AN INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

SATISCHANDRA CHATTERJEE

And

DHIRENDRAMOHAN DATTA

Chapter IV

The Bauddha Philosophy

I. INTRODUCTION

The life of Siddhārtha or Gautama Buddha, the Light of Asia and the founder of Buddhism, is fairly well-known. Born in a Royal family of Kapilavastu (at the foothills of the Himālayas, north of India) in the sixth century B.C., Siddhārtha renounced the world early in life. The sights of disease, old age and death impressed the young prince with the idea that the world was full of suffering, and the life of a care-free mendicant suggested to him a possible way of escape. As an ascetic, he was restless in search of the real source of all sufferings and of the means of complete deliverance. He sought light from many religious teachers and learned scholars of the day and practised great austerities; but nothing satisfied him. This threw him back on his own resources. With an iron will and a mind free from all disturbing thoughts and passions, he endeavoured to unravel, through continued intense meditation, the mystery of the world's miseries, till at last his ambition was crowned with success. Siddhārtha became Buddha or the Enlightened. The message of his enlightenment laid the foundation of both Buddhistic religion and philosophy which, in course of time, spread far and wide—to Ceylon, Burma and Siam in the south, and to Tibet, China, Japan and Korea in the north.

Like all great teachers of ancient times Buddha taught by conversation, and his teachings were also handed down for a long time through oral instruction imparted by his disciples to successive generations. Our knowledge about Buddha's teachings depends today chiefly on the *Tripiṭakas* or the three baskets of teachings which are claimed to contain his views as reported by his most intimate disciples. These three canonical works are named *Vinayapiṭaka, Suttapiṭaka* and *Abhidhammapiṭaka*. Of these, the first deals chiefly with rules of conduct for the congregation (saṅgha), the second contains Buddha's sermons and dialogues, and the third contains expositions of philosophical theories. All these three contain information regarding early Buddhist philosophy. These works are in the Pāli dialect.

In course of time, as his followers increased in number, they were divided into different schools. The most important division of Buddhism on religious principles was into the Hīnayāna or Theravāda and the Mahāyāna. The first flourished in the south and its present stronghold is in Ceylon, Burma and Siam. Its literature is vast and is written in Pāli. It is claimed to be more orthodox and faithful to the teachings of Buddha. Mahāyāna flourished mostly in the north and its adherents are to be found in Tibet, China and Japan. It adopted Sanskrit for philosophical discussion and thus the enormous Buddhist literature in Sanskrit came to be developed. Most of this literature was translated into Tibetan and Chinese and thus became naturalised in the lands in which Buddhism flourished. Many such valuable Sanskrit works lost in India are now being recovered from those translations and restored to Sanskrit.

As Buddhism flourished in different lands, it became coloured and changed by the original faiths

and ideas of the converts. The different schools[1] of Buddhism which thus arose are so numerous and the total output of philosophical works in the different languages is so vast that a thorough acquaintance with Buddhist philosophy requires the talents of a versatile linguist, as well as the insight of a philosopher—and yet one life-time may be found all too short for the purpose. Our account of Bauddha philosophy will necessarily be very brief and so inadequate. We shall first try to give the chief teachings of Buddha as found in the dialogues attributed to him, and next deal with some aspects of Bauddha philosophy developed in India by his followers in the different schools, and conclude with a short account of the main religious tendencies of the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna schools.

II. THE TEACHINGS OF BUDDHA: THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

1. The Anti-speculative Attitude

Buddha was primarily an ethical teacher and reformer, not a metaphysician. The message of his enlightenment points to man the way of life that leads beyond suffering. When anyone asked Buddha metaphysical questions as to whether the soul was different from the body, whether it survived death, whether the world was finite or infinite, eternal or non-eternal, etc., he avoided discussing them. Discussion of problems for the solution of which there is not sufficient evidence leads only to different partial views like the conflicting one-sided accounts of an elephant given by different blind persons who touch its different parts.[2] Buddha referred to scores of such metaphysical views advanced by earlier thinkers and showed that all of them were inadequate, since they were based on uncertain sense-experiences, cravings, hopes and fears.[3] Such speculation should be avoided, Buddha repeatedly pointed out, also because it does not take man nearer to his goal, *viz*. Arhatship or Vimutti, the state of freedom from all suffering. On the contrary, a man who indulges in such speculation remains all the more entangled in the net of theories he himself has woven.[4] The most urgent problem is to end misery. One who indulges in theoretical speculation on the soul and the world, while he is writhing in pain, behaves like the foolish man, with a poisonous arrow plunged into his flank, whiling away time on idle speculation regarding the origin, the maker and the thrower of the arrow, instead of trying to pull it out immediately.[5]

Ten questions are often mentioned by Buddha (vide *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*, *Dialogues*, I., R. Davids, pp. 254–57) as uncertain, ethically unprofitable and so not discussed (vyākata) by him: (*a*) Is the world eternal? (*b*) Is it non-enternal? (*c*) Is it finite? (*d*) Is it infinite? (*e*) Is the soul the same as the body? (*f*) Is it different from the body? (*g*) Does one who has known the truth (Tathāgata) live again after death? (*h*) Does he not live again after death? (*i*) Does he both live again and not live again after death? (*j*) Does he neither live nor not-live again after death? These have come to be known as the 'indeterminate questions' (in Pāli *avyākatāni*) in Buddhist literature and made the subject of discourses in Saṁyutta Nikāya[6] and Majjhima Nikāya.[7]

Instead of discussing metaphysical questions, which are ethically useless and intellectually uncertain, Buddha always tried to enlighten persons on the most important questions of sorrow, its origin, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation. Because, as he puts it: 'This does profit, has

to do with fundamentals of religion, and tends to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom and nirvāṇa.'[8]

The answers to the four questions noted above constitute, as we know, the essence of Buddha's enlightenment which he is eager to share with all fellow-beings. These have come to be known as the four noble truths (catvāri āryasatyāni). They are: (*a*) Life in the world is full of suffering. (*b*) There is a cause of this suffering. (*c*) It is possible to stop suffering. (*d*) There is a path which leads to the cessation of suffering (duḥkha, duḥkha-samudaya, duḥkhanirodha, duḥkha-nirodha-mārga). All the teachings of Gautama centre round these four.

2. The First Noble Truth about Suffering

The sights of suffering which upset the mind of young Siddhārtha were of disease, old age and death. But to the enlightened mind of Buddha not simply these, but the very essential conditions of life, human and sub-human, appeared, without exception, to be fraught with misery. Birth, old age, disease, death, sorrow, grief, wish, despair, in short, all that is born of attachment, is misery.[9] We have mentioned in the *General Introduction* that pessimism of this type is common to all the Indian schools; and in emphasizing the first noble truth, Buddha has the support of all important Indian thinkers. The Cārvāka materialists would, of course, take exception to Buddha's wholesale condemnation of life in the world, and point out the different sources of pleasure that exist in life along with those of pain. But Buddha and many other Indian thinkers would reply that worldly pleasures appear as such only to short-sighted people. Their transitoriness, the pains felt on their loss and the fears felt lest they should be lost, and other evil consequences, make pleasures lose their charm and turn them into positive sources of feat and anxiety.

3. The Second Noble Truth about the Cause of Suffering: the Chain of Twelve Links

Though the fact of suffering is recognised by all Indian thinkers, the diagnosis of this malady is not always unanimous. The origin of life's evil is explained by Buddha in the light of his special conception of natural causation (known as Pratītyasamutpāda). According to it, nothing is unconditional; the existence of everything depends on some conditions. As the existence of every event depends on some conditions, there must be something *which being there* our misery comes into existence. Life's *suffering* (old age, death, despair, grief and the like, briefly denoted by the phrase *jarā-maraṇa*) is there, says Buddha, because there is *birth* (jāti). If a man were not born, he would not have been subject to these miserable states. Birth again has its condition. It is the *will* to *become* (bhava),[10] the force of the blind tendency or predisposition to be born, which causes our birth. But what is the cause of this tendency? Our mental clinging to carrying to *grasping* (upādāna) the objects of the world is the condition responsible for our desire to be born. This clinging again is due to our *thrist* (tṛṣṇā) or craving to enjoy objects—sights, sounds, etc. But wherefrom does this desire originate? We would not have any desire for objects, had we not tasted or experienced them before. Previous *sense-experience*, tinged with some pleasant feelings (vedanā), is, therefore the cause of

our thirst or craving. But sense-experience could not arise but for *contact* (sparśa) *i.e*. contact of sense-organs with objects. This contact again would not arise had there not been the *six organs of cognition*, the five senses and manas (ṣaḍā-yatana). These six again depend for their existence on the *mind-body* organism (nāma-rūpa), which constitutes the perceptible being of man. But this organism could not develop in the mother's womb and come into existence, if it were dead or devoid of *consciousness* (vijñāna). But the consciousness that descends into the embryo in the mother's womb is only the effect of the *impressions* (saṁskāra) of our past existence. The last state of the past life, which initiates our present existence, contains in a concentrated manner the impressions of effects or all our past deeds. The impressions which make for rebirth are due to *ignorance* (avidyā) about truth. If the transitory, painful nature of the wordly existence were perfectly realised, there would not arise in us any karma resulting in rebirth. Ignorance, therefore, is the *root cause* of impressions or tendencies that cause rebirth.

