

# MENTAL HEALTH AND RELIGION



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# **MENTAL HEALTH AND RELIGION**

by  
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## PREFACE

The series of lectures here presented which is centred on the theme 'Mental Health and Religion' was delivered at the Thailand Theological Seminary, the Church of Christ in Thailand. This was in response to the invitation therefrom. The purpose of the arrangement of lectures and the method adopted have been made clear already in the introduction that follows.

As was generally done, the text of the lectures was to be sent three months in advance for its publication and distribution on the days of the lectures. This was also for translation work, either into English or into Thai, depending upon whether the lecturer would speak in Thai or in English. As for my lectures, I was requested to arrange for the translation also, since the Church was then heavily engaged in other commitments. However, due similarly to the prior commitments on the part of the translator, it has been almost a year before the translation work was undertaken by Mr. Siri Buddhasukh, lecturer of Buddhism of the Mahamakut Buddhist University and Editor of the REVIEW, journal of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. I would like to offer my thankfulness for the translator's cooperation.

Considering the rather long delay, I have ordered the printing immediately after the translation was finished. This was to save time in case the Church of Christ would like to undertake the

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printing itself. Again, I wish to tender my thanks for the Thailand Theological Seminary, the Church of Christ in Thailand, for the privilege offered me through the invitation.

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## INTRODUCTION

“With mutual understanding and sincerity towards each other the world would be more comfortable and peaceful”. Such is a saying which, commonplace as it appears, has in it a profound truth. Evidently wars can be traced back to fears, suspicion and failure to understand each other. Of the wars, none is so sinister as the religious one.

Possibly with this fact in mind, Acharn Sinclair Thompson, former professor at the Theological Seminary, had tried his best to study and understand Buddhism and Buddhists. It is to be regretted that he had passed away before the realisation of his objective, leaving the important task unfinished. The Theological Seminary, with a view to implementing his project, has arranged a special annual lecture series centred on the themes in line with his original purpose. This is, generally speaking, to discuss about some aspects of the relations between Christianity and Buddhism. The present one is the seventh of its kind, with Acharn Phorn Ratanasuwan as the lecturer who was invited by the committee for the “Thompson Memorial” headed by Acharn Muak Jailankarn. The lectures are based on “Mental Health and Religion.”

It is generally accepted that religion is the sustenance of the mind, bestowing upon it peace and bliss. In other words, religion can be looked upon as a medicine curing the diseases of the mind. In view of the ever-increasing number of peoples

suffering from mental diseases at present, it is obvious how the present series of lectures can be of vital importance to a modern man.

The lecturer brings into comparison some aspects of different religious teachings, showing how each religion looks at mind and what kind of prescription each offers to the diseased mind. Such an approach, besides promoting mutual understanding between religions, serves also to be of real practical use to the public. It reveals, above all, that religion, by whatever name it goes, is indispensable to man's life, being thereby really conducive to the goal of peace for mankind.

In conclusion, I would like to point to the fact that Acharn Thompson, the Theological Seminary and the former lecturers as well as Acharn Phorn Ratanasuwan, have all rendered an invaluable service in their earnest attempts to bridge the gap of understanding between people of different religious faiths, promoting understanding and then security. This is sure to result in the estranged relations between religion and the public at large being steadily improved and restored. Their efforts are deeply appreciated.

(Man Phong Udom)

*Thailand Theological Seminary,*

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# Lecture One

## WHY RELIGIOUS TEACHING IS LESS EFFECTIVE TODAY

Frankly speaking, the teaching of religion today does not produce such a result as can be reasonably expected. For whereas religion repeatedly stresses the importance of morality, it is obvious that most people are not yet convinced and, what is worse, are often led to believe on the contrary. This is mainly due to the present circumstances which appear to make the law of morality out of date or, at best, good for nothing. What is more significant to a modern man is the kind of happiness that is centred on matter or, to be more precise, money. What is most significant, therefore, is the means by which he can 'get rich quick'. His investment, whether in education, business or other activities, is invariably centred on such an intention.

The irony of this matter may be seen, if we care to look at it, in the sickening disproportion

between modern institutions of religion and those of secular knowledge. Whereas religious institutions barely make any recognised progress and extension, in the field of secular knowledge there is always an increasing demand for skilled manpower and higher progress even after the repeated increase of capital. Under the present circumstances, religious knowledge contributes little to the welfare of living and as such it is practically superseded by secular learning. Unlike his forefathers, a modern man has lost sight of his spiritual destination.

This brings about a chain of events which are obvious to all. Mind is paradoxically enslaved by matter, with the consequent insatiable desire for and attachment to matter and the unscrupulous means of satisfying such a desire. A modern man is bound to be more selfish, ignoring the gap between him and his less fortunate brethren, as long as he chooses to idolize matter and make a god of money.

**But an insatiable desire with a slavish attachment is a punishment in itself.** The more he can earn, the more he is forced to struggle. He is like a speeding car without a brake or, worse than that, without the steering-wheel. Material pro-

gress is successful in creating more desire and attachment but fails to provide a means whereby to fulfil it or even to check it. Rich or poor, a modern man is in the same boat i.e. the same battered and rudderless boat.

The cause of this is not so difficult to find out only if he sincerely wants to know and is frank enough to accept the fact that he is not infallible. Indeed it is nothing but his own slavish and feverish desire, which has turned him into a rudderless boat or a car with the steering-wheel broken. To remedy the situation he must face facts and mend his ways, for the sake of both himself and the generation to come. This refers to the youths of today who, with their strength supported by unbridled ambition, are strongly inclined to belligerence. Lack of religious principles has spurred them on to violence and terrorism. It is high time we considered how to check and reverse this trend.

### **How to teach religion more effectively**

With such an apathetic attitude towards morality the preaching of religion should take on a new method adapted to the needs of modern society

without, of course, losing its identity or being absorbed by society. The underlying motive is the same but emphasis should be placed on the condition of mental health irrespective of disturbances and distractions, along with the higher efficiency in daily work. In other words, religion cannot neglect the workaday world of Mr. Everyman, helping him to solve his daily problems much the same way as physicians cure their patients of diseases. Let a modern man see that the fundamental solution of his everyday problems lies in religion and he will turn to it on his own accord. It has now been accepted that inward happiness and a balanced mind, which refer to poise, lack of worry and anxiety and control of other negative emotions, are essential pre-requisites for a healthy life and growth. Let the people be convinced of the fact that the system for the development of such qualities can be best found in religion and they will take to it like ducks taking to water. Medical science has been promoted to a divinity as far as the care and welfare of the body is concerned; psychiatry and psychology along with other affiliated branches of study are being regarded as runners-up; but where is religion, the store-house of the wisdom of old, which specialises in this field and used to be treated as champion?

In absolute terms, religion is now an idle champion watching his challengers winning more points steadily. Is it destined to be a defeated champion?

**The "here and now" to be the main theme, but not the only one.**

Religious teaching in many cases is centred on the future to the detriment of the present life. This happens especially when ritualism comes first and foremost and the hereafter is the sole aim of merit-making. But a modern man is more objective in his manner of doing good. He is more willing to dispense charity or to sacrifice rather for such concrete plans and results as building schools and hospitals than for the edifice that yields abstract results such as temples and monasteries. Due to their apparent urgent needs, schools, hospitals and other welfare institutions have been on top of the priority list, whereas religious building are forced to occupy a lower position.

Just as a man who is hungry cannot be expected to solve other less urgent problems, so one who is troubled by such immediate problems as

money-making cannot be reminded of such remote affairs as merit-making. It is no wonder that religion which recommends reaping the harvest only in the hereafter do not appeal to the average modern mind. Whereas the fortunate few that are wealthy or well-to-do may find religion appealing to them, the bulk of the population appear to be alienated from religion as far as morality is concerned.

It has been admitted that a modern man is less happy than he should be in spite of the various happiness-producing gadgets invented for him by science and technology. Mental illness appears to increase in direct proportion to the increase of comforts and luxuries. Domestic and social problems are also multiplied through increasing complexities of a technological age. Modern civilization is doubtless successful in increasing desires but has for the most part failed in finding the ways and means by which to gratify them. Everything is ironically on the increase except the most important and most desirable thing: happiness and security.

And the section of society that is most susceptible to this corrosive influence is the younger generation: our own youth. Blessed with the strength

and vitality they just cannot remain indifferent or stand idle. Without moral anchor they become highly impulsive, thinking that rowdyism and violence can give them everything. This is the result partly of religious teaching in schools being merely perfunctory and partly of the environment being dominated by immoral influences. Youth problems have become world problem, being a source of trouble to their government, societies, parents and finally themselves.

It seems everybody is caught up in this wave of universal misery and wickedness,-----everybody, unless he or she is equipped with the resistance power of religion. The cutthroat competition and the breathless haste of a modern man in making money is sweeping man to his own destruction. He has lost his sense of value and devoted himself to the perishable aim that makes him helpless in the end. He is like a car without steering-wheel or a boat without rudder, being at the mercy of whatever spurs him on. Only religion **correctly taught and practised** can save him from self-destruction.

As earlier mentioned, religion must not neglect to solve man's immediate needs although his long-range development cannot be ignored, either.

The future and the hereafter, it must be emphasised, is to be based on the here and now, which serves as the infrastructure of the edifice of future development. This means the immunity or resistance power against the tempting or misleading influences in the environment as opposed to being mere victims of circumstances; the neutralising power within, which keeps one peaceful and balanced and enables one to regard the ills of life as acceptable, if not comfortable. The formulas by which to develop these requisite qualities have been set forth by religion and their validity proved in the lives of the Noble Disciples of all ages.

The advantage of religious practice is that there is no need for anybody to wait until he has solved his material problems before he can justifiably take interest in the inner development. Religion is the essence of life and he who ignores his own essence can be only superficially developed. Religion is to permeate his being and dominate his motive so that it can help solve his daily problem and give him fresh courage to brave whatever storms of life come his way. **This is the all-round development to be expected of religion.**

Unless religion is made to do this, it is sure to be an ex-champion knocked out by its mighty challenger of materialism.

### **What is mental health?**

The terms mental health and resistance power having been mentioned in passing in the earlier paragraphs, it is time we dealt with them in more detail.

Whenever we speak of a person with robust physical health we bring to mind a person with resistance power against the attacks of various diseases who can be exposed to the fury of the elements with little or no effect upon his body. This, however, is to be the outcome of, among other things, the normal functions of the organs of the body e.g. sufficient intake of food in both quality and quantity, the digestive and assimilation system, the repairment and elimination processes.

Another fact about a healthy person is that there are few kinds of food that are disagreeable to him. This cannot be expected of a patient or a person with poor health, who has to be always on the alert for a lot of things that are detrimental to him.

So is it with a person blessed with mental health. He is equipped with the resistance power against the change of emotions or the vicissitudes of life and can be exposed to the fury of temptations and threats with little or no effect upon his mind. Whatever negative, poisonous emotions have sneaked into his consciousness will be before long purged of the mental atmosphere through the effective elimination process. Whatever poison has affected the mind, causing some damage thereby, will be counteracted by the repairment process, with the damage recovered and the wound healed. This is due to the sufficient intake of mental food in both quality and quantity.

Now what is disagreeable or poisonous to the mind implies whatever stirs the mind to worry, anxiety, hatred, envy and other negative, destructive emotions. As worldlings, in contrast to Saints or Noble Disciples, we are more or less susceptible to these poisons, the difference being in both degree and kind. Whereas some are more vulnerable to lust-producing influences, others are distinctively less; and whereas some are highly resistant to greed but fall easy prey to irritation and anxiety, it may be vice versa to others. According to psychiatry,

we are all afflicted with at least fifteen per cent of mental disease,---- which means we are not perfectly sane in all respects. This agrees with the Buddhist principle that all worldlings are likewise afflicted with some kind or another of mental diseases through the influence of their own Kilesa or spiritual Defilement.

The elimination process now comes into play once the negative, destructive emotions have stolen into the consciousness. Some persons have the knack of getting rid of these unwelcomed guests within a short time, whereas others just cannot help cherishing them to their own detriment. The term 'just cannot help' tells everything. It means they knew better all the time but could not do otherwise. They are helpless victims of circumstances.

The repairment process implies the self-healing power or the ability to recover within a short time the balance that is disturbed by interferences. A person equipped with this quality may for a time suffer some damage from the onslaught of the invading poison but, having purged the infection from his mental atmosphere also knows how to heal the wound or scar, thereby strengthening himself with the immunity and the wisdom resulting therefrom.

All this, however, come from the assimilation system of his mental body: the ability to digest, absorb and make use of religious principles in time of emergency, when an effective weapon is needed to repulse the unwelcomed guests in the form of negative, destructive emotions. No other science or secular knowledge can do this as religion can. A sincerely religious person does not succumb to the marauders that invade his mental atmosphere. Religion only can teach him how to counteract such influences, provide himself with innumity and resistance power, eliminate these invaders when some of them have stealthily found their way into his consciousness and then heal the wound that was left by their work.

Like the body that grows with training, exercising and fighting, the mind grows with struggle, discipline and control. Every obstacle or mistake leaves in its wake a seed of more wisdom and strength provided the mind is taught how to learn from it. And what else can teach a man this tactics better than religion, which specialises for centuries in matters of mind?

Another advantage of mind-training is that unlike the body which has a limit in its capacity

for endurance and resistance, the mind is provided with an unlimited strength and inexhaustible resource. The body is irresistibly drawn to old age and its strength is thereby gradually declining with the lapse of time, but a man's mind or consciousness is not necessarily subject to the condition of the body. Besides helping the body in developing its strength and repulsing its diseases to a great degree, the mental part of a man appears to be able to function independently and to develop incessantly. Study the biographies of all great men and women of the world, whether in the fields of science, arts and religion, and you will find that their thoughts and creative power were not clouded or impaired by age or illness. Quite a number of them retained their integrity and mental balance to the end. This was due to the condition of their mental health being unaffected by outside influences.

### **The structure of mind**

What we call mind or the thinking part of man is a complex and stratified entity. In one sense it can be treated as a collective noun. Thus a living body whether of a man or an animal, strictly speaking, (*i.e. not merely from the grammatical point of view*) is

none other than a collectiven noun, since it needs a number of factors functioning collectively to maintain its life. These are, for instance, breathing, food, drink, clothing, and a range of temperature and atmospheric pressure.

Just as the life and health of a body requires the synchronised functioning of the factors mentioned above, so the health of the mind necessitates a number of essentials or requisites for the maintenance of its health or normal functioning. Lack of these requisites will result in the malfunctioning of the mind due to malnutrition. It is this mental malnutrition that produces various symptoms of mental aberrations and even of several physical ailments such as neurosis and other psychosomatic conditions. It has been made known recently that even some physical symptoms that are seemingly unconnected with the mind such as peptic ulcers and some skin diseases can be traced back to the mental malfunctioning. This, however, is not to exclude other symptoms that are known to be closely connected with the mind such as heart failure and migraine, to cite only the most common.

