

to familiarise a man with the life of a hermit, i.e., severing family ties, but without deserting his home. The object of the fourth stage was to enable a man to go in search of God and seek union with him.



17. The benefits of these stages were open only to the male members of the three superior classes. The first stage was not open to the Shudras and women. Equally the last stage was not open to the Shudras and women.

18. Such was the divine pattern of an ideal society called Chaturvarna. The Brahmins had idealised the rule and had realised the ideal without leaving any cracks or loopholes.

19. The fourth thesis of Brahmanic Philosophy was the doctrine of Karma. It was part of the thesis of transmigration of the soul. The Karma of the Brahmins was an answer to the question: "Where did the soul land on transmigration with his new body on new birth?" The answer of the Brahmanic Philosophy was that it depended on a man's deeds in his past life. In other words, it depended on his Karma.

20. The Buddha was strongly opposed to the first tenet of Brahmanism. He repudiated their thesis that the Vedas are infallible and their authority could never be questioned.

21. In his opinion, nothing was infallible and nothing could be final. Everything must be open to re-examination and reconsideration whenever grounds for re-examination and reconsideration arise.

22. Man must know the truth and real truth. To him freedom of thought was the most essential thing. And he was sure that freedom of thought was the only way to the discovery of truth.

23. Infallibility of the Vedas meant complete denial of freedom of thought.

24. For these reasons this thesis of the Brahmanic Philosophy was most obnoxious to him.

25. He was equally an opponent of the second thesis of the Brahmanic Philosophy. The Buddha did admit that there was any virtue in a sacrifice. But



he made a distinction between true sacrifice and false sacrifice.

26. Sacrifice in the sense of self-denial for the good of others he called true sacrifice. Sacrifice in the sense of killing an animal as an offering to God for personal benefit he regarded as a false sacrifice.

27. The Brahmanic sacrifices were mostly sacrifices of animals to please their gods. He condemned them as false sacrifices. He would not allow them even though they be performed with the object of getting salvation for the soul.

28. The opponents of sacrifices used to ridicule the Brahmins by saying : "If one can go to heaven by sacrificing an animal why should not one sacrifice one's own father. That would be a quicker way of going to heaven."

29. The Buddha wholeheartedly agreed with this view.

30. The theory of *Chaturvarna* was as repugnant to the Buddha as the theory of sacrifices was repulsive to him.

31. The organization of society set up by Brahmanism in the name of *Chaturvarna* did not appear to him a natural organization. Its class composition was compulsory and arbitrary. It was a society made to order. He preferred an open society and a free society.

32. The *Chaturvarna* of the Brahmins was a fixed order never to be changed. Once a Brahmin always a Brahmin. Once a Kshatriya always a Kshatriya, once a Vaishya always a Vaishya and once a Shudra always a Shudra. Society was based on status conferred upon an individual by the accident of his birth. Vice, however heinous, was no ground for degrading a man from his status, and virtue, however great, had no value to raise him above it. There was no room for worth nor for growth.

33. Inequality exists in every society. But it was different with Brahmanism. The inequality preached by Brahmins was its official doctrine. It was not a mere growth. Brahmanism did not believe in equality. In fact, it was opposed to equality.

34. Brahmanism was not content with inequality. The soul of Brahmanism lay in graded inequality.

35. Far from producing harmony, graded inequality, the Buddha thought, might produce in society an ascending scale of hatred and a descending scale of contempt, and might be a source of perpetual conflict.

36. The occupations of the four classes were also fixed. There was no freedom of choice. Besides, they were fixed not in accordance with skill but in accordance with birth.

37. On a careful review of the rules of *Chaturvarna* the Buddha had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that the philosophic foundations on which the social order was reared by Brahmanism were wrong if not selfish.

38. It was clear to him that it did not serve the interests of all, much less did it advance the welfare of all. Indeed, it was deliberately designed to make many serve the interests of the few. In it man was made to serve a class of self-styled supermen.

