

Buddhist Ethics

The Path to Nirvāna

Hammalawa Saddhatissa

7, Sarnath, Banaras, 1948
in and Study, Pali Text

English summary), Pali Text

er, *Pāli Tipitaka*
I, III, IV, Pali Text Society,

and the
Text Society, London, 1975
en & Unwin, London, 1976
t Unwin, London, 1985
Press Ltd., 1986



Wisdom Publications · London

2 Origin and Source of Knowledge of the Highest State

THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE BUDDHAS

To the Buddhist the origin of the knowledge of the Highest State lies in the Enlightenment of the Buddhas, and the Buddhist's knowledge concerning this is derived from the teaching of Gotama Buddha. That these should be sufficient, if followed sincerely, is evident from the declaration made by Gotama Buddha to his devoted attendant Ānanda shortly before his passing away (*Pari-nibbāna*): 'I have expounded my doctrine throughout, in its entirety, Ānanda; the Tathāgata⁴¹ has not the closed fist of a teacher who holds back something of his Doctrine.'⁴²

Enlightenment consists essentially in knowing things in accordance with reality (*yathābhūtam*). In seeing thus there are no misconceptions or mental projections regarding the appearance of a thing or a course of events; the seeing is entirely clear and according to absolute reality. Gotama Buddha describes the climax of the Buddhist's training, thus: 'He comes to know what, in absolute truth, are the influxes (*āsavas*) (see p. 71), their origin, their cessation, and the way to their cessation. From knowing thus and seeing thus, his mind is freed from the influxes and he knows "I am free." He knows: "Exhausted is birth; the Higher Life has come to perfection; that which should be done has been done; there will be no more of the present state."⁴³

LIFE OF GOTAMA BUDDHA

The historic personage known to Buddhists as 'the Buddha' is

Gotama Śākyamuni. He was born in about the middle of the sixth century BC, probably in the year 566, in Lumbini Park in the neighbourhood of Kapilavastu in the north of the Gorakpur district. A pillar, erected in 239 BC by the emperor Asoka, marks the place of his birth. Both his parents belonged to the Śākya clan, his father being a Chief. Astrologers had foretold that Gotama would become either a world-monarch or a great spiritual leader, and since it was taken for granted that in the latter case he would adopt the homeless life, his parents took every precaution to prevent his coming into contact with any form of unhappiness, surrounding him always with those things which, to them, seemed the best that life could offer. However, at the age of fourteen, one day in his father's garden, he did experience a state of mind in which he became aloof from his surroundings though still maintaining his faculties of observation and application of them.⁴⁴ Many years elapsed before further developments occurred; Gotama married, had a son, and, to all appearances, led an existence suitable to a man of his rank. Then, in spite of all the precautions, he encountered an aged man, a sick man, a corpse, and a man wearing the yellow robe of the wandering mendicant. Appreciating that old age, sickness and death are the lot of mankind, and that there existed persons who aspired to an existence where these did not figure, he resolved that he too would devote himself to finding the truth about life and the cause of all the suffering it entailed.

According to tradition, Gotama was twenty-nine years old when he left his father's house, his wife and child. One night he rode out with a single attendant beyond the city, dismounted, sent his horse back, and himself took to the homeless life of the forest. For some time he studied under famous teachers of the day but always found their doctrines deficient;⁴⁵ the best of them could offer only a temporary, self-induced state of cessation of consciousness, and many relied merely on theorizing. Practising strenuous asceticisms, he became so weak that he was hardly able to stand; then, finding that these served only to dull his thought, he abandoned them. With returning health he came to remember his early experience in his father's garden and to see that the only means of arriving at a solution of man's sufferings lay in his own

meditation. One night he took up his position under the Bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*), determined to remain there until he had reached complete understanding.