Such being the case, the issue of mental health deserves a great attention and interest on

the part of scholars, thinkers and religious persons everywhere, especially in this troubled times when "life is cheap", being threatened as it is by insecurities, dangers and a perverse sense of values. Facts, however unpleasant, should be laid bare to the public regarding the evils of mental malfunctioning. Data and statistics must be carefully collected to show how great are the potential dangers caused by mental aberrations. Diagnosis and treatment should be conducted faithfully and should this be done with the purely scientific mind i.e. based on truth-finding motive, it is sure to confirm the religious principles that although man is mind and matter, his life, health and suffering are the outcome more of his attitude of mind or mental health than of his physical health alone. True, it must be repeated, the physical or socio-economic aspect of his life **cannot** be overlooked, but to achieve that end his mental aspect i.e. the way he thinks, feels and reacts to various circumstances **must not** be neglected, either.

And the right attitude of mind that will determine a person's reaction to circumstances in a healthy manner has been for centuries within the framework of religions. But this means the religions that are taught and practised in the spirit of their

founders i.e. religions stripped of later accretions in the form of ritualism and superstition or black magic resultant of priestcraft. It is to be those religious injunctions firstly implanted into the mind and then applied as a guidance and a living force behind the socio-economic and politico-military development of the country as well as the domestic and daily problems of each individual. If religions or, to be more precise, religious preachers cannot do this, even for their own life and problems, the people are not to blame when they are led to seek for their solution elsewhere. Medical science and psychiatry have produced some tangible and accepted remedy at least for the ills of the body; what is the contribution of religion or again to be more precise, of religious preachers that can reach the helpless mass, rich and poor, high and low, who are suffering from mental malnutrition nowadays and who are in urgent need of a truly effective remedy?

### **The evils of poor mental health**

Unless we take it for granted, the evils of poor mental health are varied and upon close scrutiny are more formidable than we should think they are.

Just think how in a fit of anger people often do what they would not have dreamt of doing so at all in their sober moments. Less obvious but more often are the occasions where they are disturbed by a feeling of irritation and annoyance, which at least makes them unable to go on with their work. To rid themselves of such an undesirable emotion most people resort to entertainment and, what is worse, gambling and alcohol. This is dealing only with the symptoms, with the result of a waste of money and time accompanied by a bad habit. For these symptoms are temporarily drowned, only to rear their heads again with the same or even greater force.

Other examples may be seen in the feelings of fear, anxiety, worry, indecision and the like, each of which is known to be highly conducive to restlessness and then sleeplessness, two of the most common ills of our present civilization.

All these and others may be traced back to the lack of resistance power or firm determination, which is characteristic of sound mental health. The majority of people are nowadays like a log drifting in the sea, being at all times at the mercy of the waves and winds. **They are stealthily haunted by**

the fear of being not up-to-date or not following the fashion. In other words they lack self-confidence in doing what they have known and recognised as righteous, always fearing criticism and always preserving their status-symbols rather than their integrity. Such a feeble attitude of mind is like a feeble body. It is hypersensitive to any poisonous influence that cares to attack it. Just as a slight change of temperature is enough to send a feeble body to bed with serious illness, so a tempting or provoking influence insignificant to ordinary minds can upset the mind with poor mental health and damages its working ability for quite a long time. Look around you and see how many people are helplessly suffering from this poor mental health. Then check how much immunity you have to such disturbing influences.

It has been accepted in medical science that more than half of the diseases of the body nowadays can be traced back to poor mental health. The most common are diseases of the respiratory and digestive organs, blood pressure (which may be high or low), some skin diseases, allergic diseases, asthma, heart troubles and neurosis. Even children are no exception, for some of them have been found

to suffer from brain deficit through their mental strain.

Frankly speaking, the methods recommended by psychiatrists for the promotion of mental health and the treatment of mental ill can be already found in religions. The words, of course, are different, but the underlying philosophy is always the same. If there is any difference at all, it is in the fact that religion, with its centuries of direct experience in the fields of both diagnosis and treatment, can justifiably be regarded as an authoritative source if its prescription is honestly and earnestly followed in the spirit of its founder.

The advantage of a person with sound mental health based on religious principles is twofold. Besides being harmless to all he is sure to apply whatever strength and knowledge he possesses for the benefit of everybody. This kind of individual is real asset to his society and country and his value cannot be overestimated. It has to be admitted that few people today can be found to apply their influence, wealth or wisdom towards such a beneficial motive. It appears that the more wealthy, healthy and influential

a person is, the more he takes delight in applying them for the increase of **his own** resources regardless of others' sufferings. In fact such an attitude of mind can be expected of whoever strives solely for wealth and fame, whether he is a monk or a layman and whether he preaches religious or secular principles.

### **How religions can promote mental health**

In dealing with this fact I would like to refer first of all to some principles of Christianity, - - - without personal comment whatever as to whether or not they are true or reliable. The point to emphasize is only the benefit and necessity of religious faith, along with the difference between a person professing religion and another without any religious faith at all.

It is worth noting that a struggle to know or discuss about the innermost truth of a statement generally requires a lot more time and energy than to look for the benefit to be obtained from that statement. For example, when we are ill we usually think of the doctor or the medicine that can help us recover from the illness. How many patients have bothered to look into the statistical data of his doctor's record or inquired into the therapeutical

value of the ingredients in the doctor's prescription? Generally they know that such is the responsibility of the doctors and the pharmacists and they are satisfied with the social rule of 'division of labour', with each fulfilling his assignment. What if every patient should demand that they be informed of all the details of the doctor's background of learning and working and also of the compositions of every kind of medicine and how they have been prepared in such and such a factory?

The same is true of religious truths, An attempt to prove or disprove them through discussion by laymen who lack the pre-requisites for a reliable answer would result in more confusion instead of less. In this field as in the field of other sciences, the pre-requisites demanded of every searching mind is a period of time to be dedicated to the intense study along with the earnest practice and development. Only when these have been fulfilled can the searcher be qualified to realise the truths, especially the truths of religions, which are based more on inner development than the intellectual understanding. Thus before one can satisfactorily prove (or disprove), for example, the existence

of God, he is required to undertake a life that will lead him to such a proof or disproof. Frankly speaking, it is based on the same law of justice that underlies a person who aspires to practise medicine,---who is required to muster up all his assets for the purpose, in the form of money, time and efforts. This, however, is not to mention the quality of his brains or his own aptitude, which can sometimes disqualify the person who is already equipped with the three above-mentioned assets. If, however, one is not in a position to practise medicine, then he has no rational alternative but to follow the doctor's advice and prescription. And as far as religious truths are concerned, it is obvious that most people are no better than patients. If these patients were to demand that they be informed of everything about medical science and pharmacy, how, and when, could their illness be cured?

### **Benefit of Belief in God**

I believe that there are manifold benefits to be derived from a sincere belief in God. By this I means the unwavering belief that there really is the God who created the world and all things in

it; that He is able to know all our acts, words and even thoughts and thus nothing can be hidden from Him; that He is the paragon of justice and compassion and thus every reward offered and punishment meted out by Him cannot be disputed; that He is the giver of all things, including life and death; and that He is therefore both omnipotent and omniscient. Such a belief sincerely cherished always gives a person a sense of warmth coupled with a certainty of never being abandoned or left alone. In case of danger where all human help has failed, in case of approaching death when we are left alone, being shut up in a tunnel or marooned in a desolate land, we shall always be comforted and refreshed by hope even though we know that death is certain. For we know how He is silently watching us and is sure to give us a helping hand. Even in case of pain, torture and death, we know how they are but His lessons or test papers given us for the sake of our own growth and development. And if death should be inevitable, we know how we shall be rewarded with a far better life, which is eternal and blessed with all peace and happiness. With all these sincere beliefs we shall not be disturbed by anxiety, worry and fear. This ability to smile in the midst

of all adverse circumstances contributes essentially to the mental health, a valuable asset that ironically modern civilization and technology are unable to offer to their worshippers.

This shows how a religious faith can comfort and console a man and come to his rescue in time of need, when all human endeavours have failed. This is true also of other religious beliefs than Christianity. A Buddhist believing whole-heartedly in the Law of Karma will in the same way be encouraged thereby and will not despair or be driven to depression even when his life is beset with difficulties and distresses. His religious faith can give him the strength of will and the hope that science, technology or other doctrines of materialism, being as they are short-sighted and lop-sided views, cannot give at all.

### **The structure of mind**

Like the body, the mind, especially a healthy mind, has its own structure which is composed of the coming together of various virtues, one of the most important being sacrifice or detachment supported by compassion and the right attitude towards

life. This is the fountainhead from which spring other desirable virtues such as honesty, a sense of justice, courage and patience. Let us now consider the fountainhead of virtues in Christianity, one of Christ's injunctions that we should "love God with all our heart and soul and mind and love our neighbours as ourselves."

For those who whole-heartedly believe in the existence of God and also his omnipotence there is no room for depression or despair. The world and all things, our life included, are manifestations of His power and wisdom unequalled, let alone excelled, by anybody in the universe, no matter how bright, geniuslike and versatile that person is. Love of God based on this understanding is sure to be most faithful and fervent, at the same time self-renouncing and self-purifying, with God as the beacon of light and hope always safeguarding us from evil and encouraging us in doing good. His is the absolute Wisdom, the absolute Justice and the absolute Love.

For such persons there is no doubt in the saying, "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to

you." (*Luke 11;9*) Without room for depression or despair there is no anxiety or apprehension, which betrays a sense of insecurity. Such a mind is the source of moral qualities and such moral qualities taking birth from the mind are obviously more valuable and reliable than those enforced by the law of society and existing through fear of temporal punishment. The outward praise and blame, reward and punishment, success and failure, — — — all fade into insignificance before the inner, self-proven truth of the all-seeing and all-knowing power of God. Even death is nothing compared with the eternal life in the hereafter.

However, **detachment from worldly ambitions does not necessarily mean a cynical contempt or total renouncement, especially for lay disciples.** But it is a guarantee that when, for instance, wealth, honour or power is rightfully acquired, it is sure to be used for the benefit of others in a larger scale and in a more effective manner than if it is in the hands of a self-centred person who is unscrupulous in his efforts for the acquisition of wealth and fame. This is the intrinsic difference between a way of life prompted by nothing but carnal desires and another which is always based on, and guided

by, a religious teaching. Whereas the former is to be disturbed by the sporadic joys and sorrows at each turn of the events, the latter is far better immune against such vicissitudes and is blessed with poise and calm in the midst of disturbing influences. Such are the chief benefits to be derived from a sincere faith in God.

Another of Christ's injunctions "**Love thy neighbours as thyself**", also yields multiple benefits when sincerely followed. It is natural that we should be able to sacrifice everything for the sake of those whom we regard as near and dear to us. Such persons we regard as dependent on or belonging to us in some way or another and their happiness or suffering are thus considered an inseparable part of our own. Our feeling towards them is much the same way as our feeling towards ourselves and when we love them in this manner we can be said to love ourselves. This is common to everybody who holds some persons as dear to and inseparable from him. But the point to be emphasized here is to extend this kind of feeling to all people, irrespective of creed, caste or nationality; whether we know them or not. In other words, it is the extension

of loving-kindness to everybody in the sense often described in the saying, "goodwill to all, and malice towards none." This gives rise to a desire to render whatever assistance is possible to as many people as possible within our means. This may be in the form of money, advice or physical help, and may be on the individual or institutional level. It is obvious how the world today is in a critical need of people with such a philanthropic mind who sincerely regard other people as members of their own families. It is also evident that a religious teaching, be it expressed in the form of love of God or belief in Karma, is in a far better position to implant this all-inclusive loving-kindness and philanthropic spirit than a culture or civilization that professes to explain everything in terms of matter alone.

### **Mainstays of Mental Health**

As earlier mentioned, the mainstays of mental health are detachment, loving-kindness and sacrifice, which build up the immunity to the vicissitudes of life along with the preservation of mental strength. From the point of view of Christianity, these are doubtless the product of sincere and whole-hearted

belief in God. Hence the undeniable benefit of the belief in God,—the benefit that cannot be obtained from other material sources. It is no wonder, therefore, that Christians hold that to serve God is better than to serve all other things and persons, which some time or other may lead us to a bitter despair and disillusionment. But to serve God, unless our own faith in Him has been disturbed or shaken, will never produce any degree of bitterness or despair. All the adverse situations are viewed as nothing but necessary lessons for the sake of our own development. As a matter of fact there are many who voice their opinion that with all His power to create anything God should not have created such evils as exist in the world today. But looking from another angle it may be said that such evils are as necessary for our perfection as other kinds of goodness. With His all-knowing wisdom and all-inclusive compassion God must have seen some good points of the so-called evils and it is our duty to develop ourselves so as to be able to see such evils in their true perspective, and not only from our own prejudiced point of view. Even in extreme cases, where to our limited wisdom nothing good seems to come out of an evil, there is a saying, "Who will be wise

enough to teach God?". This is a warning reminding us of our finite intellect and of an attempt to look at things from God's point of view. Thus evil, as well as good, could be a godsend in that it helps us develop and unfold provided we can bring ourselves to face it bravely, resignedly and wisely. This can be said to be the criterion of success in life,----- the ability to remain calm and peaceful, to be at peace with oneself, in all adverse circumstances.

Like Adam and Eve (*when they were tempted*), the majority of people are misled into believing that sensual delight is the essence of life and that sensual perception of the world is everything. This has long been a gross mistake of mankind and will be so for a long time in future. It is for the benefit of correcting this mistake that evils have to be created. For those who are faithful to God it will be clear how those evils can be helpful in that they are like punishment meted out by parents to their children. The less wayward the children are, the less punishment they will suffer. But whether more or less, all such punishment is intended **to teach**, and never to revenge, however severe it sometimes is to some of the "children" who need it and for whom there is no other alternative in their rectification.

All these are looking at Christianity from the point of view of a Buddhist who is by no means converted. It is based on understanding of the spirit of Buddhism, which advocates a sincere tolerance, and also of such important themes of the Buddhist doctrine as the Four Noble Truths and the Law of Dependent Origination. Without a prejudiced and fault-finding eye it is possible for a Buddhist to admit the good points of other religious teachings and the benefits to be derived therefrom. Such things do exist if we do not close our eyes to them and to admit them is to admit the Truth, which should not by any means make us less Buddhist.

### **Buddhism and mental health**

Following the belief of God in Christianity, the Buddhist teachings, with the possibility of bearing some connection, although not similarity therewith, will be offered with some explanations.

The so-called Buddhist 'God', or rather the teaching that is a parallel to the Christian God, may be seen in the opening verses of the Dhammapada:

“Mind is the precedent for all Dhamma (phenomena etc.); All other things have mind as their superior; they are made up of mind.

When a person speaks or acts with an evil mind, suffering is sure to follow him like the wheels following the ox that draws a cart.

When a person speaks or acts with a good mind, happiness is sure to follow him like the shadow following him everywhere."

The Buddha's sayings quoted above may be interpreted in various meanings and depths, depending on the individual who interprets them. For an average person, they may be summed up into the fact that **everything comes from the mind, which is the most important of all.** By the 'mind' here are meant the thoughts and the results of thoughts faithfully recorded within the mind. That the mind is most important refers to the fact that if the mind is developed and equipped thereby with the moral qualities with purifying effect, the evils will be gradually reduced and removed. Such a mind will be rewarded by its own purity, with happiness arising from within and with calmness and unshakability in face of all adversities and turmoils. When, on the contrary, a mind is overcome by evils, it will reap its own harvest of suffering and whatever it does, speaks or thinks is sure to bring about its own ruin. This is the Buddhist idea of 'god', one of self-reward and self-punishment due to the faithful record of evil and good into one's own mind. This is the simplified version of explanation for an average person.

