

THE BUDDHA

- Prof. P.G. Yogi

Stripped of mythical embellishments, the principal events in the life of Gautama are easily told. He was born about the middle of the sixth century before the Christian era (563 B.C.) in Lumbini Park in the neighbourhood of Kapilavastu, now known as Padeira, in the north of the district of Gorakpur. To mark this spot as a token of his reverence for him, Emperor Asoka erected in 239 B.C. a pillar bearing the inscription: Here was the Enlightened one born.

At Kapilavastu resided the chiefs of the Sakya clan, of whom little would have been remembered, had not Siddhartha been born among them. Gautama's father, Suddhodana, and his mother, Maya, the daughter of Suprabuddha, belonged to this clan. The mother of Siddhartha died seven days after his birth. Under the kind care of his maternal aunt, Prajapati Gautami, Siddhartha spent his early years in ease, luxury and culture. No pains were spared to make the course of his life smooth. At the age of sixteen he was married to his cousin, Yasodhara, the daughter of the chief of Koli, and they had a son named Rahula. For twenty-five years Siddhartha saw only the beautiful and pleasant. About this time the sorrows and sufferings of mankind affected him deeply, and made him reflect on the problem of life. Impelled by a strong desire to find the origin of suffering and sorrow and the means of extirpating them, he renounced at the age of twenty-nine all family ties and retired to the forest, as was the wont in his day.

'I was not through hatred of his children sweet, I, was not through hatred of his lovely wife, Thraller of hearts-not that he loved them less: But Buddhahood more, that he renounced them all.

After this great renunciation (Abhinishkramana) the Bodhisattva,

the seeker after Bodhi, placed himself under the spiritual guidance of two renowned Brahman teachers, Arada Kalama and Udraka Ramaputra. The former lived at Vaisali and was the head of a large-number of followers. He was evidently a follower of Kapila, the reputed founder of the Sankhya system of philosophy, and laid great stress on the belief in an atman. He regarded the disbelief in the existence of a soul as not tending towards religion. Without the belief in an eternal immaterial soul he could not see any way of salvation. Like the munga-grass when freed from its thorny case, or like the wild bird when liberated from its trap, the soul, when freed from its material limitations (upadhi), would attain perfect release. When the ego discerned its immaterial nature, it would attain true deliverance. This teaching did not satisfy the Bodhisattva, and he quitted Arada-Kalama, and placed himself under the tuition of Udraka Ramaputra. The latter, probably a follower of the Vaisesika system, also expatiated on the question of I, but laid greater stress on the effects of Karma and the transmigration of souls. The Bodhisattva saw the truth in the doctrine of Karma, but he could not bring himself to believe in the existence of a soul or its transmigration. He therefore, quitted Udraka also, and went to the priests officiating in temples to see if he could learn from them the way of escape from suffering and sorrow. But to the gentle nature of Gautama the unnecessarily cruel sacrifices performed on the altars of the gods were revolting, and he preached to the priests on the futility of atoning for evil deeds by the destruction of life and the impossibility of practising religion by the neglect of the moral life. Wandering from Vaisali in search of a better system Siddhartha came to a settlement of five pupils of Udrada headed by kaundinys, in the jungle of Uruvilva near Gaya in Magadha. There he saw these five keeping their senses in check, subduing their passions and practising austere penance. He admired their zeal and earnestness, and to give a trial to the means employed by them he applied himself to mortification. For six years he practised the most severe ascetic penances, till his body became shrunken like a withered branch. One day after bathing in the river Nairanjana (Modern phalgu) he strove to leave the water, but could not rise on account of his weakness. However with the aid of the stooping branch of a tree he raised himself and left the river. But while returning to his abode he again staggered and fell to the ground, and might perhaps have died, had not Sujata, the eldest daughter of a herdsman living near the jungle, who accidentally passed by the spot where the Bodhisattva had swooned, given him some rice-milk. Having thus refreshed himself he perceived that asceticism, in-

stead of leading him to the goal he sought, brought about only an enfeeblement of both body and mind. Accordingly he gave up all ascetic practices, and paying due attention to the needs of the body he entered upon a course of reflection and self-examination trusting to his own reason, the light which each one of us carries within himself, to attain the truth.