THE PAṬICCASAMUPPĀDA

Canonical texts vary as to the hour at which Gotama reached this understanding and so became 'enlightened'; the *Udāna* gives in each of its first suttas of the *Bodhivagga*⁴⁶ accounts of the process of reasoning connected with the Enlightenment, identical in every respect except that the first, second and third watches of the night, respectively, are stated as the time of attainment. However, the main importance lies in the facts that the process of reasoning did immediately precede the Enlightenment, and that all the Buddhas attained to their respective Enlightenments by this process. It is known as the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*,⁴⁷ or, more popularly, as the *Nidāna*⁴⁸ Chain or Chain of Dependent Origination.

The *Mahānidāna Suttanta*⁴⁹ contains an account of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* as delivered by the Buddha, and he goes over it as in the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta*.⁵⁰ As recorded in the latter, the occasion is given as that on which Venerable Ānanda remarked that the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* was easy to understand, the Buddha replying: 'Do not say so, Ānanda; do not speak like that. Deep, indeed, Ānanda, is this *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, and it appears deep too. It is through not understanding this doctrine, through not penetrating it, these beings have become entangled like a matted ball of thread, like a matted bird's nest, like *mūñja* grass and rushes, subject to the round of rebirths (*samsāra*) in a state of suffering.'⁵¹

Nāgārjuna opens the *Mādhyamika-kārikā*, the textbook of the Mādhyamika school by the following dedication:

'The Perfect Buddha.
The foremost of all Teachers I salute;
He has proclaimed
The Principle of Universal Relativity.'⁵²

Indeed, so revered is this doctrine, that the well-known Indian

Mahāyanist scholar Śāntarakṣita offers his adoration to the Buddha in one of his treatises, the *Tatvasaṃgraha* as the 'Great Sage who taught the doctrine of *Paṭiccasamuppāda*'.⁵³

It must be remembered that unlike the majority of other religious philosophies, Buddhism has never given importance to the idea of the first cause, nor indeed to any form of cosmology. Theology did not develop in Buddhism as practical realization is expected of the Bhikkhu and not abstruse disputation. In any case, Buddhism does not recognize a conflict between religion and science as the former is, properly speaking, a practical spiritual application of the principles of the latter.

As the universe comprises the sum total of sentient life, there are, as one would expect, a multiplicity of causes which brought this entity into being. And in this connection, the doctrine of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* recognizes twelve distinct phases, links or divisions (*nidānas*) in the cycle of causation, which, being interdependent, the whole doctrine can be termed that of 'dependent production'.

The abstract formula of the whole sequence of the doctrine has been schematized, showing the logic of it without the contents, as follows:

*'Imasmīṃ sati idaṃ hoti;
imass' uppādā idaṃ uppajjati;
imasmīṃ asati, idaṃ na hoti;
imassa nirodhā imaṃ nirujjhati.'*⁵⁴

'That being thus this comes to be;
from the coming to be of that, this arises;
that being absent, this does not happen;
from the cessation of that, this ceases.'

There is law in this process of causal sequence in which cycle it is impossible to point out a First Cause, simply because it forms a circle — the 'Wheel of Life' (*Bhavacakka*). Most people are accustomed to regard time as a line stretching from a finite past to a finite future. Buddhism, however, views life as a circle and life, reflected as such, is repeated over and over again, an endless continuum. Moreover, the whole series of phases must be taken in

their entirety, the conception of the 'Wheel of Life' being in relation to space and time.

As recorded in the scriptures it is customary to begin the exposition of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* with the factor of (i) Ignorance (*Avijjā*). This ensures the continuation of death and remains a crystallization of the acts one performed during life. Ignorance, therefore, as an antonym of knowledge (*vijjā*) or (*ñāṇa*), leads inevitably to (ii) volitional activities or forces (*sankhārā*) good and bad, or rather wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala akusala*), the effect of which leads to the motive for, or will to, life. These two factors were regarded as the causes of the past.

In the present life, the first stage is (iii) consciousness (*viññāṇa*) of mind or will towards life. When this takes upon itself (iv) material form or mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*), this action constitutes the second step. The third phase soon manifests itself as (v) the six sense organs (*saḷāyatana*), of which (vi) the sense of touch (*phassa*) predominates. The consciousness of the living being rears itself, followed quickly by (vii) feelings (*vedanā*) pleasurable (*sukha*), painful (*dukkha*) or neutral (*adukkham asukha*) associated with seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, bodily and mental impressions.

