

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MILINDA PRASNA : A CRITICAL STUDY

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BY

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In habit and Character Mrs. Bhattacharjee is a fit and worthy person for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Preface

PREFACE

Buddhism was only a sojourner in its native land. Buddha's birth synchronised with the end of the age of the Upaniṣads. It had shaken the roots of Hinduism. The dynamism of Buddhist philosophy inspired an entirely different outlook about the world. Based on reason and meditation, Buddhism was essentially a reform movement. It emphasized Ahimsa or non-violence.

Buddhism is such a religion which enlightens us not only in the field of education but also it gives us the depth of life which leads us to get insight of human beings for which human beings are able to fight.

"The Questions of King Milinda" is much venerated book of Buddhism. The early and important exposition of Buddhist principles seems to have been little known during most of the centuries of its existence. **"The Questions of King Milinda"** is important for the testimony which it gives to the early completion of the Buddhist canon. It consists of a series of dialogues constructed to explain points in the sacred text. The dramatic setting of these dialogues are remarkably lively and graceful. The knotty problem was solved by Nāgasena

and the doubts and misgivings had been removed from the mind of the king. But the solution to give opportunity for which the questions or dilemmas are invented and it is really an important part of the work. It includes all important problems in a threadbare manner without any critical study. In my research work I want to bring out the critical analysis of the questions and answers which will certainly say something new to the contribution of Buddhism.

The research work of **“The Questions of King Milinda”** consists of seven Chapters, dealing with its critical analysis. The First Chapter is preceeded by an “Introduction”. In the Second Chapter an attempt has been made to bring out the importance of “The Theory of No-Soul”. The Third Chapter gives a brief exposition of “The Concept of Causality in Buddhism with special reference to Milindaprasāna”. The Fourth Chapter describes the “Concept of Nirvāṇa in Milindaprasāna”. The Fifth Chapter elaborates about “The notion of Dharma in Buddhism” in reference to Milindaprasāna. The Sixth Chapter illustrates “Some Fundamental concepts in Milindaprasāna in relation to Law of Karma, Rebirth, Love, Faith, Wisdom & Death and the Seventh Chapter, the concluding one analyses “Some Philosophical problems and their probable solutions”. The research work has been accomplished with the result of regular

study and collection of various books with proper investigation which, though not exhaustive, throws some light on some important problems. In fine, I hope that this research work will serve the purpose and can guide the students well.

In accomplishing this research work I have to fulfil the most agreeable duty of acknowledging my indebtedness to Dr. Raghunath Ghosh, Reader, the Department of Philosophy, North Bengal University who is also specialised in "Indian Philosophy" and 'Pāli' language. He has taken very keen personal interest for the progress of my research work and spared no pains in going through the whole thesis step by step and have given me his valued criticism and many weighty suggestions for completing the whole work. I convey my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Sibnath Sarma, Head of the Department of Philosophy of Guwahati University who inspired me into my studies and not only provide me with all facilities for collection of books but also guided me at every step while writing this thesis. I also grateful to my respected teacher Dr. Dilip Chakraborty, Ex-Head of the Department of Philosophy of Guwahati University who also inspired me in writing this thesis.

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I am thankful to the authorities of the North Bengal University Library, Guwahati University Library, District Library, some Buddhist temple and 'National Library' of Calcutta for giving me permission to consult various helpful books and some periodicals. I am also extend my gratitude and indebtedness to my parents, my brother and sister-in-laws for their co-operation and constant encouragement in my work.

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Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION

In the opinion of Romain Rolland, there is one place on the surface of the earth, where all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when men began to dream of existence, that permanent home is India. India is proud of her great sons from time immemorial and Buddha is one of them. He brought fulfilment to a mass of her ancient dreams after discovering the paths of enlightenment, which endows life with permanent bliss and happiness.

The leaders of free India could be able to recognise promptly the greatness of India's noblest son, the Buddha.

In the modern time, a deal of interest has been created in Buddhism in the western countries as well as in the Buddhist group. The history of Buddhism, if it could be written in full, would be of immense value.

Buddhism is the world's first proselytising religion which the history of philosophy ever presents. Its fundamental ideas and essential spirit can remarkably be compared with the advanced scientific thought of the nineteenth century. The modern pessimistic Philosophy of

Germany that of Schopenhaur and Hartmann is only a revised version of ancient Buddhism. As far as the dynamic conception of reality is concerned, Buddhism may be compared with creative evolutionism of Bergson. Early Buddhism suggests the outline of a philosophy suited to the practical wants of the present day and helpful in reconciling the conflict between faith and science. Early Buddhism in India is not an ethical guide but also an ideology as well. Buddha, an Asian Martin Luther further questioned the prevailing religious doctrine and uphold the sanctity of human intellect and its freedom.

About 2500 years ago Buddhism was born, in India as a reaction to vedism. In the sixth century before Christ, there must have happened in India something very important - some great social, political, moral and religious changes - that brought about the birth of Buddha.

The age in which the Buddha was born was a time of great spiritual unrest and remarkable intellectual ferment. It gave birth to a galaxy of spiritual leaders of mankind. There was Pythagoras in Greece, Zoroaster in Persia, Lao-tzu and Confucius in China. Hindu tradition looks upon the Buddha as one of the ten incarnations of the Lord, inspite of the traditional Vedānta outlook on the Buddha as one who is the heterodox and beyond the pale of the Vedas.

The many-sidedness of Buddhism can be traced directly to the personality of its founder, called the Śākya Muni. He possessed

to the highest possible degree, a warm and responsive human sympathy, a love not only of truth but also of beauty. The Buddha's teaching provided not only a rational analysis and a systematic solution of the problems of life, but it also furnished ways and means of living a rich and an abundant life of unity and service.

The Buddha laid the greatest emphasis on Love, or as He called it Friendliness, to all creatures.

Early Buddhism has made original contribution in several fields. It shattered the eternalist philosophy of *Upaniṣads*, and for that reason, they do not believe in the existence of Self i.e., *Nairātmyavāda*.

Early Buddhism teaches man to approach truth directly; it discards priests, mediators, ceremonies, incarnations, gods, revelation, mystical interpretation etc. It transforms a person's character and ennobles him. A Buddhist is not afraid of death and faces bravely the prejudices and follies of people. He is the friend of men and stands above kings, princess and ministers. Buddhism was based on reason and meditation. Early Buddhism was essentially a reform movement, urging every man to give up his vices and asking him to practise purity of conduct in his daily life.

The main object of early Buddhism was to bring about a reformation movement in the religious practices and a return to the

basic principles. Buddhism like as humanism crossed racial and national barrier and the enemy we have to fight within ourselves. To achieve peace we must maintain inner harmony.

Early Buddhism inculcates a high system of ethics. The chief human virtue is *Maitrī*, which may be translated as love, good will and benevolence. Early Buddhism had from the very beginning been insistent on adopting the middle path in all matters. In this point also they are maintaining the midpoint between Theism and Materialism.

Buddhism is essentially a rationalist religion. It appeals to a man's analytical faculties and exhorts him to slum all forms of superstitions and unfounded beliefs, however high. It is immensely practical. Over-emphasis on morality makes it singularly distinct from other religions: Good life as long as one lives and final extinction (Nibbāna) is the essence of Buddhism.

The Buddha's teaching provided a systematic solution of the problems of life and where liberty is sanely tempered and controlled by law and self-discipline. A man is in himself a little universe, the ordering of his mind and body is as complex according to the Buddha, as the ordering of the stars. Buddha was not merely a physician of souls but also a surgeon, using the knife, when needed. He asked man to strive for perfection and to love all creatures. Buddhism suggests a philosophy of practical wants of the present day and helpful

in reconciling the conflict between faith and science. This will be clearly seen, if we confine our attention to the leading principle of early Buddhism. Milinda is but an adopted form of the name of Menander, the Greek king of Baktria, who reigned probably from about 140 to about 115 B.C., or even 110 B.C. There is a divergence of opinion among the scholars concerning the date of king Menander.

The blessed teachings of the Buddha had begun to appeal to the Greek mind even before the time of Menander whom we first see as obsessed with doubts and dilemmas about the teachings of the Buddha and then as a devout Buddhist ruler propagating the teachings of the Buddhist religion when his doubts and misgivings had been removed by the Venerable dialectician Nāgasena.

"*Milindaprasāna*" or 'The Questions of King Milinda' is a celebrated treatise of early Buddhism.

'*Milinda-pañha*' (Pāli) or '*Milindaprasāna*' (Sanskritised) is the collection of dialogues between the Greek King Menander and the Buddhist monk Nāgasena.

It is stated in the *Milinda-pañha* that Milinda was born in a village named Kalasi in the Doab of Alasanda i.e. Alexandria (Modern Kandahar). His capital was at Sāgala. This city is identified with the modern Sialkot in the Punjab. Menander's dominions comprised

Peshawar, the upper Kabul valley, the Punjab, Sindh, Kathiawar and western Uttar Pradesh.

Menander was a well-informed scholar and a keen debator. He was well versed in various branches of learning and expert in argument. He wanted to understand the true essence of Buddhism which raised for him several difficulties and knotty problems. He approached many teachers, but none could solve his difficulties. Keen seeker of truth as he was, Menander was greatly disheartened by this. It was by a fortunate chance that one day he saw a Buddhist monk named Nāgasena going on his begging round. The calm and serene personality of the sage had a silent but powerful influence on the king's mind. The monk who was no ordinary teacher told the king that he was agreeable to a discussion only if it was held in the Paṇḍitavāda way and not in the Rājāvāda way. The king paid homage to the teacher in a fitting manner and put his difficulties one by one before the sage who ably solved them all to the king's entire satisfaction.

On this celebrated dialogue which the king had with the monk is based on the *Milinda - pañha* which is considered to be the most notable book in the non-canonical Pāli literature of early Buddhism. Suffice it to say that the deepest spiritual problem

with which the king was confronted was his inability to understand how the Buddha could believe in rebirth without believing in a re-incarnating self or ego. This knotty problem has been solved by the Venerable Nāgasena in a masterly way in this book for all time.

If we judge from the view point of ancient Indian culture and civilisation, the book '*Milinda-pañha*' is valuable which is glorious with historical and geographical facts. It consists of the discussion of a number of points of Buddhist doctrine treated in the form of conversations between King Milinda and Nāgasena, the Elder. The king himself plays a very subordinate role. The questions raised, or dilemmas stated, are put into his mouth. But the solutions to the questions or dilemmas form a major portion of the work, and these are put into the mouth of Nāgasena.

It is said that as soon as they had exchanged formal greeting, the king asked about his name Nāgasena replied that he is known as Nāgasena.

This statement of the Elder Nāgasena set the ball rolling and there followed a series of questions and answers, including the famous chariot illustration which maintained that just as the parts of a chariot put together make a chariot, similarly the different components of an

individual make an individual. The questions of king Milinda (or *Milinda-pañha*) is a masterly work on Buddhism. It treats the all important problems of momentariness, no-soul, *Nirvāṇa* and other important philosophical issues in a threadbare manner.

It contains the views of the Buddha sets out, as they appeared to his very earliest disciples in a series of 185 conversational discourses, which will some day come to hold a place in the history of human thought, akin to that held by the 'Dialogues of Plato'. It has been observed that there is a great similarity between the modern Bengali literature '*Sri Ramkrishna Kathāmṛita*' composed by Sri Ma.

The persons who have a keen interest in ancient Indian religion, philosophy and culture, will be certainly satisfied by reading this book broadly to lead them to ethical and spiritual development. Indian culture can be compared to a grand tree from which a lot of branches of various shapes and sizes come out to hold a grand variety of flowers and leaves - an inexplicable collection of exquisite beauty. Innumerable creatures come here to relax under the soothing shade of this magnanimous ancient tree and seek emancipation from the cruel clutches of worries and anxieties produced by the three major causes of sorrow. All the systems of Indian Philosophy try to achieve the same objective which is the *NIRVĀṆA*. *Milinda-pañha* paves the

way for quenching the thirst for spiritual knowledge as have been done by the *Upaniṣad*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Dhammapada* which are the masterpieces reveal the spiritual upliftment of ancient India.

The "Questions of King Milinda", is undoubtedly the masterpiece of Indian prose, from a literary point of view, that had then been produced in any country. In the Questions of Milinda we got a negative interpretation of the Buddhist teaching. Nāgasena doubted the causation of Buddha. For believing an incomplete evidence is not only a blunder but a crime. But Buddhism inspired an entirely different outlook about the world. Buddhism knows no being but becoming. The law of dependent origination is the core of Buddhist philosophy. With the help of his philosophy of change, he shattered the concept of an eternal soul and eternal Brahman.

This idea of continuous change is clearly brought out by the Buddhist monk Nāgasena, in his discourse with King Milinda. It may here be recalled, the famous Greek dialectician, *Heraclitus* who also used the simile of flowing water to prove that the "world is a continuous process of change."

In short, the *Milinda-pañha* occupies a unique position in Indian literature if it is adjudged from the point of view of metaphysics, or literature or history or knowledge of geography.

The dialogues between king Milinda and Nāgasena were delivered depending upon the facts in reality. The importance of dignity and the charm of skill in the whole fiction is maintained here. The historical evolution of thought and of the rise of literature in India will more and more look upon the questions as a whole and estimate its right value.

In fine, it may be said that important though the treatise is, a preliminary survey has revealed that no significant philosophical analysis of this work is done. Apart from being translated into so many languages as a matter of course, philosophers have only praised the book without bringing out the philosophy as such of this masterly work.

We shall analyse the philosophy of *Milindaprasāna* to see what it has to say anew, what it repeats and towards what it orients the general drift of Buddhism. I am confident, this will add something to the understanding of early Buddhism.

Chapter - II

THEORY OF NO-SOUL

'Self' as the English equivalent to '*āttā*'. 'Self' connotes primarily 'identity' or being what a man is, and therefore it connotes also separation from other individuals. It can also be applied to the moral nature of man and to his ontological reality.

One can detect an implicit contention that the original *āttā* of Buddhism coincides with the *ātman* of the Upaniṣads. Early Buddhism accepts the reality of the 'individual self' as a matter of fact. Early Buddhism speaks of the individual self in a way similar to that of *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*, Jainism etc.

According to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, the world is originated from the *Ātman*. The world-creative super divine *Ātman* as the true, intrinsic self, is directly to be found in each one of us. The first consciousness of the *Ātman* as the world principle is '*aham asmi*', 'I am'. *Ātman* existing in all is without sin. *Ātman* as man creates the mortal one, and his creation is the super-creation/ *atīśṛṣṭi*.

The *Ātman*, as the self, is the nearest and dearest of all. The

Ātman is the world of gods of all. *Ātman* is the abode of all beings. *Ātman* is silence. The way to indicate it is thus by *neti neti*, it is not this, it is not this.¹ We cannot describe it by any positive content which is always limited by conceptual thought.

Ātman was used in the *R̥g-Veda* to denote the ultimate essence of the universe, and on the other the vital breath in man. The self or *Ātman* is generally used in variety of senses, such as, *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya ātman*, *manomaya ātman*, *vijñanamaya ātman* and *ānandamaya ātman*.

Again, in another place of the *Upaniṣad* it has been said that the self is free from sin, free from old age, from death and grief, from hunger and thirst. The "deathless and fearless self is Brahman". The ultimate truth about the self is said that the body is the support of the deathless and the bodiless self. Self lives in all heart. The self is not the effect of any cause. Self-controlled steady man is always guided by his intellect, can easily manage his unmanageable horses i.e., senses and can reach the end of his journey, finds there all pervading spirit.

The all-pervading immortal self is not to be sought by outward knowledge. It is indestructable. It is the light of all lights, which helps us to move around, does its work and returns. The sum and substance of the *Upaniṣadic* teaching is *Ātman* which is identical with Brahman.

It is all the psychic function, an intelligence *prajñānam* by which one can become immortal in heaven. Man is the highest manifestation of the *Ātman* who is also named as Brahman. The *Ātman* is the bridge between this world of being and the world of Brahman.

According to *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* the self is an idea of manifold, viz. (1) materialistic in the body; (2) realistic in the individual soul and idealistic in the sole highest self. The Upaniṣad had discovered that the true self was *ānandam*.²

Early Buddhism tacitly presupposes some such idea. Early Buddhist thought was that 'self is nothing but bliss' which is changing sorrow, and what is sorrow is not bliss. Buddhism differs from Upaniṣad in the experiences of the self. Early Pāli scriptures hold that 'there is no permanent essence in our changing experiences'. Changing phenomena are nothing but sorrow and therefore non-self. The ignorant man did not know the Noble Truths and considered himself to be endowed with form (*rūpa*). Buddhism holds that this knowledge of self is delusion or false knowledge. The Upaniṣad accepts the view of permanent self but Buddha denies the same. The body and soul exists only as a complex inter-connected origination,decease, but neither body nor soul has existence as a self-contained substance.

The specific contribution of Buddhism to religious thought lies in its insistence on the doctrine of 'not-self'. The belief in a 'self' is considered by all Buddhists as an indispensable condition to the emergence of suffering. The idea of the concept of "I", is a mere figment of the imagination, with nothing real to correspond to it.

Again Buddhism does not find contention with the intellectual conviction that there is no ego, a Buddhist aims at an entirely new attitude of life. Those who look to it for advice on how to lead a self-less life, may learn a great deal. The greatest contribution of Buddhist 'philosophy' lies in self discipline which the Buddhists imposed upon themselves in order to impress the truth into a part of their own being.³

The doctrine of *Anāttā* is very difficult to understand. It will require more than one life-time to get to the bottom of it.

As facts of ultimate reality, we must reject the 'self'. But herein lies an important point to be pointed out; if there is no such thing as a 'self' there is also no such thing as a 'person'. For a 'person' is something which is organised round a supposed inner core, a central growing point 'a self'. A psychologist says that the self is the organising function within the individual. It is prior to, not the object of our sciences, it is presupposed in the fact that one can be scientist.

Man is a very limited being with a dated existence. Man has

the ability to deal with the past, which may be kept alive through memory.

The self has, up to the present, defied adequate description and definition. It is apparently the case that the difficulty lies not in our intelligence, tools and so forth, but in the nature of the very concept of "self". Terms like life, self and God are difficult to define because non-circular definitions seem to distort their nature. While we cannot define self to our satisfaction, it is nevertheless an important factor and concept. Some would say that the self is the important factor in human life.

In European conception, there is a complete gap between the nature of the universe and their mode of life. Arthur Schopenhauer and Herbert Spencer for instance, at once come to mind. In Buddhism, on the contrary, the entire stress lies on the removal of attachment to this world. A merely theoretical proposition such as "there is no ego" would be regarded as utterly useless.

All the Indian systems except Buddhism and Cārvāka admit the existence of a permanent entity called *Ātman* or *Jīva*. Different schools of Indian philosophy describe *ātman*, *puruṣa* or *jīva* differently. Nyāya calls it absolutely attributeless and characterless, in determinate unconscious entity, Sāṃkhya describes it being of the nature of pure

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consciousness. The Vedāntā says that it is that pure consciousness (*cit*) pure bliss (*ānanda*) and pure being (*sat*).

The Jaina like the Mīmāṃsakas maintain that the self is consciousness. But they regard it as identity and difference. The nature of the self is not pure spirituality as in the Brahma doctrine of the Upaniṣad. The soul, according to Jaina, are the bearer of all mental processes, are efficient and capable of action.

All the systems agree in holding that it is pure and unsettled in its nature and that all impurities of action or passion do not form a real part of it.

The summum bonum of life is attained when all impurities are removed and the pure nature of the self is thoroughly and permanently apprehended.

Rabindra Nath Tagore roughly said that the 'body' represents the finite side of man's existence and 'soul' stands for the infinite aspects of man's nature". According to him body is *the temple of the Divine*. Tagore says, "Heaven is fulfilled in your sweet body, my child, in your palpitating heart"⁴.

According to Vivekananda, freedom represents the essence of the soul, and as such, soul is not really in bondage. The soul, he

says, performs actions in ignorance, certain tendencies and *Samskāras* are created in accordance with which the next birth is determined. Soul is immortal. The realisation of immortality of the soul has to grow-evolve, but nothing which is not already there can even be evolved. This is a fact of experience, having the testimony of science also behind it. The seed, e.g. grows into a tree only because the tree is already potentially contained in the seed. The soul is able to realise immortality because the soul is immortal.⁵

The word 'self' in western philosophy is used in three different senses. First, it is used in the sense of the permanent spiritual substance which lies behind and beyond the fleeting mental phenomena.

Secondly, it is used in the sense of an aggregate of mental states without any underlying principle of unity among them.

Thirdly, it is used in the sense of concrete spiritual unity which is not above and beyond the mental phenomena, but realises in them without doing its unity and identity in them.

Among these three views the first view is named as 'soul-substance theory' of the self, the second is known as the 'empirical' conception of the self; and the third is known as the 'idealistic' view of the self.

The view is first propounded by Plato. Plato conceived the soul as a spiritual substance. Before Plato, the soul was conceived in Greek Philosophy as something material. According to Plato, thinking is the essential function of the soul: the soul is eternal and immortal. Aristotle also conceives soul as a spiritual substance. According to him, the soul is the '*entelechy*' of the body and body is its matter. Both Plato and Aristotle take the soul as the unity of manifold experiences of the individual.

This theory of the soul is called the traditional or 'soul-substance theory' of the self. It was modified later by Descartes, Locke and Berkeley.

Descartes conceived the 'soul' as a 'Spiritual' substance whose essential attribute is *thinking* or *consciousness*. From the consciousness of the 'self', he is led to affirm its existence. Descartes admits the intuitive knowledge of the self. He says, "I have an intuition of myself, so the existence of the self is unquestionable". His famous dictum '*Cogito ergo sum*' is the first principle of his philosophy. Locke advocates 'the soul substance' theory of the self. He also says that we have an intuitive certainty of the self.

According to Berkeley, the soul is entirely different from ideas or experiences which are sensuous in nature. The self is entirely different from ideas. Ideas cannot live, if there be no self.

The 'soul-substance theory' of the self is severely criticised by David Hume. Hume says that there is no reason for believing in the existence of a permanent spiritual substance. His analysis of experience gives no rational ground for believing in the existence of a soul-substance. Hume connects the various changing experiences with the Laws of association.

Hume says that when he enters most intimately into what people call 'self', he always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. The permanent conception of the self is nothing but a figment of our imagination.⁶

Kant was dissatisfied with both the 'spiritual-substance' theory and the empirical theory of the self. According to him, the self is an active organising agency and Kant's conception differs from the traditional theory of the self as a passive and changeless entity. Kant rightly grasps the nature of the self as an active unity, his theory of the noumenal self cannot be fully accepted. Kant's view of the self is the hint to the right solution of the problem yet we have to go beyond it. In Hegel we find a concrete view of the 'self' as a unity in and through the variety of experiences, and this is a more or less satisfactory theory of the self.