39. It was calculated to suppress and exploit the weak and to keep them in a state of complete subjugation.

40. The law of Karma as formulated by the Brahmins, thought the Buddha, was calculated to sap the spirit of revolt completely. No one was responsible for the suffering of man except he himself. Revolt could not alter the state of suffering; for suffering was fixed by his past Karma as his lot in this life.

41. The Shudras and women—the two classes whose humanity was most mutilated by Brahmanism, had no power to rebel against the system.

42. They were denied the right to knowledge with the result that by reason of their enforced ignorance they could not realize what had made their condition so degraded. They could not know that Brahmanism had robbed them completely of the significance of their life. Instead of rebelling against Brahmanism they had become the devotees and upholders of Brahmanism.

43. The right to bear arms is the ultimate means of achieving freedom which a human being has.





But the Shudras were denied the right to bear arms.

44. Under Brahmanism the Shudras were left as helpless victims of a conspiracy of selfish Brahmanism, powerful and deadly Kshatriyas and wealthy Vaishyas.

45. Could it be amended ? Knowing that it was a divinely ordained social order, he knew that it could not be. It could only be ended.

46. For these reasons the Buddha rejected Brahmanism as being opposed to the true way of life.

§ 4. *The Upanishads and Their Teachings*

1. The Upanishads constituted another piece of literature. It is not part of the Vedas. It is uncanonical.

2. All the same they did form a part of religious literature.

3. The number of the Upanishads is quite large. Some important, some quite unimportant.

4. Some of them were ranged against the Vedic theologians, the Brahmin priests.

5. All of them agreed in viewing Vedic study as a study of nescience or ignorance (avidya).

6. They were all agreed in their estimate of the four Vedas and the Vedic science as the lower knowledge.

7. They were all agreed in questioning the divine origin of the Vedas.

8. They were all agreed in denying the efficacy attributed to sacrifices, to the funeral oblations, and the gifts to the priests which are the fundamentals of the Brahmanic philosophy.

9. This, however, was not the main topic with which the Upanishads were concerned. Their discussions centred round Brahman and Atman.

10. Brahman was the all-pervading principle which binds the universe and that salvation lay in the Atman realizing that it is Brahman.

11. The main thesis of the Upanishads was that

Brahmana was a reality and that *Atmana* was the same as *Brahmana*. The *Atmana* did not realize that it was *Brahman* because of the *Upadhis* in which it was entangled.



12. The question was: Is *Brahmana* a reality? The acceptance of the Upanishadic thesis depended upon the answer to this question.

13. The Buddha could find no proof in support of the thesis that *Brahmana* was a reality. He, therefore, rejected the thesis of the Upanishads.

14. It is not that questions on this issue were not put to the authors of the Upanishads. They were.

15. Such questions were put to no less a person than Yajnavalkya, a great *seer* who plays so important a part in the *Brahadarnyaka Upanishad*.

16. He was asked: "What is *Brahmana*? What is *Atmana*?" All that Yajnavalkya could say: "Neti ! Neti! I know not ! I know not!"

17. "How can anything be a reality about which no one knows anything," asked the Buddha. He had, therefore, no difficulty in rejecting the Upanishadic thesis as being based on pure imagination.

PART VI

The Buddha and His Contemporaries

1. His Contemporaries.
2. His attitude to His Contemporaries.

§ 1. *His Contemporaries*

1. At the time when Gautama took Parivraja there was a great intellectual ferment in the country. Besides the Brahmanic Philosophy there were as many as sixty-two different schools of philosophy, all opposed to the Brahmanic Philosophy. Of them at least six were worthy of attention.

2. Of these schools of philosophy there was one headed by *Purana Kassappa*. His doctrine was known as *Akriyavada*. He maintained that the soul was not affected in any way by *Karma*. One may do, or one may get things done. One may do injury or one may get someone to kill. One may commit theft or dacoity or one may get theft or dacoity committed, one may commit adultery or one may get adultery committed, one may tell a lie or one may get a lie told. Nothing affects the soul. An act, however licentious, does not affect the soul with sin. An act, however good, does not bring merit to the soul. Nothing has any *Kriya* (result) on the soul. When a person dies, all the elements of which he is made join in their originals. Nothing survives after death, neither body nor soul.