In these stages, the individual is formed, but he is not entirely responsible for his present condition owing to complex past causes. The first of three causes which will ensure a future life for each individual is (viii) desire (*taṇhā*) which can be neutralized; but if joy, sorrow and the like are experienced, then (ix) attachment (*upādāna*) is produced, which in turn leads to one's clinging to the object of desire. The formation of another, (x) becoming (*bhava*), is ensured; (the latter term is preferable to that of 'existence' as this phase falls midway between this life and the next).

While the individual is enjoying the effects of his past, he is unaware of his creating the conditions for a future life. The whole process may be likened to that of the growth of an ordinary plum-tree: its very existence depends upon fertile soil, a suitable environment and favourable weather; next, after the lapse of a considerable period of time, when at last the tree has reached maturity and is blossoming, the fruit is finally born; but then, in

no time at all, the fruit perishes and dies and the stones drop and are scattered, only to become seeds and produce trees in their turn. In the matter under discussion, therefore, (xi) birth (*jāti*), (xii) decay (*jarā*) and death (*maraṇa*) in themselves constitute the causes for renewed life.

In Buddhism, every stage is a cause (*hetu*) when viewed from its effect (*phala*) and there is nothing rigid or unalterable in this theory. The ignorance that remains after death is regarded as *kamma* — a dynamic manifestation of physical and mental energy. This latent energy is potential action, the motivating force behind the cycle of life. A living being determines his own action and as this cycle has been trodden over innumerable years, no beginning can be seen to this process.

Samsāra, 'Constant Flow', is the sum total of conditioned existence and as such has been likened to an ocean upon which the ripples of the waves denote each life, each one influencing the next. It follows from this analogy, that just as each life can only be influenced by the one preceding, so no outside power, such as a divine being, can possibly trespass and claim property rights!

Before closing the subject, it is noteworthy to recall that there are four kinds of *kamma* with regard to begetting future life: that having immediate effect in this life itself (*diṭṭhadhamma-vedanīya*), that having effect in the next succeeding life (*upapajja-vedanīya*), that having effect in some after-life (*aparāpariya-vedanīya*) and that whose effect has completely lost its potential force (*abosi*).

Finally, to sum up: there is only conditioned existence (*sahetudhamma*) with the necessary causes, the factors of which are considered as belonging to every individual. A fundamental doctrine of Buddhism is to regard everything in the universe as dynamic becoming but it is through this becoming that delusion increases and ignorance is prolonged. This fact, as Chandrakīrti says, is in existence everywhere in the universe:

Nothing at all could we perceive
In a universe devoid of causes,
It would be like the colour and the scent
Of a lotus growing in the sky.⁵⁵

As associated directly with the Enlightenment of the Buddha, the declaration of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* would end with the actual enumeration of the links of the *Nidāna* Chain. This and the realization of other noble doctrines (dhammas) would constitute the aspect of the Enlightenment of the Buddha known as his *Mahāprajñā*, or Great Wisdom. However, before considering the bearings of these on the Buddhist's knowledge of the origin and source of knowledge of the Highest State, there remains, according to the *Mahānidāna Suttanta*, one more corollary declared by Gotama the Buddha in his instruction of Ānanda. This concerns the nature of the 'self'.

