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Do It Yourself

by Bhante Gunaratana

During the twenty-five years that Venerable Ánanda, the Buddha's personal attendant, spent with the Buddha, several times the Buddha asked him to strive hard and attain enlightenment. Ánanda knew all the Dhamma teachings and theories of meditation, but because he enjoyed serving the Buddha and other fellow bhikkhus, he neglected his own attainment of enlightenment. After the Buddha's passing away, the Arahants that had assembled to hold the first Buddhist council urged Ánanda to attain enlightenment before the designated date of the council as only Arahants could attend. Ánanda then practiced meditation and attained enlightenment just before the council.

The Buddha said: "Monks, meditate! Don't be heedless. Don't let your mind be filled with defilements" (Dhp 371). He meant that the mind that has not been developed through the practice of mindfulness meditation is full of tension, anxiety and worry. So don't keep repeating the same mistakes and keep crying. You cannot run away from reality. Life is not rosy. It has ups-and-downs and bumps all over. These are facts we face every day.

The practice of mindfulness meditation is similar to the shock absorbers of a car. If the shock absorbers are not good, there will be difficulties when driving over bumps. Likewise, this vehicle of ours—the combination of the body and mind—encounters many impediments and difficulties if there is no strong mindfulness.

People mostly come up with three solutions to deal with the impediments:

The first solution is to perceive the problem as being "over there, in the world" and therefore think that by correcting the world, trying to solve society's ills, we can solve our own problems. We think that only when our environment is proper, beautiful and free from problems, we can live happily. So we get engrossed and, sometimes, even obsessed, in trying to straighten out society. Of course, the desire to improve society's ills, itself, is commendable. Seeing suffering, we act out of compassion and may keep ourselves fully occupied trying to correct the society's ills. We might think that

we keep ourselves out of trouble without realizing that we actually are forgetting our own nagging problems. Our own pains and suffering continue unattended because we do not have time for ourselves. Engaging in external activities might hinder solving our own problems.

Although we live in society with people, each one of us has a little world of our own. Each of us follows our own perceptions and views of the world. We may sometimes think that all the problems we experience are generated from the outer world. Therefore, we turn our energies to the world believing that correcting society will solve our problems.

People with this attitude can be very compassionate, understanding, and ready to render their service to society selflessly and without expecting any reward. We read many wonderful accounts of many such noble persons who at the expense of their own attainment of enlightenment dedicate their lives to society.

The second way to solve our problems is to think that there is no problem at all, to believe that everything is imaginary, and to think: "I exist by myself, I am most important, and I am all alone, and nothing else matters to me."

The third way to solve personal problems is to run away from them. There is, however, no place to run away from difficulties. Even if we go to the moon (not an impossibility these days), still we will go with our body and mind filled with all kinds of mental impediments and defilements. We cannot leave them here and go over there. The impediments follow persistently and doggedly wherever we go, and they keep bothering us, day and night. We can also ignore problems by diverting our attention to something else, by distracting ourselves, but the problems do not disappear in this way.

So we may receive temporary solace, temporary comfort thinking that the problem exists over there in the external world or that it does not exist, or we may run away from the problem, diverting our attention to something, but the real solution lies in none of these methods. The real solution, according to the Buddha, is

to discover the way to purify the instrument, the agent, which makes the world happy or unhappy, peaceful or miserable, pleasant or painful—that which creates problems and suffering for everybody. This instrument is our mind. Purification of this mind is one of the five purposes of mindfulness meditation.

As we all know, all our thoughts, words and deeds originate in the mind; the mind is their forerunner. All conditions we experience are mind-made. They are created in the mind, directed and led by the mind; mind puts them into action. As the Buddha said: "All actions are all led by the mind: mind is their master, mind is their maker. Act or speak with a defiled state of mind, then suffering follows like the cart-wheel that follows the foot of the ox. All actions are all led by the mind; mind is their master, mind is their maker. Act or speak with a pure state of mind, then happiness follows like a shadow that remains behind without departing." (Dhammapada 1-2)

The analogy of the ox pulling the cart is most appropriate to illustrate our problems. The ox pulling the cart does not enjoy pulling the cart. It is not happy with this burden; pulling it is not a pleasure. The whole burden of the cart is on its shoulders, and it is in pain. The ox would have done better if it had not been born as an ox. The condition of the ox is compared to the condition of ignorance, and stupidity—not seeing the true nature of things. The life of an unenlightened person is full of ignorance and given to defilements of all kinds. Therefore, an unenlightened person committing thoughts, words, and deeds with an impure mind suffers, just like the ox which suffers by pulling the heavy cart. On the other hand, when a person speaks or does something with a pure mind, he or she feels happy and has no regrets—no pain and suffering will follow.

Our purpose in life is to improve ourselves and become happy. However, most of the things we do to gain happiness may generate unhappiness, pain, suffering and trouble because our minds are not pure. It is only the pure mind that can generate happiness, not the impure mind. Therefore, the first purpose of practicing meditation is to purify our mind because a pure mind generates peace and happiness.

The second purpose of meditation is to overcome sorrow and lamentation. When we begin to see the truth through meditation, we can bear and conquer the sorrow and lamentation caused by impermanence.

The third purpose is to overcome suffering and disappointment caused by greed and hatred.

The fourth purpose is to tread the wise path, the correct path which leads to liberation from grief, sorrow, disappointment, pain and lamentation. This is the path of **mindfulness**—the only path that can liberate

us from suffering.

The fifth purpose of meditation is to completely and totally liberate our minds from mental pain and defilements and to completely free our minds from greed, hatred and delusion.

These five purposes are very noble purposes. All other purposes of meditation may be overlooked because none of them is capable of generating these results that make us really peaceful and happy by eliminating our problems. We don't try to ignore or avoid problems but we face and tackle them with mindfulness as they arise in our minds.

Certain people simply want to meditate without having any background knowledge of meditation. They think knowledge of the theory of meditation is an impediment. This attitude can be compared to the attitude of a traveler who wishes to go to a definite destination—let us say Washington DC. The traveler has great confidence in his ability and believes his confidence alone is sufficient to get him there with his car. However, he does not prepare himself for the journey; he has no knowledge of the roads or the conditions of the roads or of the weather; he hasn't even consulted a map. All he has is a car, confidence and some experience in driving. The car may carry a sufficient quantity of gas, oil, and other items to get him to his destination. Getting into his car, he starts to drive. He may be on the road for a long time spending a good deal of money on gas, time and energy. Indeed, driving will lead him somewhere, but not necessarily to his destination.

A wise driver, on the other hand, studies the map in detail beforehand, determines the detours, and may ask others who are more experienced. If this wise driver wishes to go to Washington DC and if there is a place called Washington DC, he will find it.

Similarly, we need to have a goal in meditation. We want to reach this goal and realize our purpose. And we do need some guidelines. We do not necessarily need a great deal of philosophical and speculative theory. The guidelines are road signs to follow so that we will know (not guess) if we are heading in the right direction. Certainly confidence is necessary, but, in itself, it is not sufficient. In addition, we need understanding and knowledge of the theory.

Then what is meditation? How do we reach this goal of purifying the mind, overcoming grief and lamentation, overcoming pain and disappointment, treading the path leading to liberation from pain and suffering, from saí sára—this world of birth and death?

There is a way to attain it. When we refer to "the Way" it may turn many people off. They might think the speaker is trying to sell something and trying to

deprecate everything in the world, and might think "If this is the only way, we are not prepared to buy it." Now, when you wish to go to Washington DC, there are a number of ways to get there. Flying is the quickest way these days, of course. In other times, we would use a car or boat, or only our two feet. Whatever the means of transportation, we have to cover a specific distance to arrive in Washington DC. What is essential is that we get there—whether by slow or fast means. Therefore, "the Way" means "The Way of Mindfulness" that transverses a certain distance or area to realize our destination.