In this connection, we are in a position to understand thoroughly a much talked of dogma of Buddhism, the negation of soul.

It is not incorrect to say that Buddhism disaffirms the existence of soul, but this cannot be understood in a sense which would in any way give this thought a materialistic stamp. It might be said with equal propriety that Buddhism denies the existence of the body. The body, as well as the soul, exists only as a complex of manifold interconnected origination and de cease; but neither body nor soul has existence as a self-contained substance, sustaining itself par se, sensations, perceptions and all those processes, which make up the inner life, crowd upon one another in motley variety; in the centre of this changing plurality stands consciousness (*Vijñāna*) which, if the body be compared to a state, may be spoken of as the ruler of this state. But consciousness is not essentially different from perceptions and sensations, the comings and goings of which it at the same time superintends and regulates.

It may be allowed in this place to go beyond the range of the sacred texts and here insert those very clear expressions which we find on this group of problems in a later and in many respects exceedingly remarkable dialogue, the "Questions of Milinda"⁷.

The soul is an aggregate of the body, the sensations and the ideas. All this is beautifully illustrated in the '*Milinda Pañha*'. Nāgasena

seems to have been an acute controversialist who loved argument for its own sake almost as much as Buddha disliked it. That he had caught the deeper spirit of the Master's teaching is, to say the least, improbable; but that his discourses present to us an interpretation of that teaching, which had gained currency in his day, can scarcely be doubted. The spiritual atmosphere of his age, the words, that he finds himself compelled to use, even his own subconscious convictions - are all against the thinker. In the well known chariot dialogue, Nāgasena is supposed to have proved conclusively that 'there is no Ego'. I cannot see that he has done this, and, I am by no means sure that he has attempted to do it. What he has proved is that, just as the name chariot belongs to the vehicle as a whole and not to any of its parts, so the name Nāgasena belongs to the living being as a whole and not to any of his organs or faculties. Independence of the thirty two parts of the body and the five *skandhas* there takes place this denomination, 'Nāgasena', this designation, this conceptual term, a current appellation and a mere name. In ultimate reality, however this person cannot be apprehended. If the dialogue is directed against anything, it is directed against the vulgar belief that the soul is quasi-material something which can be separated from the rest of the man, just as a wheel can be separated from the rest of the chariot; or again that the soul is one among many faculties which go to make up the whole man. The flame

simile, which is also supposed to be directed against the soul - theory of the Brahmanic philosophy is one which that theory, far from rejecting, would accept as singularly apt. For just as fire uses up fuel, and in doing so manifests itself as flame, (this is, as burning fuel) so the soul, in its journey through the earth-life, continually uses up physical matter, and in doing so manifests itself as a living body (that is, as physical matter fused and vitalised by the soul-fire) when the soul retires from the physical plane, the body, deprived of its vitalising influence, disintegrates, into dust, just as fuel, when its fire is extinct, turns to ashes; but the soul itself, continues to use up matter, though, as the matter used is now impalpable, the soul-flame becomes invisible till the time comes for it to feed again on the fuel of physical nature - in other words, to appear again on earth.⁸ Even when Nāgasena's hostility to the Ego is unmistakable, his belief in re-incarnation causes his arguments to miscarry. He may flatter himself that he has disproved the identity between A (who is living now) and B (the future inheritor of his Karma); but as a believer in re-incarnation, he must needs take pains to prove that B will justly be held responsible for what A has done or left undone; and in his attempt to make good this point he has to admit that the relation between a "young girl" and the same girl "when grown up and marriageable".⁹

The conversation of the saint Nāgasena and the Greek king Menander truly reflects the old church door teaching.

This conception of 'soul' may be compared with the view of Heraklitos, who in his theory of being or beings more nearly approaches Buddha.

In the '*Questions of Milinda*' we seem to get a negative interpretation of the Buddha's teaching - the Buddha, who denies soul and a future for the liberated. There is no soul in the breath. The inhalations and exhalation are merely constituent powers of the bodily frame. Nāgasena satisfied Milinda, the king, with the saying of "It is by reason, O king, of the eye and of forms that sight arises, and those other conditions - contact, sensation, idea, thought, abstraction, sense of vitality, and attention - arise each simultaneously with its predecessor. And a similar succession of cause and effect arises when each of the other five organs of sense is brought into play. And so herein there is no such thing as soul."¹⁰

Nāgasena is a thorough going rationalist, who adopted the scientific method rigorously and tore off the screen of make-believe which pious hand had woven round the image of truth to disguise its uglier aspects. Realising that the seeker of truth must at least be truthful. To Nāgasena lack of evidence for an opinion was a sufficient reason for disbelieving anything.

For believing an incomplete evidence is not only a blunder but

a crime. In the west, in its love separate self-hood based on the misunderstood christian doctrine of an immortal soul, finds this Buddhist doctrine difficult. The Buddhist doctrine is not that of no-self or no-soul but of the separate soul. All things, without exception whatsoever are devoid of permanence and reality and in that sense illusion. In this sense there is no self and the belief in a self which has its rights and selfish interest is an illusion based on ignorance. When ignorance has been got rid of and knowledge has arisen, one does not grasp after sense-pleasure, speculative views rites, and customs, the theory of self.

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Chapter - III

THE CONCEPT OF CAUSALITY IN BUDDHISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MILINDA PRASNA

In the worldly process we perceive a constant change. Some of it is seemingly automatic i.e., without the efforts of some perceptible agent, e.g., the snows of the mountains melt into the water of the rivers and run towards the sea; the sun shines brightly, spreads heat and light and repels cold and darkness. This change is sometimes due to some efforts of perceptible agent, e.g., a potter turns the clay into a pot with the help of his stick and wheel.

A layman does not bother much about change. If he is asked regarding this question, he will definitely search for some causes. This layman's conception when reflected upon, confronts us with serious difficulties. The importance of the concept is twofold - metaphysical and logical. Is all Reality intrinsically active, e.g., the prakṛti of Sāṅkhya, or is it intrinsically passive? It is known that the atoms of Nyāya - Vaiśeṣika, is acted upon due to the interference of some other active agency. These questions are intimately connected with the change,

and therefore, with the concept of causation. Science, now-a-days is able to dispense with cause. Bertrand Russell, for instance, has declared the concept of cause as a 'relic of bygone age'. Thus the concept of cause is used, in the name of "functional dependence".

Causation in western philosophy is found in Aristotle's philosophy, who has drawn upon four different kinds of causes e.g. (i) Material cause (ii) Formal cause (iii) Efficient cause and (iv) Final cause.

According to J.S. Mill, causation is co-extensive with human experience, but it cannot be said to be strictly true, because, in many cases, we do not actually perceive causes for so many changes, we only infer the causes on the basis of other causal connections. Uniformity of causation is relatively recent in philosophy. It has come into effect with the development and the growth of science and its emphasis on the law of nature¹.

In the western concept of causality the efficient cause plays a vital role. They have neglected the material cause. But when we come to the Indian treatment of causation we have seen a separate picture. Their main subject of treatment is the material cause and this material cause appears differently in different systems of Indian Philosophy.

In Sāṅkhya, the material cause is the permanent basis of

changing states which are real Prakṛti of Sāṅkhya, constitutes the material cause of the whole universe, which is active. In Advaita Vedānta, the material cause is the permanent basis of the changing states which are not real, but appeared as real due to illusion. It is the substratum of the whole illusory universe. The conception of the material cause of Vedānta is parallel to the immanent causality of the Western thought.²

The main problem discussed by Indian thinkers is that of the relation of the material cause with its effect. Is the essence then derived from void ? Is it annihilated or continues to exist side by side ? In the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika conception of causality an effect is completely a new entity with its essence different from that of its inherent cause and exists side by side with it.

The real emphasis of the Buddha's teaching lay in the doctrine of causation as pervading all the things of experience which creates a new and Copernican revolution of thought.

In order to maintain the continuity of the world in the absence of a permanent substratum, Buddha announces the Law of causation and makes it the basis of continuity. The Law of universal causation, with its corollary of the eternal continuity of becoming, is the fundamental contribution of Buddhism to Indian thought. Buddha and Upaniṣads holds the same opinion that the whole world is conditioned

by causes. Upaniṣads hold that the things have no self-existence as such, but are products of a causal series which has no beginning or end. Buddha says things are the products of conditions. That which constitutes being in the material realm of things is only the *patīccasamuppāda* (*Pratītyasamutpāda*) or the origin of one thing in dependence on another. We cannot say as in the Nyāya philosophy that one thing is the cause of something else. As the world process is affiliated to conscious growth, so is the force of causality related to inner motivation. Organic growth is the type of all becoming. The difficulty of external world is that the causation becomes uniform antecedent. That is the cause, given which another occurs. Causation is not defined in more adequate terms in modern philosophy.

Before going to discuss the Buddhist concept of causality and its philosophical importance as discussed by Nāgasena to the king Milinda, we may quote the words of Kamalaśīla. "Among all the jewels of Buddhist philosophy its theory of causation is the chief jewel." Dr. L.M. Joshi has mentioned that the two principles *Pratītya - samutpāda* and *Nirvāṇa* form the core of the Buddha's philosophy. *Pratītya - samutpāda* was also called the middle way (*Madyamā pratipad*).³

The theory of causation is contained in the Second Noble Truth, which gives us the cause of suffering, and in the Third Noble Truth

which shows the cessation of suffering. Suffering is *Samsāra*; cessation of suffering is *Nirvāṇa*. Both are only aspects of the same Reality. *Pratītya samutpāda*, viewed from the point of view of relativity is *samsāra*; while viewed from the point of view of reality, it is *Nirvāṇa*. It is relativity and dependent causation as well as the Absolute, for it is the Absolute itself which appears as relative and acts as the binding thread giving them unity and meaning.⁴ *Pratītya samutpāda* tells us that in the empirical world dominated by the intellect everything is relative, conditional, dependent, subject to birth and death and therefore impermanent. The causal formula is : "This being, that arises"⁵ i.e., 'Depending on the cause, the effect arises'. Thus every object of thought is necessarily relative. And because it is relative, it is neither absolutely real nor absolutely unreal. All phenomenal things hang between reality and nothingness, avoiding both the extremes. *They are like the appearances of the Advaita Vedāntic Avidyā or Māyā*. Lord Buddha identifies the Law : "He who sees the *Dharma* sees the *Pratītya samutpāda*, and he who sees the *Pratītya samutpāda*, sees the *Dharma*". Failure to grasp it is the cause of misery. Its knowledge leads to the cessation of misery. Nāgārjuna salutes Buddha as the best among the teachers, who taught the blessed doctrine of *Pratītya Samutpāda* which leads to the cessation of plurality and to bliss.⁶ Kamalasīla says that the "doctrine of *Pratītya samutpāda* forms the most important factor in the excellent teaching

of the blessed Lord". It envelopes into it not only the theory of causation, but also the most important doctrine of Buddhist philosophy - the doctrines of the universal flux, the doctrine of unconnected flow of momentary reality and the doctrine of *Śūnya-Vāda*. It is the inexorable law that forms the basis of the whole of universe and controls all the origination and destruction of both sentient and insentient beings.

The meaning of *Patīccasamuppāda* is 'arising on the grounds of a preceeding cause'. It is the causal chain of causation. Writers have given different expression such as '*Dependent Origination*' or 'Dependent Arising' or 'Conditioned Co-production' or 'Conditioned Genesis' etc. Three formulas are given by Stcherbatsky which disclose the meanings and implications of the Buddhist theory of Causation, the *Pratītya samutpāda*. The first is "this being", that appears, the second is, "there is no real production, there is only interdependence," and the third is "all elements are forceless". The full meanings of the formulas can be grasped only in contrast to the thesis of the other schools existing at the times with which Buddhism had to fight. The *Satkāryavāda* of Sāṅkhya holds that there was no new production, no creative causation, but just a manifestation of the already existing stuff. The *asatkāryavāda* of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas holds that the effect is something new, not existing in the self of the cause. But the Buddhist answer was that the effect is not from one's own self, not from another self, not haphazard are the things produced. A thing is, in fact, not

produced at all; it arises in functional dependence upon its causes. The third formula refutes the idea of instrumental causation which is not possible in Buddhism where reality is only instantaneous and has no time to exert force on some other thing.⁷

Allied to the concept of dependent origination is the concept of impermanence or change. Cause and effect are interlinked. But how long does the cause exist ? It is not eternal. If it is eternal then it cannot produce something else called the effect, so cause is temporary, nay momentary. Every minute we see thousands of causes and effects. The effect then transforms itself into a cause and produces another effect. The transformation of cause into effect and vice-versa is an endless process.

Buddhism may be described as having reached in those early days to the modern conception of causation.

The view that everything changes from moment to moment is known as the *Kṣaṇika-vāda* or doctrine of momentariness; and it is by that term that Buddhism is commonly alluded to in Hindu philosophical works.

Everything is momentary. Nothing is permanent. Body, sensation, perception, disposition, consciousness, all these are impermanent and sorrowful. There is neither being nor not-being, but only becoming. Reality is a stream of becoming. Life is a series of

manifestation of becoming. There is no 'thing' which changes; only ceaseless change goes on. Everything is merely a link in the chain, a spoke in the wheel, a transitory phase in the series. Everything is conditional, dependent, relative, *Pratītya samutpanna*. Everything is subject to birth and death, to production and destruction, to creation and decay. There is nothing, human or divine, that is permanent. To quote the excellent words of Shelley :

*"Worlds or worlds are rolling ever,
From creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on a river,
Sparkling, bursting, borne away."*⁸

'Everything is sorrow; everything is devoid of self; everything is momentary. Heraclitus said that we cannot bathe twice into the same river. Hume said, 'I never can catch "myself". Whenever I try, I stumble on this or that perception'. William James said, 'The passing thought itself is the thinker'. Bergson said, 'Everything is a manifestation of the flow of *E'lan Vital*'. A river is not the same river the next moment. A river is only a continuous flow of different waters. Similarly a flame is not one and the same flame. It is a series of different flames. The rapidity of succession preserves continuity which is not broken. Similarity is mistaken as identity. The so-called 'same

flame' is only a succession of so many similar flames, each flame lasting for a moment. The fact that a flame is a series of so many similar flames can easily be noticed when in a hurricane lantern, due to some defect, the succession of flames is obstructed and one flame succeeds another after a slight interval. Identity, therefore, is nothing but continuity of becoming. The seed becomes the tree through different stages. A new born baby becomes old man through different stages. Rapidity of succession gives rise to the illusion of unity. 'Just as a chariot wheel in rolling rolls only at one point; of the tyre, and in resting rests only at one point; in exactly the same way the life of a living being lasts only for the period of one thought. As soon as that thought has ceased the living being is said to have ceased'.⁹ 'The wheel of the cosmic order goes on without maker, without beginning'.¹⁰ Buddha avoided the extremes of eternalism and nihilism.

The principle impermanence and no-self are fundamental to the teaching of Buddha : and by emancipating them he may be said to have reverted at the same time both the truth of the traditional teaching and the belief of the common people. The unique doctrine starts by postulating certain elements as basic which are mutually and which include both the physical and the psychical and explains the whole world as produced out of them.

All existence is impermanent. It means becoming. All becoming is subject to the law of causation. Law of causation is the production

of an effect out of a complement of cause and conditions. The effect emerges from the destruction of cause and conditions.¹¹ A seed is the cause of a plant. The soil, water, light etc. which promote the growth of the plant are its conditions. So, a *hetu* is the principal cause and a *paccaya* is a concomitant condition. The Law of Dependent Origination is endless. Causation is dynamic, not static. A cause never perishes but only changes as a jar is made from clay.

Prātitya (*Prati+i+tya*) means after reaching (*Prāpya*) or depending on (*apekṣya*) and *sammā* means a right, *utpāda* means arising. Combining all these we get 'depending causes' rightly.

The Dependent Origination brings out the basic principles of knowledge and wisdom. From this we get the twelve links of the causal wheel of dependent origination.

(1) Ignorance (2) impression (3) consciousness (4) mind and matter (5) six organs of sense (6) contact (7) feeling (8) desire (9) attachment (10) existence (11) birth (12) old age and death. This is the wheel of life revolving day after day, from birth to death and death to birth. This is the twelve spoked wheel of Dependent Origination. This is the vicious circle of causation. It does not end with death. Death is only a beginning of a new life. It is called *Bhava-cakra*, *Samsāra-cakra*, *Jarā-maraṇa-cakra*, *Dharma-cakra*, *Prātitya-samutpāda-cakra* etc.

An analysis of these twelve links shows their psychological significance. It is important to note that life is not a blind play of mechanical nature, but as due to the internal urge, the life force, the *e'lan vital*, the will to be born. Everything that lives also dies. When the cause disappears the effect also disappears. Things that appear permanent are in reality temporary. They will also pass away. What appears to have reached the highest point of glory is bound to fall. Where there is a beginning there is also the end.

The world is an endless process. Monarchy, social tyranny, slavery, inequality-all are temporary. They will pass away and something else will come. As day succeeds night, the new succeeds the old. This is the law of the world. This idea of continuous change is clearly brought out by the Buddhist Monk Nāgasena, in his discourse with King Milinda, who is no other than the Greek king Menander.

The king asked Nāgasena, "Does he the same person who is born ?" Nāgasena replied to the question, neither the same nor another. He explained it with an illustration that the king was once a baby, a tender thing and small in size lying flat on his back. The king was not the same as he has now grown up. Everyday we are new and yet not quite new. There is persistent continuity as well as unceasing change (*Milinda Pañha*)¹².

In the same *Milinda Pañha*, there is another illustration where

Nāgasena gives the example of a candle that burns from evening till morning and concludes that the chain of element is joined together. One element is always coming into being, another is always ceasing and passing away. Without beginning, without end, the change continues. Buddha also used the simile of fire and a continuous flow of water to prove his idea of change. It may compel us to recall the idea of famous Greek dialectician, Heraclitus, who also used the simile of flowing water to prove that the world is a process of continuous change.¹³

In the process of 'life', it is the result of man's thoughts in the past and this present thought will condition his future lives. A dead depends upon a thought, in fact, it is the manifestation of thought. His thought in the past is the condition for his present vision at any given moment. In order to arrest the life continuum he must seek the cause and its relation, so that he would be free from the cycles of births and deaths. The law of dependent origination is the central point in Buddha's logic. Whatever exists arises from causes and conditions and is in every respect impermanent. The cause does not live in the effect but ceases the moment the effect comes into being. Rahul Sankrityayan says, "Buddha's pratitya is such a cause as is always seen to be vanishing in the very moment before the birth of a thing or an event". The words 'dependent origination' do not accurately reflect

the sense of the words *pratītya-samutpāda*. It means when one thing vanishes or perishes, another is born. Change in the Buddhist conception is replacement of one entity by another; it is a series of entities emerging and perishing in entirety; one entity does not become another.¹⁴

This is the metaphysician's mode of reasoning. "For him a thing either exists, or it does not exist, it is equally impossible for a thing to be itself and at the same time something else. Positive and negative absolutely exclude one another; cause and effect stand in an equally rigid antithesis one to the other". For Buddha, cause and effect are rigidly opposed to each other. Hence a thing ceases every moment instead of ceasing and not ceasing at the same time. Hence the universal and the particular are rigidly opposed to each other. There are only particulars and no universals.

"The Buddhist holds that all existence is particular; the universal is a thought-construct or *Vikalpa*". "Man is only a conventional name for a collection of different constituents, the material body, the immaterial mind, the formless consciousness, just as a chariot is a collection of wheels, axles, shafts etc". Human consciousness continues from one life into another but the objective reality perishes in the moment. Since the succession of entities is not a continuous but discontinuous stream.¹⁵

Since only the particulars exist, "There are as many things as there are distinguishable 'parts' or aspect". Even this part or thing is "not only an instant lacking duration, but also a spatial point lacking all magnitude and diversity as well". Further : "By the same logic we are led to the denial of the universal or identical aspect of things. Each entity is discrete and unique". "There is neither flow nor movement in each entity nor in the series; it is the spectator who projects that into the several static entities".

The principle of Dependent origination explains the exact manner in which *bhava* (existence) takes place. It asserts that given anything there is also given something else which is its necessary and sufficient condition. The essential intention of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* was the purely negative one of denying the independent existence or reality of finite things. *Paṭiccasamuppāda* as the Middle way - It is not nihilistic, and emphatically denied the total unreality of things. The theory of *Karma* is based on this, being an implication of the law of causation. Our present life is due to the impressions of the *Karmas* of the past life and it will shape our future life. Ignorance and *Karma* go on determining each other in a vicious circle. Again, the theory of Momentariness (*kṣaṇa-bhaṅga-vāda*) is also a corollary of Dependent Origination. Because things depend on their causes and conditions, because things are relative, dependent, conditional and finite, they

must be momentary. To say that a thing arises depending on its cause is to admit that it is momentary, for when the cause is removed the thing will cease to be. That which is not permanent is momentary. The theory of No-Ego (*nairātmyavāda*), the theory that the Individual ego is ultimately false is also based on this doctrine. When everything is momentary, the ego is also momentary and therefore relative and false.

The Doctrine of Causal Connection of Early Buddhism

It is indeed difficult to be definite as to what the Buddha actually wished to mean by this cycle of dependence of existence sometimes called *Bhavacakra* (wheel of existence). Decay and death (*Jarāmaraṇa*) could not have happened if there was no birth.

The word *bhava* is not found in the earlier *Upaniṣads* and was used in the Pāli scriptures for the first time as a philosophical term. There could not have been a previous existence if people had not been taken themselves to things or works they desired. This betaking oneself to actions or things in accordance with desire is called *upādāna*. As this betaking to the thing depends upon desire (*trṣṇā*), it is said that there may be *upādāna* there must be *taṇhā*. Neither the word *upādāna* nor *Trṣṇā* (the Sanskrit word corresponding to *taṇhā*)

is found in the earlier Upaniṣads, but the ideas contained in them are similar to the words "*kratu*" and "*Kāma*". Desire (*taṇhā*) is then said to depend on feeling. *Nāma-rūpa* (name and form) may be said to depend upon the *Vijñāna* (consciousness). Consciousness has been compared in the *Milinda Pañha* with a watchman at the middle of the cross-roads beholding all that come from any direction.

Is this consciousness the same as the previous consciousness or different from it ? The answer will be that it is the same. Just so, the sun shows itself with all its colours etc., but he is not different from those in truth; and it is said that just when the sun rises, its collected heat and yellow colour also rise then, but it does not mean that the sun is different from these. So the *citta* takes the phenomena of contact, etc. and cognises them. So though it is the same as they are yet in a sense it is different from them.

The theory that the so-called matter is unreal, is also derived from this doctrine. Matter, being momentary, is relative and therefore ultimately unreal. The theory of causal efficiency is also based on it, because each preceding link is casually efficient to produce the succeeding link and thus the capacity to produce an effect becomes the criterion of existence.