For a more technical explanation, it can be said that everything in the universe is born of Consciousness (*which is the technical term for mind*). In this sense we are referring to what may be called 'Universal Consciousness',--- the one that pervades everything everywhere, there being nothing and nowhere without Consciousness. This can be understood in the literal, absolute sense without fear of going to the extreme and overstepping oneself. The physical world, along with its flora and fauna, is included; so is matter along with its properties; so is the law governing all things that is generally called the law of nature. Consciousness in this general, absolute sense may be viewed as coming close to the meaning of God, except that other details such as those concerning our attitude towards it are obviously different. Of these one is the emphasis that is laid more on the inward factor (*i. e. mind*) than the outer one i. e. the environment. This, however, is not to be understood that the importance of environment is overlooked or denied, for such an attitude cannot be expected of the Buddha, who was always an advocator of the Middle Way. There is a word for the favourable circumstances or environment called Sappāya, which can help a person develop sooner

and with greater ease than if he should be handicapped by the unfavourable or adverse circumstances. But there often comes a time when the ideal or perfect circumstances cannot be obtained and we should learn to be satisfied with the best kind that is possible at the moment. The rest, then, is the test for the growth of the inner capacities. In other words, if after all we cannot have something, we must learn to do without it.

From the Buddhist point of view, those who understand what life is are those who realise the fact that it is Consciousness that creates life. This Consciousness is the Consciousness of every individual, as implied by the Buddha's saying in the doctrine of Dependent Origination, "Viññāṇa Paccayā Nāmarūpaṃ,"— — — there being Consciousness, there is name-and-form i.e. body-and-mind i.e. life. This is tantamount to saying that Consciousness is the creator of life. Another doctrine concerning the quality of Consciousness is the Law of Karma, which states that what an individual is depends upon the nature of his Consciousness. With good steadily and sufficiently accumulated from the past lives a blissful life at present is the reward. On the other hand, every evil done will be faithfully recorded in

the mind (*or Consciousness*) and when such an evil is habitually done the nature of Consciousness is changed for the worse, with suffering as an inevitable result. What we are now, therefore, is the result of what we have thought, and done accordingly.

From the above it will be seen that whether **Consciousness is changed for the better or for the worse results from its own accumulation of good or of evil.** It is therefore the good or evil accumulated that serves to reward and punish Consciousness. These accumulated good and evil survive the dissolution of body, each of which is always created by Consciousness itself to serve as supporter of results of good and evil. It is also this Consciousness that creates the destiny of each individual the nature of which is to be determined, as earlier mentioned, by the Karma (*good and evil*) in such a way as cannot be done for it by other persons or outside powers. So said the Buddha in the Dhammapada.

“Whatever destruction and ruin a ferocious robber or a malicious enemy can bring on to another is still incomparable to the destruction and ruin brought on to itself by a mind that establishes itself wrongly.

“Whatever good and benefit parents or relatives can bestow upon their offsprings or other relatives is by no means comparable to the good and benefit bestowed upon itself by a mind that establishes itself righteously.”

This system of establishing the mind righteously, if followed out to the point of finality, will make a Noble Disciple of the follower through the eradication of the pollutions in the deepest recess of the mind or Consciousness. This is the criterion of success, on which level the external circumstances are powerless to disturb the mind, be they the most adverse circumstances or the most excruciating pain of the body. So said the Buddha again.

“Just as a pillar with a firm foundation is not shaken by the winds from the four directions, so a virtuous person having realised the Four Noble Truths cannot be disturbed by suffering and happiness, which are characteristic of living in the world(s).”

“Blessed is the mind that in the presence of happiness and suffering is unshakable, being never grief-stricken but always purified of stains and secured.”

Upon an ordinary mind, however, the outer circumstances are bound to have more or less in-

fluence. This is due to attachment to one's own thoughts and feelings as well as to the body and generally gives rise to contradiction and a desire for the impossibility, including an inability to adapt oneself to the changing circumstances. But a person who is not enslaved by his own thoughts and is equipped with detachment can find peace and bliss wherever he dwells. A verse said by the Buddha in the Dhammapada shows this :

“Wherever an Arahat (highest grade of Noble Disciple) is, be it a house or a forest, a lowland or a highland, there it is for him a delightful place.”

The Christian concept that God always knows every moment we do good and evil may be said to find a parallel in Buddhism, which says that we are the witness or recorder of all our doing good and evil. However secret it may be to others, there is no secrecy for us who are their doers. That our good and evil are rewarded and punished by God may again be compared with the Buddhist statement that we are rewarded and punished by our own good and evil, and not **because of** them. This is because whenever we do good or evil, the

results or Vipāka of such good and evil are recorded with the perfect fidelity within our Consciousness. This kind of high-fidelity recording is automatic, infallible and also indestructible as long as such results have not exhausted themselves by some means or another. This is the real reward and punishment, since the record that is impressed within our character (*i.e. the depth of Consciousness*) is bound to produce the results of the nature and degree by which it was recorded. In other words, having been so recorded, sooner or later *i.e.* either before or after the dissolution of the present body, it is bound to be played back and to reveal its true nature, and then to produce its inevitable result, to the mind or Consciousness that has given it birth. This process, however, has been going on in everybody of us every moment, this very moment included. For, whether we know of it or not, we are harvesting the results of our old Karma (*good and evil*) that were sown some time in the past and at the same time we are sowing more Karma, the results of which we are destined to reap in the future (*which may be in the future time of this life or some future life or both*). This may be rather surprising for those not acquainted with the Buddhist teaching

but for those who understand and believe it there is one advantage, to both himself and his society or country. This is the power of self-restraint against doing evil and self-encouragement for doing good. Such a person is sure to follow the dictates of his own conscience without the enforcement of law. This is made possible through the belief in the eternality of life, which lasts as long as we want to live, in accordance with the Pali passage Tanahā Ponobbhavikā : **Desire leads to Rebirth. This means that we are able to live as long as we want to**, be it millions of years or even longer than the age of the earth. But it must be understood that, however long and seemingly permanent, life cannot be regarded as self. After all it is an unending chain of causes and effects and there is no abiding principle within. In the same spirit Christ has said, though not the same in words, **“The person who wants to save his own life will lose it; but the one who loses his life for my sake will save it”** (*Luke 9 : 24*)

To conclude, the nature, quality and circumstances for each individual life (*i.e. Consciousness*) is in accordance with what an individual has sown. The purpose of life is self-control against the

tyrannical power of old age, illness and death of the body which are imposed upon the mind.

If within the present life we cannot conquer or detach ourselves from the imposition of such forces it would be next to impossible to fare better in an after-life. If, on the contrary, we have made peace with ourselves regardless of the adverse circumstances and the condition of the body, regardless of the injustices and insults and the intense torture experienced by the body, then we are entitled to be called a **Conqueror i.e. the Conqueror of attachment of ill will and other evil passions**. It is the establishment of virtues that develops Consciousness and ennobles mind, providing it with a perfect immunity against all the intervening and disturbing influences. These are certainly conducive to the health both of the body and the mind and are the common aims of both Buddhism and Christianity. Such is how these two great teachings can co-exist and co-operate with each other.

## Lecture Two

### MEETING PLACE FOR BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The possibility of a meeting place for Buddhism and Christianity depends upon whether or not we shall be able to find some points of similarities in spite of the superficial differences, which are bound to exist between two religious teachings. Such differences should be viewed as diversities, which can by no means be obstacles to the aim of unity and harmony in working together for the sake of creating world peace and prosperity. Following, therefore, will be discussed the permutations and combinations of the two religious doctrines, showing how and where they can go together and then where each prefers to depart and take its own course without being at enmity with the other.

**Essential purposes of Buddhism  
and Christianity**

In Christianity the point of finality is eternal life or union with God in heaven or realm of the Deathlessness, Perfection and highest Bliss. This, it should be observed, is not the condition of extinction or nothingness since God is Life and can manifest Himself to man either visually or audibly on some occasions. He can also give inspiration to man, perform some miracles, read our minds and know of all our actions. Heaven in this sense is obviously is a realm of life and personality.

Now the point of finality in Buddhism is realization of Nibbāna, which, it must first be pointed out here, can be achieved within this life-time. It is to be regretted that many there are who think that such a realization is to be achieved only after death. This is perhaps parallel to a Christian belief that union with God can be attained to only after a person's death, --- which belief of the Christians I shall not comment upon here. But to those who hold that the Buddhist Nibbāna is attained to only after death, I would like to refer them to the fact that the Buddha had realised the condition of Nibbāna, being thereby fully enligh-

tened, on the Vesakha day when he twenty-nine years old. It was forty-five years later, when he was eighty years old, that he attained to the condition of Parinibbana. Thus by the former i.e. Nibbāna is meant the absolute extinction of passion, whereas the latter i.e. Parinibbāna implies dissolution or death of the person who previously realised Nibbāna.

A negation of Nibbāna or a misunderstanding of its meaning by Buddhists may be said to be parallel to a negation of the existence of God and his omnipotent powers on the part of Christians, both reflecting the gross ignorance of such religious persons. A misunderstanding in some cases could be equivalent to a disbelief, or even worse than a negative attitude in the form of a negation or the absence of interest in the matter since it could lead a person **away from** the truth as long as he cherishes such a wrong belief.

To return to Nibbāna in Buddhism, its realization is possible through realization of the fact that the Five Aggregates (or body-and-mind or, in more technical terms, name-and-form) are impermanent, being subject to the law of cause and effect. With the extinction of their causes and effects those

Aggregates are destined to extinction like a flame being extinguished through the lack of oil or fuel. For those who have realised Nibbāna there is a common realization of the truth that the Five Aggregates are not their 'self' and do not belong to them. The dissolution and extinction of those Aggregates are therefore viewed **as such**: the natural manifestation and phenomena without any connection or relation to them. With this realization comes the absolute Detachment, which means the absolute freedom from suffering, which is the meaning implied by Nibbāna. This condition can and must be attained to before death if it is to be of benefit after death, which, as it is commonly accepted, cannot make a saint of a sinner or vice versa.

With this understanding of Nibbāna I would like to humbly state my viewpoint that to realise the Land of God in Christianity should also be attained to within this life-time. Should anyone be still unable to see God or to enter into the Land of God before his death it would be unlikely that he should be able to do so after death. In other words, it is unlikely that a disciple who is not a saint should be transformed into one merely through his or her death. The sainthood should be the condition within the mind or of the mind, which cannot be produced

merely by death. Possibly this viewpoint of mine may contradict that of some Christians and that expressed in the Bible. It is therefore to be treated as a personal viewpoint coupled with an honest attempt to draw a parallel or some points of agreement — — — which is by no means an equation — — — between the two great religious teachings. My understanding of Nibbāna, which is the point of finality in Buddhism, leads me to understanding of the attainment to the Land of God and union with Him, and I hope this essence of understanding will be reciprocal to some extent by some Christians.

### **Realization of Nibbāna**

It is obvious that we come into contact with the world around us through our sensory perception. Unfortunately, our sense-organs have a limited efficiency. Thus, to say the least, they are not in a position to report everything to us. Scientifically speaking, there are more things to see than our eyes can see; there are again more sounds to hear than our ears can hear; and this is true of our other senses. This, however, is not to say how under some circumstances those senses of ours do not submit a faithful report to us, thus giving us a distorted

ideas of the true facts of things. How our limited and distorted ideas have worked adversely upon us may be seen in the following verses from the *Dhammapada* :

“How dark is the world ! Only a few can realise this. Just as few birds entangled in a snare can escape it, so only few people in the world can wriggle themselves free and go to the realm of bliss.”

“What is the use of enjoying and entertaining when the world is burning ? Enveloped in darkness why don't you look for the light ?”

Despite the fact that our perception is always limited and sometimes can be distorted most people are inclined to take their sense-organs as the ultimate sources of knowledge of reality. It is true that scientists having known this fact have invented various devices and instruments to increase the efficiency of our sense-organs such as the microscopes and the telescopes, but they again lead man into the same old trap in which he used to be lured:—reliance on and enslavement to the instruments he has invented. In other words, man has become enslaved by his own slaves, being dependent on and then attached to them. Whatever they can report he readily accepts as being ultimately true and whatever they cannot he brushes aside as being non-existent.

Of course, this reliance on the support of a proof or factual evidence is also advisable if not carried to excess. There is in Christianity the following saying:

“Put all things to test; keep what is good and avoid every kind of evil.”

— — — 1 Thessalonians 5 : 12

And in Buddhism there is the following advice in the *Kālāmsutta*, wherein the Buddha told the people of Kalama, saying,

“Do not believe in hearsay, traditions, rumour, textual reference, speculation, guess, logic, consistency with one’s own theory, the creditability of the speaker or personal respect for a monk as one’s own teacher.”

The negative instructions above were followed by a positive advice to base one’s own judgment on reason, on its advisability or otherwise and on one’s own experience. Thus having warned the *Kālāma* people against a mere personal attachment and other kinds of social sentiment the Buddha urged them to exercise the power of their intelligence and discrimination to be based always on an impartial analysis and the criterion of direct experience. In case one is not developed enough to

have a direct access to the self-evident truth it is also advisable to accept as a working hypothesis the results of the painstaking efforts on the part of others who are more developed so that those will be proved at a later date by one's own development to that level.

This is how both religious teachings stress the importance of the power of discrimination and an impartial analysis but at the same time remind their disciples of the limited efficiency of their intelligence which is based only on sensory perception. It is after all impossible to realise the ultimate truth through the function of such a level of intelligence. In view of this fact the Buddha taught one of his disciples by the name of Bāhiya how to be detached from sensory perception in the *Udana* 25/83 as follows:

“Whenever you see anything, Bāhiya, be mindful that there is merely a seeing (no person who sees); and whenever you hear, smell, taste, touch or think of anything, be also mindful that there is merely a hearing, smelling, tasting touching or thinking. Then your Consciousness will not be established on any plane. This is the end of suffering.”

Corinthians 3: 18,19 also recorded a teaching which is more or less the same in spirit as follows:

“No one should fool himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is a wise man by this world’s standard, he should become a fool, in order to be really wise. For what this world considers to be wisdom is nonsense in God’s sight. As the scripture says, “God traps the wise men in their cleverness.”

It may be noted that the sin committed by Adam and Eve after eating the forbidden fruit is this deficient and distorted view or intellect based on their sensory perception. This leads to a misunderstanding and the consequent misinterpretation, which results in a train of endless sufferings.

Now the realization of Nibbana is the abandonment of the distorted view regarding self. With the absolute detachment from the Aggregates previously regarded as self comes the profound tranquility, which is permanent and unshakable, freeing a person from the misleading and deceitful influence of sensory perception. This gives rise to the ability to see things as **they** really are. So said the Buddha in the *Dhammapada*.

“The Sekha disciples can realise this world, along with other realms of bliss and those of woe. They can grasp the Dhamma well-expounded by the Tathāgata like a wise florist selecting flowers.”