This Way of Mindfulness does not, however, lie in a geographical area or in space. It is in our own mind. We have to do certain things. That doing is "the Way"—the way to cultivate our minds to accomplish this journey. Cultivating the mind means practicing mindfulness. When no mindfulness is present, when we are unmindful all the time, we are entrapped by "red herrings." We are caught in all kinds of confusion; we don't understand things as they really are. To enable us to get to our destination, we need a clear understanding of where we are. Clear understanding is born from mindfulness. Through clear understanding we learn that although the other things and practices we engage in have their own purposes and goals, they do not purify the mind.

The very word used for meditation in the language of the Buddha, *bhāvanā*, means cultivation. We know what we mean when we say, "We cultivate a land." We know that there has to be a land and some means of cultivating it. We have to do certain things, such as cutting down the trees to clear the land, remove weeds and other things, and till it over and over and fertilize it. Then we can plant seeds and nourish it and grow certain crops. Similarly in the practice of meditation, we need to mentally cultivate the mind. We do not sit in one place just waiting for something to happen, because we may wait for a very long time without anything happening. We might say that we have spent so much time in meditation, but sitting in one place doing nothing is not meditation. And also simply watching our breath all the time is inadequate and insufficient. Although just watching the breath without right mindfulness may be called the practice of tranquillity meditation, it is not right concentration as there is no right mindfulness. Of course, mindfulness of breathing, *ánápánasati*, is an important part of meditation. We begin meditating with watching our breath. The right mindfulness meditation which is totally distinct to Buddhism is called *vipassanā* meditation or insight meditation. When we do insight meditation, we see impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness in our body and minds. The guidelines for the practice of insight meditation are given in the Sutta on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The four foundations of mindfulness are: mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of feeling, mindfulness of the mind and mindfulness of mental objects.

Let me take the first foundation—mindfulness of the body. Mindfulness of the body is divided into six sections. The first of them is mindfulness of breathing. Now, why is the breath included in the mindfulness of the body? The breath is a part of our body. This body, as we know it, is just made up of four basic elements: the element of earth (solidity, hardness), the element of water (cohesion, liquidity), the element of fire (heat) and the element of wind (movement, expansion). Therefore, when we try to practice mindfulness of the body, we begin with the mindfulness of the breath which is the element of wind.

In this mindfulness of the body meditation, we do not dwell upon some imaginative fairy land. We are not trying to induce self hypnosis. We are not trying to discover the hidden, mystical elements of the universe. We are not trying to become absorbed in the whole universe. We are not trying to become "One" with the whole universe. All these are interesting words, but when practising mindfulness of the body we are trying to use this very personality of ours, our own body and mind, and see it as truly is—impermanent, unsatisfactory and selfless. We watch mindfully this body and mind and their activities, we investigate them because they are what we carry with us wherever we go. This body and mind is our laboratory. All we have to work with is right here. The raw materials of earth, heat, wind, and water are all there in this body.

My laboratory is my body and mind. I always try to watch them within me. I cannot work in your laboratory. You have to work in your own laboratory. Most of us forget our own laboratories and try to get into somebody else's laboratory. We try to see what so-and-so is eating, what so-and-so is doing, whom so-and-so is associating with, where so-and-so is going, what so-and-so is reading, how much money so-and-so has, etc. We always forget our own laboratories. We may never know what is in this laboratory within ourselves. We, in this practice of insight meditation, become introspective, mindful and careful to watch what is happening here in this mind and body, as it is, and in the present moment. That is what insight meditation is all about; methodical investigation in the laboratory within ourselves.

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Distorted Visions of Buddhism

Agnostic and Atheist *by B. Alan Wallace*



As Buddhism has encountered modernity, it runs against widespread prejudices, both religious and anti-religious, and it is common for all those with such biases to misrepresent Buddhism, either intentionally or unintentionally. Reputable scholars of Buddhism, both traditional and modern, all agree that the historical Buddha taught a view of karma and rebirth that was quite different from the previous takes on these ideas. Moreover, his teachings on the nature and origins of suffering as well as liberation are couched entirely within the framework of rebirth. Liberation is precisely freedom from the round of birth and death that is *saí sára*. But for many contemporary people drawn to Buddhism, the teachings on karma and rebirth don't sit well, so they are faced with a dilemma. A legitimate option is simply to adopt those theories and practices from various Buddhist traditions that one finds compelling and beneficial and set the others aside. An illegitimate option is to reinvent the Buddha and his teachings based on one's own prejudices. This, unfortunately, is the route followed by Stephen Batchelor and other like-minded people who are intent on reshaping the Buddha in their own images.

The back cover of Batchelor's most recent book, entitled *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*, describes his work as "a stunning and groundbreaking recovery of the historical Buddha and his message." One way for this to be true, would be that his book is based on a recent discovery of ancient Buddhist manuscripts, comparable to the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Nag Hammadi library for Christianity. But it is not. Another way is for his claims to be based on unprecedented historical research by a highly accomplished scholar of ancient Indian languages and history. But no such professional research or scholarship is in evidence in this book. Instead, his claims about the historical Buddha and his teachings are almost entirely speculative, as he takes another stab at recreating Buddhism to conform to his current views.

To get a clear picture of Batchelor's agnostic-turned-atheist approach to Buddhism, there is no need to look further than his earlier work, *Buddhism without Beliefs*. Claiming to embrace Thomas Huxley's definition of agnosticism as the method of following reason as far as it will take one, he admonishes his

readers, "Do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable."¹ He then proceeds to explain who the Buddha *really* was and what he *really* taught, often in direct opposition to the teachings attributed to the Buddha by all schools of Buddhism. If in this he is following Huxley's dictum, this would imply that Batchelor has achieved at least the ability to see directly into the past, if not complete omniscience itself.

Some may believe that the liberties Batchelor takes in redefining the Buddha's teachings are justified since no one knows what he really taught, so one person's opinion is as good as another's. This view ignores the fact that generations of traditional Buddhists, beginning with the first Buddhist council shortly following the Buddha's death, have reverently taken the utmost care to accurately preserve his teachings. Moreover, modern secular Buddhist scholarship also has applied its formidable literary, historical, and archeological skills to trying to determine the teachings of the Buddha. Despite the many important differences among Theraváda, Maháyána, and Vajrayána schools of Buddhism, traditional Buddhists of all schools recognize the Pali suttas as being the most uncontested records of the Buddha's teachings.

In the face of such consensus by professional scholars and contemplatives throughout history, it is simply an expression of arrogance to override their conclusions simply due to one's own preferences or "intuition" (which is often thinly disguised prejudice). To ignore the most compelling evidence of what the Buddha taught and to replace that by assertions that run counter to such evidence is indefensible. And when those secular, atheistic assertions just happen to correspond to the materialistic assumptions of modernity, it is simply ridiculous to attribute them to the historical Buddha.

For example, contrary to all the historical evidence, Batchelor writes that the Buddha "did not claim to have had experience that granted him privileged, esoteric knowledge of how the universe ticks." To cite just two of innumerable statements in the Pali canon pertaining to the scope of the Buddha's knowledge: "Whatever in this world—with its devas, maras, and brahmas, its generations complete with contemplatives and priests, princes and men—is seen,

1. Stephen Batchelor, *Buddhism without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening*. (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997), 17–18.

heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect, that has been fully awakened to by the Tathágata. Thus he is called the Tathágata.”² In a similar vein, we read, “the world and its arising are fully known by a Tathágata and he is released from both; he also knows the ending of it and the way thereto. He speaks as he does; he is unconquered in the world.”³

Batchelor brings to his understanding of Buddhism a strong antipathy toward religion and religious institutions, and this bias pervades all his recent writings. Rather than simply rejecting elements of the Buddha's teachings that strike him as religious—which would be perfectly legitimate—Batchelor takes the illegitimate step of denying that the Buddha ever taught anything that would be deemed religious by contemporary western standards, claiming, that “There is nothing particularly religious or spiritual about this path.” Rather, the Buddha's teachings were a form of “existential, therapeutic, and liberating agnosticism” that was “refracted through the symbols, metaphors, and imagery of his world.”⁴ Being an agnostic himself, Batchelor overrides the massive amount of textual evidence that the Buddha was anything but an agnostic, and recreates the Buddha in his own image, promoting exactly what Batchelor himself believes in, namely, a form of existential, therapeutic, and liberating agnosticism.