The very theory of causation, where cause produces effect which is something new, is a proof of this. "Sour cream comes out of

sweet milk. If there was absolute sameness or absolute difference this could not happen." So it recognises the emergence of the new in the course of change. The essential aspects of dialectics is to recognise the emergence of the new from the old. This recognition of the new makes the dialectical approach, the philosophy of faith in human progress. History is not the repetition of the old events. Human civilisation is a gradual progression from the lower to the higher and further on. Buddhism shares this faith in human progress.

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Chapter - IV

THE CONCEPT OF NIRVANA IN MILINDA PRASNA

The concept of Indian religion, as found in the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, had emphasised on the pain and futility of physical existence and had sought for the mystery of eternity. So, it is obligatory for us to acquaint ourselves with the basic concept of mystic philosophy, originally expressed in the Upaniṣads, if we want to gain a correct understanding of the ideas and teaching of Buddha concerning these eternal mysteries.

The saint is one who has passed beyond the cycle of births and deaths and his consciousness has become merged in the *Eternal*. The Hindus call this condition *Paramam Brahman* or *Brahma-Nirvāṇa* and it is known to the Buddhists as *Nirvāṇa Dhatu*.

Upaniṣad states, "There is no joy in the finite. Only in the infinite there is joy."¹ The earlier Hindu concept also separates the term "God" from the "abode of eternal peace-Brahman". Brahman like Nirvāṇa is a condition.

It is, therefore, essential for us to recognise the Buddha's re-interpretation of the Upaniṣadic concepts of *Nirvāṇa*, *Brahma bhūta*,

denoting the supreme bliss, similar to the Upaniṣadic concept of *Mokṣa*.

Therefore, *Nirvāṇa*, can be stated as :

"Not this, not this" or 'like that, like that'. Buddha equates it with *Dharma*, and He also equates it with *Brahma* and *Brahma* with *Dharma*.

Buddha described how He himself attained the incomparable supreme *Nirvāṇa* where there is no *birth and death*, sickness or sorrow, declares *Nirvāṇa* to be the 'highest', higher also than heaven. We can find the references in the *Mahābhārata* and the Hindus too was acknowledged the concept of *Nirvāṇa* before the time of the Buddha. In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* the word *Nirvāṇa* is used to denote the state of bliss. "Health is the greatest gift, contentment is the greatest wealth, trust is the relationships, *Nirvāṇa* is the highest happiness".²

The word *Nirvāṇa* is composed of "*Ni*" and '*Vāṇa*'. '*Ni*' is a negative particle. '*Vāṇa*' means blowing, weaving or craving. Generally speaking, the term '*Nirvāṇa*' stands for going out of a lamp, or fire. But according to the Buddhist conception, '*Nirvāṇa*' means state of existence, where the threefold fire of lust,³ ill will⁴ and stupidity⁵ stand extinguished. Fire is a lamp may not be blown out but may put out of

the wick or due to lack of oil.⁶ The wise man who has known *Dharma*, and has been freed from all kinds of desires or cravings obtains *Nirvāṇa*.

Buddhist *Nirvāṇa* is thus the stage of full enlightenment of the lamp of *Bodhi*. *Nirvāṇa* stands for cooling off of all flames of ignorance, thirst and suffering.

Nirvāṇa is said to be a negative cessation of all earthly miseries. It is given in the third Noble Truth about the cessation of suffering. It is often compared with the extinction of the flame of a lamp.⁷ Just as a lamp when it becomes extinguished goes neither hither nor thither, neither to the earth nor to the sky, neither to this direction nor to that, it has been utterly blown out on account of the oil being consumed; similarly a sage obtains *Nirvāṇa* when the desires and the passions have been consumed, he goes neither this way nor that, but obtains utter peace.⁸ *Nirvāṇa* as annihilation is 'a wicked heresy'.

"At the beginning *Nirvāṇa* means simple faith in soul's immortality, its blissful survival in a paradise a faith emerging from practices of obscure magic.⁹ *Nirvāṇa* is described as "unborn, unoriginated, unconstituted, undecaying, undying, free from diseases, grief and impurities, it is the supreme and attained by the best exertion".¹⁰

One Buddhist poet has described it as "*Ākāśena sadā tulyam nirvikalpaṃ prabhāsvaram* - i.e. it is similar to the sky or space, beyond distinctiveness and extremely shining. The followers of Buddha believed the *Śūnya* or *Nirvāṇa* as beyond existence and non-existence (*asti-nasti-vinmukta*) and not partaking of the nature of any soul or non-soul (*ātmā-nairātmya-vivarjita*). Every object or phenomenon except this *śūnya* is unreal and is as delusive as a magic, a mirage, a dream, a moon in the water, and an echo (*māyā-mṛga svapnabhaṃ jalendu-pratinādavat*). *Nirvāṇa* is the 'going out', the disappearance, of that sinful, yearning, grasping condition of mind and heart which would otherwise, according to the great mystery of *Karma*, be the cause of renewed individual existence. That extinction is to be brought about by, and runs parallel to, the growth of the opposite condition of mind and heart; it is complete when that opposite condition is reached. *Nirvāṇa* is therefore a moral condition, a pure, calm, clear state of mind, and if translated at all, may best be rendered. "HOLINESS -holiness that is, in the Buddhist sense - perfect peace, goodness and wisdom."¹¹

Nirvāṇa ... the Buddhist Summum bonum, is a blissful, holy state, a modification of personal character; and we should allow the world to remind us, as it did the early Buddhists, both of the "Noble Path" which leads to the extinction of sin, and also of the break in the transfer of *Karma*, which the extinction of sin will bring about.¹²

Nirvāṇa, the ultimate goal of Buddhism, has been described in different ways in the *Milinda Pañha*. We might make fresh start with the concise definition of *Nirvāṇa* in the *Oxford Pocket Dictionary*— "Extinction of individuality and absorption into the supreme spirit as the Buddhist highest good."¹³ A man attains *Nirvāṇa* when he overcomes the delusion of self. He feels submerged in an unchangeable, eternal spirit or stream. With our worldly limitation, we cannot comprehend it. But those who have subdued self by the extinction of all greed, hatred, and delusion enjoy happiness in their life time and can look forward to death with equal happiness. *Nirvāṇa* is a negative conception in relation to the world of existence, but a positive conception as known in mystic experience.

No precise knowledge on *Nirvāṇa* can be given beyond this world.

Perfection is the sense of oneness with all that is, has ever been and can ever be. The horizon of being is extended to the limits of reality.

Nirvāṇa, the ultimate goal of Buddhism has been described in different ways in the *Milinda-pañha*. But no explanation or argument has made the concept clear.

Interestingly enough, every simile given here undoubtedly contained a positive teaching. But 500 years later, we find in the

dialogue between Nāgasena, the Buddhist Monk and the Indo-Greek king Menander which is embodied in the *Milinda Pañha*, the precise nature, form, and extent of what is so much talked of in Buddhist literature, by the term NIRVĀṆA. "There is one quality of the lotus, O King, inherent in Nirvāṇa, and two qualities of water, and three of medicine, and four of the ocean, and five of food and ten of space and three of the wish-conferring gem, and three of red sandal wood, and three of ghee and five of a mountain peak."¹⁴ As the lotus, O King, is untarnished by the water, so is *Nirvāṇa untarnished* by any evil dispositions. This is the one quality of the lotus inherent in Nirvāṇa.

Nirvāṇa is also identified with water. As water is cool and diminishes heat so also is *Nirvāṇa* which is cool and which diminishes the fever arising from all evil dispositions. As water removes the thirst of man, so also *Nirvāṇa* removes the craving for sensuous enjoyments - As medicine puts an end to sickness so *Nirvāṇa* is to all sufferings. Finally Nirvāṇa and medicine both give security. And there are the ten qualities which *Nirvāṇa* shares with space. It is further compared to the ocean. Nāgasena asked Menander to say what his reply to an interrogator should be if the later puts him the question : "Do you know an ocean, and if so, how much water does it contain and how many lives live therein ?" The king said that the question was out of order and it was not possible to be precise in calculating the measure

of the ocean's water, nor to count the number of being that live in it. After this Nāgasena told the king that in the same manner it is not possible to explain by means of any comparison or logical argument the nature, form or measure of that great entity *Nirvāṇa*.

It is further compared to food. As food gives energy to all beings so *Nirvāṇa* puts an end to old age and death. It is also compared to space. It is not reborn. It is incomprehensible. It cannot be carried off by thieves, rests on nothing. It is the sphere in which birds fly. So also is the *Nirvāṇa*. It is also like the wishing-gem pleases every desire so also *Nirvāṇa* pleases to the purified saints. It is also identified with red sandal wood, ghee and mountain peak. As the red-sandal wood is too hard to get, so also *Nirvāṇa* is hard to attain. As ghee is beautiful in colour, so also is *Nirvāṇa* beautiful in righteousness. As the mountain peak is very lofty so also is *Nirvāṇa* very exalted. As a mountain peak is unshakeable, so is *Nirvāṇa*. As a mountain peak is inaccessible, so is *Nirvāṇa* inaccessible to all the passions. As no seeds can grow on a mountain peak, so the seeds of all the passions cannot grow in *Nirvāṇa*. And finally, as a mountain peak is free from all desire to please or displease, so is *Nirvāṇa*.

Just as the flame of a lamp struck by the wind disappears and cannot be traced so also a perfect saint is free from all worldly attachment.¹⁵ *Nirvāṇa* is unconstituted, undying, true, going across, undecaying, firm, signless, inexpressible, calm, quiet, excellent.¹⁶

By the use of the word "Atthi", it indicates that *Nirvāṇa* is an ends not a non-ends. The Milindapañha tells us that *Nirvāṇa* has an existence. *Nirvāṇa* has a cause for its realisation but there is no cause for its origin.

Nāgasena says against, "Nirvāṇa is all bliss, O king. There is no intermingling of pain in it. From the psychological point of view *Nirvāṇa* is neither a substance nor a quality. *Nirvāṇa* is the highest state of ecstasy and cessation of consciousness and sensation".¹⁷ *Nirvāṇa* is the healer of a poisonous life. If a man can follow the paths of virtuous deeds, he can attain the blissful and tranquil state of *Nirvāṇa*.

King Milinda said, "Tell me, what in the world is not born of *Karma*, or a cause, or of nature ?" "There are two things, space and *Nirvāṇa*".

"What did, I say, your majesty, that you speak thus to me?" "What you said about space not being born of *Karma*, or from a cause, or from nature, that was correct. But with many hundreds of arguments has the Lord proclaimed to his disciples the way to the realization of *Nirvāṇa* - and then you say that *Nirvāṇa* is not born of a cause !" "It is true that the Lord has with many hundreds of arguments proclaimed to his disciples the way to the realization of *Nirvāṇa*; but that does not mean that he has spoken of a cause for the production of *Nirvāṇa*."¹⁸

"Here, Nāgasena, we do indeed enter from darkness into greater darkness, from a jungle into a deeper jungle, from a thicket into a denser thicket, in as much as we are given a cause for the realization of *Nirvāṇa*, but no cause for the production of that same *Dharma* (i.e., *Nirvāṇa*). If there is a cause for the realization of *Nirvāṇa*, we would also expect one for its production. If there is a son's father, one would for that reason also expect the father, to have had a father; if there is a pupil's teacher, one would for that reason also expect the teacher to have had a teacher; if there is a seed for a sprout, one would for that reason also expect the seed to have had a seed. Just so, if there is cause for the realisation of *Nirvāṇa*, one would for that reason also expect a cause for its production."¹⁹

"*Nirvāṇa*, O King, is not something that should be produced. That is why no cause for its production has been proclaimed."

One can point out the way to the realisation of *Nirvāṇa*, but one cannot show a cause for its production. Because *Nirvāṇa*, is unconditioned.

So *Nirvāṇa* is unconditioned and it is not made by anything. One cannot say that it is produced, or unproduced, or that it should be produced; that it is past, or future, or present; or that one can become aware of it by the eye, or the ear, or the nose, or the tongue, or the body.

"*Nirvāṇa* is something which is cognizable by the mind. A holy disciple, who has followed the right road, sees *Nirvāṇa* with a mind which is pure, sublime, straight, unimpeded and disinterested."²⁰

The King asked, what then is the *Nirvāṇa* like ? Nāgasena said that one cannot point to the wind like that. For the wind does not lend itself to being grasped with the hands, or to being touched. But there is such a thing as 'wind'.

Just so, there is *Nirvāṇa*, but one cannot point out *Nirvāṇa*, either by its colour or its shape.

Nāgasena also gives the childish examples of the Himalaya mountains, the wind, the farther shore, the ocean have a cause for their being or and this is more likely, that Nāgasena had become a captive of his own prejudice concerning the non-existence of the underlying Reality, the Supreme, and could not move in that, the only correct, direction open to him, namely, to explain the reality of the world of light by the presence of the sun which is the real cause of light. Nāgasena would then, of course, have had to admit the underlying Reality behind *Nirvāṇa*, since *Nirvāṇa* was not the ground of all things, but was itself an emanation.

By inserting the 'Sun', the whole picture is complete, the *Nirvāṇa* emanating from the underlying Reality can, when we through our efforts

and righteous behaviour (*Dharma*) open our spiritual sight, light before us the straight path and free us from the craving for earthly things, the pitfall of ignorance, the sickness of the soul, and make us as purified forms, journeying on rays of light (*Nirvāṇa*) towards the Sun of Reality - the Supreme.

Now, if one cannot describe these superlatives of unending bliss, everlasting virtue, immortality, embedded in the concepts of *Nirvāṇa* or *Brahmabhūta*, then one cannot imagine the underlying Reality.

Nirvāṇa means a total annihilation of all the constituent elements of being, viz. the five *Skandhas*, and people who seek after such annihilation should strive to attain it by meditation, knowledge, and display of virtue. *Nirvāṇa* is also described as the quieting of all desires and evil deeds. But the great philosopher and commentator of Buddhist works, Buddhaghosa has applied the word *Nirvāṇa* to mean *Śūnya* or absolute non-entity or non-existence.²¹ To us it appears plain that what the Brāhminic *Rṣis* have, by their deep contemplation, attained as invariable and non-dual absolute entity, in which we find a unity of all existences.

The first stage of which is attained by an *Arhat* who has reached the highest state of sanctification and the last stage of which is attained

by a Buddha alone who succeeds in bringing about release from every conceivable attribute of being and thus enjoying eternal bliss. It appears that what the Brāhminic seers (*Rṣis*) have by their deep contemplation, attained as invariable and nondual absolute entity and what they have expressed by the terms *Brāhman*, *Paramātmā* or *Pūrṇa*, or full, in which we find a unity of all existences, is non-different from the *śūnya* or void of the Buddhists in which they speak of the absence of all existences. Intrinsically the two may be treated as identical. *Nirvāṇa* has been equated by the later Buddhist philosophers with the Ultimate Truth or Reality - *tathatā* ('*thatness*') - i.e., the state of permanent and invariable existence. That Reality is *pūrṇatattva* or *śūnya - tattva* by realizing which one becomes completely still, silent or dumb as it were, being unable to express in words its nature. This description reminds us of what the great saint Śrī Rāmkrṣṇa himself said about his own realisation of *Brahmaniravāṇa* as an inexpressible phenomenon. He told his disciples that he often thought of expressing to them his experience of the peculiar bliss of *nirvāṇa*. But he said that he felt himself every time unable to express the same in words, for, his mouth became as it were gagged and he was dumb - founded during his vision in a trance.

One should take refuge with Buddha (the Teacher), *Dharma* (the Law), and *saṅgha* (the Congregation or the Church) and realize

with clear understanding the Four Noble or holy Truths viz. pain, the origination of pain, the cessation or destruction of pain, and the Eight-fold holy Path that leads to the quieting of pain. (For,) that is the safe refuge, that is the best refuge; (and) having gone to that refuge, a man is delivered from all pain.

In many other systems of religious beliefs, ethics finds a place only incidentally and secondarily, but in the Buddhist system its place is held very high. The essential virtues, according to it, are good conduct and its basic qualities, viz. friendship, compassion, non-violence etc. Good and evil, virtue and vice, well-being and adversity - these constitute the chief topics in this system. Perfection of human life cannot be achieved without adoption of moral virtues and repulsion from vices. As the *Dhammapada* (183) says : "*Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ kusalassa upasampadā. Sacitta-pariyodapanaṃ etaṃ buddhāna sāsanaṃ.*"²² 'Not to commit any sin, to take to doing good, and to purify one's own mind (i.e., to cleanse one's inmost thoughts) - that is the teaching of (all) the Buddhas - the Awakened and Enlightened Ones'.

In order to remove hatred, conflict, and injury prevalent everywhere on earth and bring about real freedom, tolerance, amity, and conciliation, our means should be righteous. No good objective is ever attained without good means. Hence one of the highest

percepts of Buddhism is laid down in the famous couplet: "*Akkodhena jine kodhaṃ asādhūṃ sādhunā jine, Jine kadariyaṃ dānena saccena alikavādināṃ.*" 'Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good, let him overcome the greedy by liberality or gift, and the speaker of falsehood by truth' (*Dhammapada*, 223).

The Buddhists also believed in the Eternal Law preached by all the Buddhas viz. "*Na hi verena verāni smmantīdha kudācanaṃ Averena ca sammantī esa dhammo sanantano.*" 'Never does hatred cease by hatred, but it does cease by love (alone) - this is an old or eternal law' (*Dhammapada*, 5). If this lesson could be made the motto of life by all people of the world, there would certainly be an entire cessation of all quarrels and conflicts.²³

Indian philosophy has often been criticized as other worldly and, therefore, pernicious in its influence on man's practical life in this world. It is said to be a philosophy of world-negation, instead of world affirmation. It prevents the Indian mind from taking an abiding interest in the affairs of this world and keeps it dwelling incessantly on the prospect of man's liberation from bondage to the world.

Generally speaking, Indian philosophy recognises four ends of human life and activity, namely, wealth (*artha*) enjoyment (*Kāma*), Virtue (*dharma*) and liberation (*Mokṣa*). It is only in the materialist

system of the Cārvākas that the last two ends have been discredited and discarded as false and fictitious. The other systems of Indian philosophy seem to agree in accepting all the four, they agree, further, in holding that liberation is the highest end of man's life. While the first three ends, wealth, enjoyment and virtue, are, after all, limited and short-lived values of life, liberation is believed to be an infinite and eternal good which surpasses them all. Hence, they should be subordinated to the highest end, liberation, and a man should so regulate the pursuits of wealth, enjoyment, and virtue that they may ultimately lead to the attainment of liberation. The contrast between the Cārvāka and the other main systems, of Indian philosophy would thus seem to be a difference between a philosophy of world-affirmation and that of world-negation.

The idea of liberation is relative to that of bondage. By "bondage" Indian thinkers commonly mean the process of birth and rebirth and the consequent miseries to which an individual is subject. Liberation means the stoppage of this process. Of all the Indian systems, it is the Buddhist philosophy that seems to be most liable to the charge of being pessimistic and world-negating. It not only emphasizes most the evil and suffering in man's life in this world, but declares that the essential conditions of life, human and sub-human are fraught with misery. It is man's very birth in this world that makes

him subject to sufferings like disease, old age, and death. To end suffering, therefore, we are to stop the wheel of birth and death by extinguishing all the causes and forces which keep it moving on and on. To be liberated from suffering one must extinguish his individual self and extirpate all his desires to enjoy objects of the world. Liberation, in Buddha's philosophy, thus comes to mean extinction of the individual self and of the will to live and enjoy life in any world. This is called *Nirvāṇa* and is regarded as the highest end of life.

Liberation, according to the Advaita Vedānta, does not mean merely the absence of all misery that arises from the illusory sense of distinction between *self* and *Brahman*. It is conceived here in accordance with the Upaniṣads as a state of positive bliss, for liberation means identity of the self with Brahman, and Brahman is infinite, eternal bliss... .

In the Vaiṣṇava schools of the Vedānta, liberation is conceived as a state of positive bliss, but for them it does not consist in the identification of the individual soul with Brahman - the Absolute, independent reality.²⁴ The soul of man is here regarded as a finite being which is somehow different from *Brahman* but absolutely dependent on Him.

The ideal of liberation does not mean to escape from life or to destroy it. Man should try to achieve this goal, to free his life from the

defects and imperfections which lead to pain and misery in the long run. The life of the liberated man is a life of self-control and self-enlightenment, or renunciation, love, and service to all.

Man is not a mere animal. He is a self or spirit living in an animal body. As spirit he belongs to a higher order of existence than the physical world, although as body he is only a part of nature. He is a child of the earth, but an heir to heaven. Hence, if man is to be true to his nature, he should be more spiritualistic than materialistic and, in this sense, more other-worldly than this-worldly. For him, conquest of the lower self through self-control is a higher achievement than conquest of the world through power.²⁵

If man is to attain the highest freedom of which he is capable, then he must control his lower nature, subdue the animal in him, and live and breathe in an atmosphere of spiritual freedom. Indian philosophy presents a balanced view of life, in which all the major values and goals of man have been given their due place, order and importance.

Nirvāṇa has been quoted by the later Buddhist philosophers with the ultimate truth ('thatness'). If a seeker of truth waits till all his queries on such problems as the soul, the hereafter, etc. are fully debated and answered, he will not be able to realize the Four Noble Truths during the short tenure of his life.

According to another Brahminic theory, the state of non-manifestation corresponds to the equilibrium of the three *gunas*, *Sattva*, goodness - purity, *rajas*, energy - activity, *tamas*, to rope stupidity. The rope which was taken for a snake is not in itself a snake, nor is it ever a snake, either in the darkness or in the light. What is it, then, that is called phenomenal reality (*Sam̐sāra*).

And what does non-duality mean ? It means that light and shade, long and short, black and white, are relative terms which depend on one another. *Nirvāṇa* and *Sam̐sāra* are not two, and it is the same with all things.

"There is no *Nirvāṇa* except where there is *Sam̐sāra*; there is no *Sam̐sāra* except where there is *Nirvāṇa*.

However high a state *Nirvāṇa* is conceived to be, whether attainable here or in the hereafter, it still remains a state - a condition - and, when equated with *Dharma* (Religion), it is the law - the divine law, acting in perfect accord with the principle of Causality (*Karma*). But, just as no law exists without a law-giver, no condition can exist without a cause, and it is precisely because *Nirvāṇa* is a state of mind, a condition of bliss, that it is never referred to as an underlying Reality anywhere in the Pāli canon.

We should also note that Kṛṣṇa, too, differentiates between that state of supreme eternal bliss, which is Brahma, and Himself, the Supreme Being.

For, I am the abode of the imperishable Brahma, of immortality, of everlasting virtue and of unending bliss - (*Bhagavadgītā* -XIV/27)

And that He, Kṛṣṇa, is to be worshipped exclusively if the worshipper is to attain Brahman.