THE SELF AND THE ANATTA DOCTRINE

The Buddha gives the current opinions concerning the self as be: (i) My self is small and has material qualities, (ii) My self is limitless and with material qualities, (iii) My self is small⁵⁶ and without material qualities, (iv) My self is limitless and without material qualities. Again there were persons who would make no declaration concerning the self.⁵⁷

The Buddha asks in what respects the self is perceived. It is seen thus: 'Feeling is my self'; 'Feeling is not my self, my self does not experience feeling'; 'Feeling is not my self, my self does not lack experience of feeling'; 'By my self is things felt, the thing that feels is my self.' To those who hold these views that feeling is my self, it should be said that feelings may be happy, unhappy or neutral; any one of these three feelings, while it endures, excludes the other two. All of them are impermanent, conditioned, arising from other relations, things of decay, age, destruction, annihilation. If to a person experiencing any one of them it should seem 'This is my self', then with the passing of that feeling it should also seem to him 'Gone is my self'. A person declaring 'Feeling is my self' is taking for the self impermanence, a mixture of happiness and suffering, a thing coming into existence and dying away, here amongst the things of this world. Therefore the statement 'My self is feeling' is not acceptable.⁵⁸

On the other hand, to a person who declares 'My self does not consist in feeling, my self does not experience feeling', it should be

said: 'Where there is entirely no feeling, can it be said "I am"?'

Again, whether it is claimed that 'my self does not consist in feeling, my self does not lack experience of feeling', or the converse, it may also be replied that if feeling should cease utterly, in every respect, could it be said there that 'I, this person, am?'

None of these statements concerning feeling and the self is therefore acceptable.⁵⁹ The Buddha concludes: 'From the time, Ananda, that the bhikkhu ceases to regard the self as consisting in feeling, experiencing feeling, and does not maintain "my self experiences feeling, the thing that feels is my self," he grasps at nothing in the world, and, not gripping for support, does not long for anything, Not longing for anything, he attains to his final release for himself.⁶⁰ He comes to know: "Exhausted is birth; the higher life has come to perfection; that which should be done has been done; there will be no more of the present state."

Concerning the existence of the Tathāgata after death, the Buddha said that any statements that he did or did not exist, or both, or neither, were 'foolish theories'. Why? 'As far as the contact of mind and mental objects and the range thereof, as far as language and the range thereof, as far as concepts and the range thereof, as far as intelligence and the roaming of intelligence, so far does there reach the cycle of rebirth and its turnings. Having thoroughly understood that, the bhikkhu is freed, and, being so freed, does not know and does not see in the same way. To him the theories are not intelligent.'⁶¹

From the direct statements of the *Nidāna* Chain, it is clear that 'life' in the usual interpretation of the term, moves as a vicious circle continuously kept in motion by a drive of anxiety that it should do so. It is necessary to bear in mind that the term 'consciousness', as used in the Chain, refers to the general sense, as one might say that a person is 'conscious' if he knows what is going on around him, 'unconscious' if he does not. Having established contact with an object or event, one registers judgement on it; one may find it pleasant, unpleasant, or one may be indifferent to it. In the first two cases one wishes either to perpetuate the liaison or to destroy it; in the third one is merely not interested. Yet though in the main there are no fixed standards of pleasantness

or unpleasantness, there are certain states which man, irrespective of time or place, dislikes, and certain others which he ardently desires. The outstanding example of the first is death, and of the second, life. Only the worst agonies to which man has been subjected have made him desire death, while dissertations on happy after-lives, Elysian fields, or whatever their appellation, have never superseded his desire to prolong the present existence. But the present existence has never shown any security of tenure, and to make it continue, or appear to continue, indefinitely, it has always been necessary to provide a support.

Yet in existence as we know it at present, life as followed by death, or a series of lives punctuated by deaths, how much of man has ever 'lived'? What is it of him that 'dies', and what is it of him that is 'reborn'? The sūtra and suttas quoted above supply the answer to the questions, and in the Buddhist teaching, far from living one single isolated life, man lives a long series of lives connected with each other by a potential constituted by his previous actions. As one life draws to a close, the characteristics which would previously have been taken to constitute 'unconsciousness' — using the word in the general sense as previously — disappear. There remains a consciousness, sometimes referred to as the sub-consciousness, but which more accurately is the infra-consciousness, which is the potential mentioned above and which leads to a blind activity, the energy or effect of which is the will to live. At the moment of conception the first stage of the individual existence is that of the infra-conscious mind, or the blind will towards life. Its next stage of development lies in that of mental and physical states, the stage of pre-natal growth with the mind and body evolving in combination. From here onwards we have the development of the sense-organs, the making of contact with the outside world, and so on. But throughout these events, and throughout the existence just started, is the undercurrent of potential, the result of past actions, which determines the personality of the individual in question and which is constantly making itself felt.