Since Batchelor dismisses all talk of rebirth as a waste of time, he projects this view onto his image of the Buddha, declaring that he regarded “speculation about future and past lives to be just another distraction.” This claim flies in the face of the countless times the Buddha spoke of the immense importance of rebirth and karma, which lie at the core of his teachings as they are recorded in Pali suttas. Batchelor is one of many Zen teachers nowadays who regard future and past lives as a mere distraction. But in adopting this attitude, they go against the teachings of Dogen Zenji, founder of the Soto school of Zen, who addressed the importance of the teachings on rebirth and karma in his principal anthology, *Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma (Shobogenzo)*. In his book *Deep Faith in Cause and Effect (Jinshin inga)*, he criticizes Zen masters who deny karma, and in *Karma of the Three Times (Sanjigō)*, he goes into more detail on this matter.⁵

As to the source of Buddhist teachings on rebirth, Batchelor speculates, “In accepting the idea of rebirth, the Buddha reflected the worldview of his time.” In the *Káláma Sutta*, the Buddha counsels others not to accept

beliefs simply because many people adhere to them, or because they accord with a tradition, rumor, scripture, or speculation. So Batchelor, in effect, accuses the Buddha of not following his own advice! In reality, the Buddha's detailed accounts of rebirth and karma differed significantly from other Indian thinkers' views on these subjects; and given the wide range of philosophical views during his era, there was no uniformly accepted “worldview of his time.”

Rather than adopting this idea from mere hearsay, the Buddha declared that in the first watch of the night of his enlightenment, after purifying his mind with the achievement of samádhi, he gained “direct knowledge” of the specific details of many thousands of his own past lifetimes throughout the course of many eons of cosmic contraction and expansion. In the second watch of the night, he observed the multiple rebirths of countless other sentient beings, observing the consequences of their wholesome and unwholesome deeds from one life to the next. During the third watch of the night he gained direct knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, revealing the causes of gaining liberation from this cycle of rebirth.⁶ While there is ample evidence that the Buddha claimed to have direct knowledge of rebirth, there is no textual or historical evidence that he simply adopted some pre-existing view, which would have been antithetical to his entire approach of not accepting theories simply because they are commonly accepted. There would be nothing wrong if Batchelor simply rejected the authenticity of the Buddha's enlightenment and the core of his teachings, but instead he rejects the most reliable accounts of the Buddha's vision and replaces it with his own, while then projecting it on the Buddha that exists only in his imagination.

Perhaps the most important issue secularists ignore regarding the teachings attributed to the Buddha is that there are contemplative methods—practiced by many generations of ardent seekers of truth—for putting many, if not all, these teachings to the test of experience. Specifically, Buddhist assertions concerning the continuity of individual consciousness after death and rebirth can be explored through the practice of samádhi, probing beyond the coarse dimension of consciousness that is contingent upon the brain to a subtler continuum of awareness that allegedly carries on from one lifetime to the next.⁷ Such samádhi training does not require prior belief

2. *Itivuttaka* 112

3. *Aòguttara Nikáya* II 23

4. Stephen Batchelor, *Buddhism without Beliefs*, 10, 15.

5. Yuho Yokoi, *Zen Master Dogen: An Introduction with Selected Writings* (New York: Weatherhill, 1976).

6. Majjhima Nikáya 36: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/ptf/buddha.html>

7. Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification*, trans. Ñáóamoli Bhikkhu (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1979), XIII 13–120; B. Alan Wallace, *Mind in the Balance: Meditation in Science, Buddhism, and Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 115–118.

in reincarnation, but it does call for great determination and zeal in refining one's attention skills. Such full-time, rigorous training may require months or even years of disciplined effort, and this is where the Buddhist science of the mind really gets launched. If one is content with one's own dogmatic, materialist assertions—content to accept the uncorroborated assumption that all states of consciousness are produced by the brain—then one is bound to remain ignorant about the origins and nature of consciousness. But if one is determined to progress from a state of agnosticism—not knowing what happens at death—to direct knowledge of the deeper dimensions of consciousness, then Buddhism provides multiple avenues of experiential discovery. Many may welcome this as a refreshing alternative to the blind acceptance of materialist assumptions about consciousness that do not lend themselves to either confirmation or repudiation through experience.

Batchelor concludes that since different Buddhist schools vary in their interpretations of the Buddha's teachings in response to the questions of the nature of that which is reborn and how this process occurs, all their views are based on nothing more than speculation.⁸ Scientists in all fields of inquiry commonly differ in their interpretations of empirical findings, so if this fact invalidates Buddhist teachings, it should equally invalidate scientific findings as well. While in his view Buddhism started out as agnostic, it "has tended to lose its agnostic dimension through becoming institutionalized as a religion (i.e., a revealed belief system valid for all time, controlled by an elite body of priests)."⁹ Since there is no evidence that Buddhism was ever agnostic, any assertions about how it lost this status are nothing but groundless speculations, driven by the philosophical bias that he brings to Buddhism.

As an agnostic Buddhist, Batchelor does not regard the Buddha's teachings as a source of answers to questions of where we came from, where we are going, or what happens after death, regardless of the extensive teachings attributed to the Buddha regarding each of these issues. Rather, he advises Buddhists to seek such knowledge in what he deems the appropriate domains: astrophysics, evolutionary biology, neuroscience, and so on. With this advice, he reveals that he is a devout member of the congregation of Thomas Huxley's Church Scientific, taking refuge in science as the one true way to answer all the deepest questions concerning human nature and the universe at large. Ironically, a rapidly growing number of open-minded cognitive scientists are seeking to collaborate with Buddhist

contemplatives in the multi-disciplinary, cross-cultural study of the mind. Buddhist and scientific methods of inquiry have their strengths and limitations, and many who are eager to find answers to questions of where we came from, where we are going, or what happens after death recognize that Buddhism has much to offer in this regard. Batchelor's stance, on the contrary, fails to note the limitations of modern science and the strengths of Buddhism regarding such questions, so the current of history is bound to leave him behind.

Having identified himself as an agnostic follower of Huxley, Batchelor then proceeds to make one declaration after another about the limits of human consciousness and the ultimate nature of human existence and the universe at large, as if he were the most accomplished of gnostics. A central feature of Buddhist meditation is the cultivation of samādhi, by which the attentional imbalances of restlessness and lethargy are gradually overcome through rigorous, sustained training. But in reference to the vacillation of the mind from restlessness to lethargy, Batchelor responds, "No amount of meditative expertise from the mystical East will solve this problem, because such restlessness and lethargy are not mere mental or physical lapses but reflexes of an existential condition."¹⁰ Contemplative adepts from multiple traditions, including Hinduism and Buddhism have been disproving this claim for thousands of years, and it is now being refuted by modern scientific research.¹¹ But Batchelor is so convinced of his own preconceptions regarding the limitations of the human mind and of meditation that he ignores all evidence to the contrary.

While there are countless references in the discourses of the Buddha referring to the realization of emptiness, Batchelor claims, "Emptiness ... is not something we 'realize' in a moment of mystical insight that 'breaks through' to a transcendent reality concealed behind yet mysteriously underpinning the empirical world." He adds, "we can no more step out of language and imagination than we can step out of our bodies."¹² p. 97. Buddhist contemplatives throughout history have reportedly experienced states of consciousness that transcend language and concepts as a result of their practice of insight meditation. But Batchelor describes such practice as entailing instead a state of perplexity in

10. Ibid. 62.

11. Progress in this regard can be read by following the series of scientific papers on the "Shamatha Project" on the website of the Santa Barbara Institute for Consciousness Studies: <http://sbinstitute.com/>. Other studies have been cited elsewhere in this volume.