And he who constantly worships Me through the Yoga of exclusive devotion, transcending these three *Guṇas*, he becomes eligible for attaining Brahman - (*Bhagavadgītā* -XIV/26.)

Thus it can be said that Brahma, too, is not the underlying Reality or the 'Transcendent Being' but a state, rather identical to what *Nirvāṇa* itself is in Buddhist belief. Also Kṛṣṇa speaking as the Supreme, states that He is "the abode of the imperishable Brahma." Hence, Brahma, which is a state, the highest (just as *Nirvāṇa*), is nevertheless contained within, and is a product of, the Supreme Being, and this Supreme State of ineffable bliss (Brahma), according to Kṛṣṇa, is attainable only by him "who constantly worships Me through the Yoga of exclusive devotion...." This is the same method (treading the path of *Dharma*) inculcated by the Buddha for attaining *Nirvāṇa*.

In modern times, Radhakrishnan has given a very fine conception of *Nirvāṇa*. Ancient Indian Philosophy describes this ultimate goal of existence or *Nirvāṇa* as the state of complete salvation or *Mokṣa*. It is conceived as a state free from suffering - a state in

which one is able to realise one's true nature. Radhakrishnan also conceives this state more or less in a similar manner, but his conception of the ultimate human liberation bears the mark of his own metaphysical convictions, and hence contains some such elements that appear refreshingly new and original. According to him, if reality is ultimately one and if man is man only in creation and if man as man is finite - infinite, then the ultimate human destiny can be nothing else but the realisation of oneness. Radhakrishnan comes to this conclusion in a consistent manner.

According to him, the finite aspects of man are real, the distinctness or the uniqueness of man consists in his spirituality. The goal of life is the union with God. Radhakrishnan seems to be impressed by the ancient Indian concept of *Jīvanmukta*, but describes it in his own peculiar manner. The liberated individual is the *Jīvanmukta*, and as such is not affected by the world. He does not have any passion or attachment left for the worldly objects, and as such acts in a selfless and disinterested manner and works simply for the good of others. The world process will reach its final goal when every individual will realise Divinity and with the *Sarvamukti* the purpose of this creation will be realised. That will be the end of the cosmic process.²⁶

Now, in fine we may conclude with the saying that if *Nirvāṇa* is to be taken as positive bliss, the theory of Momentariness would be

relegated to the sphere of the empirical alone. Momentariness is in consistent with ethical life and spiritual experience. In the state of *Nirvāṇa* one can free from the bondage of past deeds. It is a noble conception of Buddhistic thought and must be praised as indicating the ideal of the possibility of *Sarvamukti*.

It is the ultimate goal of all Buddhists. It is the end of misery - produced by chain of rebirth. An ordinary man is under delusion. But a perfect man attains *Nirvāṇa*. His mind is full of spiritual advancement. Reality, it is a state of perfect tranquility. It is the ideal, the Summum bonum of life when a being attains a state of mind in which he cannot distinguish himself from any other thing of the world or from the Absolute, he is said to attain *Nirvāṇa*.

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Chapter - V

THE NOTION OF DHARMA IN BUDDHISM

The all inclusive term for religion in India was *Āryadharma*, derived from "*Ārya*" meaning noble, and '*dharma*,' which is derived from the root '*dhṛ*' meaning to sustain or carry. *Dharma* really implies Religion, Law and Truth. Thus it is a system of man's conduct including right action, right living, as well as the whole panorama of man's duties. *Āryadharma*, therefore, includes all the faiths of the Aryan people (Vedic and non-Vedic). The origin of the idea of *Dharma* goes back to ancient Iranian and Vedic-Aryan concepts. The Vedic-Aryan concept of *Ṛta* encompasses the whole range or order, the physical order of things, the mental, and moral laws as well, related to the whole scheme of things. In a sense *Ṛta*, and also *Dharma*, is the path leading to the Eternal, just like the rays of the sun, if one could travel on them, they would lead us to the sun. *Dharma* is a door to the eternal.

Upaniṣads laid greater stress on the belief in the Absolute as the only intrinsic reality and identified *Dharma* as the emanation from it. Buddha emphasised on the *Dharma* itself as the standard for conduct in the actual world rather than dwelling on the totally in comprehensible. "Absolute Reality", which was wholly beyond, just

as a wise teacher would direct the student to analyse the life-giving as well as death-dealing powers of the rays from the sun which envelope the student and his world, in order to fruitfully and wisely exist by those powers, rather than have the student aspiring to gaze at the unseeable solar orbit directly. *Dharma* was considered to be the all in all in the actual world for it was the image of the absolute truth, infallible justice and righteousness. The Buddha called *Dharma* the king of kings and taught that reverence and homage were to be directed towards *Dharma*.

In the *Samyutta - nikāya*, a Hīnayānist text *Dharma* is unwavering law of Causality (*Karma*) or Conditioned Origination and the law of *Karma* is all-pervading and its recognition is the most precious jewel (*ratna*) of knowledge.¹

Buddha equated *Dharma* with the *Upaniṣadic* concept of Brahman and claimed that the way of the *Dharma* is the way of the Brahman or to dwell in *Dharma* is to dwell in *Brahman*. *Dharma* is the ground of being or not, it is the only path that must be followed by all to gain liberation.

However, before the traveller can find the path (*Dharma*) he must be able to recognize the true guide (the Buddha) and has complete faith in His guidance and direction.

In the traditional Indian thought, the Sanskrit term *Dharma* has a variety of ethical, legal, political, metaphysical and religious meanings which are often inter-related, norm of ethical conduct, universal righteousness, cosmic order and elements and teaching doctrine.

The term *dharmā* establishes itself as designating the basic, primordial constituents of the conscious stream of individual being, this is considered as subject of world - conscious experience. The present existence of the *dharmas* is momentary in as much as they are manifested in association with one another.

According to *Sarvāstivādins*, the *dharmas* come from the future if the causal conditions are such that they are summoned into momentary manifestation. As they flow into the past, they might retain certain characteristics which may enable them to re-manifest at a certain point in the future. Thus the three epochs (*adhvan* = the three "roads" or transitions of time, i.e. future, present and past) are "real" for the *Sarvāstivādins*.²

These "three roads" of time are connected with each other : the future with the present, the present with the future and past, and the past with both the present and the future itself.

The assertion of the *Sarvāstivādins* that "everything is", i.e. that all the *dharmas* have an essence and a givenness of their own,

which in their potentiality, is ultimate and transcendent. Thus the *dharmas* are mostly conceived as *dravyas* capable of coordinating with each other in order to travel from the *adhvan* (road) of the "future" into the *adhvan* of the "present" to be *deposited* into the *adhvan* of the "past". Only "aggregates" of *dharmas* and their actual presentation (*svalakṣaṇa*) are destroyed; their ultimate separate essences (*svabhāva*) cannot be destroyed.

The *Dharmas* are *Saraṇa* (in trouble). The term *raṇa* (turbulence) is directly connotative of *duḥkha* (suffering) which, is also often translated as "unrest". This "unrest" of the *dharmas* is the source of suffering.

Reality is analysed into a plurality of ultimate constituents called *dharma* which are as impersonal entities having each its separate character. The *Dharmas* are best understood as classes of phenomena rather than as stable universals. The starting point of the *dharma* theory is the flux of experience. *Dharmas* are, thus, constituents of experience.

The requirements of man in this world of ours have been described by the wise as *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*.

A superficial analysis we would find that man's first aim in life is to be happy. This happiness he strives for will, on a little reflection,

be seen to consist of two kinds, viz - (1) momentary happiness (2) eternal happiness.

We remain contented with a particular type of happiness only so long as we do not think of a greater type of it. The greater type of happiness is *Mokṣa*. He who realises the real nature of this state of eternal bliss will never feel attracted by the lower sensual and mental pleasure of this world. To him second and third *Puruṣārtha* i.e. *Artha* or material riches and *Kāma* or desires will cease to have any charm.

The first *Puruṣārtha* or *Dharma* i.e. the performance of goodly and righteous deeds, is a *Sādhana* or pathway towards the attainment of the last viz. *Mokṣa*. The main object of the scriptures of any religion should be to prescribe the exact methods of practising this *Dharma*. In other words, these works are supposed to be the truest exposition of *Dharma*. The sacred books in our *Sanātana Dharma* which constitute our *Dharmapramāṇas* are fourteen in number.

These fourteen sacred books are : (1) to (6) the *Vedāṅgas* or the organs of vedas; (7) to (10) the four vedas; (11) *Mīmāṃsā* (12) *Nyāya* (13) the *Purāṇas* and (14) the *Dharma Śāstras*.

Of these the first ten have been described in several places in our religious literature as the manifestations of God Himself.

These fourteen books are thus the seat both of *Dharma* and

Vidyā or Jñāna. These are the paths or *Sādhana* in Hinduism which leads to the attainment of *Mokṣa Sāmrājya* or spiritual salvation.

The Vedas are the most direct among our *Dharma Pramāṇas*. The seat of *Dharma* in the Hindu conception consists of the fourteen scriptures, the Vedas, their six *Arigas*, and the four *Upārigas*. The four Vedas are the *Ṛg*, the *Yajus*, the *Sāma* and the *Atharva*.

The *Mahābhārata*, like the *Manusmṛhitā*, gives various definitions of *Dharma*. God is the author, the protector (*dharmagoptā*) and the possessor of *dharmā*. He is the creator of Vedas, which prescribe certain actions and prohibit others. The Divine Law is the moral standard - what is wrong is forbidden by him. Moral perfection constitutes his nature.

Dharma sustains the social order, protects the people, and brings about social cohesion. The *Vedas*, *Smṛtis*, and customary conduct are the sources of morality. *Ācāra* is the foundation of *dharmā*. Good conduct is *dharmā*. Virtuous persons are characterised by it. It is the principal characteristic of *dharmā*. Sometimes it is regarded as superior to the Vedas. *Dharma* is a customary conduct. *Dharma* is what is approved and performed by virtuous persons. *Dharma* is what is approved by one's own conscience. *Dharma* is non-injury to all creatures. What is conducive to non-injury is *dharmā*.

The vedic prescriptions, customary conduct, good conduct of virtuous persons, and social welfare are regarded as *dharma*. The good of mankind or social solidarity is the highest *dharma*. The conduct of the virtuous for the good of mankind is the best.

Dharma is of two kinds : (1) *dharma* prompted by desire for fruits (*Sakāma*) (2) *dharma* free from desire for fruits (*niṣkāma*) the former leads to happiness in heaven, which is non-eternal. The latter leads to realization of identity with Brahman. *Abstention from actions for realization of empirical ends is dharma.*

When there is conflict of duties, the authority of Vedas is final. The Vedas, reason and good conduct of virtuous persons are the means of knowing *dharma*, which is one and uniform. The conscience of every person is the true test of *dharma*.

The *Mahābhārata* emphasizes inner purity of mind, *Dharma* is good character, which can conquer the world. By performing the right actions and abstaining from wrong actions always one can attain good character.

The Jainas regard subtle, corporeal particles of matter (*Pudgala*), which produce effects, as *dharma*. The *Sāṃkhya* regards a particular modification of the mind (*manas*) as *dharma*. It is not a quality of the self. The *Vaiśeṣika* regards a specific quality of the self

as *dharma*. The Nyāya regards an unseen quality (*apūrva*) of the self produced by the performance of prescribed duties as *dharma*. Prabhākara regards a supersensuous transcendental ought (*apūrva*) as *dharma*. Kumārila regards the prescribed acts or duties which are conducive to good as *dharma*.³

Śabara says, "*Dharma* is conducive to the highest good (*Śreyas*) of the moral agent". Prabhākara points out that *Apūrva* or the supersensible Moral Imperative (*niyoga*) is conducive to the highest good, - which is indicated by the vedic injunctions. *Dharma* is *Apūrva* or supersensible ought revealed by the authoritative suggestion (*preraṇā*) produced in the self by the Moral Imperative (*niyoga*)⁴. The concept of *Dharma* has been discussed by Nāgasena in one of his answer to the king Milinda. Nāgasena told the king that Buddha cannot be pointed out, for he has attained *Nirvāṇa*. But it is possible to point to the Lord by means of the body of *Dhamma*. The word *Dhamma* has been used in the Instrumental case and is rarely met with in the *Theravāda Canon*. Nāgasena uses the word *dhammakāya* to mean as the body of doctrine, the doctrine taught by the Buddha. Nāgasena has convinced the king about the pre-eminence of the Lord and said that, 'who sees *Dhamma* sees the Lord', for *Dhamma* was taught by the Lord. Hence, the tendency of Nāgasena was taught by the Lord. Hence, the tendency of Nāgasena is clear and claimed to teach the Buddha-way as pointed out by the Master.

Venerable Nāgasena said to the king that according to Buddha,

Dharma is "the best in the world,"⁵ which we are seeing now and which we have seen not yet. But according to our view the devout layman who has followed the Excellent Way, for whom rebirth has passed away, who has attained to insight, perceive *Dhamma*. But *Dhamma* does not mean that the rule of conduct is wrong, though to this point creates a double-pointed problem. If *Dhamma* is best then rule of conduct is wrong and if the rule of conduct is right then *Dhamma* is wrong. The rule of conduct is right in the sense that there are twenty personal qualities in a man, of which *Samanaship* of a *Samana*, are the two outward signs,⁶ which are worthy of respect.

The best form of attaining these are self-restraint, and the highest kind of self-control, *right conduct*, calm manners, mastery over deeds and words, long-suffering, sympathy, the practice *Ekattakariyā*, *Ekattābhirati*, *Patisallanam*, not *Samādhi*, fear of doing wrong, asking questions of those wise in the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*, freedom from attachment. By being perfect in all, accomplished in all, a layman can reach forward to the condition of *Arahatship*. The layman who has already entered on the Excellent Way can see the company of *Arhat*. It is because he has joined the noblest brotherhood.

Moreover, Nāgasena said to the king, it is because one knows that not only all the twenty personal qualities which go to make a *Samana*, and the two outward signs found in the *Bhikkhu*, but that

he carries them on, and trains others in them, just like a royal prince who learns his knowledge, and is taught the duties of a *Kṣatriya*, at the feet of a Brahman who acts as family Chaplain.⁷

Moreover, Nāgasena replied to the king that by the greatness and the peerless glory of the condition of the *Bhikkhus* - a layman, a disciple of the faith should attain to the realisation of the *Arahatship*.

The king was satisfied with Nagasena's powerful and great wisdom as to the solving of the problem to the precedence of the *Dharma*.⁸

In the modern period the same problem of *Dharma* or religion has been discussed in different ways by Swami Vivekananda and many other renowned philosophers of India. Vivekananda is interested in the problem of the origin of religion or *Dharma*. He feels that two theories regarding the origin of religion or *Dharma* have gained acceptance among scholars. One is the Spirit-theory of religion, and the other believes that Religion originates in the apprehension of the extra-ordinary or the super-natural.

Vivekananda says that if we compare the two views, we find that there is a common element in both of them, an element which is more fundamental than either of them, and which, in reality, expresses itself in both. Vivekananda calls that element "the struggle to transcend the limitations of the senses."

Vivekananda takes the specific examples of dreams and says that it is quite probable that the first glimpse of religion or *Dharma* might have come through dreams. If mind can go on working in the state of sleep, which also is apparently almost a state of temporary death, there is no wrong in supposing that it can go on working even when the body is dissolved for ever.

The best way to appreciate the religion or *Dharma* is not to try to define it but to highlight such aspects of religion without which it would be difficult to call a religious act in the true sense of the term. *Dharma*, according to Vivekananda, is a growth from within, it is inherent in the very constitution of man. It has got super-natural content. It is an attempt to transcend the limitations of the senses. Vivekananda clearly says that religion is awakening of spirituality in man, or that it is the realisation of Divinity.⁹

According to him, there are three aspects of *Dharma* or religion. Philosophy, Mythology and Ritual. But truly universal *Dharma* must rise above these petty differences, and must seek to have universality. True religion must be universal.

Therefore, the ideal *Dharma* must harmoniously balance all the aspects of religion or *Dharma* viz. philosophy, emotion, work and mysticism. And this *Dharma* is attained by what is, in India, call Yoga-

Union. Religion or *Dharma* is realisation, not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories.... it is being and becoming, it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes.

Milinda pañha plays an important part in preserving the saying of Buddha. *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* occupies an important position. Nāgasena is said as an expert in *Abhidhamma*. Nāgasena has mentioned *Abhidhamma* as a meeting place of different roads.

In the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* the term *Abhidhamma* has been employed as many as eleven times:

- 1) Nāgasena is said as an expert in the *Abhidhamma*.
- 2) Nāgasena is said to have mastering the whole of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* only after one exposition.
- 3) Nāgasena has recited to the company of *Arhats* the seven *Abhidhamma* books in full.
- 4) Nāgasena has preached to the lay devotee the deep *Abhidhamma* and the doctrine related to emptiness.
- 5) Nāgasena has expounded the philosophy of *Abhidhamma* to the merchant.
- 6) Nāgasena has again resorted to the *Abhidhamma* in his explanation to *Anantakāya's* query about principle of life.

- 7) Nāgasena has again turned to the *Abhidhamma* for the classification of feelings numbering one hundred and eight kinds in all.
- 8) Nāgasena has explained the non-existence of soul with reference to the *Abhidhamma*.
- 9) Nāgasena has mentioned *Abhidhamma* as a meeting place of different roads.
- 10) Nāgasena has referred to persons who are experts in the *Abhidhamma*.
- 11) Nāgasena has indicated that an earnest student of yoga should possess the knowledge of exposition of *Abhidhamma*.¹⁰

Abhidhamma Piṭaka is an explanation to the different problems for the understanding of the *Dhamma* than referring to other *Piṭakas*. The explanations and illustrations of various problems with regard to the *Dhamma* have been put forth by Nāgasena to the king Milinda with apt similes. The presentation of these similes has been made with such an effect that bears its originality. The purpose of these are apt to explain the difficulty of the *Dhamma*. The profuseness and variety of these similes tend to show the remarkable knowledge on the part of the compiler.

Abhidhamma is the place where three or four roads met. As the flower-bazar of a city is studded with different kinds of flowers, so are the different subjects of meditation (*ārammaṇa*) which have been exposed by the Buddha. Through the practices of any one of which one could attain and reach the city of *Nibbāna*. A man may be anointed himself with the morality of taking Refuge (*Buddha, Dhamma* and *Śaṅgha*), of *moral* habits and of restraint in the recitation of *Pātimokṣa*, the fragrance of which pervades all quarters. As the mango fruit before it is ripen passed through different stages, viz. immature, unripe, fresh etc. and it may be consumed in its different stages according to the likings of the people, such is the fruit of different stages of attainment as shown by the Buddha. It is on four paths leading to *Arhatship*, concepts of emptiness (*Śūññatā*), signless (*animitta*) and undirected (*appaṇihita*). Hence it is upon the will of the person to gain the fruit of any of the paths he likes. By the application of drugs one is free from bodily pain and suffering. Those who have longing for the highest insight (*arhatship*) and hear the Four Truths are set free from rebirth, old age, death, grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow and despair. So with the drinking of the sweet doctrine of drugs, the poison of evil dispositions disappear. As the medicines cure the ailing, the Buddha has laid down thirty seven constituent qualities (*bodhipakkhiyadhammas*) by following of which men purge themselves of wrong views, wrong aspiration, wrong speech, wrong

modes of livelihood, wrong endeavour, wrong mindfulness, wrong meditation; and with the application of emenities he has prescribed through which lusts, malice, confusion, pride, false views, doubts, agitation, consciousness and shamelessness and all the evil dispositions are vomitted out. The jewels as have been appraised of by the Buddha are morality, meditation, wisdom, emancipation. One can attain bliss through practising morality.¹¹

Nāgasena exerts himself with all his might and puts forth a good number of similes. Ultimately he convinces the king by clearing his doubts.

There is a basic similarity between Tharavāda and Sarvāstivāda. Reality is analysed into a plurality of ultimate constituents called dhamma which are defined as impersonal entities having each its separate character. The *dharmas* are best understood as classes of phenomena rather than as stable universals or *tattvas*. The starting point of the *dharma* theory is the flux of experience. To classify experience and isolate its recurring patterns of causes and conditions so that it may be possible to remould the course of life, this was the prime task of the *Abhidharma*. *Dharmas* are, thus, constituents of experience. The earliest division was made between consciousness and its objects - *nāma and rūpa*. Then consciousness was subdivided into six types and corresponding to each were posited

types of objects. The *Abhidharma*, however, did not succeed in remaining a pure phenomenalism. Its interest in discovering and positing causes always tended to lead it to hypothetical entities which threatened to acquire a transcendent character.

The *Sarvāstivādins* also tried to tackle the problem arising from an apparent duality in the nature of *dharma*s. There is, on the one hand, the *dharma* in itself (*dharmasvabhāva*), on the other hand, its numerous examples (*dharmalakṣaṇa*), constantly arise and perish. Thus the constant passing away of consciousness does not in some sense destroy the very element of consciousness. The mystery of time was thus made the subject of profound reflection.¹² In some sense even within the process of change, there is a persistence in time. The past and the future are not simply unreal. Vasumitra explained that the present state of the element is defined by actuality or functioning (*kāritra*). The past and the future thus have an ideal as well as potential reality.¹³

Similar conception of Religion or *Dharma* can be found in the writings of Tagore, Gandhi and S. Radhakrishnan. So the importance of the question of the king Milinda can be easily traceable in modern time also.

TAGORE'S VIEW OF RELIGION OR DHARMA

Tagore's views on religion or *Dharma* is that it should not be confined to any group or sect or tribe or nation. Man picks up that

particular form of *Dharma* that suits him, but in the final analysis it transcends all such particular forms.

Ordinary religions, according to Tagore, are just aimless wanderings. The aim of true religion is the realisation of one's kinship with everything. Religion or *Dharma*, is a sort of homesickness. Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day come back to their mountain nests, the religious man is also on his sacred voyage to his eternal home. In the *Gītāñjali* the poet bursts out in a religious fervour, "No more sailing from harbour to harbour with this my weather - beaten boat now I am eager to die into the deathless."¹⁴

Man has to realise his kinship with everything, he has to cultivate a universal feeling of love. That's why He says, in his *Gītāñjali*, he will never shut the doors of his senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.

Dharma or religion is not an escape; it is life and existence. True Religion should not be confused with religious institution. When the religions have to make way for religious organisation it is like the river being dominated by sand beds, the current stagnates and its aspect becomes desert like.¹⁵ "Dharma is the inner-most nature, the essence, the implicit truth of all things", "only when the tree begins to take shape that you can come to see its *dharma*."¹⁶ Tagore says, "In my language the word religion has a profound meaning. The

wateriness of water is essentially its religion, in the spark of the flame lies the religion of fire. Likewise, man's religion is his innermost truth."¹⁷ The innermost essence of man is the presence of Divinity in him. Religion is nothing but an attempt to realise this Divinity.

