

"Heaven and Hell in Buddhism"



Honorary Professor Chamnong Tongprasert

One of the problems faced the people of today as well as the people of the ancient time is the problem of a world beyond, or strictly speaking, the problem of heaven and hell.

It may be questioned: is there a world beyond? Are there heavens and hells? Regarding this problem, the Buddha replied to a brahman of Sâla village in Kosala kingdom as:

Because there is a world beyond, the view of anyone that there is not a world beyond is a false view of his. As there is indeed a world beyond, it is a false conception of his As there is indeed a world beyond, if anyone says that there is not a world beyond, he makes mock of those perfected ones who are knowers of a world beyond."**[1]**

One who convinces others that there is not a world beyond, violates the true Dhamma, and exalts himself while disparaging others. "Indeed, before his good morality is got rid of, bad morality is set up. And this false view, false conception, false speech, the mocking of the **ariyans**, the convincing which is against true **Dhamma**, the exalting of oneself, the disparaging of others- - these are a variety of evil, unskilled states that arise thus because of false view."**[2]** One who has such a conception will bring the world to peril, since that conception will make him selfish and do everything as he likes. He will have an idea that after death he will not be born again, and thus seeks for the happiness regardless the misery and trouble of the others. According to Buddhism, there will be defeat in two ways for such an unworthy individual: 1) such a person will be condemned here and now by intelligent persons; and 2) after death he will arise in a sorrowful way (Apâya), a bad bourn (Vinipâta), the downfall (Dugati), and hells (Niraya).**[3]**

In Buddhism, there are many regions of rebirth, or ways of life, the so-called "Gati". In general, they are given as six, and are enumerated in the order of their superiority: The Gods (Deva), Titans (Asura), Man (Nara), Beasts (Tiracchâna), Tantalized Ghosts (Preta), and Hell (Niraya).**[4]** However, in **Mahâsîhanâdasutta** of the Majjima-Nikâya, the only five **Gati** (Region of Rebirth) is given. In that Sutta, the Titans are not separately represented.**[5]**

Of these six **Gati**, the first three worlds are considered superior or good, and the last three inferior or bad. Heaven, the realm of gods, is the highest. Hell is the lowest. And of these six **Gati**, the highest and the lowest ones are the most interesting, since the conception of heaven and hell prevails in every religion including Buddhism.

Are there real heavens and hells? This Question is very difficult to answer, since we cannot see them. However, it is not wise to refuse to acknowledge all that we cannot see or experience. There are many things which are beyond ability to see and experience.

"Heavens" and "hells" are found in many Suttas of the Tripitaka. But these Suttas show us not only the heavens and hells of the world beyond, but also the heavens and hells at present, in ourselves, and in this world. As the Buddha said:

"Brethren, I have seen the hell so called, belonging to the sixfold sense-sphere. Therein whatever object one sees with the eye, one sees it as uninviting, not as inviting. One sees it as repulsive, not as charming. One sees it as ugly, not lovely. Whatever sound one hears with the ear..... Whatever scent one smells with the nose... . Whatever savour one tastes with tongue.... . Whatever tangible one contacts with the body... . Whatever mind-state one cognizes with the mind. He cognizes it as uninviting, not as inviting, as repulsive, not charming, as ugly, not lovely... .

"Brethren, I have seen the heavens so called of the sixfold sense-sphere. Therein whatsoever object one sees with the eye, one sees it as inviting, not as uninviting. One sees it as charming, not as repulsive, as lovely, not ugly. Whatever sound... . Whatever savour... . Whatever tangible... . Whatever mind-state one cognizes with the mind, he cognizes it as inviting, not uninviting."**[6]**

According to this Sutta, the heavens and hells are in ourselves. Our life may be both heaven and hell. This world is the world of both heaven and hell. "Heaven" is utter bliss, "hell" is misery. Hence, the world of men is a mixture of both heaven and hell. We are very lucky to be born as men, for thus we can enter the Path that sets us free.

As long as one does not cut off or at least reduce one's ignorance, desire, and grasping, one must wander in this **Samsâra**, sometimes going to heaven, sometimes going to hell.

