

## CHAPTER I

### THE BUDDHIST ATTITUDE OF MIND

Among the founders of religions the Buddha (if we are permitted to call him the founder of a religion in the popular sense of the term) was the only teacher who did not claim to be other than a human being, pure and simple. Other teachers were either God, or his incarnations in different forms, or inspired by him. The Buddha was not only a human being; he claimed no inspiration from any god or external power either. He attributed all his realization, attainments and achievements to human endeavour and human intelligence. A man and only a man can become a Buddha. Every man has within himself the potentiality of becoming a Buddha, if he so wills it and endeavours. We can call the Buddha a man *par excellence*. He was so perfect in his 'human-ness' that he came to be regarded later in popular religion almost as 'super-human'.

Man's position, according to Buddhism, is supreme. Man is his own master, and there is no higher being or power that sits in judgment over his destiny.

'One is one's own refuge, who else could be the refuge?'<sup>1</sup> said the Buddha. He admonished his disciples to 'be a refuge to themselves', and never to seek refuge in or help from anybody else.<sup>2</sup> He taught, encouraged and stimulated each person to develop himself and to work out his own emancipation, for man has the power to liberate himself from all bondage through his own personal effort and intelligence. The Buddha says: 'You should do your work, for the Tathagatas<sup>3</sup> only teach the way.'<sup>4</sup> If the Buddha is to be called a 'saviour' at all, it is only in the sense that he

<sup>1</sup>Dhp. XII 4.

<sup>2</sup>D II (Colombo, 1929), p. 62 (*Mabaparinibbana-sutta*).

<sup>3</sup>*Tathagata* lit. means 'One who has come to Truth', i.e., 'One who has discovered Truth'. This is the term usually used by the Buddha referring to himself and to the Buddhas in general.

<sup>4</sup>Dhp. XX 4.

discovered and showed the Path to Liberation, Nirvana. But we must tread the Path ourselves.

It is on this principle of individual responsibility that the Buddha allows freedom to his disciples. In the *Mahaparinibbana-sutta* the Buddha says that he never thought of controlling the *Sangha* (Order of Monks)<sup>1</sup>, nor did he want the *Sangha* to depend on him. He said that there was no esoteric doctrine in his teaching, nothing hidden in the 'closed-fist of the teacher' (*acariya-mutthi*), or to put it in other words, there never was anything 'up his sleeve'.<sup>2</sup>

The freedom of thought allowed by the Buddha is unheard of elsewhere in the history of religions. This freedom is necessary because, according to the Buddha, man's emancipation depends on his own realization of Truth, and not on the benevolent grace of a god or any external power as a reward for his obedient good behaviour.

The Buddha once visited a small town called Kesaputta in the kingdom of Kosala. The inhabitants of this town were known by the common name Kalama. When they heard that the Buddha was in their town, the Kalamas paid him a visit, and told him:

'Sir, there are some recluses and brahmanas who visit Kesaputta. They explain and illumine only their own doctrines, and despise, condemn and spurn others' doctrines. Then come other recluses and brahmanas, and they, too, in their turn, explain and illumine only their own doctrines, and despise, condemn and spurn others' doctrines. But, for us, Sir, we have always doubt and perplexity as to who among these venerable recluses and brahmanas spoke the truth, and who spoke falsehood.'

Then the Buddha gave them this advice, unique in the history of religions:

'Yes, Kalamas, it is proper that you have doubt, that you have perplexity, for a doubt has arisen in a matter which is doubtful. Now, look you Kalamas, do not be led by reports, or tradition, or hearsay. Be not led by the authority of religious texts, nor by mere logic or inference, nor by considering appearances, nor by the delight in speculative opinions, nor by seeming possibilities,

<sup>1</sup>*Sangha* lit. means 'Community'. But in Buddhism this term denotes 'The Community of Buddhist monks' which is the Order of Monks. Buddha, *Dhamma* (Teaching) and *Sangha* (Order) are known as *Tisarana* 'Three Refuges' or *Tiratana* (Sanskrit *Triratna*) 'Triple-Gem'.