Thus, "Religion consists in the endeavour of man to cultivate and express these qualities which are inherent in the nature of man, the eternal, and to have faith in them."¹⁸ Religion is the realisation of man's unity with Divinity. In religion man realises himself in the perspective of the infinite, because the supreme person dwells in the human heart. Tagore never abandons the spiritual essence or heights of his Hindu tradition, in the Upaniṣads and in the Vedānta but he does not insist on its enrichment and fulfilment in the world and in the activity in his search for ideals and for a spiritual fulfilment. The Religion of man, thus consists in the reconciliation of the universal spirit with the individual.

WHAT IS RELIGION ACCORDING TO GANDHI ?

The basic conviction of Gandhi is that there is one reality - that of God, which is nothing else but Truth. If truth is God, sincere pursuit of Truth is religion. Religion is ordinarily defined as devotion to some higher power or principle. Devotion to Truth is religion. Religion is the

expression of the permanent nature of man. It has the character of purifying and elevating one's nature. Religion has the power of arousing in man a sense of spiritual restlessness. The ultimate religious ideal is nothing but the realisation of God. Religion involves a conscious and sincere love and striving for Truth.

For Gandhi, religion is not just a theoretical concept that seeks to satisfy intellectual curiosity and urges, it is, for him the way of life, a practical necessity. Religion should pervade every aspect of life. Gandhi recommends that the religious man must practise renunciation by living in the midst of men.

Gandhi's conception of religion and the religious way of life is nothing but the path of "*Niṣkāma Karma*" as shown by the *Gītā*. Gandhi calls the *Gītā* his guru and tries to follow the *Karma Mārga* as preached in the *Gītā*. Religious recommendation is that the fruits of one's effort are to be left to God, who, if likes, will associate one with the results. True religion and true morality are inseparably bound up with each other. Religion is to morality what water is to the seed that is sown in the soil.¹⁹

Whatever is good and virtuous is moral, a sense to the good and the bad is the moral sense, and trying to live in accordance with the dictates of this moral sense is Morality.

The conception of Religion or *Dharma* according to S. Radhakrishnan is also akin to the ancient concept as well as to the concept of *Gītā*. Radhakrishnan says, "Religion is not a creed or a code but an insight into reality." He says, Religion is that discipline or the way of life which enables man to "make a change in his own nature to let the Divine in him manifest himself."²⁰ Religion implies a faith in the ultimacy of absolute spiritual values and a way of life to realise them. Great religions or *Dharmas* have often been prophetic, or have been based on truth. Religion is the affirmation of the ultimacy of Religious Experience.

India, who is strong by her spiritual heritage from the beginning had many sages, prophets and brave sons at the time of her extreme disaster and moral crisis. They cultivated the seed of morality in the Indian soil, religious urge and spirit of fresh energy of human being for the revival of values of Indian society. As a saviour of the country Buddha, Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda etc. appeared in the soil of India. Buddhist interpretation of *Dharma* is a revolt against the superstitions, exploitations, blind-faith, social disorder and moral degradation. The path shown by Buddha was respectfully followed by Ramakrishna, Vivekananda etc. In fact, they have referred to Buddha in several occasions. Appearance of Buddha in India was very significant as observed by Vivekananda. Buddha was the triumph

in the struggle that had been going on between the priests and the prophets in India. It was a critical time when the masses of people were debarred from all knowledge. The priest had made a secret of the Vedas and they wanted to govern the whole society according to their rule. Buddha preached the most tremendous truths. He established the equality of all men and women to attain spirituality by following the path of *morality* or *Dhamma*. In this connection Vivekananda says, "No amount of preaching can ever shock the Indian soul, but it was hard for India to swallow Buddhists doctrine."

Buddhism is a religion without God. Generally *Dharma* is God-centric which moves the whole world. Particularly in *Hīnayāna*, it is due to *Dharma* that the fruits of *Karma* are accumulated and every individual gets mind, body and worldly things according to his own *Karmas*. In the *Hīnayāna* school the Buddhists do not have any room for idol-worshipping or God-worshipping. One of the important grounds for disbelief in God is the problem of evil. He thought that God was the confusing concept misleading the masses to the way of superstitious and instead of being strong foundation of religion it destroys the real spirit of religion. Such a concept if not properly understood in the light of the idea of sacred or of the 'Holy', it is very dangerous to pollute the fresh temperament to realise the Truth from the deepest depth of intuition. Buddha established a religion of self-

conquest. Sri Ramkrishna used to say that Buddha is knowledge as such, Truth as such, consciousness as such. He has realised what *Nirvāṇa* is *Sat* under a tree. It was Buddha's great teaching that it is man to be loved. The love of man in Buddha philosophy was expressed in the way of establishing utilitarian ethics in life. Buddha pointed out *Nirvāṇa* as the goal of life. Man is a complete final being. The essence of religion in Buddhism is a change in man's nature. Dharma or Religion is nothing but the awakening of moral sense or morality. Man's nature is nothing but the attainment of his own nature of humanity which was covered by all kinds of evils like selfishness, desire, delusion and dishonesty. The only remedy is in making man unselfish. We need to teach people to obey the laws rather than to make more laws.

Ignorance and craving are the substratum of the empirical life. From *Avidyā* we must rise to *Vidyā*, *bodhi*, enlightenment. Buddha said with his dying breath, "None can help you, help yourself, work out your own salvation."

Buddhists philosophy of Religion is nothing but the religion of man which is one and universal. To feed out humanity, to reach to the perfection, to realise eternal infinite consciousness within him is the goal of religion. Buddha says - let us start from where we are. If we go beyond desire and are neither desirous of pleasure nor desirous

of getting rid of pain, we reach a state of equanimity. That is the ideal state and that is *Nirvāṇa*.

Buddha established a religion of man although he did not feel that he was announcing a new religion. He was in the first place to bring a movement of reformation. Moral conduct with the aim of achieving the good and happiness of mankind was the essence of religion according to Buddha. Compassion was the source of his morality and good of all was the goal of his moral conduct. He made religion democratic by doing away with caste barriers and distinctions based on birth. He emphasised on good conduct instead of rituals and formalities of religion.

Buddha emphasised ethics or morality based on noble instincts and emotions such as compassion, friendliness and non-injury. This approach shifted the emphasis from theory and tradition of religion. So practice of religion in the form of ethical conduct which is in fact the most important aspect of all real religion. Buddha emphasised moral conduct as means which led to calmness of mind. He was thus able to introduce new values in the field of religion and religious conduct.

In modern time, the same saying was uttered by Sri Ramakrishna, that service of man is the service of God and that is *Dhamma*.

The philosophy of Buddha was enlightened into the light of Indian spirit of humanism contained with the idea of equality, love and compassion at the time of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda once more. They observed Buddha in a magnifying glass and picked up the cream of his philosophy encouraging it for starting revolution against superstition and blind thoughts.

A relativist and instrumentalist conception of Morally good characterised by hedonistic overturns, throws suspicion even upon the ethical integrity of the causal elements or actions. For an action is called "good", because it will produce a materialistically pleasant state of being in the future. Is it really 'good' ? In reply, we must say that charitability is good, not in and for itself, but because it produces a pleasant state of being.

The Buddhist believe in the theory of momentariness on account of which they cannot accept the permanent character of an object. Such impermanent character also exists in the feeling of pleasure, universal etc. this amounts to the acceptance of *Sarvasūnyvāda*. An object is known in four ways : (a) existent (b) as non-existent (c) as both existent and non-existent and as different from existent and non-existent (*Sadasadbhinna*). The object which is free from this four-fold ways of description is called *Śūnya*. If existence (*Sattā*) becomes the essence of an object, the function of the

instrumental causes (*Kāraṅkavyāpāra*) for its manifestation would become useless. As the 'existence' is diametrically opposite to 'non-existence' there cannot be an object bearing both existence and non-existence and also an object devoid of both existence and non-existence.

Sūnyatā is the nature for this indeterminable, indescribable nature of a thing. If each and every nature of an object is imagined, there is no reality in it. An object is called indescribable as it is dependent on other thing. In other word, it is the *Dharma* of a thing that it depends on other thing for its origination. *Dharma* does not exist there if it is not *Sūnya*.

It should be clearly borne in mind that the truth in the phenomenal level points to the attainment of the truth in the absolute level. An individual can transcend this world and attain the world of *Nirvāṇa* by the practice of moral qualities, which is latent in himself. Though Buddha had never directly described this state after considering its indescribable character, the state is not capable of being known through ordinary intellect. That's why Buddha kept mum when asked about the transcendental world, which indicates that the truth of the transcendental experience cannot be described in the light of ordinary intellect and description. The transcendental reality which we are talking about cannot be expressed through any *Kalpanā*

as it has got *parāmarthasatyatā*, as mental construction can reveal an object having *Samvṛti Satyatā* accepted in Buddhism. Buddhism has followed the Middle path (*Madhyama*). It does not accept the extreme views, i.e., absolute reality and absolute unreality of the things. To say that an object has got relative means to say that it is neither absolutely real nor absolutely unreal.

In the present time, suffering of mankind is found in *global* level due to the adoption of violence in mind, body and speech. All individual beings have become disintegrated because they are suffering from this worldly diseases (*bhavaroga*) due to the absence of right vision (*samyag dṛṣṭi*) of the objects. If the nature of an object is known as *Śūnyā*, an individual may be free from the wrong notion of an object. The detachment towards the enjoyable object is possible for a man if he realises that the nature of the known object is relative, conditional and apparent. The *phenomenon* of *Upakṣā* which is accepted as a *Brahma-vihāra* is possible if the void character of an object is realised. Detachment towards an object gives rise to *Upakṣā* where a man can remain indifferent in loss and gain and in different ups and downs of life. The detachment and *Upekṣā* again are related to the understanding of the void character of an object in the sense as mentioned earlier.

Nāgarjuna has highlighted this point with the metaphor of

mirage. According to him, an individual who, thinking sands as water, comes to know that it is not at all water is not at all pool. In the same way, a man who considers this world as having existence just like mirage and afterwards comes to know its absence is a real knower having no infatuation towards the external world.

One who understands *Sūnyata* (voidness) can understand dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). The knower of dependent origination alone can realise Four Noble Truths which are the causes of the removal of thirst etc. Due to this an individual can know the real *Dharma* as well as the cause of it and its result leading to the knowledge of suffering. Those who know these can know the real nature of happiness and suffering, and also know the means of the attainment of happiness and removal of suffering.

This state is known as right vision (*Samyagdarśi*). Ignorance towards the real nature of an object is the main cause of our suffering. The morality is possible only through the change of attitude towards the objects of enjoyment. The real or right knowledge of them can associate us with detachment from which moral action is possible. All other ways like right resolve (*Samyak Saṃkalpa*), right speech (*Samyagvāk*), right conduct (*Samyak Karmānta*), right livelihood (*Samyagājīva*), right effort (*Samyag Vyāyāma*), right attention (*Samyak Smṛti*) and right concentration (*Samyak Samadhī*) follow

from the right knowledge of the objects. All other moral actions like *Maitrī*, *Karuṇā* and *Muditā* apart from *Upekṣā* are possible due to having the non-essential or void character of objects.

Śūnyavāda is the root cause of restoring world-peace by way of removing violence, exploitation etc. is accepted by Nāgarjuna who has said that the person knowing *Śūnyavāda* knows the meaning of all and if otherwise, he does not know anything. Rahul observed that *Śūnyavāda* does not accept the reality of this world.

The philosophy of Indian origin was based from the very beginning on a moral foundation. It is stated that none was allowed to study the Upaniṣads if he is not properly initiated and if he has not performed his civil and religious duties.

In philosophy there is a system which considers morality and formulates the principles of conduct from an absolute point of view and desecrates the factors of distinction between right and wrong that are formal and rigorous in the extreme. This aspect of Buddhist philosophy may be highlighted following the line of Hindu scriptures.

The Ethical philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā* rejects these two extreme conditions. It does not accept the high apriori road of Kant cleared of everything that is empirical. The world of sense and sensibility is recognised by *Gītā*. However, the main function of Ethics

is to investigate true moral which is opposite to rational or freedom. The approach of the *Gītā* towards problems of conduct is synthetic on account of the fact that the states of moral life are stages in continuous development.

According to *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, there should be a complete harmony among the spiritual excellence, mental efficiency and physical fitness. Sri P.N. Srinavaschari has accepted the importance of it and compared the phenomenon with the modern system of psycho-analysis. He says - "It is interesting in this connection to note a novel theory of prānaism according to which the *Gītā* is a manual of mind-cure analogous to the modern system of psycho-analysis. It is claimed that this interpretation would solve many of the problems of the *Gītā*, till now enshrouded in mystery. The main problem of the *Gītā* is said to be how a diseased and disorder mind like that of Arjuna, suffering from a 'division of the conscious and the sub-conscious phases of the ego', can be restored to moral health by supreme psycho-analyst like Kṛṣṇa. It is urged that the disorder in the mind is due to the habitual repression of the impulses from the outside and of the emotions of the mind. The accumulated and suppressed feeling shows itself in perspiration, palpitation, cardiac pains, tremor, fear and grief. Arjuna suffers, according to this view, from psycho-neurosis.....Kṛṣṇa is said to cure the disease of Arjuna's mind by directing it to be divine

qualities of the psycho which constitute the *Daivīsampat*. The divine consciousness is then aroused and the mind is said to be cured. Then Arjuna exclaims '*naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtirlabdhā*'. ("My delusion is destroyed, I have now regained my memory").

From the above discussion it can be said that there should be harmony between the physical fitness and mental tranquillity for the attainment of spiritual bliss. The consumption of *Sāttvika* food give rise to the fitness of body by way of generating *Sattvaguna* in it which can provide one with mental stability. When an individual is possessed of *Sattvaguna*, he can have awareness of the *daivī - sampat* existing in him. For the attainment of the same the harmony between physical fitness and mental stability is essential. Keeping this harmony in view, it has been stated '*Śarīramādyam khalu dharmasādhanaṁ*.' From this maxim it is known that the body is not to be neglected, because it becomes the means of the performance of dharma.

In the *Bhagavadgītā*, *yajña* or sacrifice is taken as the essence of ethical life. Without the sense of sacrifice an individual cannot think of serving other social beings. This view has been beautifully elaborated by Sri P. N. Srinavaschari. He says - "*Yajña* or sacrifice is the essence of ethical life."

In order to bring the ethical purification and perfection of an individual in thought, word and deed (*mānas, vāk & kāya*), austerity

(*tapas*) is essential. The perfection in mind will come into being when there is control of mind existing in freedom from anger, self-restraint and desire for social welfare.

The Upaniṣad also teaches us to adopt what is good (*śreyaḥ*) but not pleasant (*preya*). An action may be good if it can serve the broader interest i.e., the welfare of himself as well as that of other social beings. That which brings universal welfare is called 'good' while that serves narrow interest of an individual is *preya* or pleasant. The Upaniṣadic seers speak in favour of 'good' in order to do justice to others. Those who adopt 'good' are associated with welfare while adopting pleasant objects (*preya*) they are dissociated with the welfare. ('*Tayoḥ śreya ādadānasya sādhu bhavaṭi/hiyate'rthād ya ū preyo vṛmīte*').²¹ That is why, the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* advises an individual to do those actions that are *anavadya* i.e., faultless from all standpoints.

Those who are engaged in doing welfare to others are called *Dhārmikas* in the true sense of the term. In the *Bhagavadgītā* it is said that self exists in all beings and all beings are in self. ("*Sarvabhūtasthaṁ ātmānam ātmani sarvabhūtam*")²² All the good qualities that are essential for the said justice are originated from this notion of self. The qualities which make a man's life fruitful are called *Sadguṇas*.²³ In the *Māhābhārata* it is said that all these qualities are

to be obtained for the development of complete humanity. The forgiveness (*Kṣamā*), steadiness, non-violence, equality, truth, non-miserliness (*akāraṇya*), shame (*hrī*) etc. are included in the *Sadguṇas*. The selfishness or miserliness is described as a defect which counters the human nature (*kāraṇyadoṣopahatasvabhavāḥ*).

The concept of *Dharma* in the *Mahābhārata* is the welfare of the whole world. The main objective of *Dharma* is to think about the welfare of the whole world and become maliceless towards all beings. (*'Mānasam sarvabhūtānām dharmamāhurmanīṣinaḥ/ yasmāt sarveṣubhūteṣu manasā śivamācareṭ*)²⁴ and "*Adroheṇaiva bhūtānām yaḥ sa dharmāḥ satām mataḥ*".²⁵ To make friendship with all beings without doing any harm to them is also *Dharma* ("*Sarvabhūtahitam maitram purānam yaṁ janā viduḥ*").²⁶

In *Mānavadharmasāstra* Manu's concept of *Dharma* is similar to that of the *Mahābhārata*. *Dharma*, as Manu opines, is the means of the attainment of the good (*Śreyah*) which is described by the Vedas as heaven etc. It has been stated afterwards that *Dharma* is always performed by honest and intellect persons having no malice etc. and it is always supported by one's conscience ("*hṛdayenābhyanujñāto*").²⁷ In other words, that which is performed by the honest, maliceless, intellectual person and that which can associate us with our well-being and highest good is called *Dharma*. Those who are really *Dharmika*

in nature should possess thirteen types of moral characters which include service to others (*aparopatāpitā*), non-jealous to others (*anasūyatā*), softness in temperament (*mṛduta*), non-harshness to others (*apāruṣyaṁ*), friendliness (*maitratā*), capability of speaking lovable words (*priyaṁvadatā*), sense of gratitude (*kṛtajñatā*), pity to others (*kāruṇyaṁ*) etc.. All these moral characters are described as preconditions of Dharma on account of the fact that these mortal characters are to be developed for justice to the social beings. ('.....*aparopatāpitā anasūyatā mṛduta apāruṣyaṁ maitratā kāruṇyaṁ praśāntiśceti trayodaśavidhaṁ śīlam*).²⁸

From this it follows that *Dharma* has been taken in the sense of morality in broader sense of the term in Hinduism also.

Rabindranath is of the opinion that human character has two different aspects: on one side a man is in search of satisfaction within this worldly object and on the other he longs for something which does not come under the purview of this worldly object. When an individual has confined himself in performing some works in order to fulfil his own this worldly interest, it is due to his animal-nature. That which leads us to the world of sacrifice or renunciation is called humanity or the religion of man. An individual man is internally identified with the Universal Man and hence he does not want only happiness but more than that or whole world (*bhuma*).²⁹ Rabindranath

observes : "And I say of Supreme Man that he is infinite in his essence, he is finite in his manifestation in us, the individuals".³⁰ The harmony between finite and infinite is actual liberation. This doctrine is beautifully represented in his poem *Vairāgya*.

In the view of Aurobindo, the chief aim and duty of human spirit are respect, service and progress of human being. The religion of humanity is the religion against the oppression, cruelty and exploitation of man, no other considerations are to be taken for determining the religion of humanity. Like Tagore, Sri Aurobindo also has realised that the ego is the enemy of the manifestation of religion of humanity.³¹ Both of them as again recognised the spirit within us can bring real unity of a man with another man. After the attainment of spirit the religion of humanity which can give love, mutual recognition of human brotherhood, sense of human oneness and practice of human oneness in thought, feeling etc. can be attained. Sri Aurobindo thinks that the human brotherhood existing in Self and by the Self is the most fundamental thing from which liberty and equality follow.

Man has a feeling that there is in him some meaning that has yet to be realised. The spirit of love, dwelling in the boundless realm of the surplus, emancipates our consciousness from the illusory bond of the separate self, trying to spread its illumination in the human world. Tagore has pointed out that the existence of surplus power

existing in the ear which is united in the spirit or universal man is indicated.³² Rabindranath has heard the echo of this truth in a song of Baul where the universal Man is described by them as "Man of the heart" for whom we should search within our mind, but not in the external world.

Mīmāṃsakas observed *Dharma* is always associated with good. Any injunction leading to our well-being is called *Dharma*. If an individual maintains the direction of the Śāstra and if this leads him to his well-being, it would be treated as *Dharma*.

The Buddhist also believed in the concept of *sat*. They admit that an object is to be understood as *sat* if it has got some causal efficacy (*arthakriyākāritvaṃ*). In other words, an object is *sat* if it has capacity to serve our purpose and to fulfil any action. The object which does not serve our purpose is called *asat*. A man may be described as *sat* or *asat* after keeping his *arthakriyākāritva* by way of doing social welfare, adopting *maitrī* and *karuṇā* etc. or *anarthakriyākāritva* respectively in view. An object having causal efficacy is taken as *sat*, our existence being endowed with causal efficacy is *sat* in the true sense of the term. On the other hand, our existence which is not endowed with such causal efficacy is called *asat*. A man having unique character and free from imaginary attributes is self-luminous.

A man who is self-luminous through his own auspicious deeds is *sat* who is otherwise known as *Sura*.

The view has found its echo in the religious poem composed by Kabir which runs as follows :

*"Vāḍa huyā to kyā huyā
jaise vaḍī khejur
pānthako chāyā nāhi
phal lāge atidūr."* ³³

That is, a man born in a high society or having high education etc. is insignificant to the society if he does not engage himself in auspicious works like social welfare etc. when an individual can maintain an harmony between his own welfare and that of social members, he becomes converted into a *sat* or *sura*. If a man having body does not possess any mentionable quality and action, he does not have *sattā* in the true sense of the term, which is indicated by the term pure *sattā*. Here 'quality' and 'action' denotes the good qualities like social service, broadness of mind etc. and good actions like service of mankind, performance of the duties towards family or social members respectively. If there is a harmony among body (*dravya*),

good qualities (*guṇa*) and good action (*karma*) in an individual, the real *Sattā* prevails there.

There are some *sat-puruṣas*, good people, who engage themselves in the good of others sacrificing their own self interest; the *Sāmānyas*, the generality of people, on the other hand, are those who engage themselves in the good of others so long as it does not involve the sacrifice of their own self-interest. There are some others, the *Mānavarākṣakas*, devilish men, who sacrifice the good of others without gaining thereby any good to themselves or to any one else.³⁴

It is true that at present day society the melody is completely lost due to having this devilish attitude in man and it can be regained if this attitude is removed. *Satpuruṣas* can be brought again. For this our nation's moral health is to be improved. Swami Ranganāthānanda observes : "The moral health of the nation entirely depends upon this immense group. Steadying itself by drawing inspiration from the small minority of the *Satpuruṣa* group above it.....the self criticism which is evident in our nation today, and which is a sure sign of the basic health of our society will slowly generate the necessary moral forces to cure the nation of its present ailments. The ailment is a moral and the remedy has to be a moral remedy. We all desire that our nation should be healthy, physically as well as mentally.....Cynicism, self-centredness, and utter unconcern for others are more deadly than

the most deadly physical diseases and viruses that cause them; for they corrode the nation's resolve to be free, to be united and to march onward to progress. We cannot be blind to the fact that this disease has already invaded our body-political, including our youths. We have to take energetic measures to arrest the further progress of this disease and to eliminate it from the body-politic. And the nation has to be alert thereafter to see that these deadly mental viruses do not invade our society again.³⁵

If an individual tries to attain the moral health, he would be regarded as *Sura*. A *sura* can be described as *amāyika*, which comes from the word *māyā*. This interpretation is completely different from that of Śamkara.