“Truth is within ourselves: it takes no rise from outward things, what ever you may believe. There is an inmost centre in us all, Where truth abides in fulness; and around wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in the perfect clear perception which is truth. A baffling and perverting carnal mesh binds it and makes all error: and to know rather consists in opening out a way whence the imprisoned splendour may escape, Then in effecting entry for a light supposed to be without.” One night, while sitting in deep meditation under a fig tree, the consciousness of true insight possessed him. He saw the mistaken ways of the faiths that then obtained, he discerned the sources whence earthly suffering flowed, and the way that led to their annihilation. He saw the cause of suffering lay in a selfish cleaving to life, and that the way of escape from suffering lay in the attainment of these grand truths and their realization in life the Bodhisattiva became enlightened; he thus attained Sambodhi and became a Buddha. Rightly has Sambodhi been called Svabodhanam to emphasise the fact that it can be accomplished only by selfhelp without the extraneous aid of a teacher or an Isvara. As the poet says,

“Save his own soul’s light overhead, None leads man, none ever led”.

Now arrived the most critical moment in the life of the Blessed one. After many struggles he had found the most profound truths, truths teeming with meaning but comprehensible only by the wise, truths fraught with blessings but difficult to discern by ordinary minds (Prtajana). Mankind were worldly and hankering for pleasure. Though they possessed the capacity for knowledge and virtue and could perceive the true nature of things, they remained in ignorance, entangled by deceptive thoughts. Could they comprehend the law of Karma, the law of concatenation of cause and effect in the moral world? Could they rid themselves of the animistic idea of a soul and grasp the true nature of man? Could they overcome the propensity to seek salvation through a mediatorial caste of priests? Could they understand the final state of peace, that quenching of all worldly cravings which leads to the blissful haven of Nirvana? Would it be advisable for him in this circumstances to preach to all mankind the truths he had discovered? Would it be advisable

for him in this circumstances to preach to all mankind the truths he has discovered. Might not failure result in anguish and pain? Such were the doubts and questions which arose in his mind, but only to be smothered and quenched by thoughts of universal compassion. He who had abandoned all selfishness could not but live for others. What could be a better way of living for others than to show them the path of attaining perfect bliss? What could be greater service to mankind than to rescue the struggling creatures engulfed in the mournful sea of samsara? Is not the gift of Dharma, the greatest of all gifts? When the perfect one considered how sorrow and suffering oppressed all beings, he became very compassionate, and made up his mind to all mankind the eternal truth he had discovered. Amongst the nations I shall go, and open the door that to the deathless leads. Let those that have ears to hear, master the noble Path of Salvation.

With this firm resolve he started for Benares which has been famous for centuries as the centre of religious life and thought. On his way the Blessed one met one of his former acquaintances, Upaka, a naked Jain monk, who, struck by the Buddha's majestic and joyful appearance, asked:- "Who is the teacher under whose guidance you have renounced the world?" The Enlightened one replied:- "I have no master. To me there is no equal. I am the perfect one, the Buddha. I have attained peace. I have obtained Nirvana. To found the kingdom of righteousness I am going to Benares. There I shall light the lamp of life for the benefit of those who are enshrouded in the darkness of sin and death." Upaka then asked :- "Do you profess to be the Jina, the conqueror of the world?" The Buddha replied :- "Jinas are those who have conquered self and the passions of self, those alone are victors who control their passions and abstain from sin. I have conquered self and overcome all sin. Therefore I am the Jina".

"He whose life is pure, whose thought is good, whose subject senses own him sovereign, whose heart and mind no attachment hampers, ment hampers, whose remorseless ignorance killed, Whose head and heart love and gladness fill, Whose pride of egoism slain,
Who, from all defilements purged and free, combiner truth and valour
and resource with fareright,
kindness and fixed resolve,
He has all fetters utterly destroyed,
And made the conquest glorious and true".

At Benares he met Kaudinya and his four companions in the Deer Park, Isipatana. When these five (the Pancha-vaggiya) saw the Tathagata