<sup>2</sup>D II (Colombo, 1929), p. 62.

nor by the idea: 'this is our teacher'. But, O Kalamas, when, you know for yourselves that certain things are unwholesome (*akusala*), and wrong, and bad, then give them up . . . And when you know for yourselves that certain things are wholesome (*kusala*) and good, then accept them and follow them.<sup>1</sup>

The Buddha went even further. He told the bhikkhus that a disciple should examine even the Tathagata (Buddha) himself, so that he (the disciple) might be fully convinced of the true value of the teacher whom he followed.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Buddha's teaching, doubt (*vicikiccha*) is one of the five Hindrances (*nivarana*)<sup>3</sup> to the clear understanding of Truth and to spiritual progress (or for that matter to any progress). Doubt, however, is not a 'sin', because there are no articles of faith in Buddhism. In fact there is no 'sin' in Buddhism, as sin is understood in some religions. The root of all evil is ignorance (*avijja*) and false views (*micchaditthi*). It is an undeniable fact that as long as there is doubt, perplexity, wavering, no progress is possible. It is also equally undeniable that there must be doubt as long as one does not understand or see clearly. But in order to progress further it is absolutely necessary to get rid of doubt. To get rid of doubt one has to see clearly.

There is no point in saying that one should not doubt or one should believe. Just to say 'I believe' does not mean that you understand and see. When a student works on a mathematical problem, he comes to a stage beyond which he does not know how to proceed, and where he is in doubt and perplexity. As long as he has this doubt, he cannot proceed. If he wants to proceed, he must resolve this doubt. And there are ways of resolving that doubt. Just to say 'I believe', or 'I do not doubt' will certainly not solve the problem. To force oneself to believe and to accept a thing without understanding is political, and not spiritual or intellectual.

The Buddha was always eager to dispel doubt. Even just a few minutes before his death, he requested his disciples several times to ask him if they had any doubts about his teaching, and not to

<sup>1</sup>A (Colombo, 1929), p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>*Vimamsaka-sutta*, no. 47 of M.

<sup>3</sup>The Five Hindrances are: (1) Sensuous Lust, (2) Ill-will, (3) Physical and mental torpor and languor, (4) Restlessness and Worry, (5) Doubt.

feel sorry later that they could not clear those doubts. But the disciples were silent. What he said then was touching: 'If it is through respect for the Teacher that you do not ask anything, let even one of you inform his friend' (i.e., let one tell his friend so that the latter may ask the question on the other's behalf).<sup>1</sup>

Not only the freedom of thought, but also the tolerance allowed by the Buddha is astonishing to the student of the history of religions. Once in Nalanda a prominent and wealthy householder named Upali, a well-known lay disciple of Nigantha Nataputta (Jaina Mahavira), was expressly sent by Mahavira himself to meet the Buddha and defeat him in argument on certain points in the theory of Karma, because the Buddha's views on the subject were different from those of Mahavira.<sup>2</sup> Quite contrary to expectations, Upali, at the end of the discussion, was convinced that the views of the Buddha were right and those of his master were wrong. So he begged the Buddha to accept him as one of his lay disciples (*Vpasaka*). But the Buddha asked him to reconsider it, and not to be in a hurry, for 'considering carefully is good for well-known men like you'. When Upali expressed his desire again, the Buddha requested him to continue to respect and support his old religious teachers as he used to.<sup>3</sup>

In the third century B.C., the great Buddhist Emperor Asoka of India, following this noble example of tolerance and understanding, honoured and supported all other religions in his vast empire. In one of his Edicts carved on rock, the original of which one may read even today, the Emperor declared:

'One should not honour only one's own religion and condemn the religions of others, but one should honour others' religions for this or that reason. So doing, one helps one's own religion to grow and renders service to the religions of others too. In acting otherwise one digs the grave of one's own religion and also does harm to other religions. Whosoever honours his own religion and condemns other religions, does so indeed through devotion to his own religion, thinking "I will glorify my own religion". But on the contrary, in so doing he injures his own religion more gravely.

<sup>1</sup>DII (Colombo, 1929), p. 95; A (Colombo, 1929), p. 239.

<sup>2</sup>Mahavira, founder of Jainism, was a contemporary of the Buddha, and was probably a few years older than the Buddha.

<sup>3</sup>*Upali-sutta*, no. 56 of M.

So concord is good: Let all listen, and be willing to listen to the doctrines professed by others'.<sup>1</sup>

We should add here that this spirit of sympathetic understanding should be applied today not only in the matter of religious doctrine, but elsewhere as well.

