to the sacred silence,  
 which stands still in the midst of surging centuries of noise,  
 till he feels assured  
 that in an immeasurable love  
 dwells the final meaning of Freedom,  
 whose prayer is :  
 "Let Buddha be my refuge."