coming towards them, they agreed among themselves not to rise in salutation, nor greet him, nor offer him the customary refreshments, for he had broken his first vow by giving up ascetic practices. However, when the Tathagata approached them, they involuntarily rose from their seats, and in spite of their resolution, greeted him and offered to wash his feet and do all that he might require. But they addressed him as Guatama after his family name, for it is a rude and careless way of addressing one who has become an Arhat. His mind is undisturbed, whether people treat him with respect or disrespect. But it is not courteous for others to call one, who looks equally with a kind heart upon all living beings, by his familiar name. Buddha brings salvation to the world, and therefore they ought to treat him with respect as children treat their fathers. Then he preached to them his first great sermon, the Dharmachara pravartana sutra, in which he explained the four Great Truths and the Noble Eight fold path, and made converts of them. They received the ordination and formed the first nucleus of the holy brotherhood of disciples known as the Sangha. Soon after, one night the Blessed one met Yacas, the youthful son of a rich merchant (Sreshti) of Benares, who was wandering like a madman much distressed by the sorrows of this world. The Tathagata consoled him by pointing out the way to the blessedness of Nirvana, and made him his disciple. Seeing that Yacas had become a bhikshu, his former fifty-four jovial companions also joined the Sangha. The Blessed one sent out these sixty as missionaries in different directions to preach his universal religion. Shortly afterwards the Buddha had an accession of thousand new disciples by the conversion of three leading fire worshipping ascetics, Uruvilva Kasyapa, Nadi Kasyapa and Gaya Kasyapa, all brothers, with all their followers. To these, he preached, on a hill near Gaya, a sermon on the fire sacrifice. In this discourse he explained how ignorance produced the three fires of lust, hatred and delusion, which burnt all living beings, and now these three fires might be quenched by the giving up of sin and the pursuit of right conduct.

From Gaya followed by his numerous disciples the Blessed one proceeded to Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha. After his great renunciation Siddhartha passed through Rajagriha, and Bimbisara, the king of Magadha, failing to dissuade him from his resolve to attain bodhi, requested the Bodhisattva to come back to Rajagriha after the accomplishment of his purpose and receive him as his disciple. In compliance with this request the Blessed one now visited Rajagriha. King Bimbisara, hearing of the arrival of the world-Honoured, went with his counsellor

generals and myriads of Magadha Brahmans and Sreshtis to the place where the blessed one was. When the king and his followers saw uruvilva Kasyapa with the Blessed one, they began to question if the latter had placed himself under the spiritual guidance of the former. But Kasyapa removed their doubt by prostrating himself at the feet of the Blessed one, and explained how, after seeing the peace of Nirvana, he could no longer find delight in sacrifices and offerings, which promised no better rewards than pleasures and women. The Blessed one, perceiving the state of mind of his audience, preached to them the inconstancy of the self, the so-called lord of knowledge, which, originating from sensation and recollection, must necessarily be subject to the condition of cessation. On hearing this discourse, the king and many of those that accompanied him took refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, and became lay followers. The king then invited the Blessed one to the royal palace, entertained him and his bhikshus and presented to the Sangha his pleasure garden, the bamboo grove (Venuvana), as a dwelling-place for the homeless disciples of the Great Teacher.

A much more important event connected with the Blessed one's stay at Rajagriha was the conversion of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana, both pupils of the wandering monk Sanjaya. One day as Asvajit, one of the first five that were ordained by the Buddha, was going on his alms-seeking round, Sariputra saw the noble and dignified manner of ASVAJIT, and asked him who his teacher was and what doctrine he professed. ASVAJIT replied that his teacher was the Blessed one and summed up the Tathagata's teaching in the well-known :- "Whatever things proceed from a cause, of them the Buddha has stated the cause. And what their dissolution is. This is what the Great Sramana teaches". On hearing this Sariputra went to Maudgalyayana and told him what he had heard. Then both of them went with all their followers to the Tathagata and took their refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. The Buddha held both of them in high estimation for their intelligence and learning. Some of the books of the Abhidharma, the philosophical part off the Tripitaka, are ascribed to these two learned Bhikshus. Another worthy acquisition to the faith during the Master's stay in the Bamboo Grove was the Brahman sage, Maha kasyapa, who had renounced his handsome and virtuous wife, his immense wealth and all his possession to find out the way of salvation. It was he, who, after the Parinirvana of the lord, held a council at Rajagriha under the Patronage of king Ajatasatru, and collected the Tripitaka, the Buddhist canon, with the help of a large number of Bhikshus. He was in fact the first patriarch of