This spirit of tolerance and understanding has been from the beginning one of the most cherished ideals of Buddhist culture and civilization. That is why there is not a single example of persecution or the shedding of a drop of blood in converting people to Buddhism, or in its propagation during its long history of 2500 years. It spread peacefully all over the continent of Asia, having more than 500 million adherents today. Violence in any form, under any pretext whatsoever, is absolutely against the teaching of the Buddha.

The question has often been asked: Is Buddhism a religion or a philosophy? It does not matter what you call it. Buddhism remains what it is whatever label you may put on it. The label is immaterial. Even the label 'Buddhism' which we give to the teaching of the Buddha is of little importance. The name one gives it is inessential.

What's in a name ? That which we call a rose,  
By any other name would smell as sweet.

In the same way Truth needs no label: it is neither Buddhist, Christian, Hindu nor Moslem. It is not the monopoly of anybody. Sectarian labels are a hindrance to the independent understanding of Truth, and they produce harmful prejudices in men's minds.

This is true not only in intellectual and spiritual matters, but also in human relations. When, for instance, we meet a man, we do not look on him as a human being, but we put a label on him, such as English, French, German, American, or Jew, and regard him with all the prejudices associated with that label in our mind. Yet he may be completely free from those attributes which we have put on him.

People are so fond of discriminative labels that they even go to the length of putting them on human qualities and emotions common to all. So they talk of different 'brands' of charity, as for example, of Buddhist charity or Christian charity, and look down

Rock Edict, XII.

upon other 'brands' of charity. But charity cannot be sectarian; it is neither Christian, Buddhist, Hindu nor Moslem. The love of a mother for her child is neither Buddhist nor Christian: it is mother love. Human qualities and emotions like love, charity, compassion, tolerance, patience, friendship, desire, hatred, ill-will, ignorance, conceit, etc., need no sectarian labels; they belong to no particular religions.

To the seeker after Truth it is immaterial from where an idea comes. The source and development of an idea is a matter for the academic. In fact, in order to understand Truth, it is not necessary even to know whether the teaching comes from the Buddha, or from anyone else. What is essential is seeing the thing, understanding it. There is an important story in the *Majjhima-nikaya* (*sutta* no. 140) which illustrates this.

The Buddha once spent a night in a potter's shed. In the same shed there was a young recluse who had arrived there earlier.<sup>1</sup> They did not know each other. The Buddha observed the recluse, and thought to himself: 'Pleasant are the ways of this young man. It would be good if I should ask about him'. So the Buddha asked him: 'O bhikkhu,<sup>2</sup> in whose name have you left home? Or who is your master? Or whose doctrine do you like?'

'O friend,' answered the young man, 'there is the recluse Gotama, a Sakyan scion, who left the Sakya-family to become a recluse. There is high repute abroad of him that he is an Arahant, a Fully-Enlightened One. In the name of that Blessed One I have become a recluse. He is my Master, and I like his doctrine'.

'Where does that Blessed One, the Arahant, the Fully-Enlightened One live at the present time?'

'In the countries to the north, friend, there is a city called

<sup>1</sup>In India potters' sheds are spacious, and quiet. References are made in the Pali texts to ascetics and recluses, as well as to the Buddha himself, spending a night in a potter's shed during their wanderings.

<sup>2</sup>It is interesting to note here that the Buddha addresses this recluse as *bhikkhu*, which term is used for Buddhist monks. In the sequel it will be seen that he was not a bhikkhu, not a member of the Order of the Sangha, for he asked the Buddha to admit him into the Order. Perhaps in the days of the Buddha the term 'bhikkhu' was used at times even for other ascetics indiscriminately, or the Buddha was not very strict in the use of the term. Bhikkhu means 'mendicant' 'one who begs food', and perhaps it was used here in its literal and original sense. But today the term 'bhikkhu' is used only of Buddhist monks, especially in Theravada countries like Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and in Chittagong.

Savatthi. It is there that that Blessed One, the Arahant, the Fully-Enlightened One, is now living.'

'Have you ever seen him, that Blessed One? Would you recognize him if you saw him?'

'I have never seen that Blessed One. Nor should I recognize him if I saw him.'

The Buddha realized that it was in his name that this unknown young man had left home and become a recluse. But without divulging his own identity, he said: 'O bhikkhu, I will teach you the doctrine. Listen and pay attention. I will speak.'