The term “Tathāgata” means the Buddha and is the word used by the Buddha to refer to himself. The word “Sekha” means the Noble Disciple who has attained to the lower stage of Enlightenment but who is irrevocably destined to the full-final stage sooner or later. This implies the minimum requirement for the person who can realise the nature of this world and the hereafter. Realisation of this world (*or ‘land’, literally translated*) does not mean the physical world, but refers introspectively to the body-and-mind or the Aggregates above-mentioned. Thus the Sekha disciples — — — this is the minimum requirement — — — realise how life or this body-and-mind comes to be, by whom or by what it was created, whether or not it will survive the physical or apparent death, why there are an endless variety of them and others relating to life and its manifestations and phenomena. The answers of these questions are evident in their minds without any grain of doubt. Thus they know, for example,

that Consciousness survives the physical death, that Consciousness always creates new life or body-and-mind as long as it is impregnated with even a grain of passion or defilement, that whatever good and evil done have their results or Vipāka faithfully recorded in a person's character on all occasions and at all times, that an individual life is the outcome of such Vipāka in the same way as a full-grown tree is the outcome of its own seed, that the nature and quality of each individual are determined by the nature and quality or Vipāka of the Karma (good and evil) that one has accumulated, that as long as Consciousness is still impregnated with a desire to live, so long will it be unable to die but it will go on creating life after life to satisfy its own desire, that even the various conditions of the mind (*feelings, thoughts etc.*) are impermanent, cannot be regarded as selves and are always dependent on a variety of causes for their birth, lasting and disappearance, much the same way as the seed produces the tree, which produces the seed and so forth as long as there are the temperature, soil and water favourable for its reproductive process.

As a matter of fact these are but parts of the knowledge that comes out from within, that

reaches out beyond the sensory perception and that is therefore not limited by external factors such as space and time. They are all the same for those who have abandoned the attachment to the Aggregates, who realise that they are now freed of all binding forces. Life is then seen as being based on one's own desire; it could last as long as, or even longer than, the life of this earth if one so wishes or it could also be eternal if one cherishes such a desire. The nature of life is again determined by the Karma i.e. good and evil accumulated. The development or evolution of life is possible through detachment from this body of flesh and blood, a willingness to sacrifice all worldly possessions and then all such defilements as greed, hatred, jealousy and the like. The mind is always bathed in goodwill and loving-kindness towards all. Whatever adverse circumstances will lose their power to disturb or even distract the mind. It is these qualities that contribute to the perfection and eternity of life, which, of course, has to be finally attained to in an invisible world beyond our stopover on this planet earth.

### **Realisation of God**

From what has been discussed so far, it may be said that the first and fundamental meaning of realisation of Nibbāna is abandonment of clinging

to Aggregates, which leads to a serious misunderstanding about self. However, those who can develop themselves to this stage are bound to be equipped with several moral qualities such as selflessness, loving-kindness and others, the most important being the knowledge that "everything is born of the mind; the mind is the most important thing." From the Christian point of view, this is nothing but the knowledge of God, realisation of God, an unshakable belief in God coupled with a devoted respect and admiration. Following are quotations showing how similar in essence are the principles of Christianity and Buddhism:

"For the person who wants to save his own life will lose it; but the one who loses his life for my sake will save it. Will a man gain anything if he wins the whole world but is himself lost or defeated?"

--- Luke 9 : 24,25

"Whoever loves his own life will lose it: whoever hates his own life in this world will keep it for life eternal."

--- John 12 : 25

"Happy are the pure in heart : they will see God. Happy are those who work for peace among men; God will call them his sons."

--- Matthew 5 : 8,9

Once a man came to Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "What good thing must I do to receive eternal life?" "Why do you ask me concerning what is good?" answered Jesus. "There is only One who is good. Keep the commandments if you want to enter life." "What commandments?" he asked. Jesus answered: "Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not lie; honour your father and mother; and love your neighbour as yourself." "I have obeyed all these commandments," the young man replied. "What else do I need to do?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sad because he was very rich.

Jesus then said to his disciples: "It will be very hard, I tell you, for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. I tell you something else: it is much harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." When the disciples heard this they were completely amazed. "Who can be saved, then?" they asked. Jesus looked straight at them and answered, "This is impossible for men; but for God everything is possible."

Then Peter spoke up. "Look," he said, "we have left everything and followed you. What will we have?" Jesus said to them : "I tell you this : when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne in the New Age, then you twelve followers of mine will also sit on thrones, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses and brothers or sisters, or father or mother or children or fields for my sake, will receive a hundred times more, and will be given eternal life."

--- Matthew 19 : 16-29

"Do not save riches here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal."

--- Matthew 6 : 19

"Sell all your belongings and give the money to the poor. Provide for yourselves purses that don't wear out, and save your riches in heaven, where they will never decrease, for no thief can get to them, no moth can destroy them. For your heart will always be where your riches are."

--- Luke 12 : 33,34

"The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. A man happens to find it, so he covers it up again. He is so happy

that he goes and sells everything he has, and then goes back and buys the field."

--- Matthew 13 : 44

"No one can be a slave to two masters : he will hate one and love the other ; he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

"This is why I tell you : do not be worried about the food and drink you need to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. After all, isn't life worth more than food ? and isn't the body worth more than clothes ? Look at the birds flying around : they do not plant seeds, gather a harvest, and put it in barns ; your Father in heaven takes care of them ! Aren't you worth much more than birds ? Which one of you can live a few years more by worrying about it ?

"And why worry about clothes ? Look how the wild flowers grow : they do not work or make clothes for themselves. But I tell you that not even Solomon, as rich as he was, had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers. It is God who clothes the wild grass -- grass that is here today, gone tomorrow, burned up in the oven. Will he not be all the more sure to clothe you ? How little is your faith ! So do not start worrying : "Where will my food come from ? or my drink ?

or my clothes? (These are the things the heathens are always after). Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead, give first place in his Kingdom and to what he requires, and he will provide you with all these other things. So do not worry about tomorrow: it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the trouble each day brings.”

--- Matthew 6 : 24-34

From the above quotations it is clear that those who still worry about riches or who are afraid of poverty, suffering, insult and death, being unable to shoulder the Cross and following in the foot-prints of Christ, cannot expect to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. In other words, those who lack such pre-requisite virtues as faith, loving-kindness, courage, fortitude and sincerity cannot be expected to be united with God after their deaths.

The same is true also of Buddhists. Those who have such worries and lack such essential virtues cannot hope to progress towards Nibbāna, let alone realise it. For it reflects their ignorance of the fact that “everything is born of mind, which is most important of all.” A sincere acceptance of this fact will encourage a person to at least remove

all such worries and fears. He will not be overwhelmed by it to such an extent that he is forced to violate the law of morality but at the same time he is ready, when occasion arises, to give up for the benefit of others whatever he has, however much or little it is.

A devout Christian also knows how limited is his wisdom and unlimited is the wisdom of God. This gives rise to the virtues of modesty and faith, a willingness to obey and follow whatever is Christ's injunction. Look at the following quotations :

But I tell you who hear me : Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone hits you on the cheek, let him hit the other one too ; if someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well. Give to everyone who asks you for something, and when someone takes what is yours, do not ask for it back. Do for others just what you want them to do for you.

If you love only the people who love you, why should you expect a blessing ? Even sinners love those who love them ! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you expect a blessing ? Even sinners lend

to sinners, to get back the same amount ! No ! Love your enemies and do good to them ; lend and expect nothing back. You will have a great reward, and you will be sons of the Most High God. For he is good to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your father is merciful.”

— Luke 6 : 27–36

It is evident that for an average man such teachings are very difficult to follow. Jesus must have known this when he said, “This is impossible for men; but for God everything is possible.” (Matthew 19: 26). Similarly, the advanced practices in Buddhism may appear to be next to impossible for an average man, who often finds that even the most fundamental Five Precepts are often very difficult to observe regularly or at all times. But for a really advanced person who is called a Noble Disciple or for a person who aspires to be one such practices are not beyond his capacity and such injunctions are readily accepted in view of the development within.

### **Where is Heaven ?**

There are several Biblical sayings pointing to the fact that those who will enter into the Kingdom

of God are permitted to do so only after their death, Thus such phrases as "God had received him", "he is with God now" and others usually mean that person is dead. Following are examples :

"Jesus said : 'I shall be with you a little longer, and then I shall go away to him who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me, for where I shall be you cannot go.'"

— John 7 : 33,34

This means Jesus knew he would not live long before he was to be crucified. Thus in Matthew 23: 37,38 there are the following:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophet and stone the messengers God has sent you! How many times have I wanted to put my arms around all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me! Now your home will be completely forsaken."

I would suggest considering the following passages in their essential meaning and perhaps it could be that the Kingdom of God is within our own minds and consequently could be attained to within this life-time. Some are as follows:

“There was a man named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, who belonged to the party of the Pharisees. One night he came to Jesus and said to him: “We know, Rabbi, that you are a teacher sent by God. No one could do the mighty works you are doing unless God were with him.” Jesus answered: “I tell you the truth; no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again.” “How can a grown man be born again?” Nicodemus asked. “He certainly cannot enter his mother’s womb and be born a second time!” “I tell you the truth,” replied Jesus, “that no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, and Spirit give birth to Spirit. Do not be surprised because I tell you ‘You must all be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it wishes, you hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. It is the same way with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

– John 3 : 1-8

“Where is your father?” they asked him. You know neither me nor my Father,” Jesus answered. “If you know me you would know my Father also.”

– John 8 : 19

“And he who sent me is with me ; he has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him.”

— John 8 : 29

The Father and I are one.”

— John 10 : 30

“ But if I do them ( my Father’s works ), even though you do not believe me, you should at least believe my works, in order that you may know once and for all that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father.”

— John 10 : 38

“ Don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you, the Spirit given you by God? You do not belong to yourselves but to God.”

— 1 Corinthians 6 : 19

“ God raised the Lord from death, and he will also raise us by his power.

You know that your bodies are part of the body of Christ. Shall I take a part of Christ’s body and make it part of the body of a prostitute? Impossible! Or perhaps you don’t know that the man who joins his body to a prostitute becomes physically one with her? The Scripture

says quite plainly, "The two will become one body." And he who joins himself to the Lord becomes spiritually one with him."

1 Corinthians 6 : 14-17

"If you love me you will obey my commandments. I will ask the Father and he will give you another Helper, the Spirit of Truth, to stay with you for ever. The world cannot receive him, because it cannot see him or know him. But you know him, for he remains with you and lives in you."

— John 14 : 15-17

"I have told you this while I am still with you. The Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and make you remember all that I have told you.

Peace I leave with you; my own peace I give you. I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid. You heard me say to you, 'I am leaving, but I will come back to you.' If you loved me you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because he is greater than I. I have told you this now before it all happens so that when it does happen you will believe. I cannot talk with you much longer, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me, but the

world must know that I love the Father; that is why I do everything that he commands me.

Rise, let us go from this place.”

— John 14 : 25–31

“ But now I am going to him who sent me; but none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ And now that I have told you sadness has filled your hearts. But I tell you the truth: it is better for you that I go away, because if I do not go the Helper will not come to you. But if I do go away, then I will send him to you. And when he comes he will prove to the people of the world that they are wrong about sin, and about what is right, and about God’s judgment. They are wrong about sin, because they do not believe in me; about what is right because I am going to the Father and you will not see me any more; about judgment because the ruler of this world has already been judged.

I have much more to tell you but now it would be too much for you to bear. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will tell you what he hears, and will speak of things to come. He will give me glory, for he will take what I have to say and tell it to you. All that my Father has is mine; that is why I said the Spirit will take what I give him and tell it to you.”

— John 16 : 5–15

“ This is what I say: let the Spirit direct your lives, and do not satisfy the desires of human nature. For what our human nature wants is opposed to what the Spirit wants: the two are enemies, and this means that you cannot do what you want to do. If the Spirit leads you, then you are not Subject to the Law.

What human nature does is quite plain. It shows itself in immoral, filthy, and indecent actions; in worship of idols and witchcraft. People become enemies, they fight, become jealous, angry and ambitious. They separate into parties and groups; they are envious, get drunk, have orgies, and do other things like these. I warn you now as I have before : those who do these things will not receive the Kingdom of God.

But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. There is no law against such things as these. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death their human nature, with all its passions and desires. The Spirit has given us life; he must also control our lives. We must not be proud, or irritate one another, or be jealous of one another.”

— Galathians 5 : 16-26

“ My brothers, if anyone is caught in any kind of wrongdoing, those of you who are

spiritual should set him right; but you must not do it in a gentle way. And keep an eye on yourself, so that you will not be tempted, too. Help carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will obey the law of Christ. If someone thinks he is something, when he really is nothing, he is only fooling himself. Each one should judge his own conduct for himself. If it is good, then he can be proud of what he himself has done, without having to compare it with what someone else has done. For everyone has to carry his own load.

The man who is being taught the Christian message should share all the good things he has with his teacher.

Do not deceive yourself. No one make a fool of God. A man will reap exactly what he plants. If he plants in the field of his natural desires, from it he will gather the harvest of death; if he plants in the field of the Spirit, from the Spirit he will gather the harvest of eternal life. So let us not become tired of doing good; for if we do not give up, the time will come when we will reap the harvest. So then, as often as we have the chance we should do good to everyone, but especially to those who belong to our family in the faith."

— Galathians 6 : 1-10

### **Where to see God**

The above-quoted Biblical sayings may be sufficient to give the readers an idea where we can find or see God. The more often they are read with care, the better and deeper understanding they will bestow upon the readers. However, in John 1 : 18 we read:

“No one has ever seen God. The only One, who is the same as God and is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”

These were the words spoken by John, who baptized Jesus. They appear to give an idea that except Jesus, nobody was on any account entitled to see God. But this was not the case, for in other places we are told of other persons who can also see God.

“Happy are the pure in heart: they will see God.”

— Matthew 5 : 8

“Happy are those who work for peace among men: God will call them his sons.”

— Matthew 5 : 9

The above two quotations were spoken by Jesus himself, showing how other people can also

see God provided they are pure in heart and have made peace with themselves. However, a question arises **when** such persons can see God: whether or not it would be necessary for them to wait until after they have died before they are entitled to see God. The following quotation appears to confirm, literally speaking, that they must be able to see Him **after** their death. It is:

“ Jesus answered, “ I tell you the truth: no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again.”

— John 3 : 3

But this “being born again” refers to the birth in spirit, and not one of the body. For in John 3 : 5,6 He added, saying,

“ “ I tell you the truth, ’ replied Jesus, ‘ that no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, and Spirit gives birth to Spirit.’ ”

Thus it can be concluded that the “being born again” here implies a person being converted to belief in God and in Jesus as the Son of God. The following will make clear the implied meaning.

“Where is your father?” they asked him.  
“ You know neither me nor my Father, “ Jesus

answered," If you knew me you would know my Father also."

— John 8 : 19

This is another of Jesus' sayings and it may be concluded here again that one can have God within his own mind and can always see God within who is pure in heart, whose mind is peaceful and who follow Christ's injunctions, especially the two main essentials viz. love God with all his heart and soul and love his neighbor as himself. Another saying referring to the fact that all good comes from God is as follows :

"You know that Christ appeared in order to take away men's sins, and that there is no sin in him. So everyone who lives in Christ does not continue to sin; but whoever continues to sin has never seen him, nor has he ever known him.