The particular meaning of the term "*māyā*" is followed from the meaning of the term '*amāyika*', which is used in an ordinary sense.

The term *māyā* may find support in the episode of the Rāmāyana where Mārīca was found to take the artificial form of a deer (*māyāmṛga*) in order to help Rāvaṇa to abduct Sītā from Rāma's custody. The deer was called *Māyamṛga* as it was artificial in character. The term *māyā* is used in the sense of artificiality is again evidenced from the usage of the terms "*māyā-krandana*" i.e. artificial crying or crocodile tears, '*māyāvanaṁ*' i.e., artificial forest. These terms do not mean 'real crying' or 'real forest'. An individual who frequently takes

an artificial form is described as *māyāvī*. The magician is described as *māyāvī* on account of the fact that the magical performance of him is artificial, but not real.

The qualities like 'broadness', 'self-extension' etc. are honoured in the society in as much as they are the products of *amāyikatā*. The notion of *māyā* can be obtained from the literal meaning of the term. The root '*mā*' existing in the term '*māyā* means to limit'. That which absolutely limits us is called *māyā*.

The *māyika* or mechanised situation is described by the ancient seers as *mṛtyu* (death), *tamas* (darkness) and *asat* (non-existent) while *amāyikatā* is *jyoti* (light), *amṛta* (immortal) and *sat* (existent). Our constant prayer is to reach from death to Immortality, darkness to light, and *asat* to *sat*, which is described in the Upaniṣadic mantra.³⁶

In fine, it may be concluded that above mentioned *amāyikatā* exists in the simple true nature of a man which is free from crookedness, hypocrisy, or artificiality or mechanisation. This remains in the life of a baby and in his smiling glance towards mother's face and hence there was melody which could appease other's heart. This situation is lost and hence constant prayer is done to get back this type of *amāyikatā*.

The echo of such prayer is found in Rabindranath Tagore's poem which runs as follows :

*'Ye sur bharile bhāṣābhola gīte,
Śisur navīn jīvan vāṁsite,
jananīr mukh-tākāno hāśite,
se sure more vājāo.'*³⁷

When an individual attains *suratva* after removing *asuratva* from him, he will have different characteristics like inner force (*śakti*), forgiveness (*kṣānti*), peace (*śānti*), shame or the sense of obligation (*lajjā*), respect (*śraddhā*), fortune (*Lakṣmī*) etc.³⁸ A sura will look at other social beings in the eye of forgiveness as his mind is full of satisfaction (*tuṣṭi*), peace (*śānti*) due to the absence of turmoil caused by asura in the form of nescience.

It has been stated in the *Devīmāhātmya* that all other *Suras* have extended their hands of co-operation after providing their ornaments, weapons etc. to Durgā for making her perfect.³⁹ It indicates that she is not able to defeat asura without the co-operation of others. In the like manner, an individual becomes perfect or attains *suratva* if he gets co-operation from other social beings who have already attained it.

The image of Durgā in Hindu Religion gives us the glimpse of

another eternal truth. God is found to dominate Asura in the battle and at this time she is depicted to have undertaken this easily without any tension, which indicates her self-confidence. Self-confidence may come due to having much vigour inside. On the other side, *asura* is found to lose self-confidence due to having excessive anger in him. Durgā is luminous through her vigour and self-confidence and hence, her complexion appears like the colour of the flower called *Atasī* while asura has lost himself with anger, which is indicated through his black complexion, the symbol of ignorance.

The picture of fighting between Durgā and Asura gives us a lesson which is important for our transformation. The goddess as if gives us direction 'you should not possess anger and disregard your soul like asura, but be self-confident after gathering vigour from within'. The anger is one of the enemies because it makes a man blind due to which he cannot discriminate between good and bad. Moreover, anger makes a man vigourless instead of augmenting energy in him.⁴⁰

An individual has two types of nature; real nature and artificial nature. The real nature of an individual is manifested in his simplicity which is possible due to removal of the enemies like anger etc. while the artificial nature due to having excessive ego etc. hides his real nature. In order to get rid of this artificiality it is the prayer of an ordinary person : '*Rūpam dehi, Jayam dehi, Yaśo dehi, dviṣo jahi*'⁴¹ i.e. give

me beauty, victory and fame, and destroy enemies. The interpretation of the icon of *Durgā* given earlier and its relevance in common social beings who are yet to attain *suratva* would be more firm-footed if the significance of this prayer is explained in the light of this theory.

All these Divine qualities are nothing but moral qualities. In Buddhism one is **always** advised to adopt these moral qualities; and hence there is no necessity of admitting any Super Power or God apart from these **qualities**. Buddhism is not contrary to other religions so far as morality is concerned. An effort has been made to evaluate the position of Buddhism after giving a fresh interpretation of what our tradition says.

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Chapter - VI

SOME FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS IN MILINDA PRASNA

LAW OF KARMA

The Vision of law and order in creation is revealed in the *R̥ta* of the R̥g-Veda. The Law of *Karma* is the law of conservation of moral energy. It is the counterpart in the moral world of the physical law of Uniformity. According to the principle of *Karma*, there is nothing uncertain or capricious in the moral world. We reap what we sow. The good seed brings a harvest of good, the evil of evil. Every little action has its effect on character. The attempt to overleap the *law of Karma* is as futile as the attempt to leap off one's shadow. It is the psychological principle that our life carries within it a record that time cannot blur or death erase out. A man becomes good by good deeds and bad by bad deeds. Suffering is the wages of sin. Some men are happy and some miserable, some men wise and some ignorant. Moreover, it is found that some virtuous men suffer and wicked people prosper in this world.

The *law of Karma* is this general moral law which governs not only the life and destiny of all individual beings, but even the order and harmony of the physical world.

The doctrine of *Karma* has a number of philosophical and

social implications. Almost in every Indian system we find it clearly recognised that *Karma* as understood by the Indian from the remotest past implies in same form or the other the action of *Avidyā* or non-dualistic, *Ātmā* in its essence is held to be purely divine. It is only through the influence of *Karma* that it is compelled to take a body and pass through the life of joy and suffering. An intellect which is clouded by ignorance is never expected to be able to have a glimpse into the origin of things. The other systems of Indian philosophy say each from its own point of view almost the same thing.

All schools of Indian philosophy except the Cārvāka believe in the *Law of Karma*. A right action inevitably produces a good consequence. There is no escape from the consequences of actions. Their fruits must be reaped in this life or in a future life. The *Law of Karma* is the inexorable law of moral causation.

The Buddhist, the Jaina, the Sāṃkhya and the Mīmāṃsā believe in impersonal *Law of Karma* which adjusts the realm of nature to the realm of spirits. But the other systems believe in God who is the dispenser of the *Law of Karma*.

How beautiful diagnosis of Hindu philosophy of *Karma* is. *Karma* is dominant and not birth. We rise and fall by our deeds. In the words of Lord Krishna, "*Karmāṇyeva adhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu*

Kadācana. "O man, do your duty without idea of its fruit. *Niṣkāma-Karma* is enjoyed. Duties should be performed without desire for fruits. Prescribed duties should be done for the sake of duty without attachment for their fruits. Manu, the great Hindu law-giver says that all are born in low-caste. By deeds we become high-caste. The *Bhagavadgītā*, too, emphasises the supremacy of Brāhmans on the basis of temperance, austerity and restraint and not on birth.

Karma Yoga is not opposed to *Jñāna yoga*. The former is possible when the latter is attained. The constituents of *Prakṛti*, *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* necessarily give rise to actions. As Wordsworth says :

*"The eye cannot choose but see,
We cannot bid the ear be still,
Our bodies feel where'er they be
Against or with our will."*¹

The Universe itself depends on actions. Inertia is not liberty, but death. Work keeps up the cycle of the universe and it is the duty of every individual to help it. He who does not do so and finds pleasure in the senses is sinful and lives in vain. The ideal of the *Gītā* is not negation of actions, but performance of actions in a detached spirit. It is not *Naiṣkarmya*, but *Niṣkāmya Karma*. The giving up is not of

action itself, but of interest, desire, fruit attachment regarding actions. Desire binds a man; he should therefore act in such a way when action does not bind. The *Gītā* synthesises both *Pravṛtti* and *Nivṛtti*. The *Gītā* teaching stands not for renunciation of action, but for renunciation in action. Actions are our sphere; fruits are not our concern. We should never be attached to the fruits of actions and at the same time we should never be inactive. But without knowledge, renunciation of desire and attachment is not possible. So only a true *Jñānī* can perform *niṣkāma karma*. Hence only fools and not wise people speak of *jñāna* and *karma* as different and opposed; really they are one.²

Every individual is born with certain aptitudes and predispositions which constitute his innate nature (*svabhāva*) and determine his station in the society. "All work is worship". Each class of persons ought to do its own duties, and refrain from meddling with others' duties. The Hindu concept of four classes anticipates Plato's concept of different classes of men in the society with different duties for the highest social good. This ethical teaching of the *Bhagavat Gītā*, Plato and Bradley's conception of "my station and its duties" is in keeping with teaching of modern psychology.

The perfect man has no axe of his own to grind. He simply acts for the good of the people. The Lord Himself, though He has

nothing to accomplish for Himself, acts for the benefit of humanity. The perfect man also has to work for the benefit of humanity in the spirit of perfect detachment, disinterest, selflessness, with no desire to reap the fruit. He alone is capable of doing so. The liberated 'cave-dweller' in Plato goes again into the cave to free others. He who performs actions in a detached manner, thinking himself to be a mere instrument of God, is not contaminated by sin.

Hīnayānism admits action without an agent. *Karma* is an impersonal law which works by itself. Unlike the orthodox Hindu "*karma*", in Buddhism does not depend on any divine power. The doctrine of action plays a very important role in Buddhism. The law of action is not imposed from nothing. We cannot escape from the effect of our deeds. When a man dies, his physical organism which is the basis of physical existence ends psychical organism. The continuity of action is maintained between two lives separated by the phenomenon of death. So the practice of good deeds has to be repeated. In the words of Buddha, "we are heir to our deeds." A man, with good deeds, at his back, is a man of light, a man, with bad deeds, at his back, is a man with darkness, a man, with bad and good deeds, is a man with light and darkness.

In Buddhist system of thought *Avidyā* or ignorance lies in the background of *Karma*. It is said that in the world of desire a man

through his virtuous actions can rise upto the top of this world and attain to the status of a *Deva*. The true aim of human life is peace and freedom from sorrow. This cannot be attained except through Karma and meditation.

Let us now take up the doctrine of action as depicted in non-canonical texts. In the conversation between the king Milinda and Nāgasena as found in the famous *Milindapañha*, the effect of action is discussed in detail. The king wants to know what causes difference between man and man, and the answer received is action (*Karma*) which is the main criterion for a man. King Milinda further told Nāgasena, "those who die of *Karma*, or of journeying or of activity, or of old age, all die in fullness of time, even he who dies in the womb, is his appointed time, so that he too dies in fullness of time, and so of him who dies in the birth chamber or when he is a month old or at any age upto a hundred years. It is always his appointed time, and it is in the fullness of time that he dies. So, Nāgasena, there is no such thing as death out of due season. For all who die, die at the appointed time.³ The conversation between king Milinda and Nāgasena makes it evident that virtue takes a long time to die but guilt becomes evident at once even in this present life. The effect of *Karma* becomes manifest in future birth. Nāgasena was asked about what are to be "*Karma-born*". Nāgasena answered that "All

beings, O King, who are conscious, are *Karma-born*." Nāgasena says that it is because of difference in their *Karma* that men are not all alike. Some are long-lived, some short-lived, some are healthy and some sickly, some are handsome and some ugly, some are powerful and some weak, some rich and some poor, some of high degrees and some of low degrees, some wise and some foolish. All these differences are caused by the difference in the *Karma* performed by the individuals.⁴

According to all Indian tradition maintained by the Buddhists, the Jainas and Brahmanical Hindus man is the ultimate arbiter of his own fate and destiny. Action is the connecting link between one life with another. Buddhism, of course, denies the existence of soul but it admits the unbroken continuity of Action.

Most of the modern personalities have given an impressive conception regarding the doctrine of *Karma*. Hindu thought has given tremendous importance to the doctrine of *Karma*. Our present life and body are on account of our past *Karmas*.

According to Gandhi, every individual is unique because of his peculiar physical and mental inheritance and equipment. For Gandhi, the *Law of Karma* appears to be more important because it is consistent with his moral convictions and also with his kind of faith in rebirth. The realisation that one's own *Karmas* determine the

future nature and status of an individual. Such a realisation will create a sense of responsibility in man, to raise himself by himself so that he can fully express him.⁵

Sri Aurobindo, also in a general way accepts the importance of *Karma*. But the originality of Sri Aurobindo's view lies in recognising the limitation of this law. The *Law of Karma* can only be one of the processes, that it uses for the purpose. He says that our spirit or the self must be greater than its *Karma*. *Karma* is only an instrument.⁶

Vivekananda says, "*Karma-yoga*..... is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works. The *Karma-yogī* need not believe in any doctrine whatsoever. He may not ask what his soul is, nor think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realising selflessness, and he has to work it out himself."⁷

To Swami Vivekananda, the action is justified which gives universal welfare, peace and happiness. Hence, action is essential for the harmonisation and equality among all men. In connection with his philosophy of action he has brought harmony between physical strength and spiritual strength. One is complementary to other. Hence we find a harmony between physical strength and spiritual strength.

Vivekananda's Vedānta encourages us in the philosophy of

action. His vedānta does not make us away from the world of activity but induces us in action. One who is 'strong' in the above-mentioned sense can do action for the welfare and happiness of all (*Bahujanahitāya Bahujanasukhāya*). For this the physical weakness which is the cause of our miseries is to be removed. The physical weakness which we possess is the cause of our laziness due to which we cannot work, we do not love each other. The said laziness is the prime cause of selfishness. The physical strength which gives rise to strong brain is to be augmented. Without this we will have idle and weak brain which cannot do social welfare or any positive selfless work. That is why Vivekananda has emphasised that all young men should be strong at first and then adopt religion. According to him "you will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of Gītā". The only way to think oneself strong is to believe - "I am the soul", but we should never say that we are weak. This conviction leads us to the path of *Karma*. An individual can prove his existence through *Karma* for others. Vivekananda says - "But I will tell you in plain language that you work best when you work for others."

Vivekananda very reverently takes the example of the life of Lord Buddha, who after attaining *Nirvāṇa*, kept on working throughout his life for the good of men and expected no return. Vivekananda says, "He works best who works without any motive, neither for

money, nor for fame, nor for anything else; and when a man can do that, he will be a Buddha, and out of him will come the power to work in such a manner as will transform the world. This man represents the very highest ideal of *Karma-yoga*.⁸

In this brief analysis we find that the doctrine of *Karma* occupies an important position in spiritual path of a human being. It is a moral force recognised by all the Indian systems. It was the foundation stone of the cultural thinking.

The point discussed by Nāgasena to the king Milinda is a very interesting one. It has to be taken carefully in a systematic study of the philosophical standpoint until free moral atmosphere is changed to social stability and moral life and ultimately it is given up for ever when moral life is replaced by spiritual life and with the surrender of a man to the Divine will begin the period of self transformation. "The history of an individual" - write Radhakrishnan, "does not begin at his birth, but has been for ages in the making."

REBIRTH

The theory of rebirth was enunciated in the *Upaniṣads*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* says that just as an insect going to the end of a leaf of grass by a new effort collects itself in another. This life thus presupposed another existence. Birth is followed by death. Death is followed by rebirth. The cycle goes on until liberation is attained by an individual self. Buddha, was the first man, who had made a serious attempt to deal with the doctrine of Rebirth.

All schools of philosophy except the Cārvākas believed in it and so little is known to us of the *Cārvāka sūtras* that it is difficult to say what they did to refute this doctrine. The Buddha also accepts it as a fact and does not criticize it. This life therefore comes only as one which had an infinite number of lives before and which except in the case of a few emancipated ones would have an infinite number of them in the future. It was strongly believed by all people, and the Buddha also, when he came to think to what our present birth might be due, he had to fall back upon another existence (*Bhava*). If *Bhava* means *Karma* which brings rebirth then it would mean that the present birth could only take place on account of the works of a previous existence which determined it. Here also we are reminded of the Upanisadic notes "as a man does so will he be born". (*Yat Karma Kurute Tadabhisampadyate*, Brh. IV, iv, 5).

Buddha denied soul and hence he has denied also the theory

of transmigration of souls. But does life end after death ? What about the good and bad deeds committed by man in this life ? Life is an endless process. How can it end at a point ?

This apparent contradiction is solved by modern dialectics by realising that life in general is endless, humanity and progress are endless and the good and evil deeds of man are remembered by his successors. The individual body and mind vanish but his contribution to society lives and becomes part of the eternal human process. There is a continuity of human consciousness. A lamp fades out and kindles another lamp. A man dies. His consciousness enters another body. The theory of rebirth is introduced into Buddhism by the backdoor.

The King Milinda, raises an interesting point about the oneness of transmigration and Rebirth. The king asked Nāgasena whether the same person is born or another. Nāgasena replied that neither the same nor the another is born. Just as it would not be right to say that the ghee, butter, and curds are the same as the milk. Neither it would be right to say that they are something else. The king also asked whether the man who will not be born is aware of the fact or not. Nāgasena's utterance was that it can be possible only through the cessation of all, that is, cause or condition of rebirth. Again if a man knows, he would not be born, he would be free from any painful

feeling. Nāgasena again continues his discussion by saying that it is the name and form (*nāma-rūpa*) that are reborn and in that name and form good and evil actions done another is reborn so the other is not free from the former.

Then the king again asked Nāgasena that whether he will be born again or not. Nāgasena replied very easily that if he dies with clinging in his mind, he will be born again, and if not any mental clinging he will not be born. Again he explains the meaning of name and form. Whatever is gross therein that is "form". Whatever is subtle, mental, that is "name".⁹

These conditions are related like the yoke or an egg and its shell. They have been related from time immemorial.

So, if there were no name there would be no form. What is meant by name in that expression being intimately dependent on what is meant by form, they spring up together. And this is, true from time immemorial.

The apparent contradiction is solved by modern dialectics by realising that life in general is endless, humanity and progress are endless and the good and evil deeds of man remembered by his successors.

Hardy speaks of the theory of Rebirth by making a comparison.

This as follows : Just as the light comes from the same lamp all the night through, in the same way, great king, one being is conceived, another is born, another dies, when comprehended by the mind, it is like a thing that has no before, and no after; no preceding, no succeeding existence. Thus the being who is born does not continue the same, nor does he become another; the consciousness, is thus united with the rest.

A man at any one moment, is precisely all that he is the conscious of. *The phrase of his self-consciousness the totality of that of which he is conscious*, is always changing; and is so different at death from what it was at birth that, in a certain sense, he is not the same at the one time as he was at the other. But there is a continuity in the whole series - a continuity dependent on the whole body. And this is appropriate to the simile, in which the lamp is the body, and the flame the changing self-consciousness.

In modern time, so many great personalities of India also believe in Rebirth and the Law of *Karma*. Gandhi gives a moral interpretation to this doctrine. By believing in the possibility of rebirth one is able to make adjustments with life. This belief enables men to be loving, kind, moral and benevolent even in the midst of his bitter experiences of jealousy, hatred and strife. This world is not the end of everything. Belief in rebirth becomes a condition for a pious, moral and noble living.

Again Sri Aurobindo's account of Rebirth and *Karma* is not merely an old wine in a new bottle, it contains strikingly original ideas, which, in certain respects similar to the traditional Indian notions about *Karma* and Rebirth. But his idea emphasises on certain elements which carry the mark of Sri Aurobindo's original insight and freshness. Sri Aurobindo tries to assign to the notion of Rebirth a place in his general scheme of evolution. He asserts that Rebirth is an aspect of the general process of evolution and ascent.¹⁰

The doctrine of the plurality of selves along with the consciousness of the fact of death leads Radhakrishnan to develop a doctrine of Rebirth also. If souls have to retain their individuality till the end of the cosmic process, they must continue to exist in some form or the other even after death. Rebirth therefore means survival, it is continuing to exist by assuming different bodies after death. Radhakrishnan is aware that it is difficult to understand the mechanism of rebirth fully, but an awareness of the unfulfilled urges and tendencies in the purposive set-up of the universe compels us to think about some possible forms of life after death. We cannot, in one life, exhaust all the potentialities of life. The most general ground for the rejection of a belief in rebirth is the fact that there is no evidence of anybody having any memory of the past life. But Radhakrishnan says that lack of memory about the past life is not an adequate ground

for rejecting the belief in rebirth. Nobody has any memory of his existence in his mother's womb, but that does not mean that, that is not a state of existence. Death puts an end to the memory-capacity, but sufficient evidences of the tendencies of the past are available in life. The inborn patterns of behaviour and some of the peculiarities of the individual can be explained only by presupposing a prior birth.¹¹

The significance of this philosophical question of rebirth is nothing but the philosophy of eternal change. It raises the revolt against the metaphysical thinking of *Upaniṣads*. The mentality of "change according to times" which is however a part of Indian culture is the contribution of *Hīnayāna* Buddhist to India. In the words of Oldenberg "*Upaniṣads* saw being in all becoming, Buddha saw becoming in all being."

LOVE

In the ancient time, the idea of *Love* and *Bhakti* was announced by Lord Kṛṣṇa and He taught his dear disciple Uddhava, who was very proud of his sound knowledge, how a wise man by acquiring vast knowledge can argue only, the real idea of *Love* regarding the Infinite can be able to free oneself from the bondage of sufferings and can attain eternal peace which is the destiny of every human being. With the help of this weapon we can be able to win the heart of others. When the hatred is totally abolished from our heart, we shall be able to think for the well being of others and can throw a light which will dispel all kinds of darkness.