Briefly speaking, then (*a*) *suffering* in life is due to (*b*) *birth*, which is due to (*c*) *the will to be born*, which is due to (*d*) our mental *clinging* to objects. Clinging again is due to (*e*) *thirst* or desire for objects. This again is due to (*f*) *sense-experience* which is due to (*g*) *sense-object-contact*, which again is due to (*h*) the *six organs* of cognition; these organs are dependent on (*i*) the *embryonic organism* (composed of mind and body), which again could not develop without (*j*) some *initial consciousness*, which again hails from (*k*) the *impressions* of the experience of past life, which lastly are due to (*l*) *ignorance* of truth.

Thus we have the *twelve links* in the chain of causation. The order and number of the links are not always the same in all the sermons; but the above has come to be regarded as the full and standard account of the matter. It has been popularised among Buddhists by various epithets, such as the twelve sources (dvādaśa nidāna), the wheel of rebirth (bhava-cakra). Some devout Buddhists remind themselves even today, of this teaching of Buddha by turning wheels which are made to symbolise the wheel of causation. Like the telling of beads, this forms a part of their daily prayers.

The twelve links are sometimes interpreted to cover the past, the present and the future life which are causally connected, so that present life can be conveniently explained with reference to its past condition and its future effect. The twelve links are, therefore, arranged with reference to the three periods[11] in the following way proceeding from cause to effect:

1.	Ignorance (avidyā)	
2.	Impressions (saṁskāra)	Past Life
3.	The initial consciousness of the embryo (vijñāna)	
4.	Mind and body, the embryonic organism (nāma-rṟupa)	
5.	Six organs of knowledge (ṣaḍāyatana)	Present Life
6.	Sense contact (sparśa)	
7.	Sense-experience (vedanā)	
8.	Thirst (tṛṣṇā)	
9.	Clinging (upādāna)	
10.	Tendency to be born (bhava)	
11.	Rebirth (jāti)	
12.	Old age, death, etc. (jarā-maraṇa)	Future Life

Before we close this topic, we may note one very important contribution made by Indian thinkers in general and Buddha in particular; namely, the conception that the external phenomenon of life or the living organism is due to an internal impetus of desire, conscious or unconscious. The evolution of life is sought to be explained mechanically by modern biologists—both Darwinians and anti-Darwinians—with the help of material conditions, inherited and environmental. The first appearance of a horn on the cow's head, or the formation of an eye, is to them nothing more than an accidental variation, slow or sudden. The famous contemporary French philosopher, Bergson, shows that the development of life cannot be satisfactorily explained as merely accidental, but that it must be thought to be the outward expression of an internal urge or life-impetus (*élan vital*). Buddha's basic principle of the explanation of life, namely, that bhava (internal predisposition, the tendency to be) leads to birth (existence of the body) or that consciousness is the condition of the development of the embryo, anticipates the Bergsonian contention, that the living body is not caused simply by collection of pieces of matter, but is the outward manifestation or explosion of an internal urge. Incidentally we may note also that Bergson's philosophy of reality as change resembles the Buddhistic doctrine of impermanence.

4. The Third Noble Truth about the Cessation of Suffering

The third noble truth that there is cessation of suffering follows from the second truth that misery depends on some conditions. If these conditions are removed, misery would cease. But we should try to understand clearly the exact nature of the state called cessation (nirodha) of misery.

First of all, it should be noted that liberation from misery is a state attainable herein this very life, if certain conditions are fulfilled. When the perfect control of passions and constant contemplation of truth lead a person through the four stages of concentration to perfect wisdom (as will be described hereafter), he is no longer under the sway of worldly attachment. He has broken the fetters that bound him to the world. He is, therefore, free, liberated. He is said then to have become an

Arhat—a venerable person. The state is more popularly known now as nirvāṇa—the extinction of passions and, therefore, also of misery.

We should remember next that the attainment of this state is not necessarily a state of inactivity, as it is ordinarily misunderstood to be. It is true that for the attainment of perfect, clear and steady knowledge of the fourfold truth one has to withdraw all his attention from outside and even from other ideas within, and concentrate it wholly on repeated reasoning and contemplation of the truths in all their aspects. But once wisdom has been permanently obtained, through concentrated thought, the liberated person should neither always remain rapt in meditation nor wholly withdraw from active life. We know what an active life of travelling, preaching, founding brotherhood, Buddha himself led during the long forty-five years that he lived after enlightenment, and even to the last days of his eightieth year when he passed away! Liberation then was not incompatible with activity in the life of the founder himself.

As he clearly pointed out once, there are two kinds of action, one that is done under the influence of attachment, hatred, infatuation (rāga, dveṣa, moha), another that is done without these. It is only the first that strengthens our desire to cling to the world and generates the seeds of karma causing rebirth. The second kind of action, done with perfect insight into the real nature of the universe and without attachment, does not create a karma producing rebirth. The difference between the two kinds of karma, Buddha points out, is like that between the sowing of ordinary productive seeds and the sowing of seeds which have been fried and made barren.[12] This lesson he teaches also in the story of his enlightenment.[13] After he had attained nirvāṇa, he was at first reluctant to work. But soon his enlightened heart began to beat with sympathy for the countless beings who were still writhing in pain. He thought it proper, therefore, that the raft which he constructed with toil and with which he got across the flood of misery, should be left for others and not allowed to perish.[14] Nirvāṇa, he thus shows by his own example and precept, does not require the Arhat to shun activity; on the contrary, love and sympathy for all beings increase with enlightenment and persuade the perfect man to share his wisdom with them and work for their moral uplift.

If this be a correct interpretation of Buddha's life and teaching, it is wrong to think, as it is very often done, that nirvāṇa means total extinction of existence. The etymological meaning of 'nirvāṇa' is 'blown out'. The metaphor of a 'blown-out light' is there; and the liberated one is sometimes compared to it. Depending on such etymological meaning and the negative description of nirvāṇa as the absence of all physical and mental states known to us, some interpreters of Buddhism—Buddhists and non-Buddhists—have explained nirvāṇa as complete cessation of existence. But against this view we have to remember, first, that if nirvāṇa or liberation be extinction of all existence, then Buddha cannot be said to have been liberated till he died; his attainment of perfect wisdom and freedom for which we have his own words, turns then into a myth. It is difficult to hold, therefore, that nirvāṇa as taught by Buddha means cessation of all existence.[15] Secondly, we are to remember that, though nirvāṇa, according to Buddha, stops rebirth and, therefore, means the extinction of all misery and of the conditions that cause future existence in this world after death, it does not mean necessarily that after death the liberated saint does not continue in any form. This last point, as we mentioned previously, is one of the ten points on which Buddha repeatedly refuses to express any opinion. So that even the view that, after death, the person who attains nirvāṇa ceases to exist altogether is one which Buddha cannot be said to have held. Buddha's silence might just mean that the state of liberation cannot be described in terms of ordinary experience.[16]

The important question that arises here then is: If Buddha is not explicit about the fate of a

liberated person after death, what according to him is gained by nirvāṇa? The gain is double, negative and positive. Nirvāna is a guarantee that rebirth whose conditions have been destroyed, will not occur. Nirvāṇa also positively means that one who has attained it enjoys perfect peace even in this life so long as he lives after enlightenment. This peace is not, of course, like any of the pleasures born of the fulfilment of desires. It is, therefore, said to be beyond worldly pleasures and pains. But it is a state of serenity, equanimity and passionless self-possession. It cannot be described in terms of ordinary experiences; the best way of understanding it in the light of our imperfect experience is to think of it as a relief from all painful experience from which we suffer. We can understand this because all of us have experience at least of temporary feelings of relief from some pain or other, such as freedom from disease, debt, slavery, imprisonment.[17] Besides, the advantages of nirvāṇa can be enjoyed in part, even before it has been obtained, by the partial fulfilment of its conditions. As Buddha explains to King Ajātaśatru in a discourse on the advantages of the life of a recluse every bit of ignorance removed, and passion conquered, brings about palpable benefit, such as purity, good-will, self-possession, courage, unperplexed mind, unruffled temper.[18] This heartens him and gives him the strength to pursue the difficult goal of nirvāṇa till it is fully obtained.