'Very well, friend,' said the young man in assent.

Then the Buddha delivered to this young man a most remarkable discourse explaining Truth (the gist of which is given later).<sup>1</sup>

It was only at the end of the discourse that this young recluse, whose name was Pukkusati, realized that the person who spoke to him was the Buddha himself. So he got up, went before the Buddha, bowed down at the feet of the Master, and apologized to him for calling him 'friend'<sup>2</sup> unknowingly. He then begged the Buddha to ordain him and admit him into the Order of the *Sangha*.

The Buddha asked him whether he had the alms-bowl and the robes ready. (A bhikkhu must have three robes and the alms-bowl for begging food.) When Pukkusati replied in the negative, the Buddha said that the Tathagatas would not ordain a person unless the alms-bowl and the robes were ready. So Pukkusati went out in search of an alms-bowl and robes, but was unfortunately savaged by a cow and died.<sup>3</sup>

Later, when this sad news reached the Buddha, he announced that Pukkusati was a wise man, who had already seen Truth, and

<sup>1</sup>In the chapter on the third Noble Truth, see p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>The term used is *Avuso* which means friend. It is a respectful term of address among equals. But disciples never used this term addressing the Buddha. Instead they use the term *Bhante* which approximately means 'Sir' or 'Lord'. At the time of the Buddha, the members of his Order of Monks (*Sangha*) addressed one another as *Avuso* 'Friend'. But before his death the Buddha instructed younger monks to address their elders as *Bhante* 'Sir' or *Ayasma* 'Venerable'. But elders should address the younger members by name, or as *Avuso* 'Friend'. (D II Colombo, 1929, p. 95). This practice is continued up to the present day in the *Sangha*.

<sup>3</sup>It is well-known that cows in India roam about the streets. From this reference it seems that the tradition is very old. But generally these cows are docile and not savage or dangerous.

attained the penultimate stage in the realization of Nirvana, and that he was born in a realm where he would become an Arahant<sup>1</sup> and finally pass away, never to return to this world again<sup>2</sup>.

From this story it is quite clear that when Pukkusati listened to the Buddha and understood his teaching, he did not know who was speaking to him, or whose teaching it was. He saw Truth. If the medicine is good, the disease will be cured. It is not necessary to know who prepared it, or where it came from.

Almost all religions are built on faith—rather 'blind' faith it would seem. But in Buddhism emphasis is laid on 'seeing', knowing, understanding, and not on faith, or belief. In Buddhist texts there is a word *saddha* (Skt. *sraddha*) which is usually translated as 'faith' or 'belief'. But *saddha* is not 'faith' as such, but rather 'confidence' born out of conviction. In popular Buddhism and also in ordinary usage in the texts the word *saddha*, it must be admitted, has an element of 'faith' in the sense that it signifies devotion to the Buddha, the *Dhamma* (Teaching) and the *Sangha* (The Order).

According to Asanga, the great Buddhist philosopher of the 4th century A.C., *sraddha* has three aspects: (i) full and firm conviction that a thing is, (2) serene joy at good qualities, and (3) aspiration or wish to achieve an object in view.<sup>3</sup>

However you put it, faith or belief as understood by most religions has little to do with Buddhism.<sup>4</sup>

The question of belief arises when there is no seeing—seeing in every sense of the word. The moment you see, the question of belief disappears. If I tell you that I have a gem hidden in the folded palm of my hand, the question of belief arises because you

*An Arahant* is a person who has liberated himself from all defilements and impurities such as desire, hatred, ill-will, ignorance, pride, conceit, etc. He has attained the fourth or the highest and ultimate stage in the realization of Nirvana, and is full of wisdom, compassion and such pure and noble qualities. Pukkusati had attained at the moment only the third stage which is technically called *Anagami* 'Never-Returner'. The second stage is called *Sakadagami* 'Once-Returner' and the first stage is called *Sotapanna* 'Stream-Entrant'.

<sup>1</sup>Karl Gjellerup's *The Pi/grim Kamanita* seems to have been inspired by this story of Pukkusati.