This question of loving disposition was asked by King Milinda to Nāgasena for the clarification of the puzzle arose in his mind. Because it has been said by the Lord, that the eleven advantages may be expected by one who practices and makes a habit of loving-kindness towards all beings: he sleeps in peace; he wakes in peace; he dreams no evil dreams; he becomes dear to human beings and to non-human beings; the gods protect him, neither fire, nor poison, nor weapons can harm him; his mind is quickly concentrated his countenance in serene; he dies unconfused and he is reborn in the *Brahmā* realm.¹²

The King Milinda was puzzled in thinking about the consequence of the prince Sāma, who while dwelling in the cultivation of loving disposition, hit by a poisoned arrow fired by King Piliyakkha. If the statement of the Lord is right then why this miserable consequence has been faced by the prince Sāma. This too, is a double-edge problem, so subtle, so delicate and so profound, that the solving of the problem might well bring out sweat over the body. The King requested Nāgasena just to throw light upon this matter to the accomplishment of the desire of those sons who shall arise hereafter.¹³

Nāgasena tried to solve the problem with the idea of that these eleven virtues of loving - kindness are dependent on love itself and not on the character of the person who practises it. Sāma practised the meditation on loving-kindness all the time. However, while he was collecting water, his mind lapsed from the meditation and at that moment king Piliyakkha shot him, so the arrow was able to hurt him. Just like that it is with the virtue inherent in the felt presence of love that a man has called up in his heart.¹⁴

Nāgasena was fully strange how the presence of love has the power of warding off all evil states of mind.

So, in fine we may say that the practice of love is productive

of all virtuous conditions of mind both in good and in evil ones. So, all beings, who are in the bonds of conscious existence certainly cultivate the feeling of love - kindness and reap the harvest of great advantage.

In modern time, the idea of love has been propounded by Tagore, Rāmakrishna, Vivekananda, Gandhiji etc, for the reformation of the world revolution which is going on in this world in the absence of pure love and kindness. All the people has been involved themselves in their own self interested work and hate each other when this interest is opposed by somebody. People of the modern world is now going to forget the ideal taught by our predecessors.

The ultimate human destiny is the realisation of the universal in the individual. The ordinary man in his embodied existence is the self, he can realise his true nature by becoming a soul. The self is the narrow egoistic existence of the individual, the *soul* is the existence of the individual as an aspect of the universal. To realise the one's true nature, consciousness has to be extended beyond the ego, the consciousness of the self must make room for soul-consciousness. Worldly wisdom can never be the means of attaining soul consciousness. Intellect may be the proud possession and the tool of the scholar, but it can never give us the insight into the nature of reality. Intellect can count the petals, classify the scent and

describe the colour of the rose, but that is not knowing the rose because these do not constitute the roseness of the rose. Just as the knowledge of the theory of music is not music, so the intellectual view of things is not the real view.

The unity that is the goal of life is not partial, but all-comprehensive, and therefore, it can be attained not through intellect but through vision. Vision means sudden outburst of spirituality from within.

Now the question arises how we may be able to gain this vision. Tagore answers the question in one word - *Love*. It is only through love that our consciousness can be enlarged. The soul has been described as a lover always in search of the beloved. The union will be possible only when soul intensifies his love. Love has been defined as comprehension. Comprehension is comprehending "all" in a unity. In love the sense of difference is obliterated. Love identifies oneself with the object of one's love, and the discovery of oneself outside his own self is a source of joy. Therefore, love is joy. So long as 'I', 'me', and 'mine' continue to guide man, he cannot be able to enjoy the taste of love. In the king of the dark chamber the queen sees the king only when she gives up her egoistic pride. Love is the highest faculty of soul because by the exercise of this faculty one transcends the boundaries of the limited self. To be one with the

all (*sarvānubhūti*), one must reach that summit of consciousness which is love; it is through love that one comes into intimate touch with others, love must be distinguished from attachment. Attachment centres round the ego, and has a motive or a purpose behind it. True love does not seek to satisfy any egoistic motive. Love presupposes sacrifice. Love and sacrifice go together. This is an important character, because in the act of love, with which man begins his spiritual journey, giving up and sacrificing of all personal considerations constitutes the first step. Our experience of life tells us that love begins with pain and sorrow but this pain is able to bring out the secrets of man's innermost being.

Man can conveniently begin by trying to have a sympathetic attitude towards others. It is true that generally our love for children, friends and near ones prevents us from extending our love to others, yet the love for the near ones is a step onwards, and the process of sacrifice starts here.

To work for all would mean the recognition of the metaphysical unity of all and to work under that recognition. This would no longer remain a life of the finite, it would be living in the infinite. Actions for others gives a man freedom in the outside world, and that is a prelude to his finding freedom within.

According to Tagore, the realisation of the Infinite can be

possible through the Realisation '*in Action*', Realisation *in Love* and Realisation *of Beauty*. Tagore also talks about *Spiritual Yoga*. Yoga is taken in the sense of a discipline that demands sacrifice and renunciation. Renunciation consists in one's giving up of his possessions and in his sacrificing his egoistic impulses. This means that the lower aspect of man has to be raised higher - made more perfect. He clearly says, "The renunciation is not in the negation of the self, but in the dedication of it."¹⁵

This *yoga*, therefore, is "the daily process of surrendering ourselves, removing all obstacles to union and extending our consciousness of him in devotion and service, in goodness and in love."¹⁶

Love or joy is knowledge in its completeness. Love is the only form of experience that comprehends unity.

Recently Ramakrishna and his disciple Vivekananda have tried their level best to abolish the difference between man to man with the help of the instrument of love with each other. There is no distinction of caste and creed. All the beings are the manifestation of God. We should not hate anybody so that one's inner soul is insulted. By virtue of love we can win the whole world. He himself proved the fact by his own action. When the India was suffering from so many kinds of diseases and the *Sanātan Dharma* was in the position of

the setting sun, that setting sun is again revived and that starts to shine in the sky with its original brightness. This difficult task was performed by Vivekananda with the help of strong mental determination and his deep and pure love for the countrymen or the poor Indian. He came to feel that India, in spite of its rich spiritual heritage and very strong cultural history, had not been able to root out poverty, weakness and social evils. He strongly felt the need of bringing about a spiritual revolution, which, he also realised, required a very strong spiritual leadership.

At that time he came to know that the "*Parliament of Religion*" was going to meet at Chicago. He decided to go there and to participate in the meet. What happened there is today a household story. He addressed the American people, with a very sweet tone, "All my brothers and sisters of America" and with the pronouncing of these very words, American people whole-heartedly congratulated him and the Parliament of Religion enabled Vivekananda to assure the spiritual leadership of the Indian people.

Deep-rooted feeling of love towards the Indian people compelled him to overcome many obstacles which were prevailing in the social order. He used to say, "He preyth best, who loveth best. All things both great and small." Even the smallest things in the world is nothing but the manifestation of the Infinite or Brahman. So in

fine, we may say that by following the idea of love and by its cultivation, we can gain the best in the world.

According to Gandhi, good consists in doing good to others, it would involve sacrificing one's personal motives for the good of others. This means that - self-transcendence or love constitutes the essence of morality. Love in the opinion of Gandhi is Divine; it makes performance of duty not only a convenience; but also a duty. But love at times tends to be blind. This may lead to dogmatism and even to fanaticism. Full knowledge of love is required to guide oneself towards the path of morality. Love in ignorance tends to become sensuous and narrow, knowledge will break its bonds and barriers. Therefore, D.M. Dutta observes, 'the path to the realisation of the True self or God, therefore, lies through the love of others and the performance of duties towards others as love demands.'¹⁷

So, the importance of the questions of Milinda and the reply given by Nāgasena can be widely accepted with the discussion of the idea of love and kindness towards all, which is as ancient as the beginning of the society. Science has discovered many deadly weapons, but the instrument of love is more deadly than these weapons if we can apply it properly at the proper time.

FAITH

From the standpoint of rigid Philosophy, there is a conflict between faith and reason. Whereas reason demands explanation for whatever we know or believe in, faith cajoles us into believing without apparent reason.

However, this is an extreme case. There need not be a conflict between faith and reason. The two can have two different domains and each can make room for the other. Absolutely irrational things need not be believed in; and what our heart accepts easily may have different reason than dry logic. The questions of King Milinda have delved deep into the problem of faith and come out with wonderful insights.

The King Milinda asked Nāgasena regarding the characteristic mark of faith. The reply was given by Nāgasena very easily by using simply two words, "Tranquillisation and aspiration". Faith springs up in the heart so it must have to cross the various hindrances like lust, malice, mental sloth, spiritual pride and doubt. When the heart is free from these hindrances, it becomes clear and undisturbed like the peaceful surface of the stream.

Next, aspiration as the mark of faith is the perception of the heart of others which have been set free in a very excellent way just

like a leap upon the fruit. It is the attainment of *Arahatship*. It is the stage of applying himself to the attainment of what has not reached, experienced or realised just like a man who crosses over the stream firmly and aspires the other people to take the risk or hazard in doing so. A man, who knowing exactly his own strength and power should gird himself firmly and with a spring, land himself on the other side. Nāgasena referred to the King, the saying of the Blessed one in *Samyutta Nikāya* :

*"By faith he crosses over the stream,
By earnestness the sea of life;
By steadfastness all grief he stills,
By wisdom is he Purified."*¹⁸

In modern times also we can interpret the concept of faith in a different philosophical manner. To Vivekananda the highest ideal of our life is the attainment of Good. We must dispel doubt from our mind. Doubtful mind can create troubles regarding honesty and chestity of a truthful person also. When the doubt of a person goes upto the extreme, that person is regarded as psychologically imbalanced. But doubt is not always negative. It has got some positive side also. Now-a-days a simple and honest person is deceived everywhere. So honesty does not mean that a person will be cheated.

So in this sense some kind of doubt should be there in all minds. Doubt arises due to the complexity of the world. But inspite of all complex surroundings, a man should be doubtless in respect of good qualities which are inherent quality of the self.

In view of Vivekananda we should be determined in the attainment of truth. Firm determination or belief of the self is the best quality by which we can regain everything. With this dictates he aspires all the nation to regain their lost Independence.

So the concept of faith in the Buddhist philosophy has its much importance in modern time also. In order to lead a smooth and peaceful life we should abolish doubts which arise due to the ignorant attitude of mind.

Doubts also arise due to the ingratification of our sense organs. When these obstacles are removed, we can smoothly perceive the Truth and Faith reveals itself in its original form which is the Master of life. When a man becomes the winner of enemies, he is called *Arhat* in Buddhist philosophy. *Arhat* means who has conquered all the enemies in the battle of life and wins the heart of each and everybody. Enemy does not mean only the external enemy but also the internal enemy which is more important to overcome. According to Hinduism these are called "*Ṣaḍ Ripu*". These six enemies are the great obstacles in the path of attaining '*Mokṣa*' or '*Nirvāṇa*' in Buddha

philosophy. So these enemies should be uprooted first so that we can see clearly the reality. When our original vision is revived, we can develop ourself to the stage of *arhatship* which is nothing but the destruction of evil qualities and attainment of finer qualities. To lead a peaceful and tranquil state of mind is nothing but the stage of "*Sthitaprajña*" in the *Bhagavadgītā* where all kinds of desires have been extinguished and the self reveals itself like a shining Sun.

Next important question was asked by the king regarding the characteristic mark of *perseverance*. The reply was given by Nāgasena that the rendering of support is the mark of perseverance. We should try to cultivate the good qualities and put away evil ones, puts away what is wrong and developes what is right or good, so that we can keep ourselves pure.¹⁹

In modern time, also we can interpret perseverance in a slight different way. Its significance lies in the fact that without this quality of mind we cannot attain anything good in our life. In order to attain the three Ideals of life we must have to proceed through great patient and perseverance. Not only the three Ideals of life but also to secure any kind of good results or to create anything we must have to possess this quality. Almost all the persons who are now become immortal, have achieved success in life due to perseverance. Without this good quality the man will lead a static life. He will be inactive in

every respect. When there is no action, the whole world will lose its dynamic quality. Creation will be destroyed for ever. These are the mortal and mental qualities which together make *Arhatship* in Buddhism. The internal significance of all these good qualities stand in the fact that a man can be perfect and good if he cultivates good qualities with perseverance and he may attain Truth, the Highest Ideal of life or the *Summun Bonum* of life.

Next inter-related question asked by the king regarding the marks of wisdom. In order to gain wisdom a man should be enlightened. When wisdom or knowledge is attained, it will dispel the darkness of ignorance and radiance of light will arise and make the intelligence to shine forth. With the help of intelligence we can clearly see the 'Four Noble Truth'.

WISDOM

Philosophy is, in its essence, the quest of reality. In the attempt to determine what is real, one has to choose, in the first instance, between the percipient self and the things that it perceives. This choice may seem to be purely metaphysical, but sooner or later it becomes a moral choice and one which is decisive of the chooser's destiny. The decision as to whether the self or the outward world is real, rests with the self not with outward world. It is I who have made the choice between myself and the world that surrounds me; the man who can allow himself to say : "I can see the outward world; therefore it is real, but I cannot see myself; therefore I am non-existent"; is obviously the victim of a singular confusion of thought. It is sometimes said that the idealist starts with himself and never gets to the outward world. There are certain dialectical developments of Idealism of which this criticism may perhaps hold good; but as a general criticism of idealism, it is, I think, entirely untrue.²⁰

To prove the reality of what alone enables one to prove reality is, for obvious reason impossible. But the universe would melt into a dream-world if I could not place myself at the centre of it; and my inability to prove, or even begin to prove, that myself is real, matters little so long a Nature herself constrains me - with or without the consent of my consciousness - to postulate its real.

For Indian thought, then, which started with acceptance of the individual self, Brahman - the universal soul or self - was and is alone real. The first thing that we can say about him is that he is unknown and unknowable. In the world which centres in me, it is I, the knower who is unknown and unknowable. It is the same in the cosmos. We must either keep silence when we meditate on Brahman, or speak of him as the Upaniṣads habitually do in the language of paradox and negation. He is afar and yet near. All opposites are harmonised in him, - being and non-being, wisdom and ignorance, right and wrong.

A devoted person with the help of clearest wisdom can perceive the impermanency of all beings and things and the suffering of individuality, and the absence of any soul.

Wisdom is like a lamp which dispels the darkness, brings light and makes everything visible. Ignorance which is the root cause of birth and death will be abolished. With the help of knowledge we can clear up our mind and reveal its inherentness which is basically good. Due to Ignorance we lose our actual vision of observing anything rightly.

Ignorance has been interpreted by most of the Indian schools of thought as the cause of miseries. In Buddha philosophy it has been regarded the root of sufferings. The chain of Rebirth arises

due to this reason. We are surrounded by so many worldly pleasure, happiness and miseries at the same time. If we want to remove our sufferings we must know the Four Noble Truth. With the knowledge of Four Noble Truth, and by following the Eight Fold path we can reach to the goal of permanent happiness. In Advaita Vedānta, Ignorance is nothing but *Avidyā*. Due to *Avidyā* we born in this world and think it a permanent stage. In this respect the greatest Dramatic Shakespeare's opinion may be quoted. Shakespeare regards this world as a stage, where we, the human being, are the best actors. When we return our permanent home our acting will come to an end. So in order to know the permanent home we must acquire knowledge or wisdom. When true knowledge is born in mind then everything will appear to us as impermanent. True vision can provide us with peaceful state of mind which is nothing but *Mokṣa* or *Nirvāṇa*.

Sankarāchārya also regards this world as an illusion or *Māyā*. Everything in this world is *Śūṇya* or void. This voidness or *Śūṇyatā* can be realised only through the true knowledge about Reality.

Wisdom in the version of Nāgasena is nothing but the putting end of the evil disposition, which has its significance in the deepest sense of the term. The person who has intelligence, has also wisdom. Both are the same.²¹ If reasoning ceases, knowledge remains. To attain liberation or to know anything of this world correctly true

knowledge should be acquired. Ignorance is nothing but the curtain which always veils the true nature of the things. When this curtain is removed from our eyesight, then we will be regarded as a perfect human being due to having true vision. We can attain this perfection in this world with the help of knowledge. It is like a lamp, which will illuminate the darkness through its light. Though there are seven kinds of wisdom, according to Nāgasena, yet only the single instrument i.e., instrument of the "Investigation of the Truth" can unveil the dark clouds after appearing before the mind and can illuminate the truths which is the ideal or *Summum bonum* of life.

DEATH

Birth and death are indeed the great antipodes in the career of a living being; and death, 'The Great Migration', as the Tibetans call : is indeed a change that has struck and even confused the *minds* of the high and low from the dawn of time to the present day. This change, along with birth and old age, constitutes, according to Buddhism, one of the prime miseries of life, and we are over and over again reminded in the sacred canon of the sorrowful fact and death is the end of life *Maranāhtaṃ hi Jīvitaṃ*. In technical language of Buddhist philosophy the change involved in Death implies the impermanence of life ... appearance. In other words the tenet of the impermanence of the life - period denotes among living beings.

Death is one of man's eternal problems. Death is the anti-thesis of life. Man is faced with perplexities and despairs in different phases of his existence, but in the face of death, his lack of adjustment is the most profound. Death marks the termination of all adjustments in our lives. In human life there is no other experience so universal, inevitable and intense as the painful and fearful experience of death. Death is a universal fact; because it is the common lot of every living being of the world. Death is inevitable in the sense that it is unavoidable, none can escape from it. In the *Gītā* (II.27) Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that for one who is born, death is certain and certain is birth

for the one that dies. (*Jātasya hi dhrubo mṛtyur dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca*). Man can never be at rest even if his physical needs are met as they do not result in abiding spiritual happiness. Life's transitoriness will continue to disturb his mind; the heart of man cannot be content unless he has a vision of eternity; it is the intense fear of death that creates and stimulates intense longing for eternal life. There is no more powerful impulse than the one to live. The stronger or the more intimate consciousness of the death, the more inward is the life. We are afraid of death when one erroneously identifies oneself with the ups and downs of the limiting adjuncts of body, mind, senses, intellect and the ego which conceal the essential nature of the Self. Desires for worldly objects are the main fetters that bind us to the painful vicious circle of birth and death. Freedom from the fear of death comes from the freedom from all desires. Whereas the body is subject to disintegration and destruction, the Self is not. Once we realise that the Self or true 'I' is the unborn and undying spirit in us, the fear of death will not arise. Man's perfection lies in the direct realisation of this truth.

Self-realisation will bring the conviction that everything is dear not for its own sake but for the sake of the self. In the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad (IV 5.6), Yājñavalkya tells his wife Maitreyī that the wife is not dear because she is a wife, the husband is not dear because of

being a husband, the son is not dear because of being a son; all is dear because of the Self. (*ātmanas tu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati*).²² So the Self is to be seen, heard, and meditated upon; and when the intrinsic nature of the Self is known, not only everything else is known but one also conquers death, for one attains immortality.

In *Dīgha-nikayā* (Sutta 22) Buddha gives detailed instructions of meditation. Regarding the body, for example, one should always meditate or remember that the body is only a combination of the four elements (earth, water, air and fire), that it is filled with flesh, bone, skin, dirt, bile, blood, pus etc. and that it is ultimately eaten by dogs and vultures. From such intense meditation on death detachment from all objects that bind man to the world or indifference (*vairāgya*) towards mundane life will result; and thereby it ultimately helps the aspirant in the attainment of the highest goal of life, namely Liberation (*nirvāṇa*) (The Dhammapada, X. 129).

According to Plato, philosophy is the practice of death as he knows how to die with ease. Deep contemplation on death enables a man in separating the soul from the body or sensuous objects which hide the soul's vision of the Ideas from our view. It helps the aspirant to fly from the world of sense into the calm of philosophic contemplation leading ultimately to the apprehension of reality.

Philosophy becomes useless when it does not solve the vital problems of death and suffering. An interest (*jijñāsā*) in philosophical enquiry commences the very moment when an attempt is made to know what death is. It is the query of death that initiates a man for the search of Truth. It is the starting-point of all philosophy and *sādhana*. Philosophy begins with deep contemplation of death and ends in the solution of the question of death - that is, spiritual realisation. Any kind of *sādhana* is practised only for attaining immortality i.e. freedom from death. Whatever may be the position of philosophy or of the metaphysics, so long as there is such a thing as death in the world; there shall be faith in some higher Power. The secret of death can be understood only when one has the realisation of or knowledge of the Self. The subtle body persists throughout its different incarnations till its final dissolution is brought about by knowledge. One must be first released from the bondage of the body to be able to realise the Self more closely. The annihilation of the ego which is achieved by renouncing everything that constitutes the ego. When the ego is annihilated, there is no more transmigration or fear of death.

Another important question was asked by the king, "Why all men tremble at punishment, all are afraid of death but not *Arhat* who has passed beyond all fear."²³ The problem has been solved by

Nāgasena in a simple manner by saying that *Arhat* has removed all causes of fear and the ordinary people are still infatuated with the delusion of self, and cast down by pleasures and pains. To the *Arhat*, all kinds of future existence have been destroyed, good and evil have been ceased, ignorance has been demolished, all sin has been burnt and all worldly conditions have been overcome. Death is a condition which is afraid of those who have not seen the truth. All beings who are not free from sin are afraid of death. Death is a thing disliked by all beings. But this is true for all. Death is ultimate truth. It is common to all and must be accepted by all.

In spite of knowing the nature of truth we are afraid of Death. But a person who is beyond all the state of sorrows and sufferings, pleasure and pain, good and evil and has realised the Four Noble Truth is beyond the fear of Death.

In the language of Dr. Radhakrishnan, Death is nothing but the change of one body to another but the Self remains the same just like torn pieces of cloths are changed and a new one is taken at the cost of the old. So we should not think about the inevitable thing, which we must have to face. *Yama*, the Master of Death, will visit each and everybody. That's why Death is called the Great Master, who teaches the best thing in this world.

If we want to remove ourselves from this chain of Birth and Death and to attain *Nirvāṇa*, the process of Rebirth will be come to an end.

Besides the above important questions, there are so many questions put forward by the King Milinda and the problem was solved by the Monk Nāgasena in a very intelligent manner with appropriate simile and having a philosophical importance. However, in various ways Nāgasena closes the discussion of the Beginning of Time, Perception, Consciousness, Memory, Intelligence and Wisdom, Body etc. The concept of change, emergence of the new and endless progress was introduced in Indian philosophical thinking. The mentality of "change according to times" which is now a part of Indian culture is the contribution of this discussion.

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Chapter - VII

SOME PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS AND THEIR PROBABLE SOLUTIONS

It may be argued that what exactly the import of *Dharma* is in Buddhism. It has been admitted by Nāgasena that the Buddhist concept of *Dharma* is 'the best in the world' (M.P. IV/3/1). It may be questioned in what sense the concept of *Dharma* is unique or best in character from other philosophical systems.