Let no one deceive you, children! Whoever does what is right is righteous, just as Christ is righteous. Whoever continues to sin belongs to the Devil, for the Devil has sinned from the very beginning. The Son of God appeared for this very reason, to destroy the Devil's works.

Whoever is a child of God does not continue to sin, because God's very nature is in him; and because God is his Father, he is not

able to continue to sin. Here is the clear difference between God's children and the Devil's children: anyone who does not do what is right, or does not love his brother, is not God's child."

— 1 John 3 : 5-10

"If a man is tempted by such testing, he must not say, "This temptation comes from God." For God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. But a person is tempted when he is drawn away and trapped by his own evil desire; then his evil desire conceives and gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death."

— James 1 : 13,14

### **What is Satan ?**

The facts about Satan is also worth a careful study in that they could help us obtain a better picture of God. Following will be quotations to help us towards that understanding :

"From that time on Jesus began to speak plainly to his disciples: "I must go to Jerusalem and suffer much from the Elder, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. I will be put to death, and on the third day I will be raised to life." Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "God forbid it, Lord!" he said. "This

must never happen to you!" Jesus turned around and said to Peter: "Get away from me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my way, for these thoughts of yours are men's thoughts, not God's!"

— Matthew 16 : 21-23

It is apparent enough from the above quotation that when Jesus Spoke to Peter, calling him Satan, he meant to refer to the wrong thoughts of Peter rather than Peter himself. This is parallel to a word in Buddhism called *Māra*, one implication of which is the evil passion that occurs in the mind of a person. In this place the evil passion meant the concern over or attachment to the body, thinking that it is the real self and forgetting the fact that by giving up this impermanent life for the sake of an ideal or of God can a person be rewarded with an eternal life.

Also during his fast for forty days he had been put to test in several manners by Mara or Satan in this sense. A detailed story can be studied from Matthew 4 : 1-11.

But Satan in other places can also imply evil unseen beings — — — unseen like other divine beings in heaven, the difference being that they are evil or sinners. Thus the Bible says :

“One Sabbath day Jesus was teaching in a synagogue. A woman was there who had an evil spirit in her that had kept her sick for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her he called out to her, “Woman, you are free from your sickness!” He placed his hands on her and at once she strightened herself up and praised God. The officials of the synagogue was angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; so he spoke up and said to the people, “There are six days in which we should work; so come during those days and be healed, but not on the Sabbath!” The Lord answered him by saying, “You imposters! Anyone of you would untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and take it out to give it water on the Sabbath. Now here is this descendant of Abraham whom Satan has kept in bonds for eighteen years; should she not be freed from her bonds on the Sabbath?”

--- Luke 13 : 10-16

Also in Luke 11 : 14-18 there are the following:—

“Jesus was driving out a demon that could not talk: when the demon was out the man began to talk. The crowds were amazed, but some of them said, “It is Beelzebul, the chief of the demons, who gives him the power

to drive them out.” Others wanted to trap him, so they asked him to perform a miracle to show God’s approval. But Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: “Any country that divides itself into groups and fight one another will not last very long; a family divided against itself falls apart. So if Satan’s Kingdom has groups fighting each other, how can it last?”

It is obvious from the above quotations that by the word ‘Satan’ was meant the evil unseen beings,——the kind that is in Buddhism called the wicked beings of the OPAPĀTIKA birth i.e. the instantaneous birth. Beings of this kind of birth do not have to pass through a period of infancy or depend upon the parents. Their lives and bodies are mind-made, springing from the results of Karma embedded within their Consciousness. As a matter of fact there are several other sayings in the Bible that point to this fact: the fact that Satan can be wicked beings in the unseen worlds of the life after death.

### **Comparative value of morality based on belief in God and of one based on belief in NIBBĀNA**

As earlier mentioned, morality in Christianity is based on belief in God, without which it is

impossible to practise any rule of morality. However rich or influential, it is difficult for a person without a belief in God to be really happy. Thus there are no rules of ethics and mental health in Christianity that can be divorced from belief in God.

But it is to be admitted that there are also people without such belief who can practise the law of morality and who appear to have a sound mental health. And it is also worth noting that a person without a belief in any religious doctrine at all cannot be expected to have a reliable degree of morality or to be able to remain balanced and poised in face of the adverse circumstances. In fact the concept of God as expressed in both the Old and the New Testaments is really a good one in laying the foundation of morality and as a means of combating the evils and sufferings of life. A sincere belief in God coupled with a faithful love in Him, to the extent expressed in the Bible "with all the heart and soul and mind", is sure to facilitate all other difficult practices such as to love our neighbour or our enemies as ourselves, to give up our lives for the sake of God or of mankind. Thus a person (especially a so-called Christian) without such a belief may be compared to a tree with rotten roots,

being ready to topple before a squall of the wind of trying circumstances.

But faith in God is also to be coupled with understanding or wisdom so that it will be deep-rooted and not easily shaken. A blind faith cannot avoid being whimsical and vulnerable to opposing forces. Hence the following instructions by Jesus himself,

“Listen, then, and learn what the parable of the sower means. Those who hear the message about the Kingdom but do not understand it are like the seed that fell along the path. The Evil One comes and snatches away what was sown in them. The seed that fell on rocky grounds stand for those who receive the message gladly as soon as they hear it. But it does not sink deep in them, and they don't last long. So when trouble or persecution comes because of the message, they give up at once. The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear the message, but the worries about his life and the love for riches choke the message, and they don't bear fruit. And the seed sown in the good soil stands for those who hear the message and understand it; they bear fruit, some as much as one hundred, others sixty, and others thirty.”

— Matthew 13 : 18–23

Another quotation also confirms the importance of understanding, which is commended as drawing the person close to the Kingdom of God. It reads:

“A teacher of the Law was there who heard the discussion. He saw that Jesus had given the Sadducees a good answer, so he came to him with a question: “Which commandment is the most important of all?” “This is the most important one,” said Jesus. “Hear, Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord. You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second most important commandment is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment more important than these two.”

The teacher of the Law said to Jesus, “Well done, Teacher! It is true, as you say, that only the Lord is God, and that there is no other god but he. And so man must love God with all his heart, with all his mind, and with all his strength: and he must love his neighbour as himself. It is much better to obey these two commandments than to bring animals to be burned on the altar and offer other sacrifices to God.” Jesus noticed how wise his answer was,

and so he told him: "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." After this nobody dared to ask Jesus any more questions.

— Mark 12 : 28–34

However, belief must be supported by the practice accordingly, otherwise it is of no avail. Thus the Bible says,

" My brothers! What good is it for a man to say ' I have faith ' if his actions do not prove it? Can that faith save him? Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, ' God bless you! Keep warm and eat well! --- if you don't give them the necessities of life? This is how it is with faith: if it is alone and has no actions with it, then it is dead.

But someone will say, ' You have faith and I have actions.' My answer is, ' Show me how you can have faith without actions; I will show you my faith by my actions.' You believe that there is only one God? Good! The demons also believe --- and tremble with fear. Foolish man! Do you want to be shown that faith without actions is useless? How was our ancestor Abraham put right with God? It was through his actions, when he offered his sons Isaac on the

altar. Can't you see? His faith and his actions worked together; his faith was made perfect through his actions. And the Scripture came true that said, 'Abraham believed God, and because of his faith God accepted him as righteous.' And God called him, 'My friend Abraham.' So you see that a man is put right with God by what he does, and not because of his faith alone.

It was the same with the prostitute Rahab. She was put right with God because of her actions, by welcoming the Jewish messengers and helping them leave by a different road. For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without actions is dead.

— James 2 : 14—26

Having pointed out how important is the belief (coupled with actions) in God, let us see for the sake of comparison what is the basis of morality in Buddhism, thereby enabling us to remain calm and balanced and also to do away with all kinds of suffering, including the fear of death.

### **What realization of NIBBĀNA means**

To recall what was earlier mentioned, realization of NIBBĀNA in the most fundamental sense

means the total abandonment of the idea of self in the Five Aggregates, which makes a person cease to identify himself with the manifestations and phenomena of those Aggregates. This realization gives rise to realization also of the nature of all kinds of life in the cosmos i.e. in all the worlds existing, both seen and unseen or visible and invisible. In one sense the path towards such a realization may be seen in the following summary teaching of the Buddha, who said to one of the youths who came to him for questions:

“Be always mindful, O Mogharaja, looking at the world as void. Having given up the wrong view regarding self (in the Aggregates), you will rise beyond death. The Lord of Death is unable to see those who look at the world in this manner.”

— Mogharājapañha, Suttanipāta 25/544.

The above is the Buddha's answer to the question put to him by a youth named Mogharaja, who wondered how he should be able to conquer death. It should be noted that one of the synonyms of Nibbana is Immortality or Deathlessness and those who realise Nibbana are therefore called immortal

or deathless. There are also other words of description for Nibbana such as the condition of void, of no rebirth. Unfortunately, these two have given a wrong impression on the minds of many, who are given to speculation and conclude that it would be of no use to realise the condition of void, which to them is synonymous to emptiness or nothingness, or the condition of no re-birth, which again should be something like lifeless. The truth of the matter, however, is that the void or emptiness is not nothingness in the sense it is speculated. It is, to say the least, the emptiness of feeling or sensation and thoughts of all kinds, which is the result of raising the Consciousness over the limitations imposed upon us by those feelings and thoughts. These limitations, besides narrowing our perception as their name implies, also distort our viewpoint and produce misunderstanding and the consequent misinterpretation. We are thus led to take the sensory perception of the world or environment as being the ultimate sources of knowledge and then rely upon the knowledge coming from outside. But with Consciousness being so raised there arises the wisdom **from within**, the knowledge that is independent of the five senses. It is this level of knowledge or this kind of wisdom

that enables us to obtain an uncoloured view of things, seeing them as **they** really are.

The chief obstacle to realising Nibbāna is attachment to the idea of self or self-identification with the Five Aggregates. To overcome this obstacle there must be developed the wisdom by which to see that whatever is regarded or clung to as self or belonging to self is all subject to the Three Fundamental Laws viz. Impermanence, Suffering and Nonselfness. Thus whatever is of the nature to be born is consequently of the nature to die. Whatever is to die or to disappear and change cannot be regarded as self since sooner or later it is due to disintegrate and cease to exist. With this direct realisation the mind will be void of feeling or sensation and thoughts. It is simultaneous and automatic, like the extinction of the flame when the last drop of oil is consumed.

Of course, such a void is by no means easy to attain to, for the habit and character accumulated throughout aeons cannot be dropped overnight. It was said in the Canon that even the eighth step of Jhāna or advanced meditation called Neither-Perception-nor-Non-perception (Nevasannānāsannāyatana)

cannot produce this absolute void. This level of Jhāna, so it is said, makes a person so oblivious of the surroundings that even the sound of a thunder-bolt or the touch of another person, however strong, cannot have any effect in producing consciousness on him. This is like a person in the most profound sleep or one almost dead. But even with such a depth of meditation the absolute void cannot be realised as long as there is in the deepest recess a grain of attachment to the idea of self. On the other hand, a person may be conscious of the sound and the touch and sometimes may be opening his eyes, but if there occurs at that moment a realisation of the truth that “whatever is of the nature to be born is consequently of the nature to die”, “there is no self whatever in such phenomena”, then the absolute void of Nibbāna could be realised in a flash of enlightenment.

That the absolute void of Nibbāna is so difficult to realise is because it must be absolutely divested of and divorced from even an atom of desire i.e. the desire to have or to be something. The differences between a very deep meditation with some amount of self or ego remaining and another meditation not as deep but absolutely without self or ego are enumerated as follows:

1. The former is always impregnated with a degree of the pressure of attachment exerting on the mind, whereas the latter being absolutely without it is completely free.

2. The former due to the presence of some pressure as earlier mentioned cannot hope to be perfectly calm, bright and unshakable. Having withdrawn from such a lofty condition the external circumstances will gradually exert its influence on the mind, the lofty condition of which previously attained to is now gradually fading away before the silent onslaught of circumstances. The latter, on the other hand, has its quality of calm, poise and blissfulness unshakable and irrevocable. There is no power to make it revert to its former habitat. This is the decisive test and proof.

3. The former is characterised by the strong and effective suppression of passion during the flight to the lofty state of Consciousness. During such moments the passion is still existing but cannot insert itself or intrude into the field of consciousness. The latter, however, is characterised by the absolute extinction of some or all kinds of passion. Whatever passion has gone is gone once for all,

even when the mind is withdrawn from that lofty state and comes into contact with the tempting and threatening circumstances as before.

4. With the advance of meditation comes the advance of knowledge and wisdom, — — — from within, that is. The deeper the meditation, the higher the knowledge. But the possibility of error is not ruled out when there is still present the pressure of attachment to self or ego which can interfere to colour and distort the knowledge coming forth. In the latter kind, wherein desire and attachment have lost their pressure, knowledge and wisdom is always correct and foolproof in its nature. The amount or range covered by it, however, is to be determined partly by the previous base or foundation of an individual and partly by the power of meditation attained to at a particular moment.

The knowledge coming out from inside is one beyond the sensory perception and also beyond the level of intellectual thoughts. Equipped with a sufficient power of meditation a person is able to find the answer of anything whenever he wants to know it. This comes out of the store-house of knowledge in the backdoor, so to speak, of the mind

provided the mind at that moment is sufficiently void i.e. freed of the interferences and disturbances of emotions and thoughts. The more freed the mind, the more void it is and the more accurate answer is obtained therefrom. This level of knowledge is the most important one in that it is the agent or factor that creates life, looks after birth, controls growth, change and other functions of the body that act without our conscious efforts. It is the storehouse of Karma, good and evil, wherein results of all Karma are faithfully recorded and stored and from where those results are crystallised in the tangible forms of life-functions, life-events and also the nature, quality and variety of life as we know it. It is evidence of the infallible law of "whatever one sows one is to reap" and accordingly "whatever one is reaping one has certainly sown."

Another fact worthy of note is the psychic feats or miraculous performances which can be found described in all religions. These are, for example, clairvoyance, clairaudience, mind-reading and other miracles such as levitation, sudden curing of the sick, even the recollection of events in past lives. All these are possible through the development of the inner source of power, at the level from which

life is created. Thus the Buddha said in the opening verse of the *Dhammapada*,

“Consciousness is the basis of all things; it is superior to all things; all things are made out of Consciousness.”

Also in the *Samyuttanikaya* 15;54 he said,

“The world revolves through the mind; evolves through the mind. All things are under the power of one thing i.e. the mind.” (In Buddhism mind and Consciousness are the one and same thing)

“There being Consciousness, there is name-and-form.”

— Paṭiccasamuppāda

And in several other places there were mentioned the superior importance of mind. With the mind controlled and developed comes the development of other things, more or less in proportion to the development of the mind.

In Christianity the Bible also has this to say, which may be regarded as a parallel,

“From the very beginning, the Word was with God. Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him.”

— John 1 : 3,4

“Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly seen. Men can perceive them in the things that God has made. So they have no excuse at all.”