How far the individual can improve on this undercurrent will decide his circumstances and disposition in future lives, but there is

no question of any organ representative of the individual, such as a *jīva* or soul, experiencing one existence only and fading out into some realm of happiness or misery, or with its potential lost in the general mass of the world's activity. Just as modern biologists tell us that there is no permanent part of the physical organism that sustains, or could possibly sustain, the whole process of life, but, on the contrary, that life consists in the processes of growth, nourishment, renewal, and suchlike that were once assumed to be the accompaniments to life, so there is no 'self' which stands at the centre of the mentality to which characteristics and events accrue and from which they fall away, leaving it intact, at death. The stream of consciousness, flowing through many lives, is as changing as a stream of water. This is the anatta doctrine of Buddhism as concerning the individual being. Extended to all the phenomena of the universe, we have a parallel in the Steady-State Theory, or Theory of Continuous Creation as advanced by present-day astronomers, this in contrast to the former periodical creations as developing from Brahma or a primeval atom, or with the Creation once-and-for-all as put forward by the Zoroastrians and taken over by the Christians and other monotheistic religions.

THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF EXISTENCE

The anatta doctrine is counted among the three characteristics of existence as put forward in the Buddha's teaching, the other two being Impermanence, or *anicca*, and Suffering, or *dukkha*. They are essentially present in all teachings claiming to rank as 'Buddhism'. The *Dhammapada* treats of them in a passage not presented identically, though often approximately, elsewhere in the Buddhist scriptures as we know them at present. According to the *Dhammapada* we have:

"All mental and physical phenomena are impermanent."

Whenever through wisdom one perceives this, then one becomes dispassionate towards suffering. This is the road to purity.

"All mental and physical phenomena are painful." Whenever through wisdom one perceives this, then one becomes dispassionate towards suffering. This is the road to purity.

"All things are without self." Whenever through wisdom one perceives this, then one becomes dispassionate towards suffering. This is the road to purity.⁶²

Two points are of particular note in the translation of these verses. The first, 'is indifferent to suffering', is explained, both here and in the corresponding Sanskrit text, as 'a sense of indifference to suffering arising out of a true knowledge of the real character of existence'. The meaning is due to Buddhaghosa and is also borne out in the Tibetan version. R. C. Childers, in an early translation of the Pali *Dhammapada*, gave the sense correctly as 'only does he conceive disgust for (existence which is nothing but) pain'.

The second point consists in the employment in the third verse of the word 'things' as contrasted with the 'mental and physical phenomena' of the first and second. The corresponding Pali terms are *sāṅkhāra* and *dhamma*. The meaning of *sāṅkhāra* is more comprehensive here than in the previous case mentioned⁶³ and now extends to all mental and physical phenomena which are *sāṅkhāta* (i.e. put together, compounded, conditioned). *Dhamma*, of which the corresponding Sanskrit form is *dharma*, carries a yet more extensive meaning. 'Dharma' derives from *dhṛ*, to hold, bear, so that the noun *dharma* would be 'that which is held to', therefore, figuratively, the 'ideal'. This to the Buddhas would be their Enlightenment, the Supreme Wisdom, *sambodhi*. To their followers it would be 'that to be realised', the seeing *yathābhūtam*; expressed in words, dharma would be the Buddhas' teaching, the Moralities, Precepts, and general discipline of *magga*, the Road. But these meanings of dharma are not here applicable and are not intended, and dharmas in the everyday world as 'that which is held to' are the things, material or otherwise, of everyday life. Used in this connection it is better not to translate 'dharma', but if translation is imperative, 'thing' is the only possibility since it has no pretensions to being a scientific term. The rendering made by Stcherbatsky, 'elements of existence', is merely an aggrandisement which does nothing to clarify the meaning, for, as will be seen by the forthcoming classifications of dharmas, the word 'element' as used in the strict sense is not here applicable, while that which qualifies for 'existence' from one point of view is 'non-existent'.