12. Stephen Batchelor, *Buddhism without Beliefs*, 39.

8. Stephen Batchelor, *Buddhism without Beliefs*, 35–36.

9. Ibid. 16.

which one is overcome by "awe, wonder, incomprehension, shock," during which not "just the mind but the entire organism feels perplexed."¹³

Batchelor's account of meditation describes the experiences of those who have failed to calm the restlessness and lethargy of their own minds through the practice of samádhi, and failed to realize emptiness or transcend language and concepts through the practice of vipassaná. Instead of acknowledging these as failures, he heralds them as triumphs and, without a shred of supportive evidence, attributes them to a Buddhism that exists nowhere but in his imagination.

Although Batchelor declared himself to be an agnostic, such proclamations about the true teachings of the Buddha and about the nature of the human mind, the universe, and ultimate reality all suggest that he has assumed for himself the role of a gnostic of the highest order. Rather than presenting Buddhism without beliefs, his version is saturated with his own beliefs, many of them based upon nothing more than his own imagination. Batchelor's so-called agnosticism is utterly paradoxical. On the one hand, he rejects a multitude of Buddhist beliefs based upon the most reliable textual sources, while at the same time confidently making one claim after another without ever supporting them with demonstrable evidence.

In Batchelor's most recent book,¹⁴ he refers to himself as an atheist, more so than as an agnostic, and when I asked him whether he still holds the above views expressed in his book published thirteen years ago, he replied that he no longer regards the Buddha's teachings as agnostic, but as pragmatic.¹⁵ It should come as no surprise that as he shifted his own self-image from that of an agnostic to an atheist, the image he projects of the Buddha shifts accordingly. In short, his views on the nature of the Buddha and his teachings are far more a reflection of himself and his own views than they are of any of the most reliable historical accounts of the life and teachings of the Buddha.

In his move from agnosticism to atheism, Batchelor moves closer to the position of Sam Harris, who is devoted to the ideal of science destroying religion. In his book *Letter to a Christian Nation*, Harris proclaims that the problem with religion is the problem of dogma, in contrast to atheism, which he says "is not a philosophy; it is not even a view of the world; it is simply an admission of the obvious."¹⁶ This, of course, is the attitude of all dogmatists:

they are so certain of their beliefs that they regard anyone who disagrees with them as being so stupid or ignorant that they can't recognize the obvious.¹⁷

In his article "Killing the Buddha" Harris shares his advice with the Buddhist community, like Batchelor asserting, "The wisdom of the Buddha is currently trapped within the religion of Buddhism," and he goes further in declaring that "merely being a self-described "Buddhist" is to be complicit in the world's violence and ignorance to an unacceptable degree." By the same logic, Harris, as a self-avowed atheist, must be complicit in the monstrous violence of communist regimes throughout Asia who, based on atheistic dogma, sought to destroy all religions and murder their followers. While Harris has recently distanced himself from the label "atheist," he still insists that religious faith may be the most destructive force in the world. It is far more reasonable, however, to assert that greed, hatred, and delusion are the most destructive forces in human nature; and theists, atheists, and agnostics are all equally prone to these mental afflictions.

Harris not only claims to have what is tantamount to a kind of gnostic insight into the true teachings of the Buddha, he also claims to know what most Buddhists do and do not realize: "If the methodology of Buddhism (ethical precepts and meditation) uncovers genuine truths about the mind and the phenomenal world—truths like emptiness, selflessness, and impermanence—these truths are not in the least 'Buddhist.' No doubt, most serious practitioners of meditation realize this, but most Buddhists do not."¹⁸ In the wake of the unspeakable tragedy of communist regimes' attempts to annihilate Buddhism from the face of the earth, it comes as an unexpected blow when individuals who have been instructed by Buddhist teachers and profess sympathy for Buddhism seem intent on completing what the communists have left undone.

The current domination of science, education, and the secular media by scientific materialism has cast doubt on many of the theories and practices of the world's religions. This situation is not without historical precedent. In the time of the Weimar Republic, Hitler offered what appeared to be a vital secular faith in place of the discredited creeds of religion, Lenin and Stalin did the same in the Soviet Union, and Mao Zedong followed suit in China. Hugh Heclo, former professor of government at Harvard University, writes of this trend,

13. Ibid. 97.

14. Stephen Batchelor, *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2010).

15. Personal correspondence, July 6, 2010.

16. Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 51.

17. Cf. B. Alan Wallace, "Religion and Reason: A Review of Sam Harris's Letter to a Christian Nation." In *Shambhala Sun*, October/November 2006: 99–104.

18. Sam Harris, "Killing the Buddha" In *Shambhala Sun*, March 2006, 73–75.

"If traditional religion is absent from the public arena, secular religions are unlikely to satisfy man's quest for meaning. ... It was an atheistic faith in man as creator of his own grandeur that lay at the heart of Communism, fascism and all the horrors they unleashed for the twentieth century. And it was adherents of traditional religions—Martin Niemöller, C.S. Lewis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Reinhold Niebuhr, Martin Buber—who often warned most clearly of the tragedy to come from attempting to build man's own version of the New Jerusalem on Earth."¹⁹

While Batchelor focuses on replacing the historical teachings of the Buddha with his own secularized vision and Harris rails at the suffering inflicted upon humanity by religious dogmatists, both tend to overlook the fact that Hitler, Stalin, and Mao Zedong caused more bloodshed, justified by their secular ideologies, than all the religious wars that preceded them throughout human history.

I am not suggesting that Batchelor or Harris, who are both decent, well-intentioned men, are in any way similar to Hitler, Stalin, or Mao Zedong. But I am suggesting that Batchelor's misrepresentation of Buddhism parallels that of Chinese communist anti-Buddhist propaganda; and the Buddhist holocaust inflicted by multiple communist regimes throughout Asia during the twentieth century were based upon and justified by propaganda virtually identical to Harris's vitriolic, anti-religious polemics.

The Theravada Buddhist commentator Buddhaghosa refers to "far enemies" and "near enemies" of certain virtues, namely, loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. The far enemies of each of these virtues are vices that are diametrically opposed to their corresponding virtues, and the near enemies are false facsimiles. The far enemy of loving-kindness, for instance, is malice, and that of compassion is cruelty. The near enemy of loving-kindness is self-centered attachment, and that of compassion is grief, or despair.²⁰ To draw a parallel, communist regimes that are bent on destroying Buddhism from the face of the earth may be called the far enemies of Buddhism, for they are diametrically opposed to all that Buddhism stands for. Batchelor and Harris, on the other hand, present themselves as being sympathetic to Buddhism, but their visions of the nature of the Buddha's teachings are false facsimiles of all those that have been handed down reverently from one generation to the next

19. Hugh Heclo, "Religion and Public Policy," *Journal of Policy History*, Vol. 13, No.1, 2001, 14.

20. Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification*, trans. Bhikkhu Nāomoli (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1979) IX: B. Alan Wallace, *The Four Immeasurables: Cultivating a Boundless Heart* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2004).

since the time of the Buddha. However benign their intentions, their writings may be regarded as "near enemies" of Buddhism.

The popularity of the writings of Batchelor, Harris, and other atheists such as Richard Dawkins—both within the scientific community and the public at large—shows they are far from alone in terms of their utter disillusionment with traditional religions. Modern science, as conceived by Galileo, originated out of a love for God the Father and a wish to know the mind of their benevolent, omnipotent Creator by way of knowing His creation. As long as science and Christianity seemed compatible, religious followers of science could retain what psychologists call a sense of "secure attachment" regarding both science and religion. But particularly with Darwin's discovery of evolution by natural selection and the militant rise of the Church Scientific, for many, the secure attachment toward religion has mutated into a kind of dismissive avoidance.

Children with avoidant attachment styles tend to avoid parents and caregivers—no longer seeking comfort or contact with them—and this becomes especially pronounced after a period of absence. People today who embrace science, together with the metaphysical beliefs of scientific materialism turn away from traditional religious beliefs and institutions, no longer seeking comfort or contact with them; and those who embrace religion and refuse to be indoctrinated by materialistic biases commonly lose interest in science. This trend is viewed with great perplexity and dismay by the scientific community, many of whom are convinced that they are uniquely objective, unbiased, and free of beliefs that are unsupported by empirical evidence.