— Romans 1 : 20

Whatever meaning the above passages may convey to the Christians, the Buddhists, having understood the creative power of Consciousness, can accept that it is true in essence, though not in the literal sense of the words. For them the all-creating power of Consciousness can be regarded as a parallel to the God concept of Christianity. The more they study, the better they realise the truth of the statement, in both the Christian and the Buddhist presentations, and the deeper meaning implied by such statements will appear, which is really of great benefit in their daily life and work.

But the meaning implied by Nibbāna is often misinterpreted and it is often judged and speculated on the basis of the limited intellect. Thus often Nibbāna is pictured as something void, empty or nothingness; and a person realising Nibbāna is but one who becomes empty or nothing and cannot be found in any plane of existence. In this light, it is no better than life in heaven or even in this troubled world. Paradoxically, such is the understanding of some so-called Buddhists. Possibly they can find their counterparts in the so-called Christians who do not believe in the existence of God, since

“No one has ever seen God. The only One, who is the same as God and is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”

— John 1 : 18

From the Buddhist point of view, every Noble Disciple, from the Stream-enterer upwards, is the son of the Buddha. This comes from the term Jinorasa: sons (or daughters) born of the Buddha. Evidence of this is as follows:

“Whoever, Vasetṭha and Bhāradvāja, has his faith established, who is born of the taproots

of the Noble Eightfold Path, whose faith is unshaken and cannot be induced otherwise by any recluse, Brahmin, Mara (evil spirits) or Brahma (good and highly evolved spirits), he is entitled to call himself son of the Blessed One, since he is born of the chest of the Blessed One, born of the words of the Blessed One. He is thus born of the Dhamma, created by the Dhamma. Why is it so? Because the terms Dhamma-body, Brahma-body, Dhamma-existence, Brahma-existence, are all names of the **Tathāgata** (i.e. the Buddha himself)."

— Aggaññasutta, Dī. Pāṭi. 11/92

The equivalence of meaning between the Buddha and the Dhamma may again be seen in the popular saying of the Buddha himself, "Whoever has seen the Dhamma has seen the Tathagata; whoever has seen the Tathagata has seen the Dhamma." In this advanced sense the person who can see the Dhamma must be at least the lowest grade of Noble Disciple called the Stream-enterer. A worldling, however well-versed in the Dhamma, is not entitled to "see the Dhamma" in the ultimate sense of the term. The reason for this is that they have not yet realised the condition of Nibbāna. Without such realisation there is no direct experience of the

wisdom by which to penetrate the nature of life, the world and the cosmos.

As earlier mentioned, although a parallel of ideas may to some extent be found in Buddhism and Christianity, yet it must not be assumed that both can be equated. For there naturally exist some essential differences that mark the individuality of each as follows :

**1. There has to be a sense of self or ego** for one who enters the Kingdom of God or attain to the point of finality in Christianity. In Buddhism however, the Stream-enterer, who is the lowest grade of the Noble Disciples, has realised the fact that there is ultimately no self or ego. Although such a Noble Disciple has not actually realised the condition of complete nonselfness, yet he is irreversibly destined to such a condition. This, it must be noted, is mentioned only for the sake of comparison, in order to show the distinctive qualities of each doctrine, and not to extol one's own teaching and under-estimate the other. In Buddhism, the extinction of the idea of self is to be the final goal since it is regarded as the extinction of suffering.

An instance may be cited from the story of Peter, one of Jesus' disciples. He was so close to

Jesus and had witnessed several miracles performed by Jesus. He also confirmed, in the presence of Jesus, that he (Jesus) was son of the living God (Matthew 16 : 16) and declared that he was glad to die with Jesus. But in time of danger he denied everything, saying he had never known Jesus before (Matthew 26 : 33-35 ; 69-75). And Jesus himself was overcome by grief when he knew for certain that he was soon to be arrested (Matthew 26 : 37,38). From the Buddhist point of view, such a grief was still expected of a Noble Disciple of the Stream-enter; — — — an instance of which may be seen when the lady Visākhā wept over the death of her grandchild. But to tell a lie with such a selfish motive cannot be forgiven at all. It clearly betrayed a slavish attachment to the body as self, the "I am the body" attitude of mind which is the grossest form of attachment.

2. Another implication of Nibbana is, as earlier mentioned, is the condition of void and must be first attained to before death. This attainment produces detachment from the Aggregates, the absence of self-identification with those Aggregates i.e. the body-and-mind or name-and-form. This attainment or realisation must be achieved when the

mind is at least divorced from the Five Mental Hindrances or is in the condition of Nibbāna, wherein all desires and attachment have been given up. The mind during this moment has risen beyond the level of thought and feelings or emotions. A rising to this lofty state must be absolute although in some cases it may be temporary or momentary. But a flash of such an enlightenment is enough to produce the abandonment of all desires and attachment, which gives rise to realization of the nature of life, the world and the cosmos in all aspects.

Thus from the Buddhist criterion **the ego or self-concept is to be absolutely given up** so that the condition of absolute void can be realised. It was said that the condition of deep and advanced meditation was also common to other monks of the hermit type, some of whom were able to perform many miracles through such a depth, or rather a height, of meditation. But the complete abandonment of the idea of self or ego was unique only to Buddhism although some Noble Disciples were not able to develop such a level of meditation or perform such an exciting mental feat. But with the attainment of the absolute void in the sense mentioned above life is absolutely freed of all disturbing

forces and with such a freedom the Christian saying "Ask and you will be given; knock and it will be opened to you" will come true.

For those who wish to have a summarised prescription for the sake of such an attainment a theme of practice will be offered here. It is called the "Practices for the fulfilment of all wishes" and is of four kinds as follows:

1. SADDHĀSAMPADĀ: Attainment of Faith
2. SĪLASAMPADĀ: Attainment of Morality
3. CĀGASAMPADĀ: Attainment of Sacrifice
4. PANNĀSAMPADĀ: Attainment of Wisdom

Of course, the 'Attainment' in the absolute sense of the term is to be achieved only when the full-final enlightenment is attained, but the fourfold practice will serve to point out the requisites demanded for the attainment.

Such are some of the similarities and the differences between Buddhism and Christianity, showing where both can go together and where each prefers to take a separate course of its own. They are meant to serve as a bona fide comparison, without any aggressive intention. As a matter of

course those differences there must be between two religious teachings and each has an equal freedom and dignity to preserve its own individuality, but as systems of religious teachings some points of similarity, parallels and overlapping ideals and practices are naturally to be expected. And from an overall survey previously discussed any one who has so expected is not to be disappointed. On the contrary, he will be surprised to see so many common points which would otherwise have escaped notice. The practices, for example, of non-violence, loving-kindness, sacrifice and other desirable moral qualities have been equally stressed by both teachings. Devout Buddhists and Christians are required to couple their faith in the Triple Gem or in Christ with those practices, it being not enough to pride oneself with mere faith, without the practices in accordance therewith. The teaching that marks Buddhism from Christianity is the one concerning ANATTA or nonselfness. For whereas Buddhism emphasises this from the outset, Christianity chooses to remain silent about it. After all, shouldn't this be viewed as a mark of diversity rather than that of disunity?

More details of practices will be discussed in the following lecture.

# Lecture Three

## Religion for a Modern Man

### IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION TO THE WORLD

The goal of Christianity is to realise God or to have an eternal life in the kingdom of God. The way to achieve this goal necessitates a belief in God coupled with a love in Him with all the heart and mind and soul and strength. Then this is to be followed by a life of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Thus the Bible says,

“ Love your neighbour as yourself.”

(Mark 12 : 31)

“ Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you.”

(Luke 6 : 27)

“ Do not save riches here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. Instead, save riches in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal.”

(Matthew 6 : 19,20)

“It will be very hard . . . for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven . . . it is much harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.”

(Matthew 19 : 23,24)

“If anyone wants to come with me he must forget himself, take up the cross every day, and follow me. For the person who wants to save his own life will lose it; but the one who loses his life for my sake will save it.”

(Luke 9 : 23,24)

Such are the essential teachings for the Christians which obviously are so difficult that they can hardly be expected of an average person, especially an average person of modern times, when scientific and technological progress have made a god of matter and have ironically made a slave of his own mind. There is no need now to point to the fact how man at present has been enslaved by the slaves he has created to serve his purpose.

**But a few there are** who are not victims of circumstances, who believe whole-heartedly in God and His omnipotent power. These can be living examples for the some of the rest who can be

influenced by them, and who have, to use a Buddhist phrase, "but little dust in their eyes." Although this latter group cannot in the meantime be expected to embody all of Christ's injunctions into their daily life and work, yet they are 'trainable' and can gradually develop and evolve. After all, they are much better off in their mental health than those who choose to dethrone God from their minds, only to put their heads in the nooses of Mara (the Evil One) or Satan.

Judging from the present situation, it appears that there are at least two things the world is in dire need of:

1. How to make a man's morals a matter of his own conscience.
2. How to develop resistance to the power of environment and vicissitudes

The former makes a person law-abiding even when and where the arms of the law cannot reach him and he has a reasonable hope to go scot-free in his doing evil. This makes him a valuable asset to his society and country. The latter enables a person to remain poised and peaceful in all the adverse and trying circumstances. This, however, is by no means

a passive virtue, which implies apathy towards an opportunity for betterment. It is, as its name implies, a resistance i.e. a fighting to attain to a point of balance as opposed to the self-surrendering, giving way to the automatic feeling of grief and despair.

As a matter of fact if religion can effectively imbue these two qualities into the minds of people, one would probably be wrong not to realise the value of religion to a country at least and also to the world at large. And frankly speaking, it is the direct responsibility of religion to do so. No other secular subject and system can hope to do as well, being as it is centred on matter rather than on the mind. But then a harassing problem stands on the way: how, for Christianity, to make a modern man sincerely believe in God or in what was said in the Scriptures. This is, however, not to mention another kind of problems plaguing Buddhism also.

To return to Buddhism, it is obvious now that Nibbāna is the point of finality. The systems of practice towards its attainment and realization was previously dealt with in summary. But it was enough to point to the fact that, like Christianity, such a realization appears to be too demanding for

an average person, exacting sustained efforts for the perfection of quite a number of virtues viz. loving-kindness, self-denial, development of meditation. These and others have to be developed to such an extent that it is disheartening for a modern man and from this viewpoint Buddhism also seems to be of little practical value to modern society, its goal being too remote and its system too demanding.

But that is but a one-sided, and therefore lopsided, view of the ignorant towards Buddhism. It must be understood that Buddhism consists of different levels of teaching and practice for people of different aptitudes and social status. In other words, there is always a kind of practice for each individual at a particular time of his or her life. There are the elementary and intermediate grades of practice as well as the advanced one; there is a kind applicable to the many as well as another suitable for only a few; there is the easy level which is not so demanding as well as another kind which is meticulously exacting; and there is the code for lay disciples as well as one for monks. It is therefore necessary that a person should look at Buddhism a little more thoroughly before making any complaint. A person is allowed to make a free and voluntary choice of

whatever practice should be appropriate to him at a particular time. If he knows he has made a mistake, choosing a disagreeable method for his tendency, he is free to change and such a mistake is sure to teach him something provided he knows how to learn. But it must also be borne in mind that whatever appears to be difficult in the beginning may not necessarily be so at all times. Through a painstaking effort and endurance a person is often strengthened in such a way as he has never dreamt of before and what appears to be remote can be made to come closer with persistent practice.

### **The Buddhist method of teaching**

Being a Buddhist I shall limit myself to discussing about how to make possible the two previously mentioned goals. And with the time at my disposal it will be only in a brief and summarised form.

**First of all, it is imperative to have every student of Buddhism, whether young or old, understand that he, or his life, is composed of two parts viz. body and mind or body and consciousness. These two, it must be emphasised, are different**

entities, the body being material and visible whereas consciousness being mental and invisible. These two entities, although they can be separated on rare occasions, are generally so closely connected that separation under normal circumstances is impossible within this life-time. Thus each individual or each life is called in Scriptural term NĀMARŪPA, literally name-and-form. In everyday usage it can be translated body-and-mind.

This understanding is imperative as the foundation of right knowledge and understanding, which is to be like the infrastructure upon which to rest the superstructure of an edifice or a bridge. This is to counter-balance the popular 'scientific' theory that the body is everything, that it is the centre and basis of life and all happiness. Those holding this so-called scientific theory take for granted the statement 'a healthy mind in a healthy body.' Thus it is this 'I am the body' attitude of mind that religious preachers must convert the people from, otherwise they cannot hope to proceed effectively. Covertly or openly, in one way or another, religious people must draw the people from their 'axiomatic' concept and implant instead the theory that mind is more

important than matter or body, that mental development is the centre and basis of material or physical development, that, contrary to popular but misguided belief, "a healthy body is the product of a healthy mind." How to do so may be briefly dicussed as follows:

1. Often stress and repeat the fact, with reasons and explanations, that the ability of the body to see, hear, smell, taste touch and think and feel are all manifestations of, and therefore originate from, mind or consciousness. Of course, the functions of the nerves and brain cannot be denied, for they also have a place in the process of seeing etc.. But their place, it must be understood, is one of a vehicle or channel, and never the original source or creator. They are closely connected and that is why under ordinary circumstances i.e. for an average man the condition of body generally affects that of mind but the body does not, and cannot, create the mind any more than the soil alone can create a seed or a plant and the electric wire alone can create electricity. Both are only instrumental causes, and not originating ones.

2. Such being the case, the entity that controls the functions of the organs and processes of

the body is mind or consciousness, not the nerves and brain. What is in medical science called nerve current is, strictly speaking, the consciousness current, with its headquarters at the brain. This is the importance of the brain in its capacity as headquarters from where commands are sent forth or relayed, but never as a general from whom orders are made and issued.

3. Another truth to be often stressed and repeated is that body and mind or consciousness are different entities although, as earlier mentioned, so closely connected to each other. The bottle and its contents or the water therein, for example, cannot be regarded as the one and same thing. That they are different entities points to the truth that they can be separated much the same way as, for instance, oxygen and hydrogen can be separated although they are so closely connected in the form of water and appear in that form to be inseparable. One example of separation can be witnessed in time of the physical dissolution or death. Here they are separated, each going its own way. The body's elements return to where they come from, whereas consciousness along with its accumulated good and evil enter into a condition determined by its own balance sheet of

those good and evil. No good or evil accumulated can be lost since each time it is recorded into the sub-conscious part of the mind with the perfect high-fidelity recording system ready to be played back and then to betray its real nature when occasion arises. In Buddhism results of both good and evil are called VIPĀKA, whereas the good and evil accumulated are called KARMA. These VIPĀKA are unfailingly registered in the deep recess of the mind which in English is sometimes called character. These VIPĀKA may be viewed as the seeds of a tree, which can produce more trees under favourable circumstances.

4. A human birth is possible through the three agents as follows:

1. Parents
2. Temperature or other physical requisites.
3. Consciousness or mind

Of the three, the most important and the decisive factor is the third i.e. consciousness or mind. The quality and destiny of a new being in the mother's womb has been determined by its own VIPĀKA or results of Karma previously accumulated.

The endless variety of human beings is thus dependent on the endless variety of the sum total of their VIPĀKA. In other words, it is the nature of their balance sheet brought over from the previous page that partly predicts how they will fare in this life, --- whether they will prosper or turn bankrupt in their 'business', so to speak. We have to say 'partly' because although the present is the outcome of the past, yet the future can similarly be outcome of the present. And by the 'future' here are meant both the future lives and the future time within the present life.