the Buddhist (Monarke). During his active life as a teacher, the Blessed one made many converts. High and low, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, Brahmanas and Chandalas, Jains and Ajivakas, house holders and ascetics, robbers and cannibals, nobles and peasants, men and women of all classes and conditions, furnishing him with many disciples, both ordained and lay. Among his converts were King Prasenajit of Kosala, Panchasikha the follower of Kapila, Mahakatyayana of Benares, King Udayana of Kausambi, Kutadanta, the head of the Brahman community of the village of Danamati, Krishni Bharadvaja of the Brahman village of Ekanala, Angulimala the bandit and assassin who was the terror of the kingdom of Kosala, Alavaka the cannibal of Atavi, Ugrasena the acrobat, Upali the barber who had the honour of reciting the Vinaya collection of the Tripitaka in Kasyapa's council and Sunita the scavenger who was despised by others. Some of the members of the Sakya clan who were the close kith and kin of Siddhartha also became the followers of Sakyamuni. Suddhodana, the father of Siddhartha, became a lay disciple, and Rahula, his son, joined the Sangha. Yasodhara, the wife of Siddhartha, and Prajapati Gautami, his aunt, both joined the order of Bhikkhus, which was established with some reluctance by the master owing to the importunities of Prajapati Gautami and the intercession of Ananda. Ananda who was the Buddha's constant companion and personal attendant, was one of his cousins.

Another of his cousins was Devadatta who became notorious in later days by attempting to found a new sect of his own with severer and stricter rules than those prescribed by the Buddha. When he did not succeed in getting many followers, even though he had a special vihara built for him by King Ajatasatru, the son of King Bimbisara, he plotted many schemes to take the life of Sakyamuni. Murderers were set up to kill the lord, but they were converted as soon as they saw him and listened to his preaching. The rock hurled down from the Gridhrakuta hill to hit the master split in twain without doing him much harm. The drunken elephant that was let loose on the royal highway just at the time when the Blessed one was coming along that path became docile in his presence. After these failures Ajatasatru, suffering greatly from the pangs of conscience, sought peace in his distress by going to the Blessed one and learning the way of salvation. The Twelve of Buddha's disciples became famous as preachers. These were Ajnata Kaundinya, Asvajit, Sariputra, Maudgalyayana, Mahakasyapa, Mahakatayana, Anuruddha, Upali, Pindola Bharadvaja, Kausthila, Rahula and Purna Maitrayani putra. In the conversation with Subhaddra just before his death, the Blessed one

said:- "Save in my religion the twelve great disciples, who, being good themselves rouse up the world and deliver it from indifference, are not to be found." Among the many patrons and benefactors of Buddha no names are more famous than those of Anathapindika, the supporter of the orphans. Jivika the Physician, Visaka, the mother of Migara, and Ambapali, the courtesan of Vaisali. Anathapindika, on account of his charities to the orphans and the poor, was a merchant of Sravashti with immense wealth. He bought at an enormous price a magnificent Park at Sravashti from prince Jeta, and built the splendid Jetavana vihara for the Buddha and his ordained disciples. Jivika was the renowned physician extra-ordinary to Bimbisara, and was appointed by the king to undertake medical attendance on Buddha and his followers. It was at his instance that the Bhikshus, who were previously wearing only Cast-off rags, were permitted to accept robes from the laity. Visakha was the daughter-in-law of Migara, a rich Jain merchant of Sravashti, but she was generally known as the mother of Migara, as she was the cause of Migara's conversion to the Buddhist faith. She was the first to become a matron of the lay sister, and obtained permission from the lord to provide the chief necessaries of life on a large scale to the Bhikshus and Bhikshunis. Another service of hers was the erection of the vihara of Purvarama near Sravashti, which in splendour was inferior only to the Vihara built by Anathapindika. Ambapali, who was beautiful, graceful, pleasant, gifted with the highest beauty of complexion, well-versed in dancing singing and lute playing, and through whom Vaisali became more and more flourishing. She presented to the master her stately mansion and mango grove and became Bhikshuni. The great popularity of the master and the gift which the pious laics bestowed on him created a jealousy in the hearts of the leaders of heretical sects. These conspired to sully the reputation of Sakyamni and ruin him in the eyes of the people. They induced a heretical nun, Chinchā to accuse the master of adultery before the assembly. Her calumny was exposed and she was made to suffer terribly for her misdeed. Not baffled by this failure the heretics made a second attempt to slander the master. This time they induced one Sundari, a member of one of the heretical sects, to spread a rumour that she passed one night in the bed-chamber of the teacher.