Thomas Huxley's ideal of the beliefs and institution of the Church Scientific achieving "domination over the whole realm of the intellect" is being promoted by agnostics and atheists like Batchelor and Harris. But if we are ever to encounter the Buddhist vision of reality, we must first set aside all our philosophical biases, whether they are theistic, agnostic, atheist, or otherwise. Then, through critical, disciplined study of the most reliable sources of the Buddha's teachings, guided by qualified spiritual friends and teachers, followed by rigorous, sustained practice, we may encounter the Buddhist vision of reality. And with this encounter with our own true nature, we may realize freedom through our own experience. That is the end of agnosticism, for we come to know reality as it is, and the truth will set us free.

B. Alan Wallace, PhD, is an American author, translator, teacher, researcher, interpreter, and Buddhist practitioner interested in the intersections of consciousness studies and scientific disciplines such as psychology, cognitive neuroscience and physics.



KÁKA JÁTAKA: Crows' Fat

A Játaka Story retold by Ken and Visakha Kawasaki

It was while staying at Jetavana that the Buddha told this story about a wise teacher.

Long, long ago, when Brahmadatta was reigning in Varanasi, the Bodhisatta was born a crow. He resided in a huge charnel ground in Varanasi, where he was the leader of a flock of eighty thousand crows.

One day the king's spiritual advisor left the city to go to the river to bathe. When he finished, he dressed in brand new clothes, garlanded himself, and returned to the city. On the archway of the city gate there sat a pair of crows. The male said to his mate, "I am going to foul this brahmin's head."

"Don't you dare do such a thing!" said his wife. "This brahmin is an important man. It is dangerous to incur the hatred of the great. If you anger him, he may do serious harm to us."

"I don't care. I'm going to do it anyway!" insisted her mate.

"Well, you'll be sorry," said the wife, and flew quickly away.

Just when the brahmin was under the battlements, the crow released a considerable dropping, which landed on the man's freshly washed and shaven head. The indignity he suffered infuriated the brahmin so much that he developed an intense hatred for all crows.

A short time later, a young servant in charge of a granary spread new rice in front of the granary door to dry in the sun. She sat in the door to guard the rice, but the sun made her sleepy, and she dozed off. While she was sleeping, a shaggy goat came up and started to eat the rice. When the girl woke up she drove him away. The goat stayed close by, and, as soon as he saw the servant nodding, he returned to eat more rice. Again she awoke and chased the goat away. After the servant had driven the goat away for the third time, she decided to give the animal such a scare that he would go away and leave the rice alone.

She got a lighted torch, propped it beside her, and pretended to fall asleep again. As soon as the goat resumed eating the grain, she jumped up and struck his back with the torch, which set the goat's

shaggy hair on fire. Frightened and in pain, the frantic goat dashed into the hay-shed next to the elephants' stable and rolled in the hay, trying to extinguish the fire. Instead of putting out the fire on his back, the goat set the shed on fire. The flames quickly spread to the elephant stables, where many of the elephants suffered serious burns, beyond the skill of the elephant-doctors to cure.

When the king heard about this, he asked his advisor whether he knew of a remedy to relieve the elephants' pain and heal their burns.

"I certainly do, Sire," replied the advisor. "The best salve for this type of injury is crows' fat."

The king immediately ordered all crows killed and their fat rendered into an ointment. Throughout the city, there was a great slaughter of crows, but not a single drop of fat was found on any bird. Undaunted, the king's men went on killing as many crows as they could. Dead crows lay in heaps everywhere. All surviving crows were terrified as they watched their relatives and friends being slain.

After escaping from the king's men, a crow informed the crow chief of the danger they were all in. He immediately realized that he was the only one who could save the crows from complete annihilation. He reviewed the Ten Perfections and, taking loving-kindness as his protection, flew straight to the king's palace. He entered through an open window and landed under the king's throne. A servant tried to catch him, but, at that moment, the king entered and forbade it.

Again recollecting loving-kindness, the leader of the crows stepped out from under the throne. "Sire," he said calmly to the king, "in ruling his kingdom, a king should remember never to act from passion. Before taking action, a ruler should thoroughly examine a situation. Only then should he do what needs to be done. If, on the other hand, a king acts

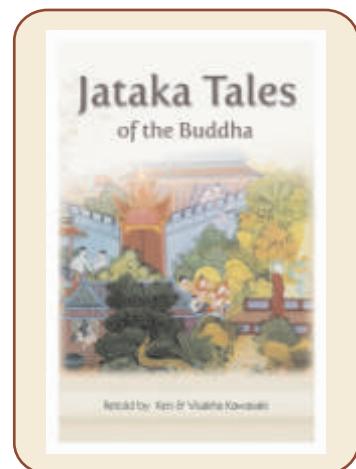
rashly and without justice, he may cause great fear, even the fear of death, among his subjects. When your advisor prescribed crows' fat, he was merely seeking revenge. He knows that crows have no fat. His intention was to have many crows die simply because he hates them."

These words touched the king's heart. In gratitude, he ordered that the leader of the crows be placed on a golden throne, anointed with the choicest oils, and provided with curries from the royal kitchen, served in vessels of gold. After the wise bird had finished eating, the king said, "Sage bird, you say that crows have no fat. Can you tell me why?

"Your Majesty," the chief crow answered in a clear voice, "crows live in perpetual fear of all humans who are their enemies. Because of this extreme anxiety and apprehension, crows never develop any fat."

King Brahmadatta was so pleased with everything the crow leader had taught him that he offered him the kingdom, but the wise crow promptly returned it. Then, establishing the king in the five precepts, the wise crow urged him to protect all living creatures from harm. The king immediately proclaimed a ban on killing any living creature. To crows, he declared special privileges. He ordered that every day six bushels of rice be cooked for them, while the leader of the crows was given the same food as he himself ate.

Having concluded his story, the Buddha identified the birth: "At that time, Ánanda was king of Kási, and I was the leader of the crows."



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As a teacher, during the interval between the last class and the class in which a particular moral value is being taught, you can focus your practice on that moral value. Then you will teach with the confidence and understanding of one who practices what he or she preaches. In some instances, particularly with older children, you might even have your own anecdote to share with the class regarding your experience in practicing that value. Whether you are an experienced teacher, a parent, or someone who has never taught before, I encourage you to accept the wonderful and challenging opportunity to teach Dharma to children with the help of these books, and with an open, understanding and loving heart. You can teach your own children at home or with a small group, you can organize and teach a Dharma class at a local temple or meditation centre, or you can assist or substitute in an ongoing Dharma class. More than ever, with the negative influences of modern society, children need guidance in becoming aware of their own moral weaknesses and how to overcome them—how to practice the moral values in their daily life, given today's norms and challenges.

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They were written with the idea that the most important aspect of teaching youth is to facilitate the growth of their good character by learning and practice of spiritual (moral) values. In the terminology of Buddhism, we would refer to guiding them along the path of Dharma

THE CONDITIONED GENESIS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

An extract from an essay by
K. N. Jayatilleke

The doctrine of conditioned genesis or *paticca samuppāda* explains phenomena in terms of causal correlations without assuming the existence of metaphysical entities like a soul.

It is, at the same time, an explanation of the origin and cessation of suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of conditioned existence. After stating the whole series of interrelated phenomena such as "ignorance conditions volitional acts, etc., " it is concluded: "In this manner there arises this mass of suffering ... and in this manner there ceases this mass of suffering" (SN 12:17/S II 20f.).

We find in other religions and philosophies that many explanations of the present condition of the individual are in terms of metaphysical first causes or final causes. The theists try to explain the condition of the individual by asserting that the individual is a creation of God considered as a first cause. The materialists try to account for the individual in terms of purely material factors considered as a first cause in the evolution of the world. The dualists assume primordial first causes, such as Matter (*prakṛti*) and Spirit (*puruṣa*) in Sāṅkhya philosophy.