The fire of hell in this world is hotter than that of the hell of the world beyond, for the Buddha said: "There is no fire equal to lust (Râga)."**[7]** And in **Âdittapariyâyasutta**, the Buddha said

to the ascetics of Uruvelâ headed by Uruvela-Kassapa as:

"Monks, everything is burning... . The eyes, monds, is burning, material shapes are burning, consciousness through the eye is burning... . I say it is burning with the fire of passion, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of stupidity; it is burning because of birth, aging, dying, because of grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair. The ear... the nose ... the tongue... the body... the mind is burning... lamentation and despair."^[8]

In addition to this Sutta, the Buddha said to the monks:

"Monks, there is Hell called "The Great Distress". Therein, whatsoever object one sees with the eyes, one sees it as repulsive, not attractive: as repellent, not as charming: one sees it as unpleasant, not as pleasant. (And so in the case of sound, smell, taste, tangible, and mental states.)

"There is indeed, monks, a distress greater and more fearsome. And what is that? Whatsoever recluses or brahmins understand not, as it really is, the meaning of: This is Ill (Dukkha), This is the ceasing of Ill (Dukkha-Nirodha), This is the practice that leads to the ceasing of Ill (Dukkha-Nirodha-Gâminî-Patipadâ)."^[9]

Moreover, the Buddha explained to Tâlaputta, the stage-manager, about the "heaven in the hell" as follows:

"In the case of those beings, manager, who aforetime were not free from lusts, but were bound with the bond of lust; who aforetime were not free from resentment, but were bound with the bond of resentment; who aforetime were not free from illusion, but were bound with the bond of illusion, --in such case, a player who on the stage or in the arena brings about lustful, resentful, or illusory states of mind, so that such beings become still more lustful, still more resentful, still more deluded, --being himself drugged and slothful, he drugs and makes others slothful,-- such a one, when body breaks up, after death is reborn in the Purgatory of Laughter (Pahâsa-Niraya)."^[10] Hence, it may be said the theaters, babareta, arena, and places like that, are the Pahâsa Hell.

Now we come to a consideration of the heavens and the hells of the world beyond.

According to the **Mahâvagga** of the Sanyutta-Nikâya, there are more and more living beings reborn in the hells, in the wombs of animals, and in the realm of Ghosts. Those reborn as men or Devas (gods), by contrast, are so few as to be comparable to the amount of dust picked up by the finger-nail, relative to the whole earth.^[11]

The problem of the heaven, the hell, the preta, and the asura, is a very perplexing one in Buddhism, since we ourselves know nothing about what they really are. One who really know these Gati is only the **Sekha**, the learner, who is at least a **Sotâpanna**, or one who reaches the stream of Nibbâna.^[12] Nonethelese, these **Gati** (regions of rebirth) should be considered as stated in the Buddhist text as much and carefully as possible.

[1] **The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings**, Vol.II, "Discourse on Sure" (Apaóóakasutta), trans. by I.B.Horner, (London: Published for the Pali Text Society by the Luzac & Company, Ltd. 1957), P. 71.

[2] Ibid., p. 71.

[3] Ibid., p. 78.

[4] L.A. Waddell. **The Buddhism of Tibet**, (Lamaism, Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, Limited, 1959), p. 101.

[5] **The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings**, Vol. I, "Mahâsîhanâdasutta", trans. by I.B. Horner, (London: Published for the Pali Text Society by the Luzac & Company, Ltd., 1954), P. 98.

[6] **The Book of the kindred Sayings** (Sanyutta-Nikâya), or Grouped Sutta, Part IV, "The Chapter of Devadaha"? trans. by F.L. Woodward, (London; Published for the Pali Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 81.

[7] **The Minor Antrologies of the Pali Canon**, Part I, "Dhammapada: Verses on Dhamma, and Khuddaka-Pâtha: The Text of the Minor Sayings", trans. by Mrs. Rhys Davids, (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 85.

[8] **The Book of the Discipline** (Vinaya-Piöaka), Vol. IV, tr. by I.B.Horner, (London: Luzac & Company, Ltd., 1951), p. 49.

[9] **The Book of the Kindred Sayings** (Sanyutta-Nikâya), Part V, trans. by F.L.Woodward, (London: Published for the Pali Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 1930), pp. 379-380.

[10] **The Book of the Kindred Sayings**, Part IV, tr. by F.L.Woodward. p. 215.