3. Another school of thought was known as *Niyativada*. Its chief propounder was *Makhali Ghosal*. His doctrine was a kind of fatalism or determinism. He taught that no one can do anything or undo anything. Things happen. No one can make them happen. No one can remove unhappiness, increase it or diminish it. One must undergo one's share of the experiences of the world.

4. The third school was known as *Ucchedavada*. Its chief propounder was *Ajit Kesakambal*. His doctrine was a kind of *Annihilism*. He taught that there was nothing in *Yajna*, *Haom* ; there is no such thing as the fruits or effects of deeds to be enjoyed or suffered by the soul. There is neither heaven nor hell. Man is made up of certain elements of unhappiness in the world. The soul cannot escape it. Whatever sorrow



or unhappiness there was in the world the soul cannot escape. This sorrow or unhappiness will come to an end automatically. The soul must undergo rebirth during eighty-four lakhs of cycles of Mahakalpas. Then only the sorrow and unhappiness of the soul will end, not before nor by any other means.

5. The fourth school was known as *Annyonyavad*. The head of this school was *Pakudha Kacchiana*. He preached that there are seven elements which go to make up a being, namely, Prathvi, Apa, Tej, Vayu, Sukha, Dukha and the Soul. Each is independent of the other ; one does not affect the other. They are self-existent and they are eternal. Nothing can destroy them. If any one chops off the head of man he does not kill him. All that happens is that the weapon has entered the seven elements.

6. *Sanjaya Belaputta* had his own school of philosophy. It was known as *Vikshepavada*, a kind of scepticism. He argued, "if anyone asked me is there heaven, if I feel there was I would say yes. But if I feel there was no heaven I would say no. If I am asked whether human beings are created, whether man has to suffer the fruits of his action whether good or bad, and whether the soul lives after death, I say nay to all these because I don't think they exist. This is how Sanjaya Belaputta summed up his doctrine.

7. The sixth school of philosophy was known as *Chaturyamsamvarvad*. The head of this school who was alive at the time when Gautama was searching for light was *Mahavir*, who was also called *Nigantha Nathaputta*. Mahavir taught that the soul had to undergo rebirth because of the bad karmas done in the past life and in the present life. One must therefore get over the bad, he suggested, by *tapascharya*. For preventing the doing of bad karmas in this life Mahavira prescribed the observance of chaturyama dharma, i.e., observance of four rules : (1) not to kill ; (2) not to steal ; (3) not to tell a lie ; and (4) not to have property and to observe celibacy.

§ 2. *His Attitude to His Contemporaries*

1. The Buddha did not accept the teachings of the new philosophers.

2. His rejection of their teaching was not without reasons. He said that :

3. If the doctrines of *Purana Kassappa* or *Pakudha Kaccyana* were true then one can do any evil or any harm ; one may even go to the length of killing another without involving any social responsibility or social consequences.

4. If the doctrine of *Makhali Ghosal* is true then man becomes the slave of destiny. He cannot liberate himself.

5. If the doctrine of *Ajit Kesakambal* is true then all that man has to do is to eat, drink and make merry.

6. If the doctrine of *Sanjaya Belaputta* was true then man must float about and live without a positive philosophy of life.

7. If the doctrine of *Nigantha Nathaputta* was true then man's life must be subjected to Asceticism and Tapascharya, a complete subjugation and uprooting of man's instincts and desires.

8. Thus, none of the paths of life suggested by the philosophers appealed to the Buddha. He thought they were the thoughts of men who had become hopeless, helpless and reckless. He therefore decided to seek light elsewhere.