<sup>2</sup>Abhisamuc, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>*The Role of the Miracle in Early Pali Literature* by Edith Ludowyk-Gyomroi takes up this subject. Unfortunately this Ph.D. thesis is not yet published. On the same subject see an article by the same author in the *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (April, 1943), p. 74 ff-

do not see it yourself. But if I unclench my fist and show you the gem, then you see it for yourself, and the question of belief does not arise. So the phrase in ancient Buddhist texts reads: 'Realizing, as one sees a gem (or a myrobalan fruit) in the palm'.

A disciple of the Buddha named Musila tells another monk: 'Friend Savittha, without devotion, faith or belief,<sup>1</sup> without liking or inclination, without hearsay or tradition, without considering apparent reasons, without delight in the speculations of opinions, I know and see that the cessation of becoming is Nirvana.'<sup>2</sup>

And the Buddha says: 'O bhikkhus, I say that the destruction of defilement and impurities is (meant) for a person who knows and who sees, and not for a person who does not know and does not see.'<sup>3</sup>

It is always a question of knowing and seeing, and not that of believing. The teaching of the Buddha is qualified as *ehi-passika*, inviting you to 'come and see', but not to come and believe.

The expressions used everywhere in Buddhist texts referring to persons who realized Truth are: 'The dustless and stainless Eye of Truth (*Dhamma-cakkhu*) has arisen.' 'He has seen Truth, has attained Truth, has known Truth, has penetrated into Truth, has crossed over doubt, is without wavering.' 'Thus with right wisdom he sees it as it is { *yatha bhutam* }' A With reference to his own Enlightenment the Buddha said: 'The eye was born, knowledge was born, wisdom was born, science was born, light was born.'<sup>5</sup> It is always seeing through knowledge or wisdom (*nana-dassana*), and not believing through faith.

This was more and more appreciated at a time when Brahmanic orthodoxy intolerantly insisted on believing and accepting their tradition and authority as the only Truth without question. Once a group of learned and well-known Brahmins went to see the Buddha and had a long discussion with him. One of the group, a Brahmin youth of 16 years of age, named Kapathika, considered

<sup>1</sup>Here the word *saddha* is used in its ordinary popular sense of 'devotion, faith, belief'.

<sup>2</sup>S II (PTS), p. 117.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* III, p. 152.

<sup>4</sup>E.g. S V, (PTS), p. 425; III, p. 103; M III (PTS), p. 19.

<sup>5</sup>S V (PTS), p. 422.

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by them all to be an exceptionally brilliant mind, put a question to the Buddha

'Venerable Gotama, there are the ancient holy scriptures of the Brahmins handed down along the line by unbroken oral tradition of texts. With regard to them, Brahmins come to the absolute conclusion: "This alone is Truth, and everything else is false". Now, what does the Venerable Gotama say about this?'

The Buddha inquired: 'Among Brahmins is there any one single Brahmin who claims that he personally knows and sees that "This alone is Truth, and everything else is false."?'

The young man was frank, and said: 'No'.

'Then, is there any one single teacher, or a teacher of teachers of Brahmins back to the seventh generation, or even any one of those original authors of those scriptures, who claims that he knows and he sees: "This alone is Truth, and everything else is false"?''

'No.'

'Then, it is like a line of blind men, each holding on to the preceding one; the first one does not see, the middle one also does not see, the last one also does not see. Thus, it seems to me that the state of the Brahmins is like that of a line of blind men.'

Then the Buddha gave advice of extreme importance to the group of Brahmins: 'It is not proper for a wise man who maintains (lit. protects) truth to come to the conclusion: "This alone is Truth, and everything else is false".'

Asked by the young Brahmin to explain the idea of maintaining or protecting truth, the Buddha said: 'A man has a faith. If he says "This is my faith", so far he maintains truth. But by that he cannot proceed to the absolute conclusion: "This alone is Truth, and everything else is false".' In other words, a man may believe what he likes, and he may say 'I believe this'. So far he respects truth. But because of his belief or faith, he should not say that what he believes is alone the Truth, and everything else is false.

The Buddha says: 'To be attached to one thing (to a certain view) and to look down upon other things (views) as inferior—this the wise men call a fetter.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>*Canki-sutta*, no. 95 of M.  
<sup>3</sup>Sn (PTS), p. 151 (v. 798).