no
stable
self

from another. The term does not seem to have met with Stcherbatsky's entire satisfaction for we have from him shortly after: 'A Buddhist element is always a separate entity, it is neither "compound" nor "phenomenon", but is an element (*dharmā*).'⁶⁴ The confusion becomes even greater when one finds 'entity' to mean 'A thing complete in itself, its actual existence as opposed to qualities and attributes; something with a real existence of its own.'⁶⁵ Rhys Davids was nearer the mark when he translated *diṭṭhe va dhamme* as 'in this very world', the context being to the following effect.⁶⁶ An enquirer, having observed that craftsmen such as mahouts, horsemen, high-ranking military officers, cooks, bath attendants, confectioners, garland makers, accountants — many others were mentioned — were able, from the proceeds of their occupation, to support their families and enjoy themselves generally, *diṭṭhe va dhamme*, asked if there accrues to a person who becomes a recluse any comparable result *diṭṭhe va dhamme*. Taking *diṭṭhe* as 'seen, perceived, understood', and *va* for *iva*, 'like, as', with *dhamme* 'that which is held to', we have for the whole expression 'that which is held to in everyday life'. Again, Rhys Davids and William Stede in their Dictionary give for *diṭṭhe va dhamme* 'in the phenomenal world', as contrasted with *sam-parāyika dhamme*, 'the world beyond'.⁶⁷ A.C. Banerjee, in his *Sarvāstivāda Literature*, gives for *dhamma* 'existent things', and for *dhammas* 'things'.⁶⁸

Taking the classifications of dharmas according to the Buddhist philosophical systems, *Sarvāstivāda*⁶⁹ and *Vijñaptimātravāda*⁷⁰ enumerate seventy-five and a hundred dharmas respectively. These divide into five groups entitled Mind, Mental Concomitants, Forms, Things not associated with Mind, and Things which are not put together. The first four groups are *samskṛta* dharmas, *samskṛta* corresponding to the Pali term *saṅkṛhata*, otherwise dharmas that are formed, prepared, put together, etc., while the fifth group contains the *asamskṛta* dharmas, things which are not formed, prepared, etc. The *samskṛta* dharmas, which include the body and the four sense-organs of eye, ear, nose and tongue, include also the corresponding touch, sound, smell and taste, as well as the eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, and so on.

Amongst the mental concomitants which all systems treat with great respect, are feeling (*vedanā*), will (*cetanā*), vigilance (*appamāda*), while the class 'Things not associated with Mind' contain such various dharmas as birth (*jāti*), number (*saṅkhyā*), region (*deśa*), time (*kāla*). The *asamskṛta* dharmas comprise space, modes of exhausting the life-process, and, in the *Vijñaptimātra*, that which transcends all specific character and conditions, namely, *Tathatā* (Thusness, i.e. Truth, reality). Pali Abhidhamma condenses to four categories: Mind, Mental Concomitants, Form and the *Lokuttara* (suptamundane).

According to the *Dhammapada* verses 277-9 quoted above, then, one turns away from, or becomes dispassionate towards an existence which by reason of the transitoriness of the phenomena brings only sufferings; further we are reminded of the lack of stability of all things. *दुक्कहा = suffering, evil*

Dukkha, here translated as suffering, may also represent misery, unsatisfactoriness, or evil. '*Dukkha*' is the first of the Four Noble Truths, and figures in 'Feelings' to the extent that these may be painful or unpleasant as regards the physical and mental senses. 'Birth is painful, old age is painful, disease is painful, death is painful, grief, lamentation, suffering, misery and despair are painful, not to get what one wishes for is painful; in short, the clinging to the Five Khandhas is painful.'⁷¹ Yet these five sensorial aggregates condition the appearance of life in any form, and in an existence that is essentially conditioned, even to the extent that it itself 'exists', we cannot know from our present standpoint anything that is unconditioned. Therefore we follow the Path pointed out by the Buddha, the Way to the Cessation of Suffering, so coming to a position from which, or in which, we may gauge that which is greater than happiness.