We know that a later Buddhist teacher of great eminence. Nāgasena, while instructing the Greek King Menander (Milinda) who accepted his discipleship, tried to convey to him the idea of the blissful character of nirvāṇa with a series of metaphors; Nirvāṇa is profound like an ocean, lofty like a mountain peak, sweet like honey; etc.[19] But all these, as Nātasena points out, can scarcely convey to the imperfect man the idea of what that thing is. Reasoning and metaphor are of little avail for convincing a blind man what colour is like.

5. The Fourth Noble Truth about the Path to Liberation

The fourth noble truth, as seen already, lays down that there is a path (mārga)—which Buddha followed and others can similarly follow—to reach a state free from misery. Clues regarding this path are derived from the knowledge of the chief conditions that cause misery. The path recommended by Buddha consists of eight steps or rules and is, therefore, called the eightfold noble path (aṣṭāṅgika-mārga).[20] This gives in a nutshell the essentials of Bauddha Ethics. This path is open to all, monks as well as laymen.[21] The noble path consists in the acquisition of the following eight good things:

Right views (sammādiṭṭhi or samyagdṛṣṭi)-As ignorance, with its consequences, namely, wrong views (mithyādṛṣṭi) about the self and the world, is the root cause of our sufferings, it is natural that the first step to moral reformation should be the acquisition of right views or the knowledge of truth. Right view is defined as the correct knowledge about the four noble truths. It is the knowledge of these truths alone, and not any theoretical speculation regarding nature and self, which, according to Buddha, helps moral reformation, and leads us towards the goal—nirvāṇa.

Right resolve (ṣammāsaṅkalpa or samyaksaṇkalpa)–A mere knowledge of the truths would be uesless unless one resolves to reform life in their light. The moral aspirant is asked, therefore, to renounce worldliness (all attachment to the world), to give up ill-feeling towards others and desist from doing any harm to them. These three constitute the contents of right determination.

Right speech (sammāvācā or samyagvāk)–Right determination should not remain a mere 'pious wish' but must issue forth into action. Right determination should be able to guide and control our speech, to begin with. The result would be right speech consisting in abstention from lying, slander,

unkind words and frivolous talk.

Right conduct (sammākammanta or samyakkarmānta)–Right determination should end in right action or good conduct and not stop merely with good speech. Right conduct includes the Pañca-Sīla, the five vows for desisting from killing, stealing, sensuality, lying and intoxication.[22]

Right livelihood (sammā-ājīva or samyagājīva)–Renouncing bad speech and bad actions, one should earn his livelihood by honest means. The necessity of this rule lies in showing that even for the sake of maintaining one's life, one should not take to forbidden means but work in consistency with good determination.

Right effort (sammāvāyāma or samyagvyāyāma)–While a person tries to live a reformed life, through right views, resolution, speech, action and livelihood, he is constantly knocked off the right path by old evil ideas which were deep-rooted in the mind as also by fresh ones which constantly arise. One cannot progress steadily unless he maintains a constant effort to root out old evil thoughts, and prevent evil thoughts from arising anew. Moreover, as the mind cannot be kept empty, he should constantly endeavour also to fill the mind with good ideas, and retain such ideas in the mind. This fourfold constant endeavour, negative and positive, is called right effort. This rule points out that even one high up on the path cannot afford to take a moral holiday without running the risk of slipping down.

Right mindfulness (sammāsati or samyaksmṛti)–The necessity of constant vigilance is further stressed in this rule, which lays down that the aspirant should constantly bear in mind the things he has already learnt. He should constantly remember and contemplate the body as body, sensations as sensations, mind as mind, mental states as mental states. About any of these he should not think, 'This am I,' or 'This is mine.'[23] This advice sounds no better than asking one to think of a spade as a spade. But ludicrously superfluous as it might appear to be, it is not easy to remember always what things really are. It is all the more difficult to practise it when false ideas about the body, etc. have become so deep-rooted in us and our behaviours based on these false notions have become instinctive. If we are not mindful, we behave as though the body, the mind, sensations and mental states are permanent and valuable. Hence there arises attachment to such things and grief over their loss, and we become subject to bondage and misery. But contemplation on the frail, perishable, loathsome nature of these, helps us to remain free from attachment and grief. This is the necessity of constant mindfulness about truth.

In *Digha-nikāya*, sutta 22, Buddha gives very detailed instructions as to how such contemplation is to be practised. For example, regarding the body, one should remember and contemplate that the body is only a combination of the four elements (earth, water, fire, air), that it is filled with all sorts of loathsome matter, flesh, bone, skin, entrails, dirt, bile, phlegm, blood, pus, etc. Going to a cemetery one should observe further how the dead body rots, decays, is eaten by dogs and vultures and afterwards gradually becomes reduced to and mixed up with the elements. By such intense contemplation he is able to remember what the body really is: how loathsome, how perishable, how transitory! 'He gives up all false emotions and affection for the body, his own and others.' By similar intense contemplation about sensation, mind and harmful mental states, he becomes free from attachment and grief regarding all these. The net result of this fourfold intense contemplation is detachment from all objects that bind man to the world.[24]

Right concentration (sammāsamādhi or samyaksamādhi)–One who has successfully guided his life in the light of the last seven rules and thereby freed himself from all passions and evil thoughts is fit to enter step by step into the four deeper and deeper stages of concentration that gradually take him to the goal of his long and arduous journey—cessation of suffering. He concentrates his pure and

unruffled mind on reasoning (vitarka) and investigation (vicāra) regarding the truths, and enjoys in this state, joy and ease born of detachment and pure thought. This is the first stage of intent meditation (dhyāna or jhāna).

When this concentration is successful, belief in the fourfold truth arises dispelling all doubts and, therefore, making reasoning and investigation unnecessary. From this results the second stage of concentration, in which there are joy, peace and internal tranquillity born of intense, unruffled contemplation. There is in this stage a consciousness of this joy and peace too.

In the next stage, attempt is made by him to initiate an attitude of indifference, to be able to detach himself even from the joy of concentration. From this results the third deeper kind of concentration, in which one experiences perfect equanimity, coupled with an experience of bodily ease. He is yet conscious of this ease and equanimity, though indifferent to the joy of concentration.

Lastly, he tries to put away even this consciousness of ease and equanimity and all the sense of joy and elation he previously had. He attains thereby the fourth state of concentration, a state of perfect equanimity, indifference and self-possession—without pain, without ease. Thus he attains the desired goal of cessation of all suffering, he attains to arhatship or nirvāṇa.[25] There are then perfect wisdom (prajña) and perfect righteousness (śīla).

To sum up the essential points of the eightfold path (or, what is the same, Buddha's ethical teachings), it may be noted first that the path consists of three main things—conduct (śīla), concentration (samādhi) and knowledge (prajñā) harmoniously cultivated. In Indian philosophy knowledge and morality are thought inseparable—not simply because morality, or doing of good, depends on the knowledge of what is good, about which all philosophers would agree, but also because perfection of knowledge is regarded as impossible without morality, perfect control of passions and prejudices. Buddha explicitly states in one of his discourses that virtue and wisdom purify each other and the two are inseparable.[26] In the eightfold path one starts with 'right views'—a mere intellectual apprehension of the fourfold truth. The mind is not yet purged of the previous wrong ideas and the passions or wrong emotions arising therefrom; moreover, old habits of thinking, speaking and acting also continue still. In a word, conflicting forces—the new good ones and the old bad ones—create, in terms of modern psychology, a divided personality. The seven steps beginning with right resolve furnish a continuous discipline for resolving this conflict by reforming the old personality. Repeated contemplation of what is true and good, trainng of the will and emotion accordingly, through steadfast determination and passionless behaviour, gradually achieve the harmonious personality in which thought and will and emotion are all thoroughly cultured and purified in the light of truth. The last step of perfect concentration is thus made possible by the removal of all obstacles. The result of this unhampered concentration on truth is perfect insight or wisdom, to which the riddle of existence stands clearly revealed once for all. Ignorance and desire are cut at their roots and the source of misery vanishes. Perfect wisdom, perfect goodness and perfect equanimity—complete relief from suffering—are simultaneously attained, therefore, in nirvāṇa.[27]

6. The Philosophical Implications of Buddha's Ethical Teachings

We may discuss here briefly some of the more important ideas about man and the world underlying Buddha's ethical teachings. Some of these are explicitly stated by Buddha himself. We shall mention four of these views, on which his ethics mainly depends, namely, (*a*) the theory of dependent

origination, (*b*) the theory of karma, (*c*) the theory of change, and (*d*) the theory of the non-existence of the soul.