After this slander had been made sufficiently public, the heretics bribed a gang of drunkards to assassinate Sundari. These scoundrels killed her, and threw her corpse in the bushes close to the Jetavana vihara. The heretics then loudly clamoured for the institution of legal proceedings against the lord. Luckily their plan failed owing to the

imprudence of the assassins, who, reuniting after the murder in a tavern and excited by strong drink, quarrelled among themselves and reproached one another of having committed the crime. They were immediately arrested by the police and brought before the royal tribunal. When they were questioned as to the murder of Sundari, the scoundrels openly confessed guilt, and declared also the name of those who had employed them to commit the crime. The king ordered the assassins as well as the instigators of the crime to be put to death. On another occasion the heretics instigated Srigupta to take the life of the master by poisoning his food and misleading him in to a pit of fire, but by pity and calm forgiveness the holy one saved Srigupta from spite and crime, and showed how mercy conquers even a foe, and thus he taught forgiveness to free his followers from the world of woe. The manner in which the Enlightened one ordinarily spent each day was very simple. He used to rise up early, wash and dress himself without assistance. He would then meditate in solitude till it was time to go on his round for a meal. When the time arrived, he would, dressing himself suitably, with his bowl in hand, alone or attended by some disciples, visit the neighbouring town or village. After finishing his meal in some house, he would discourse on the Dharma to the host and his family with due regard to their capacity for spiritual enlightenment, and return to his lodgings and wait in the open verandah till all his followers had finished their meal. He would then retire to his private apartment and, after suggesting subjects for thought to some of his disciples, take a short rest during the heat of the day. In the afternoon he would meet the folk from the neighbouring villages or town who assembled in the lecture hall, and discourse to them on the Dharma in a manner appropriate to the occasion and suited to their capacities. Then at the close of the day, after refreshing himself with a bath when necessary, he would explain difficulties or expound the doctrine to some of his disciples, thus spending the first watch of the night. Part of the remainder he would spend in meditation, walking up and down outside his chamber, and the other part sleeping in his bed-chamber. During the nine-months of fair weather, the lord would go from place to place, walking from fifteen to twenty miles a day. During the rainy season he generally stayed in the Jetavana Vihara or in the Purvarama. The Blessed one's method of exposition differed entirely from those of the Brahmins. Far from presenting his thoughts under the concise form so characteristic of the Brahmins, he imparted his teaching in the form of sermons. Instead of mysterious teachings confided almost in secret to a small number, he spoke to large audiences composed of all those who desired to hear

him. He spoke in a manner intelligible to all, and tried by frequent repetitions to impress his meaning on the least attentive minds and the most rebellious memories. He adapted himself to the capacities of his hearers. He first talked about the merits obtained in alms giving, about the duties of morality, about future happiness, about the danger, the vanity and the defilement of lusts, and about the blessings of the abandonment of lusts. When he saw that the mind of his hearer was prepared, Unprejudiced, impressionable, free from hindrances to the comprehension of the Truth, elated and believing, then he preached the special doctrine of the Buddha, namely, suffering the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path. This profound difference between the Buddha's method and that of the Brahmans, whose most marked trait is proselytism penetrates to the very essence of Buddhism. While his discussions with the learned were more or less formal and often coldly logical, in his conversation with ordinary men the master generally resorted to similes and parables, fables and folklore, historical anecdotes and episodes, proverbs and popular sayings. The parable of the mustard-seed, described in the next chapter, illustrates how the holy one brought home plain truths to the minds of simple folk. In the conversion of the wealthy Brahman, Krishi Bharadvaja, the Buddha worked out the process of agriculture into an elaborate allegory. One day while staying in southern district of Magadha (Dakshina giri), the Buddha visited the Brahman village of Ekanala. Bharadvaja was then superintending the laborers in his field. With alms-bowl in hand, the Blessed one approached the Brahmen. Some went up and paid reverence to the lord, but the Brahman reproached the master saying: "O Sramana, I plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, I eat; it would be better if you were in like manner to plough and sow, and than you would also have food to eat". "O Brahman", replied the Buddha, "I too plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, I eat." But, said the Brahman, "If you are a husbandman, where are the signs of it? Where are your bullocks, the seed, and the plough?" Then the teacher answered: "Faith is the seed I sow; devotion is the rain that fertilizes it, modesty is the plough-shaft; the mind is the tie of the yoke; mindfulness is my plough share and goad.

Truthfulness is the means to bind; tenderness, to untie. Energy is my team and bullock. Thus this ploughing is effected, destroying the weeds of delusion. The harvest that it yields is the ambrosia fruit of Nirvana, and by this ploughing all sorrow is brought to an end". Then the Brahman poured milk-rice into a golden bowl and handed it to the lord saying: "Eat, O Gautama, the milk-rice. Indeed, thou art a hus-

bandman; for thou, Gautama, accomplishes a ploughing, which yield the fruit of immortality.” When the holy one desired to point a moral or convey a reproof, he related an anecdote or a fable treating its characters as representing the previous existences of him-self and the other persons concerned. Such anecdotes are known as Jatakas or birth-stories.