Yet, in the doctrine of conditioned genesis, ignorance (*avijjā*) is not a first cause in this sense. In this way, too, the doctrine is an attempt to explain phenomena "in the middle" without recourse to first causes or final causes. Explanations in terms of a first cause posit a cause such as God or Matter in

toward the ultimate goal of enlightenment, or liberation from the cycle of rebirth. The books are not, however, exclusively for Buddhists. They are instructive for youth of any religion to become acquainted with a great historical religious figure, Gotama Buddha, and to learn moral values which are central to all religions. The books do not delve into doctrines and nomenclature which are strictly Buddhist, but do refer to Buddhist beliefs in rebirth and kamma, and describe basic Buddhist principles such as the Middle Path, the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Path. Therefore, these books were written with the intention of being used for teaching youth in Buddhist dharma schools, Sri

the beginning of time, and explanations in terms of final causes try to explain things in terms of ultimate ends such as a goal or purpose which things serve. But, in the doctrine of conditioned genesis, there are no first or final causes.

Ignorance is not a first cause, although it is selected as a convenient starting point to explain a series of inter-connected phenomena.

Ignorance is to be found here and now in the present. It constitutes the sum-total of our erroneous beliefs, as well as true beliefs not amounting to knowledge, about the nature and destiny of man in the universe. We cannot know the first beginnings of such ignorance on the part of beings in an oscillating universe which expands and contracts without beginning or end. But we can know that our present ignorance is causally conditioned and that, by acquiring full knowledge and realization of our nature and destiny, we can put an end to our ignorance even in the present. As stated in the texts: "The first beginning of ignorance is not known (such that we may say) that before this there was no ignorance and at this point ignorance arose ... but that ignorance is causally conditioned (*idappaccaya avijja*) can be known" (AN 10:51/A V 113).

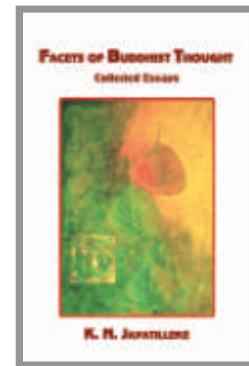
Ignorance is, therefore, not conceived as a first cause except in the purely relative sense that we may start with ignorance, which is itself (as we shall see) conditioned by other factors. It is said that anyone who understands the causal process in the genesis and development of the individual would not seek for explanations in terms of first causes or final causes. After enumerating the doctrine of conditioned genesis, the Buddha asks the monks on one occasion the following rhetorical question: "Would you, O monks, knowing and seeing thus, probe [literally, run behind] the prior end of things ... or pursue [literally, run after] the final end of things?"

Buddhism starts with the present and explains specific phenomena in terms of general laws. This is also what the scientists try to do in their investigations into the nature of phenomena in their respective branches of study. In doing so, it does not try to give explanations in terms of first causes or other such unverifiable metaphysical entities. This is the distinctive contribution of Buddhism in its investigation of phenomena concerned with man's nature and destiny.

This is why the doctrine of causal genesis is considered to be the central teaching of Buddhism. It contains the truth about the nature of the individual and his destiny as discovered by the Buddha in the final stage of his enlightenment. In a stanza which was widely known, it is said that "the Transcendent One speaks of the causes of conditioned events which arise from causes" (Vin I 40). In one place the Buddha says: "He who sees the doctrine of conditioned genesis, sees the Dhamma, and he who sees the Dhamma, sees conditioned genesis" (MN 28.28/M I 191).

Conditioned genesis unfolds the predicament of man as he is found in the present, conditioned (but not determined) by his past experiences going back into prior lives, by heredity and the physiological condition of the body, the impact of the environment—physical and ideological—and the different kinds of desires which rage within him.

From one of the essays by the renowned Buddhist scholar that were recently collectively republished in "Facets of Buddhist Thought: Collected Essays of K. N. Jayatilleke."

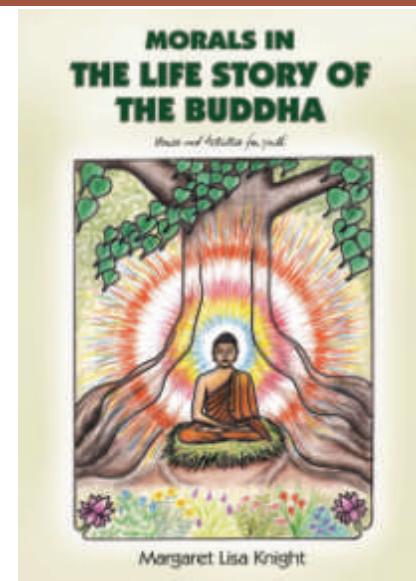


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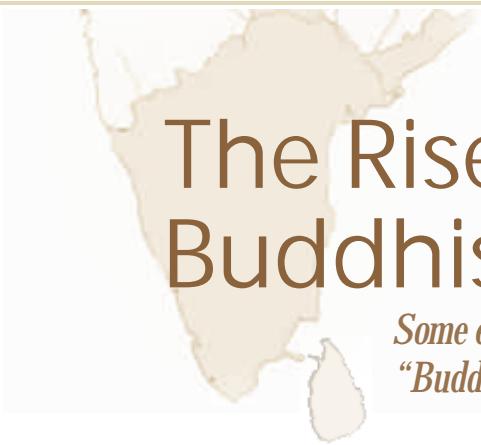
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Spiritual Education, Education in Human Values, and Hindu, Jain, interfaith and unitarian classes. It is hoped that anyone of any faith will find the books instructive and inspiring for teaching youth. The stories of the Buddha contained in the books do not follow the direct translations from the Pali texts as these include vocabulary, grammar and speaking styles which may be distracting or incomprehensible to young students of today's world. Instead, the stories are told in modern English which is easy for even the youngest students to understand. In addition, some details which are often included in popular renderings of these stories are omitted from the stories to encourage focus on the moral value being taught.



The Rise and Fall of Buddhism in South India

Some extracts from Hisselle Dhammaratana Maháthera's "Buddhism in South India"

It is not generally known that Buddhism flourished in South India in ancient times. The ancient chronicles of Sri Lanka such as the *Dipavaí sa* and *Mahávaí sa* are silent on the subject.

The earliest literary work in which Buddhism is traceable is in the Tamil collection of poems called *Puraóánúru* (1st century CE), where there is reference to the *Sivi Játaka*. The full impact of Buddhism in South India, however, is unmistakably shown in the *Silappadikáram* and *Maóimekhalaí*, which are two epics of the 3rd Sangam period in Tamil literature (2nd century CE). Of these, *Maóimekhalaí*—a poem about a court dancer who became a Buddhist nun—is a purely Buddhist work, which in addition to the narrative, contains also lengthy expositions of the Buddhist doctrine. Extracts from other poems written by the author of *Maóimekhalaí*, the Tamil Buddhist poet Síthalai Sáttanár, are found in other Tamil literary works. Quotations from the Buddhist poet Ilambodhiyar are found in the *Natrinali*. Thus we can come to the conclusion that Buddhism came to South India before the 3rd Sangam period of Tamil literature (2nd century CE).

Tamil literary works thus provide a clue to finding the time of the advent of Buddhism in South India. The inscriptions of King Asoka also shed much light on the subject. Two inscriptions of King Asoka found at Girnar in Surashtra are particularly helpful: “The merciful Emperor, endowed with favours from the gods, has arranged for medical facilities to be provided to men and beasts, in Coja (southern Tamil Nadu), Cera (Kerala), Páoðya (northern Tamil Nadu), Támrapárói (Sri Lanka), and in the kingdom of the Greek king Antiochus.”

From this it is clear that the Emperor Asoka provided medical facilities in the kingdoms of South India. Nothing is mentioned here of the spread of Buddhism. Yet in edict number XIII found near Peshawar in Pakistan, there is reference to the Buddhist missions of Asoka. Among the countries referred to are Coja, Páoðya and Támrapárói. This inscription was written in 258 BCE and is direct evidence of the Buddhist missions of Asoka to South India and Sri Lanka. As Buddhist missions to Sri Lanka had to come by way of South India, the spread of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and South India should be

considered contemporary events.