[11] **The Book of the Kindred Sayings**, Part V, tr. by F.L. Woodward. p. 396-399

[12] **Dhammapadaööhakathâ**, PartIII, ed. by the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, (Bangkok: Rungruang-Dharm Press, 2495 B.E. (1952/3), p. 2.

(ที่มา: บทความวิชาการ)

ที่มา

http://www.mcu.ac.th/site/articlecontent_desc.php?article_id=1172&menutype=1&articlegroup_id=123

My Political Thought on the life of the Buddha

by Chamnong Tongprasert

The author of this article, Chamnong Tongprasert is at present Visiting Lecturer of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in Bangkok, Thailand.

This article had already been Printed in the *Overseas Going Buddhist Missionary Monks Class V*, (Bangkok: Dhammaduta Bhikkhus Going Abroad, 2000), pp.77-96.

Introduction

Many thousand years ago, before the Aryan invasion, the land which is now called "India" was the land of the black-, brown-, and yellow-skinned people. They were the people of Negroid and Mongoloid stocks. After the Aryan invasion about 2,000 B.C., these native people who were defeated were called "Milakkha" by the Aryans. They lived scattered along the foot of the Himalayan mountains, in the north, the north-east, and the south of India. Most of the brown- and yellow-skinned peoples or the Mongoloids lived in the north and north-east, and the black-skinned in the south. Some of them were independent and some depended on the Aryan kingdoms.

We do not know exactly about the history of India before the Buddha's time. However, we know that in the time of the Buddha, some of the Mongoloid kingdoms, such as Sakka and Koliya, were the vassals of Kosala Kingdom. Other kingdoms, such as Vajji and Malla Kingdoms, were independent. All of them were governed as republics. Though some of them were the vassals of the Aryans, they were not absolutely colonized. This matter will be mentioned in the next section.

The political status of the Sakyan people

In the north of India, near the foot of the Himalayan mountains, there was a kingdom of yellow-skinned people - the Sakyans. their complexion, according to the Lakkhana Sutta, was like bronze; their skin was delicately smooth; their eyes and hair were black.[1] In those days, the Sakyans were the vassals of King Pasenadi of the Kosala. They had to render to him homage and respectful salutation. They rose and did him obeisance and treated him with ceremony.[2]

These Sakyans undoubtedly were of Mongoloid race, for most of the peoples along the foot of the Himalayan mountains even nowadays, including Nepal wherein the Sakyan Kingdom was established, belong to the Mongoloid race. The Sakyans were one of many Mongoloid groups who were scattered in the north of India. Most of them had a special type of administration, different from that of the Aryan people. Most of the Aryans were governed by absolute monarchy; but Mongoloids had republics. Some of the Mongoloids could maintain their independence even in the time of the Buddha, such as the Vajjians, the Mallas etc. Others became the vassals of the Aryan kingdoms, such as Sakyans and Koliyas. Thus the political status of the Sakyans was not so high.

Every step of their movement might be observed by the Kosalans all of the time. On the other hand, the Sakyan kingdom, compared to Kosala, was too small. The Sakyans had no chance to fight for their independence at all. In that time, Kosala was one of the most powerful kingdoms, second only to Magadha.

Though Kosala permitted the Sakyans to govern themselves in the style they liked, it was not different to the protectorates. The Sakyans had freedom only in economics, commerce and justice, but undoubtedly not in military matters. Though the Sakyans wanted independence, how they could achieve it when they had no great army? The Kosala would certainly not release them.

The Sakyans had freedom only within limits given by Kosala. Nevertheless, independence was in their thoughts all the time. Their governmental body was composed of the headmen from several great families. These Sakyans called themselves "Khattiya" (Kshatriya) or "Warriors", or sometimes "Raja", not "King" of the western idea. They usually had conferences. In the conferences, they would elect one amongst themselves to act as the President. If someone performed that position very well, he might be appointed President for a long period, like Suddhodana of the Sakyans. Sometimes the presidency was rotated like that of the Vajjians.