More potent than his method and his word was the blessed one’s wonderful personality. When he talked with men, his serene look inspired them with awe and reverence, and his lovely voice struck them with awe and reverence, and his lovely voice struck them with rapture and amazement. Could mere words have converted the robber Angulimala or the cannibal of Atavi? To have come under his spell is to be his for ever. He was a winner of hearts. It is not so much because he preached the truth that his hearers believed; it is because he had won their hearts that his words appeared to them true and salutary. A single word from him was enough to reconcile king Prasenajit to his Queen Mallika. His heart always overflowed with kindness. Was it not the effluence of the master’s love that made Raja the Mallian follow him as a calf does’ the cow? To meet him is to be penetrated by his love maitri and to know him is to love him for ever. In his last preaching tour, the master came to the town of Pava and there in the house of Chunda, a worker in metals, he had his last repast. After this he became ill and moved to kusinagara in the eastern part of the Nepalese Terai, where he died at the ripe age of eighty about 483 B. C. Even in his last moments he recieved a monk Subhadra, explained to him the Noble Eightfold Path, and converted him to the true faith. His last words to his disciples were. “Decay is inherent in all compound things. Seek wisdom and work out your salvation with diligence”. The immediate cause of his death was some poisonous element in the food which Chunda, the black smith, offered to him. In the record of it, the word used is Sukara-maddava, which can be transtated either the flesh of a wild boar when used for food or pig-food, a kind of bulbous vegetable, Sukara-kanda in which there might have been some variety of poisonous mushroom unwittingly concealed. Buddha warned his disciples not to partake of it, but out of kindness to Chunda he ate of it.

The remains of the Blessed one were burnt by the Mallas of Kusinagara with all the honours and pomp worthy of a king of kings. After cremation the relics were carried to the town hall, and guarded there for a week covered by a cupola of lances in an enclosure of bows and honoured with garlands, perfumes, music and dances. When Ajatasatru, the king of Magada, heard of the death of the lord at

Kusinagara, he sent an ambassdor to the Mallas of that place to demand of them a portion of the relics, as he desired to erect a tumulus (Stupa) in honour of these relics. The same demand was also made by the Licchavis of Vaisali, the Sakyas of Kapilavastu, the bulis of Alahappa, the Koliyas of Ramagrama and the Mallas of pava. A Brahman of Vethadvipa also demanded a share on the plea of his being a Brahman. At first the Mallas of Kusinagara were not willing to satisfy these demands, as the lord attained parinirvana in their territory. But on the advice of the Brahman Drona, who pointed out to the Mallas the indecency of quarreling over the relics of one who had preached universal brotherhood, the Mallas of Kusinagara changed their mind. Drona was then entrusted with the distribution, and he took for himself the urn, over which he desired to erect a stupa. After the division the Mauryas of Pippalavana sent an envoy demanding some relics, but they had to content themselves with the charcoal from the funeral pyre. Those that received a share of the relics (dhatu) preserved them in dagobas (dhathugarbhas) erected in their respective countries. It is said that Emperor Asoka opened these ancient dagobas and distributed the relics contained in them all over his wide empire, and built more than eighty thousand stupas and dagopas and pire. for their preservation. Such is, freed from the fanciful additions of a pious posterity, the life of the historic Buddha. How much of it is real history, is rather difficult to say. But as to the historicity of Gautama Sakyamuni himself there can be no doubt. Whatever may be the verdict of historic criticism on the details of the life of Gautama Sakyamuni, there can be no doubt that among the founders of religions he occupics a marked place. His dignified bearing, his high intelloectual endowments, his pnerating glance, his oratorical power, the firmness of his convictions, his gentleness, Kindness, and liberality, and the attractiveness of his charcter-all testify to his greatness. But the impartial philosophic critic finds that Gautama Sakyamuni towers above the founders of all other religions by his life, by his personal character, by the methods of propagandism he employed, and by his final success. In him were united the truest princely qualities with the intelligence of a sage and the passionate devotion of a martyr. Though born of an aristocratic and ruling class, Gautama Buddha lived the life of an ordinary man, discarding the narrow distinctions of caste, rank and wealth. He knew the world. He was son, husband, father and devoted friend. He was not only a man, but never profesed to be anything more than a man. He gave a trial to the creeds of his ancestors, but ultimately made for himself a nobler faith. His teaching was perfect, but never pretended