(i) The Theory of Dependent Origniation or Conditional Existence of Things

There is a spontaneous and universal law of causation which conditions the appearance of all events, mental and physical. This law (dharma or dhamma) works automatically without the help of any conscious guide. In accordance with it, whenever a particular event (the cause) appears, it is followed by another particular event (the effect). 'On getting the cause, the effect arises.' The existence of *everything* is *conditional*, dependent on a cause. Nothing happens fortuitously or by chance. This is called the theory of dependent origination (Pratītyasamutpāda in Sanskrit and Paṭiccasamuppāda in Pāli).[28] This view, as Buddha himself makes clear, avoids two extreme views: on the one hand eternalism or the theory that some reality eternally exists independently of any condition and, on the other hand, nihilism or the theory that something existing can be annihilated or can cease to be. Buddha claims, therefore, to hold the middle view,[29] namely, that everything that we perceive possesses an existence but is dependent on something else, and that thing in turn does not perish without leaving some effect.

Buddha attaches so much importance to the understanding of this theory that he calls this the Dhamma. 'Let us put aside questions of the Beginning and the End.' he says, 'I will teach you the Dhamma: that being thus, this comes to be. From the coming to be of that, this airses. That being absent, this does not happen. From the cessation of that, this ceases.' 'He who sees the paṭiccasamuppāda sees the Dhamma, and he who sees the Dhamma, sees the paṭiccasamuppāda.' It is again compared to a staircase, by mounting which one can look round on the world and see it with the eye of a Buddha.[30] It is the failure to grasp this standpoint which, Buddha asserts, is the cause of all our troubles.[31] Later Buddhism, as Rhys Davids notes, does not pay much heed to this theory. But Buddha himself says that this theory is very profound.[32] We have seen already how this theory is applied to the solution of the question regarding the origin of misery, as well as to that regarding the removal of misery. We shall see just now how profound in its many-sided implications this theory is in some other respects as well.

(ii) The Theory of Karma

The belief in the theory of Karma, it will be seen, is only an aspect of this doctrine. The present existence of an individual is, according to this doctrine, as according to that of karma, the effect of its past; and its future would be the effect of its present existence. This has been seen very clearly already in connection with the explanation of the origin of suffering in the light of the theory of dependent origination. The law of karma is only a special form of the more general law of causation as conceived by Buddha.

(iii) The Doctrine of Universal Change and Impermanence

The doctrine of dependent origination also yields the Buddhist theory of the transitory nature of things. All things, Buddha repeatedly teaches, are subject to change and decay. As everything originates from some condition, it disappears when the condition ceases to be. Whatever has a beginning has also an end. Buddha, therefore, says, 'know that whatever exists arises from causes and conditions and is in every respect impermanent.'[33] 'That which seems everlasting will perish, that which is high will be laid low; where meeting is, parting will be; where birth is, death will come.'[34]

Transitoriness of life and wordly things is spoken of by many other poets and philosophers. Buddha logically perfects this view into the doctrine of *impermanence*. His later followers develop this further into a theory of *momentariness* (kṣaṇika-vāda), which means not only that *everything* has conditional and, therefore, non-permanent existence, but also that things last not even for short *periods* of time, but exist for *one partless moment only*. This doctrine of momentariness of all things is supported by later writers with elaborate arguments, one of which may be briefly noticed here: the criterion of the existence (sattā) of a thing is its capacity to produce some effect 'arthakriyākāritva-lakṣaṇam sat). A nonexistent thing, like a hare's horn, canot produce any effect. Now, from this criterion of existence, it may be deduced that a thing having existence must be momentary. If, for example, a thing like a seed be not accepted to be momentary, but thought to be lasting for more than one moment, then we have to show that it is capable of producing an effect during each moment it exists. Again, if it really remains the same unchanging thing during these moments, then it should be able to produce the *same effect* at every one of those moments. But we find that this is not the case. The seed in the house does not produce the seedling which is generated by a seed sown in the field. The seed in the house cannot then be the same as that in the field. But it may be said that though the seed does not *actually* produce the same effect always, it always has the *potentiality* to produce the same effect always, it always has the *potentiality* to produce it, and this protentiality becomes kinetic in the presence of suitable auxiliary conditions like earth, water, etc. Therefore, the seed is always the same. But this defence is weak; because then it is virtually confessed that the seed of the first moment is not the cause of the seedling, but that the seed modified by the other conditions really causes the effect. Hence the seed must be admitted to have changed. In this way it may be shown regarding everything that it does not stay unchanged during any two moments, because it does not produce the identical effect during both moments. Hence everything lasts only for a moment.

(iv) The Theory of the Non-existence of the Soul

The law of change is universal; neither man, nor any other being, animate or inanimate, is exempt from it. It is commonly believed that in man there is an abiding substance called the soul (ātmā), which persists through changes that overcome the body, exists before birth and after death, and migrates from one body to another. Consistently with his theories of conditional existence and universal change, Buddha denies the existence of such a soul. But how, it may be asked, does he then explain the continuity of a person through different births, or even through the different states of childhood, youth and old age? Though denying the continuity of an identical substance in man, Buddha does not deny the *continuity of the stream* of successive states that compose his life. Life is an unbroken series of states: each of these states depends on the condition just preceding and gives rise to the one just succeeding it. The continuity of the life-series is, therefore, based on a causal connection running through the different states. This continuity is often explained with the example of a lamp burning throughout the night. The flame of each moment is dependent on its own conditions and

different from that of another moment which is dependent on other conditions. Yet there is an unbroken succession of the different flames. Again, as from one flame another may be lighted, and though the two are different, they are connected causally, similarly, the end-state of this life may cause the beginning of the next. Rebirth, is, therefore, not transmigration, *i.e.* the migration of the same soul into another body; it is the causation of the next life by the present.[35] The conception of a soul is thus replaced here by that of an unbroken stream of consciousness as in the philosophy of William James. As the present state of consciousness inherits its characters from the previous ones, the past in a way continues in the present, through its effect. Memory thus becomes explicable even without a soul. This theory of the non-existence of soul (Anattā-vāda) plays a very important part in understanding the teachings of Buddha. He, therefore, repeatedly exhorts his disciples to give up the false view about the self. Buddha points out that people who suffer from the illusion of the self, do not know its nature clearly; still they strongly protest that they love the soul; they want to make the soul happy by obtaining salvation. This, he wittily remarks, is like falling in love with the most beautiful maiden in the land though she has never been seen nor known.[36] Or, it is like building a staircase for mounting a palace which has never been seen.[37]

Man is only a conventional name for a collection of different constituents,[38] the material body (kāya), the immaterial mind (manas or citta), the formless consciousness (vijñāna), just as a chariot is a collection of wheels, axles, shafts, etc.[39] The existence of man depends on this collection and it dissolves when the collection breaks up. The soul or the ego denotes nothing more than this collection.

From a psychological point of view, man, as perceived from without and within, is analysable also into a collection of five groups (pañca-skandhas) of changing elements, namely, (*a*) form (rūpa) consisting of the different factors which we perceive in this body having form, (*b*) feelings (vedanā) of pleasure, pain and indifference, (*c*) perception including understanding and naming (Sañjñā), (*d*) predispositions or tendencies generated by the impressions of past experience (saṁśkāras), and (*e*) consciousness itself (vijñāna).[40] The last four are together called nāma.

In summing up his teachings Buddha himself once said: 'Both in the past and even now do I set forth just this: suffering (duḥkha) and cessation of suffering.' Rhys Davids, quoting this authority observes that the theory of dependent origination (in its double aspect of explaining the world and explaining the origin of suffering), together with the formula of the eightfold path, gives us 'not only the whole of early Buddhism in a nutshell, but also just those points concerning which we find the most emphatic affirmations of Dhamma as Dhamma ascribed to Gautama.'[41] And this is the substance of what we have learnt in the above account of Buddha's teachings.

III. THE SCHOOLS OF BAUDDHA PHILOSOPHY

It has been found again and again in the history of human thought that every reasoned attempt to avoid philosophy lands a thinker into a new kind of philosophy.

In spite of Buddha's aversion to theoretical speculation, he never wanted to accept, not did he encourage his followers to accept, any course of action without reasoning and criticism. He was extremely rational and contemplative and wanted to penetrate into the very roots of human existence, and tried to supply the full justification of the ethical principles he followed and taught. It was no

wonder, therefore, that he himself incidentally laid down the foundation of a philosophical system. His philosophy, partly expressed and partly implicit, may be called positivism in so far as he taught that our thoughts should be confined to this world and to the improvement of our existence here. It may be called phenomenalism insofar as he taught that we were sure only of the phenomena we experienced. It is, therefore, a kind of empiricism in method because experience, according to him, was the source of knowledge.