In reply, it may be said that the uniqueness in the Buddhist concept of *Dharma* lies on the importance of moral codes. There are no other religions that are based on only morality. Morality is more or less common in all religions, but the source of morality is shown as the realisation of God or Brahman or Absolute Reality. Without having an idea of the Transcendental Being one cannot be said to be moral. Hence, these religions are God-centric or ritual-oriented. In Buddhism no such Transcendental Being is accepted as a Source of morality. They believe that one may obtain morality if they have got right vision (*Samyagdr̥ṣṭi*) through which the

knowledge of the reality as such (*tathatā*) is attained. The realisation of the reality of the whole world gives rise to moral strength in one's mind. The Buddhists should know the reality of the world as momentary, void etc. The main essence of the theory of momentariness (*kṣaṇabhāṅgavāda*), theory of voidness (*śūnyavāda*). Four Noble Truth etc. lies on the fact that these theories provide an individual with the idea of the essencelessness (*śūnyatā*) or transitoriness (*anityatā*) etc. of all objects. As this world is essenceless and momentary, it cannot give us happiness and hence, full of suffering. This suffering should be overcome through the eradication of the causes of the same. This is the true nature of the whole world. If someone keeps it in his mind and realises this in his heart, he will immediately enjoy the taste of broadness (*brahmavihāra*). Under this circumstance an individual will have moral consciousness. In fact, the enjoyment of the taste of broadness is nothing but the rejoice in the realm of morality. Buddhism survives still today in the world in its own flavour and essence as it does not stand on ritualism. The advent of Buddhism in the Indian soil as a challenge against the Brahmanical religion where ritual has taken a major role. In this sense Buddhism is unique so far as the concept of *Dharma* is concerned. The conflict among men, different races and different religions is mainly centred around the ritualistic part and hence these so called religions are against the human welfare in general. For this reason

the so called religious persons are not hesitant in committing immoral activities. A religious person, truly speaking, cannot be immoral. That morality is the essence of religion has been propounded forcefully in Buddhism only. To them alone activities, if performed for the welfare of most of the people and for the happiness of the most of the people (*bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya*), are meaningful and hence they are called religious activities. The Buddhists have taken shelter in Buddha, *Dharma* and *Sangha* as found in the prayers - *Buddhaṃ Śaraṇaṃ Gacchāmi*, *Dharmaṃ Śaraṇaṃ Gacchāmi* and *Sanghaṃ Śaraṇaṃ Gacchāmi*. To take shelter in *Dharma* makes them united. It is *Dharma* alone through which one is associated with others. This association is called *Samgha*. The importance of such association has been accepted only in Buddhism. If each and every man is not associated, he cannot be aware of other's happiness and misery and cannot mutually exchange service with others. Morality is the thread through which all can be bound. Association (*Sangha*) is the direct result of morality (*dharma*). As per the famous principle - "United we stand and divided we fall", union or association has got a positive effect in the society. The extreme sense of morality can bring all human beings under one banner. Association for a good cause is always desirable in the society. The religion which makes an individual moral, social and integral is undoubtedly 'best of the world' as claimed by Nāgasena.

It may be argued that why the metaphor of chariot is taken into account for advocating the 'No soul Theory'. What is the significance of this simile ? In reply, it may be said that Nagasena has taken the simile of Chariot to prove that though the total object is called chariot, it is difficult to locate where this entity exists. Through the method of negation it is told that wheel is not chariot, upper portion is not chariot, horses are not chariot and so on. In the same way, our hands, legs, eyes etc. are not self. If it is no, where does the entity called soul exist ? As there is so, exact locus of self, it is irrational to accept its existence.

In this connection another problem can be raised. Why is the simile of chariot taken into account but not others ? The simile of chariot has intentionally been taken into account, because Buddhists were completely aware of this simile of chariot adopted by Saṃkara, Vaiśeṣika and *Kathopaniṣad*. Saṃkaracharya has taken recourse to the metaphor of chariot in the context of refuting the Saṃkhya-view on the origination of the whole world from unconscious *Prakṛti* (*Pradhānakāraṇatāvāda*) in the *Tarkapāda* chapter of the *Bhāṣya*. He said that just an unconscious wooden chariot cannot move forward without the association of the conscious like horse etc, our unconscious body which is nothing but *Prakṛti* cannot have volition unless some conscious principle (i.e. self) is accepted behind it. Hence, unconscious *Prakṛti* cannot be the cause of the origination

of the world. To Samkara conscious being is the cause of the unconscious objects like chariot etc. (*Cetana eva dehaḥ acetanānām rathādīnām pravartaka dr̥ṣṭaḥ ... Tathāpi cetanasamyuktasya rathādeḥ acetanasya pravṛttiḥ dr̥ṣṭā* - Samkarabhāṣya on Sūtra No. 2/2/2).

In the *Kathopaniṣad* also the metaphor of chariot has been taken into account. In this text our human body is compared to chariot and self inside the body is called Charioter (*rathī*). Our body in the form of chariot can move forward if it is associated with the soul. It has been stated in the *Kathopaniṣad* that one should know the body of an individual as a chariot, the self as a Charioter, intellect as the driver of the Charioter and mind is the controller (*Ātmānam rathinam viddhi śarīram rathameva tu/Buddhim tu Sārathim viddhimanam pragrahameva ca* ", *Kathopaniṣad* - 1/3/3). The *Vaiśeṣikas* have also accepted self as the cause of the movement of the unconscious chariot (*Praśastapādabhāṣya* - *Ātmaprakaraṇa*).

From the above discussion it can be proved that the simile of chariot is not a novel thing in Indian Literature. Nāgasena was completely aware of the story that chariot is often taken as a metaphor to prove that body without self is unconscious and self inside body is the Charioter. In order to show the falsity of the argument Nāgasena has taken the metaphor of chariot. Though chariot is taken as a

metaphor, Nāgasena is desirous to say that chariotness does not exist in any part of the chariot. If it is asked, where does chariot exist? The different parts of the same is not chariot. If it is so, there is no such entity like chariot. In the same way, they have proved that there is no corresponding entity of the word 'Self'. As almost all the Indians are familiar or acquainted with this metaphor, Nāgasena has taken the same to prove the unreality of soul.

It has already been shown that the Buddhist concept of *Dharma* is related to the concept of *Sangha*. In this connection another problem could be raised. Now-a-days individuals belonging a particular *Dharma* make their own association (*Sangha*). In this way there might originate different groups of people and different association (*Sangha*) lending to the disintegrity among men again.

In reply, the Buddhists might say that the Buddhists have preached a religion which may be universally accepted by the people of the whole world and hence it may be called universal religion. '*Dharma*' in Buddhism means right understanding of the reality. Delusion has obstructed us from seeing the true face of people and the reality behind matters and objects. This is resulted in seeing at life and universe in a distorted way. When this nescience is unveiled and our minds are pure, we can attain wisdom within us. With this wisdom one can have a vision with the help of which one can see

people and matters completely and purely. When our hearts are pure, we can see the past, present and future. On seeing the whole clearly we can make our understanding 'right' (*Samyak*). The Buddha's mind is pure without any pollution and sees everything clearly and entirely. Following the noble path of Buddha we can attain purity of mind, to see life and the universe most clearly and become just like the Buddhas. *Dharma* in this sense is related to *Sangha* which should be accepted by the people of the whole world. '*Sangha*' means purity and harmony. Now-a-days everything is polluted. Pollution of mind, views and body persists everywhere. Even the earth and atmosphere are polluted and vitiated. We should be free from all these pollutions and rely on the purity of mind. In our family, country and State we find disintegrity among men, which is the cause of much suffering. In Buddhism we find a solution so that we can live happily and peacefully. If the social members can follow the path of *Dharma* prescribed in Buddhism, they can lead a harmonious relationship among themselves. In this way, all human beings may be brought under one religious banner i.e. Buddhism leading to the formation of *Mahāsaṅgha*. Hence, there is or will be no different groups of Buddhism as taken in true spirit.

Nāgasena has beautifully pointed out the contradiction between two prescriptions - "Doing no injury to any one and being full of love and kindness and 'punish him who deserves punishment',

favour him who is worthy of it." (M.P. IV/3/35). If someone is advised to be loving and non injurious to others, he may not be advised for giving punishment to the deserved persons and for favouring someone worthy of it. On account of this there is a contradiction.

The above-mentioned contradiction may be removed by way of giving a fresh interpretation of the prescriptions. The first prescription is accepted by all the Buddhas. That is, generally all the people should be loving and non-injurious to others. In a special case the second prescription is given. That is, under special circumstances the wicked heart is to be subdued and good heart is to be cultivated. Herein lies the law of *Karma*. If someone is wicked, he should get punishment. But if there is someone having good-heart, he should be given a favour. Actually the attitude towards a man depends on his heart or actions (*Karma*). If a man having wicked heart is transformed to a man having noble heart, he will be guided by the first prescription and becomes non-injurious and loving to others.

It may further be argued that how wicked heart be transformed into a good one. I believe that in Buddhism there are some means through which one, however wicked may be, may get the taste of freedom after the removal of nescience from him. What are the accepted means of this? Actually an individual is essentially free

from evil qualities. Due to his ignorance some complications arise in his mind. These complications are the products of nescience. If the cause i.e. nescience is removed, the wickedness existing in one will automatically be removed. The standard prescribed methods are necessary for the removal of internal evil qualities. This nescience is removed through the right understanding alone, which follows from the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths i.e. understanding of the things as they really are. One should know wholesome *Kamma* and unwholesome *Kamma* which may be described as merits and demerits. By understanding *Kamma* an individual will learn to avoid evil and do good, thereby creating favourable outcomes in his life. A man with complete Right understanding is one who is free from ignorance and by the nature of the enlightenment removes the roots of evil from his mind and becomes liberated.

There are three aspects of Right thought. First, a man should maintain an attitude of detachment from worldly pleasures rather than being selfishly attached to them. Secondly, he should maintain loving kindness, goodwill and benevolence in his mind, which is opposed to cruelty, ill-will and aversion. Thirdly, he should act with thoughts of harmlessness or compassion to all beings. This Right understanding will lead us to good, moral conduct. There are three factors under moral conduct - Right Speech, Right action and Right Livelihood included in the list Eight-fold path. Right speech involves

respect for truth and respect for the welfare of others, which entails to avoid lying, harsh speech etc. Right action entails respect for life, property and personal relationship. Right Livelihood is a factor under moral conduct referring to how we earn our living in society. That is, we should earn a living without violating these principles of moral conduct.

Right effort, Right mindfulness and Right Concentration, when practised, enable a person to strengthen and gain control over the mind, thereby ensuring that his actions will continue to be good and that his mind is being prepared to realise the Truth, which will open the door to Freedom - to Enlightenment.

If an individual can go through these prescribed paths, he will be transformed to good moral man being free from the state of wickedness.

As love and kindness to all beings as the primary objective of Buddhism, there is no scope for discrimination among men.

If it is so then why is it said that a deserving person should be punished ? In reply, it can be said again that the prescription of punishment to the deserving persons is desirable in Buddhism for two reasons. First, Buddha has to show his kindness and loving attitude to the evil-doers by way of giving them punishment. If

punishment is not given to them, they will never long for Right understanding and thereby for having good moral life. Buddha is in favour of their punishment *not* because he does not love them but because he has loving attitude to them. Punishment can make them understand that they are in wrong track and there are ways of leaving this wrong track and going to a right one. Out of sympathy and compassion towards the evil-doers Nāgasena, following *Mahākaruṇika* Buddha, has prescribed punishment for them and hence the Buddhists are not inconsistent in this respect. Moreover, punishment should be given to the observing persons to honour the status of truth, which is fundamental in Buddhism. To act according to the truth is the main objective in Buddhism.

A logical problem could be raised against the Buddhist so far as their epistemology is concerned. How can the causal efficacy (*arthakriyākāritva*) of an object be proved if it is taken as momentary (*kṣanika*). The apparent contraction within the system of Buddhism is a major problem of understanding which is removed by Nāgasena in the *Milindaprasāna*. Let us discuss the problem and suggest a line of solution from the *Milindaprasāna*.

The Buddhists believe that one entity of cognition remains only for a moment and momentary duration is one of the marks of *Svalakṣaṇa* (unique character). What may be looked upon as quite

perplexing is the fact that the Buddhists subscribe to the view of momentariness of the reals and at the same time hold on to the theory of extrinsic validity of truth (*parataḥprāmāṇyavāda*); the validity of an individual manifestation of awareness is *not Svataḥ* or intrinsic, but extrinsic (*parataḥ*). The awareness of water is taken to be veridical if it leads us to the successful inclination (*Saphalapravṛttijanakatva*) i.e. appeasement of thirst. Otherwise it would be taken as illusory. Now the problem is that the thesis of *Svalakṣaṇa* is somewhat non-congruent with the thesis of successful inclination and unsuccessful inclination. Since the Buddhists believe that an entity of perceptual cognition persists for a moment, they might find it a little odd to establish the case that *Svalakṣaṇa* could be argued for on the ground of causal efficacy. This may be the position because the concept of causal efficacy is a relational notion and thus it should span more than one moment. Persistence of an object for more than one moment is not accepted by them since it goes against one of their metaphysical assumption - *Sarvaṃkṣaṇikam*. Again one might say that the Buddhists describe *Sat* in terms of its causal efficacy and this would lead one to somewhat related difficulty. The persistence of a perceptual entity cannot be argued for as such since the entity has got causal efficacy or not is not revealed to perception. The truth of an inferred object is determined through causal efficacy as it persists for more than one moment. We are not sure how would the Buddhist

position be justified. We have not come across any argument which can substantiate both the theory of *Svalakṣaṇa* existing for a moment and causal efficacy.

The solution of such problem is found in the *Milindapaśna* in which Nāgasena says - "As regards that which has been accomplished by insight - (the perception, that is) of the impermanence of all beings, of the suffering inherent in individuality and of the non-existence of any soul (*"Yat Khalu punarmahārāja tayā prajñayā kṛtamanityamiti vā duḥkhamiti vānātmeti vā tato na sammuhyedīti"* -2/2/3). To Nāgasena any perceptual cognition presupposes an individual's insight (*prajñā*), which arises from the true understanding of the impermanence of this world, of the first Noble Truth (i.e. suffering) and of the non-existence of the Soul. The right understanding of these gives rise to Right Vision (*Samyagdr̥ṣṭi*) which is otherwise called *Prajñā* or insight. This insight is the result of *Samādhi* on the real nature of the objects. If someone has got such insight, he can visualise the essence of an object i.e. the *Svalakṣaṇa* - character of an object which is momentary - and the causal efficacy of the same within a single moment. The causal efficacy and the *Svalakṣaṇa* character of an entity remaining for a moment may flash to us within a moment due to having insight or *Prajñā*. This is not revealed through our ordinary eye or intellect, but it is revealed through the light of our *Prajñā*.

Hence perceptual cognition cannot be attained by an individual if he is not associated with the said insight. Perception to the Buddhists in general is an intuitive perception or rather insightful perception, but not an ordinary one. If it is taken for granted, the above-mentioned dilemma can easily be removed. Actually this is the only solution from the Buddhist standpoint to solve this. It has been beautifully pointed out by Nāgasena.

The doctrine of *anattā* - nonself, non-egoity would seem to call into question of the primary concerns of Western ethics. The question arises, who is morally responsible ? Who is it that acts ? It appears that Buddhism "admits action without agent, transmigration without a transmigrating soul."

The same charges are levelled against the Buddhist sage Nāgasena by king Milinda who represents the orthodox Hindu system of the Upaniṣads. The king asked Nāgasena if there is no ego to be found, who is it then keep the percepts ? Who is that realises the paths, the fruits, and *Nirvāṇa*. A murderer cannot be regarded as murderer, not a priest cannot be regarded as teachers preceptor or ordination.

Several points are notable here. First, Milinda observes that the doctrine of momentariness taken literally would make it impossible to blame a murderer for his heinous crime. The person

who committed the murder would not be the same person standing before the judge. The murderer exists, as it were only in the moment of murdering. The problem is exacerbated by the notion of *anattā*. Not only is the murderer not the same agent who can be held responsible for the deed, there is no agent. If there is no agent who commits the murder ? It would seem that there is a murder, without murderer, but how could this be ? Thirdly, and significantly, the possibility of there being permanent moral laws or principles is questioned. If everything is momentary, influx, changing, then how can moral precept, be considered as permanent ? In the light of these objections, one must wonder about the characterization of the Buddha as a distinguished teacher. *Anattā* seems to deny selves, but if there are no selves, how can there be moral agents ? Momentariness seems to disallow identity, but without identity, how can there be an ethical responsibility ?

The responses of the Buddhist against such condemnation : *Anattā*, as a philosophy of process rather than substance. To understand the doctrines of *anattā*, conditioned origination and momentariness, Buddhism must be viewed as a reaction to the tradition of the *Upaniṣads* which identified the self with the ultimate Reality, *Ātman* with Brahman, *tat tvam asi* - thou art that. Kenneth Inada depicts the Upaniṣadic tradition as "aiming at an ontological absolute of being". Brahman is the ultimate, the absolute, the locus

of all value and the ground of Truth, while the self is illusory contingent, transient and empirical. Brahman is permanent, unchanging eternal.

The doctrine of *Anattā* in its repudation of the self-ascetic being, entails the rejection of the metaphysics of the *Upaniṣads*. It was not a simple overturn of the *Ātman* concept into multity but a unique overhaul of the understanding of human experience.

Though Hume was led to the same kinds of reflections and doubts about the existence of a substantial self as the Buddha, the consequences were quite different. Hume adopted the Lockean theory of experience in which the subject was separated from the object. The subject was a passive observer, a disinterested receptacle, a blank slate upon which the external objects made their impressions. Each impression arose from discrete bits of sense datum which comprised the external world. According to D.C. Mathur, mind was nothing but a series of disjointed impressions and ideas, with no real relations between them. There is no permanently subsisting self. Hume gives expression to feelings of melancholy despair and doubt. These feelings are in sharp contrast to the feelings of release, liberation, and Nirvānic peace experienced by the historical Buddha at his discovery of the insight into the nature of things in general and the self in particular. Hume falls prey to this melancholy,

whereas the Buddha does not, because he feels, firstly, that the self has been cut off from the world, from the Real, from Truth, from the ground of Value.

The self is merely a passive copier of sense particulars. When the self as well as reality is looked upon as momentary, as a flux of discrete particulars lacking a causal connection - that is, when the self is understood to be impermanent and lacking in identity - the moral responsibility itself seems impossible. After all, the Buddha does maintain the theory of *Karma* in which one 'sows that which he reaps', but to fully appreciate the continuity of the self and the Buddhist conception of ethical responsibility as entailed by *Karma* one must understand the doctrine of conditioned origination.

Hume, in contrast to the Buddha, was troubled by his insights into the phenomenal nature of the self. He felt that if there were no permanent identity to the self, then moral responsibility would be effaced.

Buddha did not share Hume's atomistic metaphysics. He now experiences not in terms of static being, but as a process of becoming in which one moment is conditioned by the preceding one and in twin conditions the next. Experience is a flow-continuity in implicit. It is not something added by the mind, experience is rational. The Buddha's *Theory of Karma*, predicted on the doctrine of conditioned

origination which entails continuity between events in the process of becoming, ensures that not only will one be held responsible for his deeds but that he will receive his just deserts - nothing more, nothing else.

Importance of early Buddhism lies in the fact that women and men are equal in presence of the Law of self-development.

Early Buddhism removes all obstacle in the path of universal love. It has together made a chariot, and there is no chariot apart from them, similarly the different components of an individual make an individual and that the individual does not exist apart from them.

The most appealing statement of the doctrine of *Anātmavāda* can be found than the above enunciation of the Elder Nāgasena in the whole of Buddhist literature with the exception of Buddhist literature. Thus the *Milindapañha* is a comprehensive exposition not only of Buddhist metaphysics, but also of Buddhist ethics and psychology. As such, it is indispensable for the student of Buddhism. Apart from its importance as a Buddhist text, the *Milindapañha* is also to be valued as a historical document and a literary achievement of great eminence. The *Milindapañha* provides an unsurpassed testimony to Indian prose literature of the first century. In short, the *Milindapañha* occupies a unique position in Indian letter whether looked at from the point of view of metaphysics, or literature or history

or knowledge of geography. It is an indisputable fact that in post canonical literature, no other treatise on Buddhism equals the *Milinda-pañha*.

The dialogues between king Milinda and Nāgasena delivered depending upon the facts in reality, the influence of the eloquent speech in which importance of dignity and the charm of skill in the whole fiction is maintained here.

The 'Questions of Milinda' is undoubtedly the master-piece of Indian prose. It would be, no doubt, difficult to prove that anything from India was better than the corresponding thing produced by our noble selves, or by those whose *Karma* we inherit. But in ancient Indian literature there are only two or three works which can at all compare with it. The palm will probably be eventually given to the "Questions of Milinda" as a work of art.

The historical evolution of thought and of the rise of literature in India will more and more look upon the question as a whole and estimate its right value.

The conversation between the king Milinda and Nāgasena is important from various point of view. Many controversial topics have been discussed and solved. *Milindapañha* is important for the discussion of Buddha and nature and characteristics of Buddhism.

The discussion about the non-existence of Soul, Law of Karma, nature of *Nirvāṇa* and other significant matter increases its glory.

Everywhere the grand style of discussion is very lucid, appealing to the heart and intelligible to all. The abstract platitudinous moralising has been presented in such a manner with illustrations, tales and metaphors etc. that everybody can comprehend its significance easily. The mode of presentation of Buddha's genius and the eight-fold path propagated by him, alongwith the ways and means of attainment of '*Nirvāṇa*' - the ultimate destination is excellent. Such a solemn and delightful subject-matter can be discussed in such a pleasing fashion. Western scholars have adored the unique style of narration of the book '*Milindapanha*' with one voice as it exhibits a rare literary merit and it is characterised by a wonderful clearness and a colloquial ease to discuss an occult topic.

Winternitz opines regarding the "*Milindapañha*" - "well able to bear comparison with the Dialogues of Plato". "It is indeed a masterpiece of ancient Indian prose". Rhys Davids opines regarding the "*Milindapañha*" - "I venture to think that the 'Questions of Milinda' is undoubtedly the masterpiece of Indian prose, and indeed is the best book of its class from a literary point of view, that has been produced in any country". It contains the views of the Buddha set out, as they appeared to his very earliest disciples, in a series of

185 conversational discourses, which will some day come to held a place in the history of human thought, akin to that held by the '*Dialogues of Plato*'. The western philosophers and scholars are rather astonished in observing the very intimate similarity between the "Dialogues of Plato and the Questions of Milinda". Babor and others are not lagging behind in imagining the influence of Plato on "Milindapañha". Winternitz has rightly observed the fact - "This is however unlikely if only because the '*Milindapañha*' dialogue has so many models in the dialogues of the *Upaniṣads*, in the ascetic poetry of the *Mahabhārata* and in the *Tripitaka*, that there is no reason for supposing a Greek prototype. Neither does the '*Milindapañha*' show any trace whatsoever of a knowledge of the Greek language or of the Greek world of thought".

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