Once the Buddha explained<sup>1</sup> the doctrine of cause and effect to his disciples, and they said that they saw it and understood it clearly. Then the Buddha said:

'O bhikkhus, even this view, which is so pure and so clear, if you cling to it, if you fondle it, if you treasure it, if you are attached to it, then you do not understand that the teaching is similar to a raft, which is for crossing over, and not for getting hold of.'<sup>2</sup>

Elsewhere the Buddha explains this famous simile in which his teaching is compared to a raft for crossing over, and not for getting hold of and carrying on one's back:

'O bhikkhus, a man is on a journey. He comes to a vast stretch of water. On this side the shore is dangerous, but on the other it is safe and without danger. No boat goes to the other shore which is safe and without danger, nor is there any bridge for crossing over. He says to himself: "This sea of water is vast, and the shore on this side is full of danger; but on the other shore it is safe and without danger. No boat goes to the other side, nor is there a bridge for crossing over. It would be good therefore if I would gather grass, wood, branches and leaves to make a raft, and with the help of the raft cross over safely to the other side, exerting myself with my hands and feet". Then that man, O bhikkhus, gathers grass, wood, branches and leaves and makes a raft, and with the help of that raft crosses over safely to the other side, exerting himself with his hands and feet. Having crossed over and got to the other side, he thinks: "This raft was of great help to me. With its aid I have crossed safely over to this side, exerting myself with my hands and feet. It would be good if I carry this raft on my head or on my back wherever I go".

'What do you think, O bhikkhus, if he acted in this way would that man be acting properly with regard to the raft? "No, Sir". In which way then would he be acting properly with regard to the raft? Having crossed and gone over to the other side, suppose that man should think: "This raft was a great help to me. With its aid I have crossed safely over to this side, exerting myself with my hands and feet. It would be good if I beached this raft on the shore, or moored it and left it afloat, and then went on my way

<sup>1</sup>In the *Mahatanhasankhaya-sutta*, no. 38 of M.  
<sup>2</sup>MI (PTS), p. 260.

wherever it may be". Acting in this way would that man act properly with regard to that raft.

'In the same manner, O bhikkhus, I have taught a doctrine similar to a raft—it is for crossing over, and not for carrying (lit. getting hold of). You, O bhikkhus, who understand that the teaching is similar to a raft, should give up even good things (*dhamma*); how much more then should you give up evil things (*adhamma*).'<sup>1</sup>

From this parable it is quite clear that the Buddha's teaching is meant to carry man to safety, peace, happiness, tranquillity, the attainment of *Nirvana*. The whole doctrine taught by the Buddha leads to this end. He did not say things just to satisfy intellectual curiosity. He was a practical teacher and taught only those things which would bring peace and happiness to man.

The Buddha was once staying in a Simsapa forest in Kosambi (near Allahabad). He took a few leaves into his hand, and asked his disciples: 'What do you think, O bhikkhus? Which is more? These few leaves in my hand or the leaves in the forest over here?'

'Sir, very few are the leaves in the hand of the Blessed One, but indeed the leaves in the Simsapa forest over here are very much more abundant.'

'Even so, bhikkhus, of what I have known I have told you only a little, what I have not told you is very much more. And why have I not told you (those things)? Because that is not useful. . . not leading to *Nirvana*. That is why I have not told you those things.'<sup>2</sup>

It is futile, as some scholars vainly try to do, for us to speculate on what the Buddha knew but did not tell us.

The Buddha was not interested in discussing unnecessary metaphysical questions which are purely speculative and which create imaginary problems. He considered them as a 'wilderness of opinions'. It seems that there were some among his own disciples who did not appreciate this attitude of his. For, we have

<sup>1</sup>MI (PTS), pp. 134-i 3 5. *Dhamma* here, according to the Commentary, means high spiritual attainments as well as pure views and ideas. Attachment even to these, however high and pure they may be, should be given up; how much more then should it be with regard to evil and bad things. MA II (PTS), p. 109.