These different aspects of his philosophy came to be developed by his followers along different lines as they were required to justify Buddha's teaching, to defend it from the severe criticism it had to face in India and outside, and to convert other thinkers to their faith. Buddha's reluctance to discuss the ten metaphysical questions concerning things beyond our experience and his silence about them came to be interpreted by his followers in different lights. Some took this attitude as only the sign of a throughgoing empiricism which must frankly admit the inability of the mind to decide non-empirical questions. According to this explanation, Buddha's attitude would be regarded as scepticism. Some other followers, mostly the Mahāyānists, interpreted Buddha's view neither as a denial of reality beyond objects of ordinary experience, nor as a denial of any means of knowing the non-empirical reality, but only as signifying the indescribability of that transcendental experience and reality. The justification of this last interpretation can be obtained from some facts of Buddha's life and teachings. Ordinary empiricists believe that our sense-experience is the only basis of all our knowledge; they do not admit the possibility of any non-sensuous experience. Buddha, however, taught the possibility of man's attaining in nirvāṇa an experience or consciousness which was not generated by the activity of the sense. The supreme value and importance that he attached to this non-empirical consciousness, justify his followers in supposing that he regarded this as the supreme reality, as well. The fact that very often Buddha used to say[42] that he had a profound experience of things 'far beyond', which is 'comprehended only by the wise' and 'not grasped by mere logic', may be taken to mean that his non-empirical experience can neither be logically proved with arguments nor be expressed in empirical ideas and language. These grounds lead some followers, as we shall see, to raise a philosophy of mysticism and transcendentalism out of the very silence of Buddha. The nemesis of neglected metaphysics thus overtakes Buddhism soon after the founder's passing away.

Buddhism, though primarily an ethical-religious movement, thus came to give birth to about thirty schools, not counting the minor one.[43] And some of these get into the deep waters of metaphysical speculation, heedless of the founder's warning. Of these many schools we shall first notice the four distinguished in India by Buddhist[44] and non-Buddhist writers. In this account, (*a*) some Bauddha philosophers are nihilists (śūnya-vādī or Mādhyamika), (*b*) others are subjective idealists (Vijñānavādī or Yogācāra, (*c*) others still are representationists or critical realists (Bāhyānumeya-vādī or Sautrāntika), and (*d*) the rest are direct realists (Bāhyapratyakṣa-vādī) or Vaibhāṣika). The first two of the above four schools come under Mahāyāna and the last two under Hīnayāna. It should be noted, however, that under both Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna there are many other schools.[45]

The fourfold classification of Bauddha philosophy is based upon two chief questions, one metaphysical or concerning reality and the other epistemological or concerning the knowing of reality. To the metaphysical question 'Is there at all any reality, mental or non-mental?' three different replies are given: (*a*) the Mādhhyamikas hold[46] that there is no reality, mental or non-mental; that all is void (śūnya). Therefore, they have been known as the nihilists (śūnya-vādins). (*b*) The Yogācāras hold that only the mental is real, the non-mental or the material world is all void of reality. They are, therefore,

called subjective idealists (vijñānavādins). (*c*) Still another class of Bauddhas hold that both the mental and the non-mental are real. They may, therefore, be called realists. Sometimes they are styled Sarvāstivādins (*i.e.* those who hold the reality of all things), though this term is often used in a narrower sense by some Buddhist writers.[47] But when the further epistemological question is asked: 'How is external reality known to exist?' this third group of thinkers, who believe in external reality, give two different answers. Some of them, called Sautrāntikas, hold that external objects are not perceived but known by *inference*. Others, known as Vaibhāṣikas, hold that the external world is directly *perceived*. Thus we have the four schools, representing the four important standpoints. This classification has much philosophical importance, even in the light of contemporary Western thought, where we find some of these different views advocated with great force. Let us consider these four schools.

1. The Mādhyamika School of Sūnya-vāda

The founder of this school is said to be Nāgārjuna, who was a Brahmin born in South India about the second century A.D.[48] Aśvaghoṣa, the author of *Buddhacarita*, is also regarded as a pioneer. In his famous work, *Mādhyamika-śāstra*, Nāgārjuna states, with great dialectical skill and scholarship, the philosophy of the Mādhyamika school.[49]

The doctrine of Śūnya-vāda has been understood in India, by non-Buddhist philosophers in general, to mean that the universe is totally devoid of reality, that everything is śūnya or void. In setting forth this doctrine in his *Saruadarśana-saṅgraha*, Mādhavācārya has mentioned the following as an argument in its support. The self (or the knower), the object (or the known) and knowledge are mutually interdependent. The reality of one depends on each of the other two, and if one be false, the others also must be so (just as the fatherhood of any person will be proved false if the existence of his children be proved to be false). But it must be admitted by all that when we perceive a snake, in a rope, the object perceived, namely, the snake is absolutely fasle. Hence the mind or the subject which knows such an object turns out to be false and its knowledge also becomes false. Thus it may be concluded that all that we perceive within or without, along with their perception and the percipient mind, are illusory like dream-objects. There is, therefore, nothing, mental or non-mental, which is real. The universe is śūnya or void of reality.

From such arguments it would appear that, according to the Mādhyamika view, everything is unreal. Hence it is that such a view came to be known as nihilism in Europe as well as in India (where it has also been termed Sarvavaināśika-vāda by some writers). The word *śūnya*, used by the Mādhyamikas themselves, is chiefly responsible for this notion—because śūnya means ordinarily void or empty. But when we study this philosophy more closely, we come to realise that the Madhyamika view is not really nihilism, as ordinaily supposed, and that it does not deny all reality, but only the apparent phenomenal world perceived by us. Behind this phenomenal world there is a reality which is not describable by any character, mental or non-mental, that we perceive. Being devoid of phenomenal characters, it is called śūnya. But this is only the negative aspect of the ultimate reality: it is only a description of what it is not. In the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (sagāthaka, 167) it is stated that the real nature of objects cannot be ascertained by the intellect and cannot, therefore, be described. That which is real must be independent and should not depend on anything else for its existence and origination. But everything we know of is dependent on some condition. Hence it

cannot be real. Again, it cannot be said to be unreal. Because an unreal thing, like a castle in the air, can never come into existence. To say that it is both real and unreal or that it is neither real nor unreal, would be unintelligible jargon.[50] Śūnyatā or voidness is the name for this indeterminable, indescribable real nature of things. Things appear to exist, but when we try to understand the real nature of their existence, our intellect is baffled. It cannot be called either real or unreal, or both real and unreal, or neither real nor unreal.

It will be seen that in the above arguments, the indescribable nature of things is deduced from the fact of their being dependent on other things or conditions, Nāgārjuna says, therefore, 'The fact of dependent origination is called by us śūnyatā.'[51] 'There is no dharma (character) of things which is not dependent on some other condition regarding its origin. Therefore, there is no dharma which is not śūnya.'[52] It would appear, therefore, that śūnya only means the conditional character of things, and their consequent constant changeability and indeterminability or indescribability.[53]

This view is called the middle (madhyama) path, because it avoids extreme views by denying, for example, both absolute reality and absolute unreality of things and asserting their conditional existence. This was the reason why Buddha, as we saw, called the theory of dependent origination—the middle path.[54] And so Nāgārjuna says[55] that śūnya-vāda is called the middle path because it implies the theory of dependent origination.

The conditionality of things which makes their own nature (svabhāva) unascertainable, either as real or unreal, etc., may be also regarded as a kind of relativity. Every character of a thing is conditioned by something else and therefore its existence is relative to that condition. Śūnya-vāda can therefore, also be interpreted as a theory of relativity which declares that no thing, no phenomenon experieced, has a fixed, absolute, independent character of its *own* (svabhāva) and, therefore, no description of any phenomenon can be said to be unconditionally true.

To this philosophy of phenomena (or things as they appear to us), the Mādhyamikas add a philosophy of noumenon (or reality in itself). Buddha's teachings regarding dependent origination, impermanence, etc., apply, they hold, only to the phenomenal world, to things commonly obsereved by us in ordinary expericence. But when nirvāṇa is attained and the conditions of sense-experience and the appearance of phenomena are controlled, what would be the nature of the resultant experience? To this we cannot apply the conditional characters true of phenomena. The Mādhyamikas, therefore, hold that there is a transcendental reality (noumenon) behind the phenomenal one and it is free from change, conditionality and all other phenomenal characters. As Nāgārjuna says: 'There are two truths, on which Buddha's teaching of Dharma depends, one is empirical (saṁvṛti-satya) and meant for the ordinary people, another is the transcendental or the absolutely true one (paramārtha-satya). Those who do not know the distinction between these two kinds of truth, cannot understand the profound mystery of Buddha's teachings.'[56]

The truth of the order is only a stepping-stone to the attainment of the higher. The nature of nirvāṇa-experience which takes one beyond ordinary experience cannot be described, it can only be suggested negatively with the help of words which describe our common experience. Nāgārjuna, therefore, describes nirvāṇa with a series of negatives, thus: 'That which is not known (ordinarily), not acquired anew, not destroyed, not eternal, not suppressed, not generated is called nirvāṇa.'[57] As with nirvāṇa so also with the Tathāgata or one who has realised nirvāṇa. His nature also cannot be described. That is why, when Buddha was asked what becomes of the Tathāgata after nirvāṇa is attained, he declined to discuss the question.