MAHĀKARUṆĀ OF THE BUDDHA

From the foregoing account of the Buddha's Enlightenment it is clear that the enlightening consisted primarily in the perceiving of the real nature of life as experienced in the present existence and the beings living it. Further there were the expectations of future more or less similar existences and the means of bringing about

cessation of the conditioning of them all. But if the Buddha's teaching had been confined to these matters regardless of their application, though no doubt he would have drawn a considerable following of learned people throughout the ages, he would have come down in history as a great thinker and philosopher but as a theorist only. That this was not his intention, and that he took into consideration the estimate of the ordinary person as concerning himself, is clear from his exposition in the Pali *Brahmajāla Sutta* where, at the outset of this very comprehensive and profound discourse he remarks: 'An average worldling appraising the Tathāgata would speak of relatively small things, the things of this world, the Moralities. What would he say?'⁷² The text continues to the effect that the average worldling would say that the Samaṇa Gotama does not take life, does not take that which is not given, and so on, enumerating the Moralities. Therefore, though he would not appreciate in detail the high attainments of the Buddha with regard to perfect wisdom and understanding, he could not fail to see the reflection of this in the Buddha's daily life of the present existence. Could the average person establish any connection between the supreme understanding and the ordinary moralities?

Many recent Western writers have adopted the stand that original Buddhism consisted entirely in a reformatory movement amongst recluses, and that the laity were considered only in so far as they were necessary to the physical maintenance of the bhikkhus. 'Buddha's Church is a Church of monks and nuns, ... He who cannot or will not gain this freedom (*i.e. leaving home*) is not a member of the Church,' says Oldenberg, and continues: 'But while there was framed from the beginning for the monastic Church an organization, clothed with strict forms of spiritual procedure, there was no attempt made at creations of a similar kind for the quasi-Church of lay-brothers and lay-sisters.'⁷³ Quotations adduced in support of these statements and other similar ones are drawn almost exclusively from Vinaya texts which, of course, deal essentially with the Rules of the Order. But making due allowance for the facts that Oldenberg published his work over eighty years ago, that the Western nations had many centuries of strict Christian tradition behind them from which they

1st result of Buddha's Enlightenment,
was Mahākaruṇā = Great Compassion
Origin and Source of Knowledge 39

were hardly beginning to get themselves free, and that such a term as 'Church' pertained strictly to their own terminology, the idea that Buddhism was entirely the property of monks and nuns, or bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, still persists. That the Saṅgha should form the nucleus wherefrom the Buddha's teachings should be perpetuated is reasonable enough; for if with the vicissitudes of time the laity became estranged from Buddhist teachings, provided the Saṅgha remained true to its trust the populace could reform around it. History has shown that such vicissitudes did occur on more than one occasion and that the laity did so reform. If it is contended that the laity might have been more rigorously controlled so as to have been more independent of the Saṅgha, then it must be recalled that the strict control, religious or political, which has been such a feature of Western religions, was entirely contrary to the whole spirit of the Buddha's teaching. It cannot be argued that the laity was not adequately provided for at the outset of the teaching of the Buddha-Dhamma, or that Buddhism represented merely a new doctrine for the consideration of recluses. That these and kindred notions are grossly incorrect is evident from a study of the events immediately following the Enlightenment itself.