The teaching of the four above-mentioned points must be supported also by Scriptural references, which must again be simplified and interpreted in everyday language in order to enhance the value of the Scriptures as a source of reference for the knowledge of the Buddha's teachings. Examples in modern times and comparison with modern subjects of study are also advisable when it is possible to do so. Thus it takes an intensive study and experience on the part of a teacher who will be able to adapt his manner of teaching to the age, background and tendency of his students. Questions will be bombarded upon the teacher, --- questions both which

can be answered and which cannot or should not be answered due to the age and depth of understanding of the students themselves. The latter kind of questions, however, requires a teacher's skill and tact in answering so as not to disappoint the students and discourage them into giving up the study and then denying the truths of religion. A modern mind is generally a highly searching mind. This is due greatly to the influence of science and the permissive society, which have carried to excess the desire for reason, evidence and proof of whatever is taught it. Having made the Scriptures something like a text on geometrical facts, the teacher will find it greatly helpful to secure reason and evidence, whenever possible, from everyday events as proofs of his theorems, so to speak.

Comparable to the above-mentioned Buddhist principles may be the Christian belief that there is God who created us and everything, who is able to know whatever good and evil we have done even in the most secret place, even when nobody else can know it by any means, who has the indisputable supreme authority to reward and punish everybody, and who can mould and shape our des-

tiny in the manner He thinks fit for us. Thus the Bible says,

“Do not deceive yourselves: no one makes a fool of God . . . . Even the hairs of your head have all been numbered.”

(Galatians 6 : 7 ; Luke 12 : 7)

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather be afraid of God, who can destroy both body and soul in hell.

(Matthew 10 : 28)

For Buddhists who have understood the four points mentioned above these Christian teachings are really acceptable in essence, the difference being only that God is to be replaced by Karma or Consciousness of each individual. It is the Karma that shapes the nature, quality and destiny of an individual consciousness. Even in an extended sense referring to the sense that God is everywhere, it can also find a parallel in Buddhism provided a Buddhist scholar is tolerant enough and is able to read between the lines of the Buddha's teachings. It is true there was no direct mention of this in the Scriptures since it was not the primary aim of Buddhism to deal

with such facts. For the Buddha always recommended first of all an introspective study, which can best serve as a basis on which to reach out for external and remote facts. Thus when he was once questioned by a Brahmin how the world was born and is destined to end the Buddha replied, saying,

“It is better, O Brahmin, to find the birth and death of the world within this fathom-long body.”

And as to how the world was created the following verses in the Dhammapada are perhaps the best answers:

“Mind (or Consciousness) is the precedent of all things; it is superior to all things; those things are all mind-made.

“The world revolves and evolves in response to the mind; all things are subject to one thing i.e. mind.

“The Sckha (lower grade of Noble Disciple) can realise (the nature of) this land; he can realise (the nature of) the realms of woe, the realms of bliss as well as this world.”

These verses used to be quoted previously. Their understanding, however, necessitates the practice of meditation and Insight to some degree at

least plus a corresponding understanding of the nature of life in the unseen realms of the hereafter which are collectively called OPAPĀTIKA in Scriptural language. Of course, the depth of understanding still varies with the depth of meditation and Insight and this results in different interpretations by different groups of Buddhists. It can be said that the majority of Buddhists, including the learned elders and lay scholars, are of opinion that there is consciousness in man and animals, but not in plants. Then there is a smaller group who holds that plants also are endowed with consciousness, but other things such as rocks or inorganic matter cannot be included. For my part, however, there is consciousness in every atom of matter, whether organic or inorganic, whether man, animals, plants, or rocks and so forth. The properties of matter, its structure, its law, including the law of nature and phenomena, are all evidence of consciousness. From this point of view, therefore, there is absolutely nothing that is not born of consciousness. But the consciousness that is in those lifeless things is different from the consciousness of the living things. Peculiar or fantastic as this seems to be, there are some Western Buddhists who also have the same

idea. One of the best known is perhaps Mr. Christmas Humphreys, President of the Buddhist Association of England, author of quite a number of valuable books. It is surprising that we happen to have the same idea without knowing each other personally before. The theme of the Buddha's teachings that leads eventually to this conclusion is the Law of Dependent Origination or Paṭiccasamuppāda, the detailed discussion and explanation of which is already offered in another book entitled 'Buddhology.'

Parallel as my concept of consciousness appears to the Christian viewpoint concerning God, it is by no means equivalent and accordingly cannot be equated. After all consciousness in Buddhism, in whatever sense it is understood, is conditioned, born of causes, subject to the law of Dependent Origination, and is therefore not an absolute or independent entity. Of course, realization of this great truth needs a great depth of meditation or a great height of development and unless a person's Insight or Wisdom is not yet perfected and final, with the attainment of the highest grade of Noble Disciple, no direct knowledge of life, the world and the cosmos can be expected. Needless to say, my viewpoint stated above is not yet perfected, being

partly from an intensive study of the Scriptures and partly from the practice of meditation. The study and understanding, therefore, is the combined result of book-knowledge and its digestion and assimilation during the meditation-hours. It is after all a strictly personal point of view and is open to criticism and comment of all scholars and meditation students and teachers.

### **What to be stressed**

The teaching of religion in the present day needs a repeated emphasis on its practicable aspect to the problems and activities of an average person in his daily life. The target of bliss or perfection in the hereafter will appear too remote and less appealing to a modern man who is plagued with several problems which require prior and immediate attention. A religious teaching that overlooks these problems is sure to be helplessly overlooked by a modern man, whose focus of attention and interest is bound to be centred on these immediate problems. This is the law of natural retribution. The four points previously outlined are designed to help him handle his problems more efficiently, thereby convincing him that religion is an integral part of his life and work. In short, it makes him happier, if

in some cases not wealthier or more famous. And this is the goal desired by all.

### **Heaven and Hell**

The doctrine of heaven and hell is found in all religions. It is the teaching that dissuades man from doing evil and encourages him in doing good. This is the teaching that gives man simultaneously a consolation and a warning that good and evil, although secret and unseen, are not lost and their doers shall be justly rewarded and punished in due time. Belief in this teaching provides a brake in doing evil and an accelerator in doing good in such a way as no law or philosophy can do, or even dream of doing so.

But the teaching of this great truth to a modern man requires more than a mere telling of what was recorded in the Scriptures. To relay what was so recorded can sometimes prove to be useless and produce such adverse effects as disbelief and contempt, which may reach out to include other teachings as well. In short, the teaching that yields the great and desirable results calls for quite a number of equally great qualities on the part of its

teacher if it is to make an appeal and command a respectful belief.

In Buddhism heaven and hell have more than one implication. Besides referring to them as unseen realms in the hereafter, the words are also used to imply the conditions of mind at particular moments in this life. So said the Buddha,

“ There are, O Bhikkhus, heaven and hell in these eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. Whenever happiness is experienced thereon, it is heaven. When, however, suffering takes place it is hell.”

Sam. Saḷa. 18/158

There are several other sayings of the same meaning which are too many to be quoted here. But the essence of meaning is the same: that happiness here implied is one born of doing good, whereas suffering here referred to is one produced by doing evil. Happiness resulting from doing evil cannot be called heaven; nor can suffering be called hell if it is experienced while doing good.

Another noteworthy although less obvious fact is that one who sinks to the spiritual condition of hell within this life-time is also destined to the realm of hell after death unless he has freed himself of

such condition before death. In the same manner a person to whose mind the condition of heaven has come in the present existence is certainly entitled to go to it in the hereafter provided he can preserve it till his transition period. These are in accordance with the well-known truth that death cannot make a saint of a sinner and vice versa.

As a matter of fact there are a lot more truths about heaven and hell as unseen realms in the hereafter that are worth a serious study. But they will be left out due to the space at our disposal. Those interested may refer to one of my books entitled 'Buddhology Volume Two'. On the whole, it may be said that those truths properly taught and understood will contribute essentially to the achievement of what are most desirable nowadays: making a man's morals a matter of his own conscience and development of his mental health.

### **Cycle of births and deaths**

However, the meaning implied by the terms heaven and hell and their place in the doctrine of Buddhism are not equal in all respects to the same terms in Christianity or in fact in other religious

teachings. Their twofold implication capable of referring to both the condition of mind at present and the unseen realms in the hereafter was mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs and it may not be over-emphasized to reiterate here that it is often highly tempting for 'modernised' scholars or 'intelligentsia' to pride themselves upon the one-sided and therefore lop-sided idea that there exist heaven and hell only in the present existence, referring thereby to the conditions of mind at particular moments. Thus they ignore and sneer at the second implication which refers to the unseen realms, branding such belief as superstitious, primitive, non-buddhist and the like. This is as dangerous as it is foolish for other unsophisticated, humble people who naively cling to them as the unseen worlds in the hereafter only. Both sides are similarly mistaken, taking the half-truth as the whole and complete truth.

Generally speaking, the realms of heaven and hell in Buddhist sense imply something of a 'stopover' in the course of each person's pilgrimage through an endless cycle of births and deaths. To elaborate, this means that there have been, and there will be, innumerable births and deaths for us; that

consequently life in the realms of heaven and hell, being as they are something of a 'stopover', cannot be treated as permanent, eternal or immortal and that progression and retrogression in these realms are always to be expected of a worldling. Thus a person at one time may evolve so high that he is blessed with a highly advanced realm of heaven, but this is no guarantee against his retrogression. For it is still possible that due to his hidden ungratified desire he might come back to take birth in the human world once again or due to his still unab-solved but suppressed evil he might even fall back to the realm of hell for a period of time. The immunity to these processes of progression alternating with retrogression cannot be perfect before the attainment of the lowest grade of Noble Disciple called the Stream-enterer, which is the minimum guarantee against retrogression.

### **Importance of teaching concerning heaven and hell**

This teaching of the nature of the realms of heaven and hell is absolutely necessary today as a counter-balance against the onslaught of materialism. Acceptance of this truth is acceptance of the

truth that there is another kind of birth that does not depend upon parents like the birth in this human world, that is possible through the mind or consciousness or, to be more precise, through the nature of Karma (i.e. results of Karma) embedded within mind or consciousness. The life-span of the existence that is purely mind-made can be as long as one desires provided, of course, that it is sustained by a series of causes that can nourish and maintain it in such a condition.

Acceptance of this truth will lead also to the acceptance of the power of Karma since, as earlier mentioned, the nature, quality and life-span of consciousness in each plane of the hereafter depends wholly on the results of Karma and also on their surviving the dissolution of body after body as long as they are not absolved. It is this power of VIPĀKA or results of Karma that beings in various planes have been created in an endless variety. It is this power to wait for an opening and remain a potential force through a series of lives that makes many people fail to see and then to accept this great truth that governs their own life and destiny. In fact if they should stop to think, among other things, of the natural conservation

of spiritual as well as material energy and should they care to think that nothing can take place without a cause they would not ironically deprive themselves of a truth that will do them a world of good.

It is true that the endless variety of beings — — — that some are wise and others stupid and some ugly whereas others good-looking and so forth — — — may also be traced to heredity, environment and other external factors, into which some prefer to include even chance or accident. Although these cannot be denied in the world of human beings, yet, strictly speaking, it is not just or even scientific to leave out the internal agents that also have a place in the affair. It is to be regretted that the majority of people nowadays who regard themselves as the modernised intelligentsia still prefer to overlook the internal factors and to approach and explain all problems only in terms of matter. For such people, if they are law-abiding, it is due to fear of man-made law or absence of the necessity that would make them violate the law. But whenever they know they can get away with impunity they will not hesitate to commit any wrong or crime. The results of a society or a country that is com-

posed of these 'law-abiding' citizens are too obvious to be pointed out here.

**As far as Christianity is concerned,** the exhortation is sure to be based on the teaching that all things have been created by God, who has the sole and supreme authority to shape a person's destiny in the way He thinks fit for a particular person at a particular time. This is also acceptable to those who have been already equipped with an unshaken faith in God and who love Him 'with all their heart and mind and soul and strength.' Such are devout people who are always satisfied with their lot and never complain about whatever suffering or pain occurs to them. They have only one thing in mind and that is to praise God and thank Him for what they are given, — — — suffering as well as happiness. But there are also the searching minds that cannot help arguing and reasoning. They certainly cannot help questioning the wisdom of God for their own or others' pain and suffering that are sometimes so obviously unjustified. Without an acceptable answer this will give rise to more doubt in the justice of God and less faith in His power or existence. Moreover, there may occur a thought how God can shoulder a colossal respon-

sibility of looking after the peoples of the whole world and can know of their thoughts and actions at the same time and at every moment that follows, since there seems to be nothing so fleeting and changeable like a man's mind. At one moment it dwells on this subject and is enveloped in this emotion; then at another instant it jumps over to another matter, sometimes totally disconnected, and is overcome by another spasmodic joy or sorrow. It would be impossible, from the point of view of some searching minds, that God should be able to be 'everywhere' at the same time and at all times.

Such are some provoking questions that can arise to plague the preachers of Christianity and embarrass them to a certain extent. But it must be admitted that the preachers of Buddhism are in no better position. The Law of Karma, reasonable as it appears to the devout Buddhists, is also open to harassing questions. The popular saying, "You are to reap whatever you have sown" is logically sound but it is quite another matter to prove it in matters of everyday life in the 'scientific' manner. Those who are born wise, good-looking and rich are according to the Law of Karma due to their own accumulation in the previous life or lives, whereas

the poor and the crippled are suffering the results partly of their previous Karma. But as matters stand today, there are apparently numerous examples of gross injustice which have driven many a person to depression and despair. The causes that must be traced to the previous lives and the effects that must be stored in a deepfreeze to 'thaw' only in a life beyond the grave prove too remote and impracticable for the impatient mind of a modern man. This is why the solution of the immediate problems for the immediate results has to be stressed although the hereafter, both in the past and in the future, cannot be forgotten.

In fact there will be more vexatious questions from a modern man who is often inclined to carry to excess the importance of intellectual knowledge and thinking, concluding that it is the ultimate source of knowledge. Some such questions are: when, where and how was the first man born? Why are there more people today than there were in the ancient times? Why is consciousness increased? Can an individual consciousness disintegrate into smaller ones after the death of his physical body? and so forth. In short, for whatever doctrine is taught there will always arise innumerable questions,

some of which may be thought-provoking, while others are but to try the patience of the preachers, and still others serve no purpose whatever. It is advisable that religious preachers study the permutations and combinations of various answers from different religious doctrines. "Perhaps a comparison of those answers and an extraction as the highest common factor from all of them may be helpful to a certain extent for an average man.

### **Results to be expected of religious doctrines**

In order to recover their status quo achieved in the olden days and to become an active, living force in modern society, religions are required at least to meet the two conditions previously mentioned. Those are, to repeat, how to make a man's morals a matter of his own conscience and how to make his mind poised and peaceful even in the face of adverse and trying circumstances.