The secular status of Siddhattha

Siddhattha was the son of Suddhodana. His mother was Siri Maha Maya of Koliyas, the other group of the Mongoloid people. Siddhattha was born in 623 B.C. in Lumbini Park, between Kapilavatthu and Devadaha. He was the "son in the hope" of the Sakyans. He possessed the thirty-two marks of a Superman. The astrologist foretold that if he lived the life of the House, he would become the Supreme Monarch -- the Cakravartin; but if he went forth from the life of the House into the Homeless State, he would become an Arahant, A Buddha Supreme, rolling back the veil of ignorance from the world.[3] He, thus, was the "goal in the hope" of the Sakyans. His father and people loved him and wanted him to be the Supreme Monarch. For it meant that they wanted to throw off the yoke of the Kosalans' power. Their dream might be realized in the near future.

Siddhattha was fed well and grew up in a luxurious environment. He had three palaces and many beautiful girls surrounded him. He married his very beautiful cousin name Yasodhara when he was only sixteen years old. He had an opportunity to study the art of governing from many famous teachers. He was trained to be a good leader of the Sakyans in both military and government matters. He received every luxury. However, he did not become attached to these luxurious things very long.

Siddhattha knew his status and the status of his clan well. He would not try to throw off the yoke of the Kosalans by fighting even though he might be an able-bodied man and have an superior intelligence. He and his few able friends and a small army could not fight the great, well-trained army of the Kosalans. It was not easy to gain independence in this way, and it was not the clever way at all. It would be like the insects flying into the fire. It was necessary for him to seek another way, the way of gaining independence without bloodshed- the peaceful independence. What should be done? He thought, thought, and thought. How could he do it, without the Kosalans' thinking that they had lost their control?

Renouncing the world

When he was twenty-nine years of age, after having seen the four "Devadutas", i.e. the old aged, the sick, the dead man, and the wanderer, he decided to renounce the world on the day his son, Rahula, was born. He renounced the world by cutting off his hair, wearing the yellow robes and going out from his house while his parents wept and wailed.[4]

If he had not taken that opportunity, it would have been difficult for him to renounce the world. It was the love of property, wife and son were like the enemies which tied his neck, hands, and feet. They would prevent him from going anywhere. The love of wife and son would destroy his plan for independence. If he could not conquer the enemy inside his mind, how could he conquer the enemy outside? Though he loved his parents, wife, son, and property, but he loved the independence of his kingdom and people more. If he was the Enlightened One as the Brahmans had foretold, that meant that he would get not only independence from personal defilement but also independence of his kingdom and people from the control of Kosala. Though it would be very difficult for an ordinary man to leave his lovely wife and pretty son, but in case Siddhattha, he was an exception. He could do things that others could not do, because he was the greatest man the world had ever produced. When he decided to renounce the world, the important problem was where he should go to first.

In Magadha Kingdom and Siddhattha's study

From Kapilavatthu, Siddhattha went straight to the Magadha Kingdom. Why did he not go to the kingdom such as Kosala, Kasi, etc.? In those days, there were only two most powerful kingdoms, viz. Magadha and Kosala. Kasi was under the power of Kosala. If Siddhattha went to Kasi or Kosala, it would not be safe for him. King Pasenadi of Kosala might not trust him, and his plan for his kingdom's independence would not be successful. So he went to Magadha, the other Kingdom which had great power, perhaps even more than that of Kosala.

When he passed through the palace in Rajagaha, the capital of Magadha, King Bimbisara saw him, came to see him, interviewed him, and invited him to live with him in Rajagaha. But nevertheless, Siddhattha refused the good wished of Bimbisara, and told the king gently that he wanted to renounce the world and did not want the throne, and then took leave of the King. Bimbisara requested Siddhattha to come and preach him if he were the Enlightened One. We do not know whether the invitation of King Bimbisara came from the heart or not. It might have been only a political test. If Siddhattha received the invitation, it could mean that he had no true intention to renounce the world as he had told the king. That might be the great danger for him. He would lose his life and his kingdom would have no chance to gain independence any longer.

Siddhattha's refusal had many effects. First of all, King Bimbisara now trusted him and did not fear that he would usurp his throne. In this way, Siddhattha could stay there happily and openly. Ties of amity were thus established with Bimbisara. He constructed for himself a place in the balance of power in a very clever way. As a result, King Pasenadi of Kosala would not dare to do anything dangerous to him. Though these two kingdoms had close relationships to each other, but in politics and power, they competed secretly.