It is now accepted by scholars that Buddhism was introduced to South India by the Venerable Mahinda himself. Although our Sri Lankan chronicles say that the Venerable Mahinda flew to in Sri Lanka through his supernormal powers, scholars are of the opinion that he traveled by sea and called at the Coja capital Káveripáppanam in South India. He sojourned there in a monastery (*vihára*) called Indra Vihára, which was one of the several monasteries constructed in this part of the country by the Emperor Asoka. The Tamil poems *Silappadikáram* and *Maóimekhalaí* refer to this monastery, whose name is derived from the elder's name Mahá Indra (Mahendra) in its Sanskritised form.

The celebrated Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang arrived at Káñchipura in South India in 640 CE during the course of his travels. He mentions seeing a stúpa 100 feet in height. With regard to the Buddhist monuments in the Páoðya country, Hiuen Tsang writes: “Near the city of Madura there is a monastery built by Mahinda Thera, the brother of King Asoka. To the east of this there is a stúpa built by King Asoka.”

The commentator Dhammapála Thera, who wrote commentaries to the Thera-Therigáthá, Nettipakaraóa, etc, was born in the Páoðya country (Tamil Nadu). He mentions in his works that he resided at the Bhadaratírtha monastery which was built by King Asoka in the port city of Nágapáppanam, from where the great commentator Buddhaghosa embarked for Sri Lanka.

Several Sinhalese princes, including Mahá Ariphha, were ordained by Venerable Mahinda in Sri Lanka. All of them assisted Mahinda Thera in his missionary activities. Further, there is evidence that they assisted him in propagating the Dharma in South India.

Early in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, rock caves were made habitable and offered to the Saògha. Such caves are still to be seen at Vessagiri, Chetiyagiri (Mihintale), and Topigala. Similar caves are to be seen in the Madura district of the Páoðya country. Beds cut in the rocks for monks to rest upon are seen in these caves. Inscriptions are also found indicating the names of the donors. The Bráhmì script used by King Asoka in his

inscriptions has been utilised in some writings. One such cave in the Páoðya country is situated in a place called Ariþapapphi. This name could be derived from Venerable Ariþha's name, who could have resided in this particular cave while conducting his missionary activities.

From the aforementioned facts it may be concluded that Buddhism was introduced to South India by King Asoka and his son, the Venerable Mahinda, about the same time as the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka.

One can gain a good idea of the popularity of Buddhism in South India by reading the *Silappadhikáram* by the Jain poet Ilango Aðigal, the *Maóimekhalai* by the Buddhist poet Síthalai Sáttanár, and the *Theváram* hymns of the Hindu saints such as Appar, Sundarar, and Tirujñáóasambandhar. All these poets lived in the 2nd to 7th century CE. Further the works of the Vaishnavite saints of the 8th and 9th century, refer to Buddhists as "bodhiyár" or worshippers of Bodhi trees. (This practice or worshipping Bodhi trees is retained by the Hindus of South India, but they do not know that it is a legacy from their Buddhist ancestors.) The *Periyapuráóam*, by the 12th century poet Sekillár, is a Shaivaite refutation of Buddhism. The anti-Buddhist *Nilakesi* was written by the Jains as a refutation of the now lost Tamil Buddhist epic poem *Kuóðalakesi* on the conversion of the Jain nun Kuóðalakesi to Buddhism. All these works give a clear picture of the popular place of Buddhism held for several centuries in South India.

It is remarkable that not one of the five Epics in Tamil literature was written by Hindu Tamils. *Maóimekhalai*, *Valaiyapathi* and *Kuóðalakesi* are the works of Tamil Buddhist poets. The remaining two, *Silappadhikáram* and *Jívaka Cíntámani*, are Jain works. Although the epics of the Jains are preserved intact, of the Buddhist works only *Maóimekhalai*, a poem of 30 cantos, remains to tell the grandeur and glory of Buddhism in a land where it is no more. *The reason why the Maóimekhalai survived* is because its story is a continuation of the *Silappadhikáram*.

The story of Maóimekhalai is unknown in Pali and other literature. It is about the beautiful Hindu court dancer Maóimekhalai who studied the six Hindu systems of philosophy and other prevalent religions of the time. Comparing them to the teachings of the Buddha, she was most impressed with the latter. Later, on hearing doctrinal expositions from the Buddhist teacher Bhikkhu Aravaóa Aðigal, she became a Buddhist nun. There is doctrinal exposition in the last chapter of the poem dealing with the Four Noble Truths, Dependent Origination (*pápicca-samuppáda*), etc.

The aim of the author was to expose the weaknesses of Jainism—the chief opponent of Buddhism at the time—and other the contemporary religions, and to

enthrone the Buddha Dhamma as the perfect religion. The *Maóimekhalai* is a mine of information on the history of South India, Buddhism and its place during that period, contemporary arts and culture, and the customs of the times. It is a monument of the glorious days of Buddhism in South India.

South India produced many Buddhist teachers who made valuable contributions to Tamil, Páli, and Sanskrit literature. Reference to their works is found in Tamil literature and other historical records. It is most unfortunate that of the large number of books written from the 3rd to the 14th century only two are available today in the Tamil language: One literary work, *Maóimekhalai*, and a book on grammar, *Virasoliyam*, are all that remain to us. The names of some other books and a few quotations from them are available in non-Buddhist Tamil literature. As Tamil Buddhist books were not used outside India, they perished along with Buddhism in South India. In the 14th century, Toþagamuv- Ráhula, a Buddhist scholar in Sri Lanka, made use of a now lost Tamil glossary to the Játaka when he wrote the *Pañcikápradípa*. Fortunately, many of the Páli books written by Tamil Buddhist scholars such as Dhammapála Thera are preserved.

The city of Káñchipura was one of the major centers of Buddhism in South India. Renowned Buddhist teachers such as Aravaóa Aðigal, Dignága, Bodhidharma, Buddhaditiya, and the Pali commentators Ácariya Buddhadatta and Ácariya Dhammapála lived in this city. Ácarya Dharmapála, rector of the renowned Nálandá University in Bihar, and Anuruddha Thera, author of the popular 10th century Theraváda Abhidhamma compendium *Abhidhammatthasaògaha*, were natives of the city. The great Pali commentator of the early 5th century, Ácariya Buddhaghosa, mentions in the concluding stanzas to his commentary on the Aòguttara Nikáya (*Manorathapuráó*) that at the time of compiling the work he lived at Káñchipura. Again in the *Papañcasúdani*, the commentary on the Majjhima Nikáya, he mentions that the book was written when he resided at Mayúrapáñnam. In the *Samantapásádiká*, the Elder states that when residing at Káñchipura, he saw the Telugu commentary known as the *Andhappákathá*.

In Káñchipura too are found a large number of rock caves in which Bráhmí (Asokan) script inscriptions are found. The present Tirumáli shrine of the Vaishnavites was formerly a Buddhist monastery. After the disappearance of Buddhism, Buddhist viháras in the city were converted to Hindu Kovils. The Buddhist history of these shrines has been rewritten to Hindu ones and they are now parading Buddha statues in the guise of Hindu gods. The many Buddhist statues found broken up, and the use of numerous Buddhist images for building walls, foundations, and other building work are a source of grief to Buddhists.

Buddhism in South India had to contest with two rival faiths which were envious of its popularity: Hinduism and Jainism. Buddhism itself split into several sects. The *Nilakesī* of the Jains mentions three rival Buddhist sects, Maháyána, Ørávakayána, and Mantrayána, while the Hindu text *Theváram* mentions that Buddhism was divided into six sects. In the 7th and 8th century CE, Hindu saints such as Tirujñáosambandhar were responsible for the renaissance of Hinduism through popularizing the chanting of devotional hymns and incorporating local gods, etc. They successfully engaged Buddhist and Jain teachers in debate. Hinduism at that time was not yet divided into sects such as the Shaivaites and Vaishnavaites. Hence Buddhists, themselves divided, were unequal to the attack of the united Hindus. The disunity of the Buddhists thus contributed to the decline of Buddhism.