In the same light, the silence of Buddha regarding all metaphysical questions about non-

empirical things can be interpreted to mean that he believed in a transcendental experience and reality, the truths about which cannot be described in terms of common experience. Buddha's frequent statements that he had realised some profound truth which reasoning cannot grasp, can be cited also to support this Mādhyamika contention about the transcendental.[58]

It may be noted here that in its conception of twofold truth, its denial of the phenomenal world, its negative description of the transcendental, and its conception of nirvāṇa as the attainment of unity with the transcendental self, the Mādhyamika approaches very close to Advaita Vedānta as taught in some Upaniṣads and elaborated later by Gauḍapāda and Saṅkarācārya.

2. The Yogācāra School of Subjective Idealism

While agreeing with the Mādhyamikas, as to the unreality of external objects, the Yogācāra school differs from them in holding that the mind (citta) cannot be regarded as unreal. For then all reasoning and thinking would be false and the Mādhyamikas could not even establish that their own arguments were correct. To say that everything, mental or non-mental, is unreal is suicidal. The reality of the mind should at least be admitted in order to make correct thinking possible.

The mind, consisting of a stream of different kinds of ideas, is the only reality. Things that appear to be outside the mind, our body as well as other objects, are merely ideas of the mind. Just as in cases of dreams and hallucinations a man fancies to perceive things outside, though they do not really exist there, similarly the objects which appear to be out there, are really ideas in the mind. The existence of any external object cannot be proved, because it cannot be shown that the object is different from the consciousness of the object. As Dharmakīrti states, the blue colour and the consciousness of the blue colour are identical, because they are never perceived to exist separately. Though really one, they appear as two owing to illusion, just as the moon appears as two owing to defective vision. As an object is never known without the consciousness of it, the object cannot be proved to have an existence independent of consciousness.

The Yogācāras also point out the following absurdities which arise from the admission of an object external to the mind. An external object, if admitted, must be either partless (*i.e.*, atomic) or composite (*i.e.*, composed of many parts). But atoms cannot be perceived. A composite thing (like a pot) also cannot be perceived, because it is not possible to perceive *simultaneously* all the sides and parts of the object. Nor can it be said to be perceived *part by part*, because, if those parts are atomic they are too small to be perceived, and if they are composite, the original objection again arises, so if one admits extramental objects, the perception of these objects cannot be explained. These objections do not arise if the object be nothing other than conciousness, because the question of parts and whole does not arise with regard to consciousness. Another difficulty is that the consciousness of the object cannot arise before the object has come into existence. Neither can it arise afterwards, because the object, being momentary, vanishes as soon as it arises. The external object, according to those who admit it, being the cause of consciousness cannot be simultaneous with consciousness. Nor can it be said that the object may be known by consciousness after it has ceased to exist. For in that case, the object being in the *past*, there cannot be any *immediate* knowledge or *perception* of it. Perception of *present* objects, as we must admit always to have, remains, therefore, unexplained if objects are supposed to be external to the mind. This difficulty does not arise, if the object be supposed to be nothing other than consciousness.

The Yogācāra view is called Vijñāna-vāda or idealism because it admits that there is only one kind of reality which is of the nature of consciousness (vijñāna) and objects which appear to be material or external to consciousness are really ideas or states of consciousness. This theory may be described further as *subjective idealism*, because according to it the existence of an object perceived is not different from the *subject* or the perceving mind.

One of the chief difficulties of subjective idealism is: if an object depends for its existence solely on the subject, then, how is it that the mind cannot create at will any object at any time? How is it explained that objects do not change, appear or disappear at the will of the perceiver? To explain this difficulty, the Vijñāna-vādin says that the mind is a stream of momentary conscious state and within the stream there lie buried the impressions (saṁskāra) of all past experience. At a particular moment that latent impression comes to the surface of consciousness for which the circumstances of the moment are the most favourable. At that moment that impression attains maturity (paripāka), so to say, and develops into immediate consciousness or perception. It is thus that at that particular moment *only that object*, whose latent impression can, under the circumstances, reveal itself becomes perceived; just as in the case of the revival of past impressions in memory, though all the impressions are in the mind, only some are remembered at a particular time. This is why only some object can be perceived at a time and not any at will.

The mind considered in its aspect of being a store-house or home of all impressions is called by the Vijñāna-vādins Ālya-vijñāna.[59] It may be regarded as the potential mind and answers, to the soul or ātman of other systems, with the difference that it is not one unchanging substance like the soul, but is a stream of continuously changing states. Through culture and self-control this Ālya-vijñāna or the potential mind can gradually stop the arising of undesirable mental state and develop into the ideal state of nirvāṇa. Otherwise, it only gives rise to thoughts, desires, attachment which bind one more and more to the fictitious external world. The mind, the only reality according to this school, is truly its own place, it can make heaven of hell and hell of heaven.[60]

The Yogācarās are so called either because they used to practise yoga[61] by which they came to realise the sole reality of mind (as Ālya-vijñāna) dispelling all belief in the external world, or because they combined in them both critical inquisitiveness (yoga) and good conduct (ācāra).[62] Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Diṅnāga are the famous leaders of the Yogācāra school. *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* is one of its most important works.[63]

3. The Sautrāntika School of Representationism

The Sautrāntikas believe in the reality not only of the mind, but also of external objects. They point out that without the supposition of some external objects, it is not possible to explain even the illusory appearance of external objects. If one never perceived anywhere any external object, he could not say, as a Vijñāna-vādin does, that, through illusion, consciousness appears *like* an external object. The phrase 'like an external object' is as meaningless as 'like the son of a barren mother' because an external object is said by the Vijñāna-vādin to be wholly unreal and never perceived. Again, the argument from the simultaneity of consciousness and object to their identity is also defective. Whenever we have the preception of an object like a pot, the pot is felt as external and consciousness of it as internal (*i.e.* to be in the mind). So the object, from the very beginning, is known to be different from and not identical with consciousness. If the pot perceived were identical with the

subject, the perceiver would have said, 'I am the pot.' Besides, if there were no external objects, the distinction between the 'consciousness of a pot' and 'the consciousness of a cloth' could not be explained, because as consciousness both are identical; it is not only regarding the objects that they differ.

Hence we must admit the existence of different external objects outside consciousness. These objects give particular forms to the different states of consciousness. From these forms or representations of the objects in the mind, we can infer the existence of their causes, *i.e.* the objects outside the mind.

The reason why we cannot perceive at will any object at any time and place, lies in the fact that a perception depends on four different conditions[64] and not simply on the mind. There must be the object to impart its *form* to consciousness, there must be the conscious mind (or the state of the mind at the just previous moment) to cause the *consciousness* of the form, there must be the sense to *determine* the kind of the consciousness, that is, whether the consciousness of that object would be visual, tactual or of any other kind. Lastly, there must be some favourable *auxiliary* condition, such as light, convenient position, perceptible magnitude, etc. All these combined together bring about the perception of the object. The form of the object thus generated in the mind, is the effect of the object, among other things. The existnce of the objects is not of course perceived, because what mind immediately knows is the copy or representation of the object in its own consciousness. But from this it can *infer* the object without which the copy would not arise.

The Sautrāntika theory is, therefore, called also the theory of the inferability of external objects (Bāhyānumeya-vāda). The name 'Sautrāntika' is given to this school because it attaches exclusive importance to the authority of the *Sūtra–piṭaka*.[65] The arguments used by this school for the refutation of subjective idealism anticipated long ago some of the most important arguments which modern Western realists like Moore use to refute the subjective idealism of Berkely. The Sautrāntika position in epistemology resembles 'representationism' or the 'copy theory of ideas' which was common among Western philosophers like Locke. This exists even now in a modified form among some critical realists.