This, however, was only the beginning of Siddhattha's political play. He did not fight the Aryan military power only, but also the power of Aryan faith too. He wanted to destroy both the power of Aryan military and faith in his kingdom. In order to upset Brahmanism, the Aryans' faith, it was necessary for him to study and practise according to that religion first. If he himself did not test it, how could he say that it was not good? So he began to study under Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta^[5] until he knew everything that the Aryans knew. He assimilated it thoroughly and rapidly, but was not satisfied because he found that it was not conducive to perfect knowledge and salvation. Then he went away.

Mortification and Enlightenment

Siddhattha tried to study and practise every kind of knowledge and Yogas which were popular in those days. He applied himself to meditation, accompanied by complete cessation of breathing, by reducing his food to a grain of rice each day, and by living on seeds and grass etc. In the Mahasihanada Sutta,^[6] he told Sariputta about many kinds of his practice of self-mortification which were practised by other religions. He reflected that he had reached the limit of self-mortification, yet he had not attained no enlightenment. He thought there must be another way to enlightenment. He thought of the way of meditation which he had once practised when he was a child. But to practise it, he must have more strength and to get strength, he must eat. and then he began to meditate again. At last, in the last watch of the full moon day of Visakha, 588 B.C., he attained the enlightenment: that is, he understood the nature of suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way that leads to the cessation of suffering. The ignorance was destroyed and the knowledge had arisen. He was now "Samma-sambuddha", the one who obtained enlightenment by himself, not by the assistance of others. Now he himself was independent of defilement, the inside enemy. One of his aims was successful, but the other, the aim for independence of his people and his country was still unfulfilled. He must struggle further carefully.

The first sermon and first disciple

On attaining enlightenment, the Buddha at first despaired of preaching the truth to others. He reflected that his doctrine was abstruse and that mankind was given over to their desires. How could such men understand the chain of cause and effect, or teachings about Nirvana and the annihilation

of desire? His knowledge was so new and deep for men of that time. It was so far different from the other doctrines, such as Brahmanism. So he determined to remain quiet and not to preach. However, he later realized that if he did not preach his new Dhamma, how could his people, his relatives, and his parents, gain independence. His purpose of renouncing the world was to liberate his kingdom too. By now he drew near that goal, why should he despair? Only he himself could help his people, his relatives, his parents, his wife and son. In any case, the Pitaka shows that the deity Brahma Sahampati appeared before him and besought him to preach the Truth, pleading that some men could understand.[7] So he surveyed the world with his mind's eye and saw the different natures of mankind like the three kinds of lotuses: some born in the water, grown up in the water, do not rise above the water but thrive hidden under the water; some born in the water, grown up in the water, reach to the surface while a third type grown up in the water, stands up out of the water and the water does not touch it. Thus did he perceive the world, and he said to Brahma:

"Opened for those who hear are the doors of the Deathless, Brahma. Let them give forth their faith; Thinking of useless fatigue, Brahma, I have not preached Dhamma sublime and excellent for men." [8]

He thus considered those who were suitable to listen to his teaching first. It was very important and meaningful to decide this matter before doing anything. The teaching which the Buddha would deliver was new to the people in that time. If he could not gain success the first time, it would make him despair and the people would not be interested in his teaching in the future. So it was necessary for him to think and consider. He first thought of his two teachers, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta. But both of them had recently died. Then he thought further of the other five monks, or "Pancavaggiyas", who had been with him and left him when he had begun to take food after giving up his severe self-mortification. They were now at Benares in the Deer Park, "Isipatana". There would be the questions such as "why did he not teach the people in Rajagaha first?", or "Was it necessary for him to go to Benares which was more than 150 miles from Rajagaha?". He must have planned thoroughly. The reason is as I have mentioned above. And the other reason is that Benares was the center of Brahmanism and Jainism, and was the vassal of king Pasenadi of Kosala. If he could convert the five monks, it would mean that his enlightenment was not useless and not unattainable for others too. And, if his purpose was successful, he could have an opportunity to spread his doctrine to the people easily. If he could convert the people and the king of that kingdom, he could see the goal of the independence of his kingdom clearly. So, after remaining awhile at Uruvela, he started for Benares. On the way, he met a naked ascetic, but he did not teach him.[9] He had to work according to his plan.