to be a supernatural revelation. He did not doubt the capacity of man to understand the truth, and never has recourse to the arts of exorcism. He based all his reasoning on the fact of man's existence, and developed his practical Philosophy by the observation and minute study of human nature. In an age innocent of science he found for the problems of the whence, the whither and the why, solutions worthy of a scientific age. His aim was to rescue mankind from the fetters of passion and avarice and to convince them of an ideal higher than mere worldly good. He preached the gospel of renunciation attainable by meditation, a renunciation which did not lead one to the dreamy quietism of pantheistic or nihilistic philosophy but to the purification of one's activity by intellectual and ethical enlightenment so being one to the love of all beings by faith in an eternal Dharmakaya. Among the world's religious teacher, Gautama Sakyamuni alone has the glory of having rightly judged the intrinsic greatness of man's capacity to work out his salvation without extraneous aid. If the worth of a truly great man consists in his raising the worth of all mankind, who is better entitled to be called truly great than the Blessed one, who instead of degrading man by placing another being over him, has exalted him to the highest pinnacle of wisdom and love? His figure is the noblest, the most perfect that man can ever attain. It was genius unequalled among the sons of men that inspired the Buddha's teaching. It was genius commanding in its dictatorial strength that held together his order. It was genius, the first and last that India saw, that in its lofty aims and universality, foreshadowed the possibility of uniting the people into one great nationality, if such had ever been possible. Indeed the Tathagata is the light of the world. No wonder that even those who first rejected his teaching had at last to include him in their pantheon by making him an avatar of one of the very gods whom he had himself discarded ;

“ Those only are godlike who shrink from sin,
The white souled tranquil votaries of good”.

No teacher was so godless as lord Buddha yet none so god like. Though the master of all, he was the universal brother of each. While despising the follies of the world, he lived and moved among men serenely and lovingly. When surrounded by all his retinue of followers, and glorified by the whole world, he never once thought that these privileges were his, but went on doing good, just as the shower brings gladness yet reflects not on its work. Though exalted and adored, he never arrogated to himself divinity. The Blessed one called Ananda and said:- “All this is unworthy of me. No such vain homage can accomplish the words of the

Dharma. They who do righteously pay me most honour and please me most." To the unbiased thinker even the legends which enshroud the life of Sakyasimha are not without significance. They set before him a truly admirable figure: a man of quiet majesty, of wisdom and pleasant humour, consistent in thought, word and deed, of perfect equanimity and moral fervour, exempt from every prejudice, overcoming evil with good, and full of tenderness for all beings. In some of the legends, the so-called birth-stories, the Buddha is represented as having voluntarily endured infinite trials through numberless ages and births, that he might deliver mankind, foregoing the right to enter Nirvana and casting himself again and again into the stream of human life and destiny for the sole purpose of teaching the way of liberation from sorrow and suffering. The Buddhism, or as it is known among its followers, the Dharma, is the religion preached by the Buddha'. A Buddha is one who has attained Bodhi. By Bodhi is meant an attained by man by purely human means. Of the many that have attained Bodhi the one best known to history is Gautama Sakyamuni. Gautama Sakyamuni is generally spoken as the founder of the Dharma. But Sakyamuni himself refers in his discourses to Buddhas who had preached the same doctrine him. Nor can we speak of the Buddha of the founder of Buddhism in the same sense as we speak of the founder of christianity or mohamedanism. Their founder is essentially a supernatural being, he is the incarnation of the son of god, who is no other than god himself. No one can call himself a true christain, who does not accept the divinity of Jesus, and who does not believe that christ, rose from the death after dying on the cross to take upon himself the sin of all those who believe in him. Mohamed the founder the latter religion, though not an incarnation of God or any of his relations or servants, is yet a privileged human being, who was chosen as the special vehicle for the communication of a supernatural revelation to mankind, and no man can call himself a mohamed who does not believe that mohamed is the prophet of God. But the Buddha nowhere claims to be anything more than a human being. No doubt we find him a full and perfect man. All the same he is a man among men. He does not profess to bring a revelation from a supernatural source. He does not proclaim himself a saviour who will take upon himself the sin of those that follow him. He professes no more than to teach men the way by which they can Liberate themselves as he has liberated himself. He distinctly tell us that every one must bear the burden of his own sins, that every man must be the fabricator of his own salvation, that not even a God can do for man what self help in the form of self conquest and self emancipation