4. The Vaibhāṣika School

While agreeing with the Sautrāntikas regarding the reality of both the mental and the non-mental, the Vaibhāṣikas, like many modern neo-realists, point out that unless we admit that external objects are perceived by us, their existence cannot be known in any other way.[66] Inference of fire from the perception of smoke is possible, because in the past we have perceived both smoke and fire together. One who has never perceived fire previously cannot infer its existence from the perception of smoke. If external objects were never perceived, as the Sautrāntikas hold, then they could not even be inferred, simply from their mental forms. To one unacquainted with an external object, the mental form would not appear to be the *copy* or the *sign* of the existence of an extra-mental object, but as an original thing which does not owe its existence to anything outside the mind. Either, therefore, we have to accept subjective idealism (vijñāna-vāda) or, if that has been found unsatisfactory, we must admit that the external object is directly known. The Vaibhāṣikas thus come to hold 'a theory of direct realism' (bāhya, pratyakṣa-vāda).

The Abhidhamma treatises formed the general foundation of the philosophy of the realists. The

Vaibhāṣikas followed exclusively a particular commentary, *Vibhāṣā* (or *Abhidhammamahāvibhāṣa*) on an Abhidhamma treatise (*Abhidharmma-jñāna-praṣtñāna*).[67] Hence their name.

IV. THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM: HĪNAYĀNA AND MAHĀYĀNA

In respect of religion Buddhism is divided, as we know, into the two great schools, the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna.

Representing faithfully the earlier form of Buddhism the Hīnayāna, like Jainism, stands as an example of a religion without God. The place of God is taken in it by the universal moral law of karma or dharma which governs the universe in such a way that no fruit of action is lost and every individual gets the mind, the body and the place in life that he deserves by his past deeds. The life and teachings of Buddha furnish the ideal as well as the promise or the possibility of every fettered individual's attaining liberation. The organised church (saṅgha) of his faithful followers adds strength to spiritual aspirations. So an aspirant is advised to take the threefold solemn vow (tisaraṇa): 'I take refuge in Buddha, I take refuge in Dhamma, I take refuge in the Saṅgha.'

But with an unshaken confidence in his own power of achievement and a faith in the moral law that guarantees the preservation of every bit of progress made, the Hīnayānist hopes to obtain liberation in this or any other future life by following Buddha's noble path. His goal is Arhatship or Nibbāna, the state that extinguishes all his misery. Hīnayāna is, therefore, a religion of self-help. It sticks fast to Buddha's saying: Be a light unto thyself.'[68] 'Everyone can and should achieve the highest goal for and by himself.' It is inspired by the last words that Buddha said before he passed away: 'Decay is inherent in all things composed of parts. Work out your salvation with diligence.' This path is meant only for the strong, who are all too few in this world.

As the fold of Buddhism widened in course of time, it came to include not only the few select persons fit to follow this difficult ideal, but also multitudes of half-convinced nominal converts who neither understood the Path nor had the necessary moral strength to follow it. With the support of royal patrons like Aśoka, Buddhism gained in number but lost its original quality. The bulk of people who accepted Buddism, on grounds other than moral, brought it down to their own level. They came with their own habits, beliefs and traditions which soon became a part of the new faith they accepted. The teachers had to choose between upholding the ideal at the cost of number and upholding the number at the cost of the ideal. A few sturdy ones preferred the first. But the majority could not resist the temptation of the second. They came thus to build what they were pleased to call the Great Vehicle, Mahāyāna, contrasting it with the orthodox faith of the former, which they nicknamed the Lesser Vehicle, Hīnayāna. By the criterion of number Mahāyāna surely deserved the name, for it was designed to be a religious omnibus, with room enough to hold and suit persons of all tastes and cultures.

Its accommodating spirit and missionary zeal made it possible for Mahāyāna to penetrate into the Himalayas and move across to China, Korea and Japan and absorb peoples of diverse cultures. As it progressed, it assumed newer and newer forms, assimilating the beliefs of the people it admitted. Modern Mahāyānist writers are reasonably proud of their faith and love to call it a living, progressive religion whose adaptability is the sign of its vitality.

The accommodating spirit of Mahāyānism can be traced back to the catholic concern which Buddha himself had for the salvation of all beings. Mahāyānism emphasises this aspect of the founder's life and teachings. Mahāyānists point out that the long life of Buddha, after enlightenment, dedicated to the service of the suffering beings sets an example and ideal, namely, that enlightenment should be sought *not for one's own salvation* but for being able to minister to the moral needs of others. In fact, in course of time, Mahāyānism came to look upon the Hīnayānist saint's anxiety to liberate himself, as a lower ideal which had yet an element of selfishness in it, however subtle or sublime this selfishness might be. The ideal of the salvation of all sentient beings thus came to be regarded as the higher aspect of Buddha's teachings. The greatness of their faith, Mahāyānists contend, consists in this ideal and the inferiority of the Hīnayānists in the lack of it.[69]

The new elements which Mahāyānism came to acquire or develop in its different branches were many and sometimes conflicting. We shall mention here only a few of the more important ones.

(*a*) *The Ideal of Bodhisattva*: As noted previously, Mahāyāna regards even the desire for one's own salvation as selfish at bottom. In the place of personal liberation, it establishes the 'liberation of all sentient beings' as the ultimate goal of every Mahāyānist's aspirations. The vow that a devout Mahāyānist is expected to take is that he would try to achieve the State of Enlightenment, Bodhisattva (the Wisdom State-of-Existence), not to live aloof from the world but to work with perfect wisdom and love among the multitudes of suffering beings for removing their misery and achieving their salvation. This spiritual ideal of mahāyāna has, therefore, come to be called Bodhisattva.

One who has attained this ideal of Enlightenment and works for the salvation of other beings is also called a Bodhisattva. Love and wisdom (karuṇā and prajñā) constitute the essence of his existence.[70] Speaking about such perfect persons Nāgārjuna says in the *Bodhicitta*: 'Thus the essential nature of all Bodhisattvas is a great loving heart (mahākaruṇā citta) and all sentient beings constitute the object of ite love.'[71] 'Therefore, all Bodhisattvas, in order to emancipate sentient beings from misery, are inspired with great spiritual energy and mingle themselves in the filth of birth and death. Though thus they make themselves subject to the laws of birth and death, their hearts are free from sins and attachments. They are like unto those immaculate undefined lotus flowers which grow out of mire, yet are not contaminated by it.'[72] By an exchange (parivarta) of the fruits of action, a Bodhisattva relieves the miseries due to others with his own good deeds and suffers the consequences of their actions himself.

This ideal of Bodhisattva is nurtured by the Mahāyāna philosophy, which comes to think that all individuals are unreal as separate particular phenomena, and that they are all really grounded in *one* transcendental Reality (Ālya-vijñāna according to some yogācāras, or Śūnya or Tathata, according to some Mādhyamikas), of which they are the partial or illusory manifestations. This philosophy favoured the rejection of the idea of the individual ego and acceptance of a universal absolute self (Mahātman or Paramātman)[73] as the real self of man. Striving for the liberation of all and not simply for the little self (hīnātman) was, therefore, the logical outcome of this philosophy of the unity of all beings, Moreover, the idea that the transcendental Reality is not away from but within the phenomena paved the way for the belief that perfection or nirvāṇa is not to be sought away from the world but within it. Nirvāṇa, says Nāgārjuṇa, is to be found within the world by those who can see what the world really is at bottom.[74] Asceticism of the Hīnayāna is, therefore, replaced by a loving, enlightened interest in the world's affairs.

(*b*) *Buddha as God:* the philosophy which gives the advanced followers of Mahāyāna on the one hand, the ideal of Bodhisattva, supplies the backward ones, on the other hand, with a religion of

promise and hope. When an ordinary man finds himself crushed in life's struggle and fails, in spite of all his natural egoism, to avert misery, his weary spirit craves for some unfailing source of mercy and help. He turns to God. A religion of self-help, such as we have in early Buddhism, is a cold comfort to him. To such forlorn multitudes. Mahāyāna holds out the hope that Buddha's watchful eyes are on all miserable beings.

Buddha is identified with the transcendental Reality that Mahāyāna philosophy accepted. The historical Buddha or Gautama is believed, in the common Indian way, to be the incarnation of that ultimate Reality or Buddha. Many other previous incarnations of Buddha are also believed in and described in the famous Jātakas (or stories of the different *births* of Buddha). As in Advaita Vedānta, so also here, the ultimate Reality in itself is conceived as beyond all description (like the Nirguna Brahma). But this reality is also thought of as manifesting itself in this world, as the Dharmakāya or the regulator of the universe. In this aspect of Dharmakāya, the ultimate Reality or Buddha is anxious for the salvation of all beings, lends himself to incarnation in the different spiritual teachers and helps all beings out of misery. So, Buddha as the Dharmakāya, for all practical purposes, takes the place of God to whom the weary heart can pray for help, love and mercy. In this aspect, Buddha is also called Amitabha Buddha. Thus the religious hankerings of those who accepted Buddhism are also satisfied by the Mahāyāna by identifying Buddha with God.