It is a matter of extreme importance that the account of the Enlightenment of Vipassi Buddha as given by Gotama Buddha ends, not with an exposition of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, but with the conversation with the Great Brahmā. If the Enlightenment of the Buddha constituted his Mahāprajñā, the first result of this was his Mahākaruṇā, or Great Compassion. *Mahāpadāna Suttanta* gives: 'Then there occurred to Vipassi, the Exalted One, Arahat, and All-Knowing One: "What if I should now teach the Doctrine, the Truth?" But there also occurred to him: "I attained to this Truth, profound, difficult to discern, difficult to understand, of peaceful and excellent import, not of the order of logical deduction, subtle, which only the wise can appreciate. Yet this generation is attached to pleasure and delights in the attachment, and because of this it is difficult for it to understand the matters, namely, this causation and the Law of "This arises depending on That". These, too, are matters difficult to understand, namely: the calming of all mental concomitants, the forsaking of all substrata of rebirth, the destruction of craving, dispassion, quietude of heart,

nibbāna. If I should teach the Dhamma and others did not understand it from me, that would be wearisome to me; that would be a vexation to me.⁷⁴

At that point, the Great Brahmā appeared to him, asking him to preach the Dhamma, for the reason that there existed beings with few defilements who, without knowledge of the Dhamma, would dwindle away. Vipassi replied that he had considered preaching the Dhamma and gave his reasons for deciding against doing so. The Great Brahmā asked him a second time and received a similar reply. On the request being made a third time, 'Vipassi felt compassion for all beings, and with his Buddha's vision, saw beings of various degrees of defilement, of sharpness and faculties, of various dispositions, of different capacities for learning, living in evil and fear, with small appreciation of a world beyond'.⁷⁵

Two gāthās follow this description, the first, due to the Great Brahmā, enlarges on this former reason as to why the Buddha should preach the Dhamma.

'As a man who has climbed to the hill-top
Looks down on the people below,
So the Sage having reached to All-Vision
Sees men as afflicted with woe.
He considers their birth and decaying,
And attaining to victory himself,
A Leader, a man free from Grasping
Who has broken the rounds of rebirth,
Sees others possessed of ability—
May he teach them the Dhamma himself!'

To this Vipassi replied:

'The doors of the deathless state are open wide.
Let those who have ears abandon blind beliefs!
Brahmā! Perceiving vexation in teaching,
I did not declare my Dhamma to mankind.'⁷⁶

Vipassi immediately set about his task of teaching the Dhamma, and, under similar circumstances, Gotama Buddha did likewise.

Though the incident may seem familiar to Buddhist readers, it

contains one point which is often passed unstressed, namely, that as long as the prospect lay in teaching a few people in comparatively advanced states, the Buddha refused to teach; but when he considered the whole heterogeneous mass of mankind and its sufferings he decided without hesitation that he would teach his Dhamma. Therefore, any statement to the effect that the Buddha Dhamma was intended for a select few only, of whatever nature that few might be assumed to be, is not in accord with the statement made by Gotama. Remembering the *Mahāprajñā* of the Buddhas, it is incumbent on one to remember their *Mahākaruṇā*. One may consider, in passing, the import of the presence of the Great Brahmā. Should it be taken that this super-being did present himself to the ocular vision of the Buddha? Or may one take it that the Buddha became conscious of that which the *Mahā-Brahmā* was popularly assumed to represent, namely, the Creator of the world and the living creatures in it? *Mahā-Brahmā* was not Absolute Reality; technically he was a *Rūpāvacara deva*. However exalted he may have been in his own particular realm, he still created in terms of form and was still subject to birth and death. The question 'Where do earth, water, fire and air entirely cease?' has already been referred to in the present work⁷⁷ as being put to the Buddha; it had been put immediately before to the *Mahā-Brahmā* who admitted that he did not know the answer and referred the question to the Buddha. From the Buddha's reply that the question should have been stated as: 'Where do earth, water, fire and air not occur?' it is clear that the raising of the world from its present condition must be a matter for someone or something greater than its Creator. Hence the *Mahā-Brahmā's* request to the Buddha to preach his Dhamma here.

Therefore, in our consideration of the Origin and Source of Knowledge of the Highest State, we have to bear in mind the Great Compassion of the Buddha as inseparable from it. If after Enlightenment the doors of the deathless state were open wide, the Buddha, with the profound knowledge of mankind and its needs which his Compassion brought him, was ready to show the way in.