When he reached Isipatana, the Deer Park, the five monks, Pancavaggiyas, showed an unsuitable attitude to him. It was because they believed that only self-mortification was the way to enlightenment. However, the Buddha tried to explain to them that he was now the Enlightened One and had come to preach of them how to gain enlightenment. At last, they believed and began to listen to him.

The first sermon which the Buddha preached to the five monks was called "Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta." The gist of that sermon is that one must avoid the extremes of either self-mortification or self-indulgence. Next, one must practise the "Middle Way" which consists of the eightfold path. And then the Buddha enunciated the Four Noble Truths of the nature of suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the method of bringing about that cessation.[10] At the end of sermon, one of these five monks, named Kondanna, understood the sermon by gaining the pure or spotless Eye of Truth, Dhamma-Cakkhu. This monk thus was the first disciple who gained the Dhamma-Cakkhu, or the pure Eye of Truth.

No God; No Paramatman; Anatta.

The Buddha, then, formally admitted these five monks as the first members of the Sangha. He explained to them that there was no such thing as "Self" or "Soul" - a permanent substantial entity.

There was only action, but no agent or agency. It was very bold statement at that time -- the time of the glory of Brahmanism animism.

In Brahmanism there is "Paramatman" the Supreme Self, from which everything comes and there is Brahma, the Supreme God who created the world and everything in the world. Everything depends on Him. But the Buddha refused "Self" -- Atta or Atman. It meant that he refused Paramatman or God, the Creator too. Though in Buddhism, even today, there are Brahmas, there is no Paramatman or Brahma the Supreme God in the sense of Brahmanism. They are only the deities or the beings of the higher worlds. Being is only the physico-psychical organism. "It does not depend upon Self or Paramatman. It is only a series of physical states and of states of consciousness generated in succession, depending one upon another, although each of them lasts only for a moment."^[11] According to Anatta-lakkhana Sutta, the Buddha explained clearly about Anatta or Non-self. He analyzed the self into five elements: the body, sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness. Each of these is liable to change or sickness and pain, and so cannot be called the Self. If it were the self, it would not be subject to sickness, and it would be possible to say "let my body, and so on, he thus, let not be thus." All of the five above mentioned elements are impermanent, painful, and subject to change. Therefore whatever these five elements, past, present or future, internal or external, gross or subtle, low or eminent, far or near, all are not mine, not these are I, not mine are the Self.^[12]

There may be a question that if there is no Permanent Soul or Self, who will receive the fruits of the action? In Buddhism, every action has reaction. One must reap the fruits of whatever he has sown. When everything is Anatta, how will the result of that action be gained? The reply to this question depends on the "Law of Action" -- the Kammic Law.

Kammic Law

Why, it may be questioned, should one be an inferior and another a superior? Why should one be sick and infirm, and another strong and healthy; one handsome and another ugly and so on? Is it due to the work of blind chance or accident? There is nothing in this world that happens by blind chance or accident. Does it depend on God or Brahma? There is no God or Brahma, the Creator, in Buddhism. "According to Buddhism, this variation is due not only to heredity and environment, but also to our own Kamma, or in other world, to our own inherited past actions and present deeds. We ourselves are responsible for our own deeds, happiness and misery. We build our own hells. We create our own heavens. We are the architects of our own fate."^[13]

As the Buddha replied to the young man named Subha as:

"Deeds are one's own, brahman youth, beings are heirs to deeds, deeds are the matrix, deeds are the kins, deeds are the arbiters. Deeds divide beings, that is say by lowness and excellence."^[14]

In connection with variation the Atthasalini States:

"By Kamma the world moves,
By Kamma men live,
And by Kamma are being bound,
As by its pin the rolling chariot wheel.
By Kamma one attains glory and praise,
By Kamma bondage, ruin, tyranny,
Knowing that Kamma bears manifold.
Why say ye, 'In the world no Kamma is?'"^[15]

Inherent in Kamma is the power of producing its due effect. The cause produces the effect; the effect explains the cause. The effect already blooms in the cause. As long as this Kammic force exists, there is rebirth, for beings are merely the visible manifestation of this visible Kammic force. Death is nothing but the temporary end of this temporary phenomenon. It is not the complete annihilation of

this so-called being. The organic life has ceased, but the Kammic force which hitherto actuated it has not been destroyed. As the Kammic force remains entirely undisturbed by the disintegration of the fleeting body, the passing away of the present consciousness only conditions a fresh one in another birth.[16] This is Kammic Law is contrary to the doctrine of Brahmanism so far.