(*c*) *The Restoration of the Self:* one of the sources of the ordinary man's dread of earlier Buddhism must have been the negation of self. If there is no self, for whom is one to work? Mahāyāna philosophy points out that it is the little individual ego which is false. But this apparent self has behind it the reality of one transcendental self (Mahātman), which is the Self of all beings. The devout Mahāyānist thus finds his self restored in a more elevating and magnified form.

Today the followers of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna often try to belittle one another. But to the discerning outsider they stand as the living examples of a fight between two equally noble motives, namely, greater purity and greater utility. To impartial observers the mighty current of Buddhism, like every current, naturally divides itself into two parts—the narrow but pure and impetuous stream that runs through the solitary uplands near the source, and the gradually widening river that floods and fertilises the vast plains below, though not unmingled with the indifferent streams that increase its volume on the way and not unsoiled with the vast amount of dirt that it carries down. The first without the second would remain sublime but relatively useless; the second without the first would cease to be. It is good, therefore, to find that attempts are being made to unify the Buddhists of all countries and schools by emphasising the basic common principles of the faith.[75]

---

1. Vide Humphreys, *Buddhism*, for a good account of the spread and present position of Buddhism in different parts of the world.
2. For this parable vide Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of Buddha*, 1, pp. 187–88; *Udāna*, VI. 4.
3. *Brahma-jāla-sutta*, op.cit., pp. 52–55.
4. *Ibid*., p. 44.
5. *Majjhima-nikāya-sutta*, 63 (Warren, p. 120.)
6. Vide *Dialogues*, I.P. 187. These questions become sixteen by putting for *each* of the four problems, four alternatives as in the case of the last problem.
7. *Suttas* 63 and 72 (*Avyākata-pañhā*).
8. *Majjhima-nikāya-sutta*, 63 (Warren, p. 122).
9. *Dīgha-mikāya-sutta*, 22 (Warren, p. 368).
10. Mrs. Rhys Davids' rendering 'the disposition for becoming' (*Buddhism*, Home, U.L., p. 91) is better than its ordinary rendering as 'existence,' which is nearly meaningless in this context. 'Bhāva, is used' in the meaning of 'disposition', in the Sāṅkhya and other

Indian systems.

11. Vide *Abhidhammattha-saṅgraha*, 8. 6.
12. *Añguttara-nikāya* III, 33 (Warren, pp. 215 f.).
13. *Majjhima-nikāya*, 26 (*Ibid*., pp. 339 f.).
14. *Majjhima-nikāya* (vide Sīlācāra's trans., P. 170, German Pali Society).
15. Rhys Davids shows that the Pali word for 'liberated,' 'Parinibbuto' is used of living persons and scarcely of dead Arhants. (Vide *Dialogues*, II. P. 132, f.n.)
16. Vide Prof. Radhakrishnan's article, 'The Teaching of Buddha by speech and silence,' *Hibberi, Journal*, April, 1934. Also his *Dhammapada* pp. 52 f.
17. Vide *Sāmañña-phala-sutt (Dialogues*, 1, p. 84).
18. *Ibid*.
19. *Vide Milinda-pañha*.
20. Full discussion occurs in *Dīgha-nikāya-sutta*, 22 (Warren, pp. 372–74). *Majjhima-nikāya* (quoted by Sogen, *Systems*, pp. 169–71); *Dhammapada*, Magga-vagga.
21. *Vide* Rhys Davids, *Dialogues*, I, pp. 62–63.
22. For a discussion see Humphreys, *Buddhism*, pp. 111f.
23. *Vide Majjhima-nikāya*, ī, p. 171 (E.T. by Sīlācāra).
24. *Vive* Warren, *Buddhism in Trans*., p. 354.
25. Vide *Poṭṭha pāda-sutta*, and *Sāmañña-phala-sutta* for the detailed treatment of the Jhānas (*Dialogues*. I. pp. 84 f, and 245 f.).
26. *Soṇadaṇda-sutta* (*ibid*., p. *156*).
27. Four stages, progressively attained by the initiate, on the path or stream leading to nirvāṇa are distinguished *viz*. the stages of a Srotāpanna (one who has entered the stream, the path) a Sakrdāgāmin (one who will return only once again to this world), an Anāgāmin (one who will not return and an Arhat (liberated in this very life).
28. *Visuddhimagga*, Chap. xvii (Warren, pp. 168 f.) Etymologically pratītay = getting (something), samutpāda = origination (of something else)
29. *Saṁyuśta-nikāya*, xxii (*ibid*., p. 165.)
30. *Dialogues*. II. p. 44.
31. *Mahānidāna-sutta* (Warren, p. 203).
32. *Ibid*.
33. *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (quoted in Sogen's *Systems*, p. 9).
34. *Dhammapada* (Chinese and Tibetan), Sogen *loe. cit*.
35. *Vide* Warren, pp. 234 f.
36. *Potthapāda-sutta* (*Dialogues*, 1. p. 258).
37. *Ibid*., p. 261
38. *Ibid*., pp. 259–61.
39. *Milinda-pañha*, Warren, pp. 129–33.
40. *Saṁyutta-nikāya, ibid*., pp. 138–45. *Vide* also Mrs. Rhys Davids: *Buddhist Psychology*, Chap. III; Suzuki: *Outlines*, pp. 150–53.
41. *Dialogues*. II, p. 44.
42. *Vide Brahmajāla-sutta*.
43. *Vide* Sogen *Systems*, p. 3.
44. *e.g*., Mokṣākaragupta in *Tarkabhāṣā*, pp. 60–71.
45. *Ibid*., Sogen mentions 21 schools of Hīnayāna and eight of Mahāyāna, which are said to have many other less known schools.
46. According to non-Buddhist Indian critics. This interpretation is not supported by the Mahāyānist writers as will be shown later.
47. *Vide* Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism*, pp. 63–76 (where Sarvāstivādin = Vaibhāṣika); also *Hist. of Phil. E.W*., Vol. I. pp. 174f. 190, 196, 200.
48. *Vide*, Sogen, *Systems*, Chap. V, p. 187.
49. This work, under the title, *mūlamadhyamika-Kārika* (Mādhyzmika sūtras of Nāgārjuna with the *Prasannapadā* com. of Chandrakīrti) was published by Poussin in 1903, in St. Petersbourg.
50. *Sarvadarśana-saṅgraha*, Chap. II.
51. *Mādhyamika-śāstra*, Chap. 24, *Kārikā*, 18.
52. *Ibid*., *Kārika*, 19.
53. Sogen. *Systems*, p. 14 and pp. 194–98;
54. *Suzuki*, *Outlines*, *Vide ante* p. 134.
55. *Kārikā* 18 quoted above.
56. *Mādhyamika-śāstra*, Chap. 24, *Kārikās* 8–9.
57. *Ibid*., Chap. 24, *Kārikā* 3.
58. *Vide* Prof. Radhakrishnan's article, 'The teaching of Buddha by speech and silence,' *Hibbert Journal*, April 1934 for a fuller discussion.

59. Vide Sogen, *Systems*, p. 258.
60. *Ibid*, p. 259.
61. Vide Sogen, *Systems*, p. 213.
62. *Sarvadarśana-saṅgraha*, Ch. II.
63. Vasubandhu's *Vijñaptimātrasiddhi* and *Trisvathevanirdeśa*, and Diṅnāga's *Alambenaparīkṣā* are the other source books.
64. These are called respectively, the ālambana, the samanantara, the adhipati and the sahakārī pratyayas (conditions).
65. Many works of this class are named suttānta.' Vide Sogen *Systems*, p. 5. for this interpretation of 'sautrāntika.'
66. *Vide* J.E. Turner, *A Theory of Direct Realism*, p. 8.
67. *Vide* Sogen. *Systems*, pp. 102 and 106.
68. 'atmadīpobhava.'
69. All these aspects of Mahāyānism are summed up by the eminent Japanese writer, D.T. Suzuki, in his *Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, thus: 'It (Mahāyānism) is the Buddhism which, inspired by a progressive spirit, broadened its original scope, so far as it did not contradict the inner significance of the teachings of the *Buddha*, and which assimilated other religio-philosophical beliefs within itself, whenever it felt that, by so doing, people of more widely different characters and intellectual endowments could be saved' (p. 10.)
70. *Vide* Suzuki *Outlines*, P. 296.
71. *Ibid*., p. 292.
72. *Ibid*., pp. 293–94.
73. *Vide* Sogen, *Systems* pp. 23–24.
74. *Vide* Nāgārjuna's saying 'na saṁsārasya nirvāṇa kiūcidasti viśeṣanam' etc., *Mādhyamika-śāstra*, Chap. 25, *Kārikā* 19.
75. See Humphreys, *Buddhism* (Penguin, 1951), pp. 73f and 230f for the 12 principles of a nava-yāna (new vehicle).