The continuation of the *Maháváí sa* mentions that in the 13th century King Parákramabáhu of Dambadeniya brought down Buddhist monks and scriptures from the Coja country to revive Buddhism in Sri Lanka. During this period there was a great deal of cultural intercourse between South India and Sri Lanka. The chief of the monks who were brought from South India was Venerable Dharmakitti. He wrote the continuation of the *Maháváí sa* from the time of King Sirimevan up to his time and is also considered to be the author of the Páli poem *Dápháváí sa*. The Venerable Coja Dipaòkara, known as Buddhappiya, also came to Sri Lanka. He composed the Páli poem *Pajjamadhu* (*Nectar of Verses*) in adoration of the Buddha. He is also the author of the Páli grammar *Rúpasiddhi*. From these facts it will be seen that up to the 13th century Buddhism was still strong in South India.

In the 14th century there were still Buddhists, monasteries, and centres of Buddhist learning in some parts of South India. King Pandit Parákramabáhu early in the 14th century got down a learned Bhikkhu who was a linguist, to help in the translation of the Játaka book into Sinhala. A minister of King Bhuvanekabáhu IV of Gampola, named Senádhilaòkára, caused a Buddhist monastery to be built at Káñchipura.

The last mention of a Buddhist monastery in South India is of the Chinese vihára at Nágapáppanam, founded in 720 for the use of Chinese mariners who called over here for purposes of trade. In the 15th century eleven Burmese Bhikkhus and one envoy despatched to Sri Lanka by the Burmese King Rámpatirája were shipwrecked while returning to their native land. Fortunately they reached Nágapáppanam and resided in the Chinese vihára. This is confirmed by the Kalyáoi Simá rock inscription in Burma.

This is evidence of Buddhism in South India even at this late stage. From these facts we can conclude that right up to the arrival of the Portuguese traders, Buddhism existed in South India. After that Buddhism disappeared, leaving

only traces of its heyday in the many ruins and the influence it brought to bear on Hinduism.

Though Buddhism in India had to yield to Hinduism, yet the period when Buddhism flourished was one of which the Tamil nation can rightly be proud in view of its outstanding contribution to Buddhist literature in Tamil, Páli and Sanskrit. Now, after the time of religious rivalries has passed, this period may well be remembered as a strong bond between the Tamil nation and the Buddhist countries.

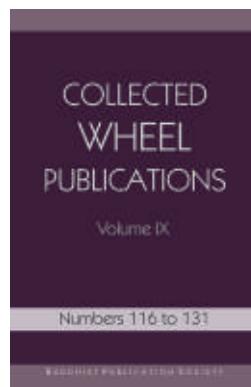
A few verses from the Maóimekhali

Analyze and understand that everything is impermanent, full of suffering, without a self and unclean; thus regarding, give up desire!

Realizing that loving-kindness, compassion and sympathetic joy constitute the best attitude of mind, give up anger!

By the practice of learning, contemplation, development of mind and vision, reflect, realize and give up all illusion! In these four ways get rid of the darkness of mind!

Buddhism in South India was earlier published as Wheel Publication No. 124/125; and will be reprinted in *Collected Wheel Publications*, Volume IX.



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VIMUTTIMAGGA
AND
VISUDDHIMAGGA
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

P.V. BAPAT

The Importance of the Dhamma in the Modern World

Most people believe that material things are important, that happiness lies in material things. In fact, the more material things you get, the more dissatisfied you are; and the more dissatisfied you are, the more material things you want to get! The Buddha has given a very powerful simile to describe this condition. He compared it to a dog with a bone. The dog won't let go of the bone and is just holding on to it, and is still hungry and still dissatisfied, and still suffers from fear of losing that bone.

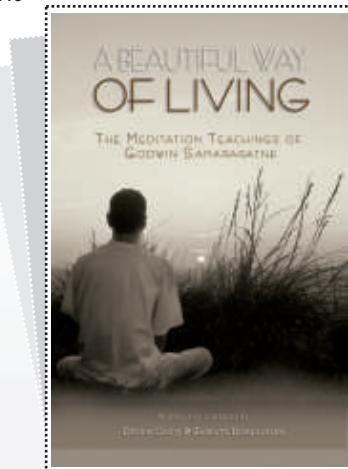
Related to this serious problem of materialism is another aspect, another manifestation of this, called consumerism. It's a real challenge for people to live in consumer societies and yet not be affected by the consumerism around them. Consumerism has many aspects, but I see two dangerous aspects in consumerism. One is that people are not clear about what they actually need and what is just their greed. According to the Dhamma we need certain things: food, clothing, shelter, and medicine—they are called the four requisites.

The four necessary things are things that human beings really need. So there's a place for material things, but then when they become our goals and when we are confused between greed and need, this is where they can lead to dissatisfaction and suffering.

Another dangerous aspect of consumerism is that the society that you live in starts manipulating you, and the danger is that you don't know that you are being manipulated. You become like puppets, puppets in the hands of a society that creates desire, creates greed, and this all leads to more and more frustration. So isn't this a sad situation when human beings have the potentiality of becoming free, of becoming enlightened? We have the Buddha-nature in us, but this aspect is not recognised and instead we become victims of the society that we live in.

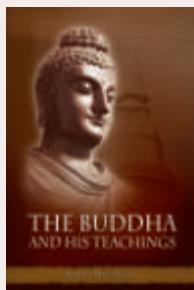
The simile that has come to my mind about this situation is that though we are grown up we have become dependent on what I call toys. What I mean by toys are external things where you think you will find happiness, joy, and peace. You start acquiring toys, and then you change one toy for another, and your whole life is spent on getting toys and yet still you are dissatisfied.

An interesting question is: is meditation also a toy? Is there a relationship between these toys and meditation? I would suggest that with meditation you become your own toy. This is the importance of the Dhamma. This is the importance of the Buddha's wonderful teaching. When you become your own toy you can be happy, contented, and peaceful with yourself. So the need for external toys, external things, drops away because you find the joy and happiness from within.

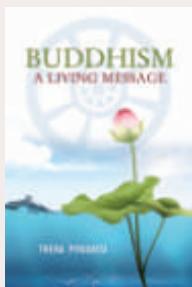


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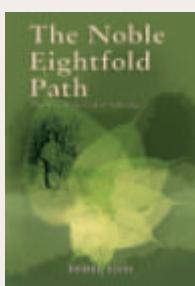
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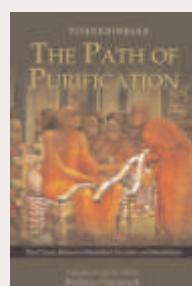
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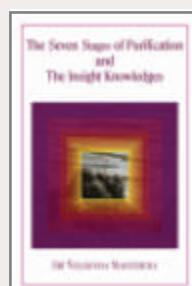
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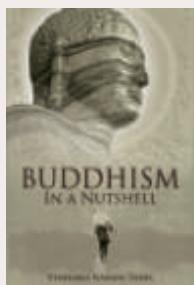
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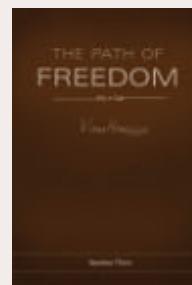
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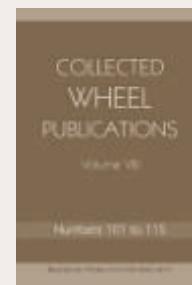
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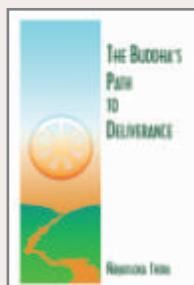
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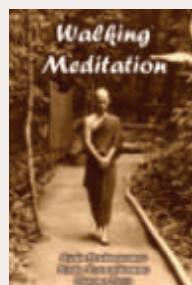
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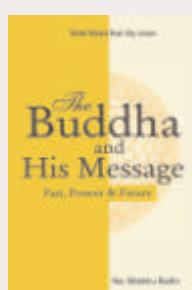


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