<sup>2</sup>S V (PTS), p. 457-

the example of one of them, Malunkyaputta by name, who put to the Buddha ten well-known classical questions on metaphysical problems and demanded answers.<sup>1</sup>

One day Malunkyaputta got up from his afternoon meditation, went to the Buddha, saluted him, sat on one side and said:

'Sir, when I was all alone meditating, this thought occurred to me: There are these problems unexplained, put aside and rejected by the Blessed One. Namely, (1) is the universe eternal or (2) is it not eternal, (3) is the universe finite or (4) is it infinite, (5) is soul the same as body or (6) is soul one thing and body another thing, (7) does the Tathagata exist after death, or (8) does he not exist after death, or (9) does he both (at the same time) exist and not exist after death, or (10) does he both (at the same time) not exist and not not-exist. These problems the Blessed One does not explain to me. This (attitude) does not please me, I do not appreciate it. I will go to the Blessed One and ask him about this matter. If the Blessed One explains them to me, then I will continue to follow the holy life under him. If he does not explain them, I will leave the Order and go away. If the Blessed One knows that the universe is eternal, let him explain it to me so. If the Blessed One knows that the universe is not eternal, let him say so. If the Blessed One does not know whether the universe is eternal or not, etc., then for a person who does not know, it is straightforward to say "I do not know, I do not see".'

The Buddha's reply to Malunkyaputta should do good to many millions in the world today who are wasting valuable time on such metaphysical questions and unnecessarily disturbing their peace of mind:

'Did I ever tell you, Malunkyaputta, "Come, Malunkyaputta, lead the holy life under me, I will explain these questions to you?"'

'No, Sir.'

'Then, Malunkyaputta, even you, did you tell me: "Sir, I will lead the holy life under the Blessed One, and the Blessed One will explain these questions to me"?''

'No, Sir.'

'Even now, Malunkyaputta, I do not tell you: "Come and lead the holy life under me, I will explain these questions to you".'

*Cula-Mdlurikja-sutta*, no. 63 of M.

And you do not tell me either: "Sir, I will lead the holy life under the Blessed One, and he will explain these questions to me". Under these circumstances, you foolish one, who refuses whom?'<sup>1</sup>

'Malunkyaputta, if anyone says: "I will not lead the holy life under the Blessed One until he explains these questions," he may die with these questions unanswered by the Tathagata. Suppose Malunkyaputta, a man is wounded by a poisoned arrow, and his friends and relatives bring him to a surgeon. Suppose the man should then say: "I will not let this arrow be taken out until I know who shot me; whether he is a Ksatriya (of the warrior caste) or a Brahmana (of the priestly caste) or a Vaisya (of the trading and agricultural caste) or a Sudra (of the low caste); what his name and family may be; whether he is tall, short, or of medium stature; whether his complexion is black, brown, or golden; from which village, town or city he comes. I will not let this arrow be taken out until I know the kind of bow with which I was shot; the kind of bowstring used; the type of arrow; what sort of feather was used on the arrow and with what kind of material the point of the arrow was made." Malunkyaputta, that man would die without knowing any of these things. Even so, Malunkyaputta, if anyone says: "I will not follow the holy life under the Blessed One until he answers these questions such as whether the universe is eternal or not, etc.," he would die with these questions unanswered by the Tathagata.'

Then the Buddha explains to Malunkyaputta that the holy life does not depend on these views. Whatever opinion one may have about these problems, there is birth, old age, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, distress, "the Cessation of which (i.e. *Nirvana*) I declare in this very life."

"Therefore, Malunkyaputta, bear in mind what I have explained as explained, and what I have not explained as unexplained. What are the things that I have not explained? Whether the universe is eternal or not, etc., (those 10 opinions) I have not explained. Why, Malunkyaputta, have I not explained them? Because it is not useful, it is not fundamentally connected with the spiritual holy life, is not conducive to aversion, detachment, cessation, tranquillity, deep penetration, full realization, *Nirvana*. That is why I have not told you about them.

i.e., both are free and neither is under obligation to the other.

'Then, what, Malunhyaputta, have I explained ? I have explained *dukkha*, the arising *oi dukkha*, the cessation of *dukkha*, and the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha*<sup>1</sup> Why, Malunhyaputta, have I explained them ? Because it is useful, is fundamentally connected with the spiritual holy life, is conducive to aversion, detachment, cessation, tranquillity, deep penetration, full realization, Nirvana. Therefore I have explained them.'<sup>2</sup>

Let us now examine the Four Noble Truths which the Buddha told Malunhyaputta he had explained.

These Four Noble Truths are explained in the next four chapters.

It seems that this advice of the Buddha had the desired effect on Malunhyaputta, because elsewhere he is reported to have approached the Buddha again for instruction, following which he became an Arahant. A (Colombo, 1929), pp. 345-346; S IV (PTS), p. 72 ff.