I

PART VII

Comparison and Contrast

1. What HE Rejected.
2. What HE Modified,
2. What HE Accepted.

§ 1. What *HE* Rejected

1. This survey of the philosophical and religious thought shows that at the time when the Buddha formulated his Sasana, certain ideas had a firm grip on the mind of the people. They were :



- (i) Belief in the infallibility of the Vedas ;
- (ii) Belief in Moksha or Salvation of the soul, i.e., its ceasing to be born again ;
- (iii) Belief in the efficacy of rites, ceremonies and sacrifices as means of obtaining moksha ;
- (iv) Belief in Chaturvarna as the ideal for social organization ;
- (v) Belief in Iswara as the creator of and in Brahmana as the principle underlying the universe,
- (vi) Belief in Atmana, or the soul,
- (vii) Belief in *Sansara*, (wandering together), i.e., transmigration of the soul,
- (viii) Belief in Karma, i.e., the determination of man's position in present life by deeds done by him in his past life.

2. In formulating the principles of his Sasana the Buddha dealt with this old stock of ideas in his own way.

3. The following are the ideas which he rejected :

- (i) He condemned indulging in speculation as to the whence, whither and what am I ?
- (ii) He discarded heresies about the soul and refrained from identifying it with either the body, sensations, volitions and consciousness.
- (iii) He discarded all the Nihilistic views which were promulgated by certain religious teachers.
- (iv) He condemned such views as were held by heretics.
- (v) He discarded the theory that the cosmic progress had a known beginning.
- (vi) He repudiated the theory that a God created man or that he came out of the body of some Bramha.



- (vii) The existence of the soul he either ignored or denied.

§ 2. *What HE Modified*

- (i) He accepted the great grand law of cause and effect with its corollaries.
- (ii) He repudiated the fatalistic view of life and other equally foolish view that a God predestined as to what should happen for man and the world.
- (iii) He discarded the theory that all deeds committed in some former birth have the potency to produce suffering, making present activity impotent. He denied the fatalistic view of Karma. He replaced the view of Karma by a much more scientific view of Karma. He put new wine in old bottle.
- (iv) Transmigration (sansara) was replaced by the doctrine of re-birth.
- (v) He replaced the doctrine of moksha or salvation of the soul by the doctrine of Nibbana.

5. The Buddha Sasana is thus an original piece. The little in it which is old is either modified or restated.

§ 3. *What HE Accepted*

1. The first distinguishing feature of his teachings lay in the recognition of the mind as the centre of everything.

2. Mind precedes things, dominates them, creates them. If mind is comprehended all things are comprehended.

3. Mind is the leader of all its faculties. Mind is the chief of all its faculties. The very mind is made up of those faculties.

4. The first thing to attend to is the culture of the mind.

5. The second distinguishing feature of his

teachings is that mind is the fount of all the good and evil that arises within and befalls us from without.

6. Whatsoever there is of evil, connected with evil, belonging to evil—that issues from the mind. Whatsoever there is of good, connected with good, belonging to good—all issues from mind.

7. If one speaks or acts with a pounded mind then affliction follows him as the wheels of the cart follow the feet of the bullocks who pull the cart. The cleaning of the mind is, therefore, the essence of religion.¹

8. The third distinguishing feature of his teachings is the avoidance of all sinful acts.

9. The fourth distinguishing feature of his teaching is that real religion lies not in the books of religion but in the observance of the tenets of the religion.

10. Can anyone say that the Buddha's religion was not his own creation?



BOOK II

Campaign of Conversion

- Part I —Buddha and His Vishad Yoga.
- Part II —The Conversion of the Parivrajakas.
- Part III —Conversion of the High and the Holy.
- Part IV —Call from Home.
- Part V —Campaign for Conversion Resumed.
- Part VI —Conversion of the Low and the Lowly.
- Part VII —Conversion of Women.
- Part VIII —Conversion of the Fallen and the Criminals.

PART I

Buddha and His Vishad Yoga

1. To preach or not to preach.
2. Proclamation of good news by Bramha Sahampati.
3. Two types of conversion.