Buddhism against Brahmanism.

There are so many different ways of contrasting between Buddhism and Brahmanism. The most important characteristic doctrine of Brahmanism is the transmigration of the soul or reincarnation. Brahmanism believes that when the body breaks up at death, there is something that passes on and migrates to another equally transitory tenement. The idea underlying the transmigration theory is that every state which we call existence must come to an end. Brahmans think that there is something which eternally manifests itself in perishable form but does not perish with them any more than water does when a pitcher is broken.

The Buddhist theory of rebirth is somewhat different as I have mentioned above. Life is like fire; its very nature is to burn its fuel. When one body dies, it is as if one piece of fuel were burnt: the vital process passes on and recommences in another, and so long as there is desire of life (Tanha), the provision of fuel fails not. There is no Universal Soul (Paramatman) for the individual soul to enter. It is only Anatta While Brahmans believe in the existence of an atman or soul, the Buddhists deny the existence of a soul in Toto. This is one of the important contradistinctions between Buddhism and Brahmanism.

The other essential difference is that Brahmanism teaches the people to believe in Brahma, the Supreme God or the Creator of everything and to pray to Him: our lives depend on the line of destiny marked by Brahma. But Buddhism, on the contrary, teaches the people to believe in their own action (Kamma): we ourselves are responsible for our own action, our own lives as I have mentioned in the section above on "Kammic Law."

The other points of contrast are the caste system and the status of the women in societies. In Brahmanism, the people were divided into four castes or "Vannas": Brahmans, Khattiya (Kshatriyas), Vessa (Vaisyas), and Sudda (Sudra); but in Buddhism there is no caste at all. Everyone has equality. They are only different by Kamma. Anyone has a chance to elevate himself in accordance with his action and wishes. Furthermore, the women in Brahmanic society are evaluated as only men's property. Both of these latter points I shall mention in the next section.

From these points of view, we can see the fighting between Buddhism and Brahmanism, strictly speaking between the religions of the Mongoloids and the Arayans, in the fields of morality and social welfare. They fought each other all the time, both secretly and openly.

No caste; No race; Universal equality.

It was the Buddha who first abolished slavery and vehemently protested against the degrading caste-system of Brahmanism which was firmly rooted in India. In Buddhism, it is not by mere birth, one becomes either an out caste or a Brahman, but by one's action or Kamma Caste, colour or race does not preclude one from becoming a Buddhist or entering the Order. So the portals of Buddhism were open wide to all, irrespective of race, caste, colour, rank, or nationality, just as the water from several rivers goes to the same ocean, it becomes only one unique, so the people from different casters and nations come to the same Buddhism, they are all Buddhists equally. Particularly in the Order, they respect each other following seniority in the Vinaya, knowledge, and ability -- not caste, race, and nation. Just as the great ocean has only one taste, the taste of salt; so has Buddhism only one taste, the taste of Salvation.

It is the Buddhist Metta or loving-kindness that attempts to break all the barriers which separate one from another as in Brahmanism. There is no reason to keep aloof from others merely because they belong to another caste or another nationality. Buddhism is not confined to any country or any

particular nation. It is universal. Buddhism has no idea of establishing the brotherhood of all living beings. Buddhism is unique, mainly owing to its rationality, practicability, efficacy, and universality. It is noblest of all unifying influences and the only lever that can uplift the world. So it is very contrary to Brahmanism.

Uplift the status of women.

Let us imagine the status of women in the days before the Buddha's time. We will see that the women were not different from slaves and were only the property of men. According to Manu, they were declared to have no property; the wealth which they earned was acquired for the men to whom they belonged.^[17] They had no rights in their societies. They had no chance to study, particularly in the three Vedas. But in the time of the Buddha, women played a considerable part in the entourage of the Buddha. The Buddha admitted that they were capable of attaining Arahantship. The work of supplying the Order with food and raiment, naturally fell largely to pious matrons, and their attentive forethought delighted to provide the monks those comforts which might be accepted but not asked for. The prominent among such donors was Visakha who donated the Pubbaram to the Sangha.