These two have been generally accepted as being the gaps beyond the power of modern science and technology. If religions could step in and fill these gaps there would be no doubt of the fact that a modern man would welcome them with open arms. But should religions not be able to do so

then it would be difficult for religions to resume their former positions. It is true that sometimes religions may offer a helping hand in the socio-economic development or assist in the educational and other philanthropic movements in time of disasters, but such fields are not the direct responsibilities of religions. Such material assistance, useful as it is on some occasions, are not what is reasonably expected of religions, which should cater first of all to the spiritual needs of the people. A material help is, from the religious point of view, the temporary solution, a dealing with the symptoms, not a diagnosis, of a diseased mind. This task is more than a mere lip service, a rhetoric and eloquent speech or a perfunctory activity calculated to impress. It is more than a traditional practice or a parrotlike recitation of the Scriptures. But it is to be a faith sincere, profound and trusting, whether in God, the Buddha or the Law of Karma,— which faith is to be supported by self-sacrificing actions, willingness to face all trying situations, an ability to endure with serene fortitude all miseries and pains, a fear of evil and a feeling of shame in bringing oneself to do evil, a knowledge that there is God as a silent watcher or that there is a faithful recording of Vipāka every time good or evil is done, and a

degree of detachment from all the vicissitudes of life that would otherwise upset one's inner peace. All these are conducive to the building up of spiritual immunity and also to the promotion of mental health, which the world is beginning to realise is more precious than the physical one.

### **Various interpretations of the doctrine**

Referring to the foregoing paragraphs that mentioned the possibilities of various interpretations of consciousness due to different tendencies and backgrounds of each interpreter, it is noteworthy that the term 'God' is nowadays undergoing the same situation due also to the same causes. By the term 'God' here are meant not only the God of Christianity, but also the God of other theistic religions. Thus some science-minded people may interpret this term, saying that God is really equivalent to the law of nature, whereas Buddhists may equate this term with the Law of Karma. Although this may be viewed as the sign of a progressive and liberal idea, yet it is not without a potential danger. It is evident that the attitude of mind of one who interprets God as the law of nature or

other abstract, impersonal idea and that of another person who regards God as a Supreme Being, who created man in this own image, must be far different. Whereas the former is inclined to think of God as a cold, lifeless force with little or no direct connection with him, the latter looks to God with a feeling of warmth and worship and always refers to Him as the ultimate source of renewed strength and courage. This is treating a religious doctrine from a religious point of view, without discussing whether or not it would be more or less scientific to interpret God in the former sense or the latter one. For it seems to be inevitable that such different interpretations are bound to occur to all religions among devotees of the same religion. Obviously this is due, as mentioned before, rather to the nature and quality of the interpreters themselves than to those of the doctrine to be interpreted. Perhaps the best illustration may be best seen in a popular quotation

“Two men looking through the same bars  
One sees mud; the other stars.”

To which we would suggest that it should be better to see **both** the mud **and** the stars if we wish to see things as **they** really are.

**Loopholes and drawbacks**

From what has been discussed so far it is evident that religion as a teaching or a movement, by whatever name it is known, cannot be expected to be absolutely faultless. To an observer from a vantage point, some loopholes and drawbacks can be found here and there even though that observer is not a malicious fault-finder and provided he is not attached to that religion. And in this age when science and technology are silent rivals of religion, it must be admitted that there is an unhealthy trend showing that the contradictions between science and religion are becoming more in both number and degree, with the former almost always gaining the upper hand and winning away more disciples from the latter. The concept about God, for example, is one point in which an outside observer may see something that is significantly unacceptable but of which devout Christians see nothing wrong. This is applicable in the same manner to Buddhism. There may be in the Scriptures many things which are utterly illogical to a modern mind but which have been taken for granted by those who are born and bred as Buddhists. It is the spirit of tolerance that will enable religious people of one faith to treat

those of other faiths with a sympathetic understanding and to be willing to work in genuine cooperation with them for the survival and peace of mankind as a whole.

### **Conclusion**

How in Christianity God can give protection to His devotees can be seen in the following passages from the Bible:

“When they bring you to trial, do not worry about what you are going to say or how you will say it; when the time comes, you will be given what you will say. For the words you speak will not be yours; they will come from the Spirit of your Father speaking in you.”

— Matthew 10 : 19,20

“Make up your minds ahead of time not to worry about how you will defend yourselves, for I will give you such words and wisdom that none of your enemies will be able to resist or deny what you say. You will be handed over by your parents, your brothers, your relatives, and your friends; they will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me. But not a single hair from your heads will be lost. Hold firm, for this is how you will save yourselves.”

— Luke 21 : 14-19

As regards Buddhism, the main themes are, among others, the Law of Karma, the Cycle of Births and Deaths, the doctrine of heaven and hell and the great truth that consciousness or mind is the creator of all things. These are the main pillars of the edifice of morality provided the people are convinced of them, thereby having a genuine faith in them. It is true that even those who are equipped with such beliefs and understanding are still in a position to do wrong some time or other. This is because they are not perfected beings and occasionally may yield to the influence of temptations and threats. But with every wrong committed they are able to learn something and draw a lesson therefrom. They are profoundly convinced of the evils of their succumbing to such influences and they are likely to be better able to withdraw themselves from the drag of vices instead of being submerged deeper into the quagmire. With a flash of illumination steadily gained through such a painful realisation there will come a time when, given the favourable circumstances, they will once for all abandon what they have been so far doing in spite of themselves. This is the abandonment of vice in a reliable and perfect way since it is based on a painful realization of its danger and a genuine struggle, with trial

and errors, to wriggle oneself free. It is far different from a forced abstention from doing evil,--- through fear of punishment or lack of opportunity, which betrays the existence of a desire to do evil that is all the time suppressed. The seed (of evil) is always there and certainly under favourable circumstances it will take roots, sprout and grow. Possibly this explains the existence of Satan or, in Buddhism, Mara, both of whom serve as a test and a proof for every success of an aspirant, qualifying him or her for every step of promotion and development. Without these two no Christian or Buddhist can rightfully claim he has passed the tests and has proved himself worthy of the distinction.

A person who loves God with all his heart and mind and soul and another one who believes in and understands the Law of Karma are essentially the same with regard to the result of their sincere belief. One may be called a Christian and another a Buddhist, but both are usually motivated to do good for the sake of good and their morals are similarly a matter of their own conscience. Of course they may not be perfected beings yet and are not totally immune to evil influences. But, as mentioned

above, their doing evil is sure to spur them to stop doing so sooner than if they should have done so without the love for God with all their heart or without the belief in the Law of Karma. They are warned by the whisper of their conscience every time they do evil and unless they choose to silence that whisper their evil-doing will not affect their character so much as if they had done so without the love of God with all their heart or without the belief in the Law of Karma. This kind of person are ready and willing to stop doing evil whenever there is something that prevents them from doing so, whereas another kind that are prevented to do evil in spite of themselves will readily jump at the first opening that gives them an opportunity to do evil. For such people without the love of God or the genuine belief in the Law of Karma they will continue doing evil with all their heart and there is no telling when they will stop. The more they do evil, the more their character will be spoiled and corrupted and the faster they will be sucked into the quagmire of their own evil, both here and in the hereafter, where they will be have to suffer for nobody knows how long.

### **Advanced Practices**

With regard to the advanced practices both of Christianity and of Buddhism, it is obvious that it appears to be too difficult for an average person, whether in the modern times or in the former ones, and that they are intended, as they name implies, for the really advanced kind of persons. But there is in Christianity a consolatory fact that God is always forgiving those who admit their guilt, being courageous enough to confess it. This brings about a sense of relief to the Christians who know that somehow they cannot help doing wrong at times. Furthermore, the ethical practices of Christianity in general are not so demanding and are applicable to the majority of people. Christ himself had been a living example during his life-time of self-sacrifice and philanthropic services. This has been a noble inspiration for his followers and has given birth later on to various aspects of social welfare services on the part of Christian missionaries, who make it a rule to couple their religious preaching with the building of schools, hospitals and other social welfare institutions wherever they are sent to spread the Message of Christ. Christian missionaries are seen to be genuinely devoted to their work, in the social

welfare aspect as well as the spiritual one, and evidence of their devotion, in the wilderness or other remote and dangerous places as well as in the towns and cities all over the world, can speak for itself. And, frankly speaking, such evidence speaks louder than words. It is the material witness showing how the Christian martyrs impressed by Christ's injunction "one who loses his life for my sake will save it" have been immortalised by both their contemporaries and their posterity. Their faith in God and their love for Him with all their heart and soul and mind have been undeniably supported by their actions and the Christian teachings have rightfully found their way into the heart and mind and soul of those who are impressed by the materialised faith of the devoted Christian missionaries who preached through their actions as well as words.

As a matter of fact the global spread of Christianity is not the results of one single sect or denomination. Rather, it has been the outcome of different groups of different sects, each of which is sure to have its own concept of God and liturgy more or less different from the rest. But they have one thing in common: sincere faith in God and love for him with all their heart and soul. Thus they

are within the same level of spiritual maturity and in fact for the people in this similar condition, whether they call themselves Christians or are supposed to profess other religious doctrines, there is no dispute or bickering about petty differences. Such a spiritual maturity sees no benefit whatever in verbal arguments and knows no discrimination through race, creed and other trade-marks or labels which serve only propaganda purpose.

**To come to Buddhism**, there are similarly different levels of practice designed for disciples of different tendencies and degrees of maturity. It is wrong, therefore, to impose the advanced level on everybody or to assume that it is a crime for anybody not to follow the strict, rigorous practice for the highly mature people. This advanced practice is voluntary, never compulsory. Examples may be seen in the 'going forth' or asking for ordination and 'going back' or asking for disrobing, which must be done by the aspirant himself first before the Sangha or Bhikkhus that assemble can do anything.

**To be a living force** among people in the modern times, therefore, preachers or Bhikkhus must have a close relationship with the people. They should offer a helping hand in problems of society,

especially those of the mind, which are the first, direct and sacred responsibility of a religious doctrine. Apart from the results in the hereafter, which cannot be overlooked, those in the present life must also be pointed out and then explained how they are primarily connected with results to be experienced in the hereafter. What is to be stressed is the immediate result of "how to remain peaceful and poised under any event" since it is this capacity that contributes essentially to the deliverance of suffering in the light of Buddhism and since this is really a self-proven truth.

And the condition of mind that can "remain poised and peaceful under any event" must not be taken as occurring when one can obtain what one desires or when one's wish is fulfilled. This capacity must be developed to the extent that it can come to one even under the trying and adverse circumstances, even when one cannot get what one wants and has no hope to fulfil one's wish. This is the result of the virtue of detachment, of the ability to become a detached observer, not to get involved in the natural phenomena which are but the facts of life to be accepted, whether one likes it or not. However, detachment may be compared to an edifice, which

rests on the foundation of other virtues such as goodwill to all, malice towards none, self-sacrifice for the sake of others, each and all of which must undergo the crucial tests and concrete proofs by the actual application to the events of daily life and work. Just as a person can not be justifiably called brave unless he used to be confronted with dangers and has successfully braved them all, so a Buddhist cannot hope to equip himself with detachment unless he has proved it through **not** identifying himself with the Aggregates (body-and-mind) in time of emergency. He must have braved death in the past and can brave it once again when occasion arises. One who can claim that he is detached from money, fame or others must similarly be able to give them all up whenever there is an occasion requiring him to do so. In case his power of detachment is not satisfactory or perfected, being still charged with more or less sorrow which betrays a hidden attachment, he has no choice but to try again and again, with an ever increasing degree of courage and sacrifice.

Such practices, although they characterise the Buddhist principles, yet can be seen to correspond

also with those of Christianity such as had been exemplified by Christ himself.

With the essential similarity of purposes as mentioned above it would really be conducive to mutual benefit if the disciples of both religious faiths could join hands, or rather forces, in their attempt for the establishment of peace for mankind. This is in fact what can justifiably be expected of religions, which cater to the development of the mind, from where come the causes both of peace and war. Of course, the roles of politics, administration, economics and others cannot be excluded, but it must be noted that they all aim primarily at the development of body or matter and as such they are not in a position to specialise in what is beyond their range of knowledge and experience. However advanced they are in their respective fields, it is impossible to hope that they will do as well what is only their collateral function. Thus religions must step in and fill this gap; they must accept the fact of co-existence and co-operation. It is not enough for Buddhism and Christianity to 'live and let live', as a saying goes; but both will have to develop the attitude of 'live and **help** live' for the survival of

all. With the plurality of world religions accepted both can work together and help each other, thereby treating their minor differences as being unavoidable in the 'division of labour' scheme. After all those diversities when viewed with the detached attitude of mind can enhance the spirit of unity rather than enmity.

Thus it is through religions joining forces that they can at present hope to become active, living forces counter-balancing the influence of matter and providing a modern man with the highest refuge after his other shelters have failed him all along. With the survival of religions comes the survival of man himself.





Block of picture by courtesy of the World Fellowship of Buddhists Headquarters



# A Ding-dong Struggle

FOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

## RELIGION vs. MATERIALISM

**(The old, aged champion vs. the new, young challenger)**

The present round sees the aged champion flagging (but not yet flinching) and the young, robust challenger harassing the old man with his vicious jabs and thus winning more admirers to his side. The spectators on the side of the old champion are steadily dwindling, only to swell on the challenger's side. The devotees that are faithful to the champion are represented by a woman covering her face with her hands, not daring to witness the outcome of the bout. The man in the middle, laughing gleefully, signifies *anybody* who either plays it safe or pays lip service, thereby waiting to climb onto the bandwagon and ride triumphantly with the victor.

But there is a conspicuous absence, if we should be pardoned for a cliché. This is that there

seems to be no referee. And why should there be? The fight has been a see-saw affair for milleniums, dating back to even before or during the time of the Buddha, when the challenger emerged in the name of LOKĀYAT or CHARVAKYA. The referee, therefore, implies the spectators or disciples of either side, whose voice had drowned that of the other alternately. One round may see Religion TKO' ing Materialism with his direct uppercut, whereas another may witness, as we see today, Materialism steadily outpointing Religion with his repeated jabs and hooks. But religion, by whatever name it goes, does not appear to be easily KOed. Recently para-psychology and psychiatry, cousins of Materialism itself, has unwittingly come to meet Religion half-way, admitting that the thinking part of man, call it mind, consciousness and what you will, is after all **as important as** body. A right attitude of mind has been found to help heal and purify body, purging the body of its impurities and speeding up the time of recovery. Of course, this is explained in terms of matter, with mind as the mere by-product. But the fact that the 'thinking part' has *some* influence on on the non-thinking part (i.e. body) appears to augur well for the prospect of having the tables turned on

Materialism. Rightly handled the importance of mind could be the trump card of Religion; abused it could bring on destruction to even Materialism itself.

— WFB REVIEW Editorial

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*INTRODUCING THE ARTIST*

Sompot Upa-in, 38, graduated with a Bachelor's Degree of Sculpture from Silpakorn (University of Arts), being a lecturer of Sculpture, Faculty of Painting and Sculpture and Graphic Art of the above university. He was awarded three silver medals and six bronze medals. His works of art have been continually exhibited at the Annual National Art Exhibition since 1959. The latest display of his collection which was graciously attended by His Majesty the King was the One-man Retrospective Exhibition at the National Library in Bangkok, and was held for four weeks in February last year.





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