can accomplish. We read in the Dhammapada, a collection of verses attributed to the Blessed Sakayamuni:- “All that we are is the result of what we have thought, it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. By oneself evil is done: by oneself one suffers: by oneself evil is left undone; by oneself one is purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself; no one can purify another. You yourself must make an effort; the Buddhas are only preachers. The thoughtful who enter the way are freed from the bondage of sin. He who does not rouse himself when it is time to rise, who though young and strong, is full of sloth, whose will and thoughts are weak, that lazy and idle man will never find the way to enlightenment. Struuousness is the path of immortality, sloth the path of death. Those who are strenuous do not die; those who are sloth are as if dead already.” Again in the Mahapatinirvana sutra the Buddha gives the following admonition to Ananda, one of his beloved disciples:- “O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye refuges to yourselves. Hold fast to the Dharma as a lamp. Hold fast to the Dhamma as a refuge. Look not for refuge to any one beside yourselves. And whoever, Ananda, either now or after I am dead, shall be a lamp unto themselves and a refuge unto themselves.....it is they. Ananda, among the seekers after Bodhi who shall reach the very to most high. Not only did the Buddha offer no support to favourable interference from supernatural agencies on behalf of man, not only did he offer no promise of exemption from suffering and sorrow as reward of simple belief in him, but he went further in admonishing his disciples not to attach importance to his individual personality but to remember always the ideal”. It is said in the Vairacchedika:- “He who looks for me, i.e. the true Tathagata, through my material form, or seeks me through any audible sound, that man has entered on an erroneous course, and shall never behold Tathagata.” Similarly in another place we read:- “Who say you see me and have transgressed the Dharma are not seen by me, but as though you were distant by ten thousand miles, whereas the man who keeps the Dharma dwells ever in my sight.” The same truth is much more impressively brought out in a conversation between the Blessed one and the Brahman Drona. Once upon a time the latter seeing the Blessed one sitting at the foot of a tree, asked him:- “Are you a deva?” And the Exalted one answered :- “I am not.” “Are you a gandharya?” “I am not.” “Are you a Yaksha?” “I am not”. “Are you a man?” “I am not a man”. On the Brahman asking what he might be, the Blessed one replied:- “Those evil influences, those lusts, whose non-destruction would have individualised me as a deva, a Gandharva, a Yaksha, or a man. I have completely

annihilated. Know, therefore. O Brahman, that I am a Buddha". Now the practical lesson of this anecdote is obvious. According to Hindu ideas a Deva, a Gandharva, a Yaksha could assume a human form, It was therefore natural for the Brahman to ask if the being in human form before him was a Deva, a Gandharva, or Yaksha. But what perplexed the Brahman was that he received a negative answer to each one of his questions, and this led him to his general questions. Buddha's answer to it was unequivocal. What was of importance in his eyes was not form (rupa) but his character (nama), the embodiment in practical life of the ideas of compassion and wisdom summed up in the word Bodhi. He was not only Sakyamuni, but he was also tathagata. The eternal truths he taught were nothing but what he himself was in the quintessence of his personality. He was dharmadhatusvabhavatmaka, representing in himself the ultimate reality embodied in the society of all human beings. No wonder therefore that the personality that dominates Buddhism is not sakyamuni but the Buddha. Though what is of primary importance is the life in accordance with the Dharma, yet the personality of the Great Teacher is not without value. In so far as that personality is the practical embodiment of his teaching, it serves as a model for the disciple to imitate and follow. As the Amitayur-dhayana sutra says:- "Since they have meditated on Buddha's body, they... Will also see Buddha's mind. The Buddha's mind is his absolutely great compassion for all beings". But it must at the same time be remembered that the teaching of the Blessed one does not rest for its validity on any miracle or any special event in his life as is the case in many other religions. Should the events in the life of Gautama Sakyamuni turn out to be unhistorical, that would not in the least detract from the merit of his teachings. As the Blessed one himself has said, the teaching carries with it its own demonstration. The ideal of persistent energy thus held up before the disciple is intensely human. And even if the virtues of Tathagata are infinitely superior to those of ordinary men, still the ideal can serve as a pattern and guide. The disciple can always take the Buddha as his model, so that the recollection of his heroic and saintly life may assist him to be a hero and a saint as well. In his unbounded love for all beings Sakyamuni found philosophic truth that makes him the best. With metta!!!