The most important point was the admission of women to the Order. At first, the Buddha did not admit them. The story of the admission of women to the Order is as follows: When the Buddha was visiting Kapilavatthu, the capital of Sakka kingdom, for the second time, his aunt and foster mother named Mahapajapati trice begged him to grant the admission of women to the Order, she was trice refused and went away in tears. Then she and a number of Sakyan women, shaving their hair and wearing yellow robes, followed him to Vesali and stood in the entrance of the Kutagara Hall with swollen feet, and all covered with dust and looking very sorrowful. Ananda, who had pity on her, submitted her request to the Buddha, but received a triple refusal. But he was not to be denied and urged that the Buddha admit women capable of attaining Arahantship and that it was unjust to deny the blessings of religion to one who had suckled him. At last, the Buddha yielded.

This was a very difficult problem for the Buddha. It was a very good idea but he did not hasten to admit the women to the Order. If he had, it would not have been at all good for him. First of all, there might be someone would think that the Buddha might not be an Arahant, for he felt an interest in women. Secondly, the women could not protect themselves from danger, particularly bad men. It would add the burden the monks in this case, since the Bhikkhunis or nuns were not allowed to live separately from the monks' temple. Thirdly, if it was necessary that they lived in the same compound with the monks, it might afford opportunity for other religions which were opposing Buddhism, particularly Brahmanism, to take an attack on Buddhism. And last but not least, it upset the social system of Brahmanism. In this way, the women in Brahmanic societies would come to be Buddhists more and more. It would make the Brahmanic system unsteadfast. So the Brahmans might thwart by all means, and it would be difficult for him to spread his new doctrine. It also meant that his plan for his kingdom's independence might be unsuccessful. He thus had to proceed carefully. In the end, his timing took effect beyond his expectation.

In fact, he wanted to sound out the reaction of the Brahmans first. For the news of Pajapati about her request for ordination spread everywhere. What would the Brahmans do? Nothing happened. So the Buddha decided to admit her and her accompanying Sakyan women to the Order as she had requested. However, there were the provisions for the Bhikkhunis' lower status, called the "Eight Garudhammas." Pajapati and her company professed the provisions. It looked like he did not satisfy to receive the women in the Order, for it meant he upset the Brahman's system. He should not do anything which would shake the hearts of the opposing side too much. He tried to keep away from attacking as much as possible, except in the inevitable cases.

By directing his affairs profoundly, Brahmans were not angry with him, and the women had an opportunity to be the Bhikkhunis. The Buddha praised them according to their ability as monks or Bhikkhus, and praised the Upasikas as well as the Upasaka. He was not partial. He did not think about their previous castes, their ability only was important to him. This is the other way in which the Buddha could upset Brahmanism.

The intellectual war between the conqueror and the conquered.

Though the Buddha was not a politician, his activities looked like those of the politicians. Though he was not a warrior, his deeds looked like those of the warriors. He held in his mind the aim of liberating his kingdom and his people from the yoke of Kosala. How could he do so if he did not play roles like this? The victory by fighting his only temporary. The conquered must try by all means to upset the power of the conqueror. The latter cannot sleep happily, he must be on the lookout the whole time.

One who wins must encounter revenge, and one who is defeated sleeps unhappily. The Buddha knew that he could not liberate his kingdom this way. The only way which would be safe for him and his people was to liberate in the other way -- the intellectual way only, not the military. Only in this way, could the conqueror be made to feel that he must not have really been conquered.

So after his enlightenment, the Buddha went to Benares for his first sermon. Benares was the capital of Kasi which was part of Kosala at that time. Besides the five monks at Isipatana, he was able to convert many prominent young men such as Yasa and his friends. On the way he returned to Rajagaha, he converted the thirty young princes who were the halfbrothers of King Pasenadi. This was a victory of great importance. It was the first step for him to enter the Kosala -- the kingdom of the Conqueror of this native kingdom.

On the other hand, the Buddha must fight Brahmanism which had been rooted deeply in the soil of India for a long time. It was a genuine intellectual war. He tried to upset Brahmanism by all means all the time. He could convert many Brahmans and Brahmanis to be Buddhist. Many of them entered the Order to be Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis, and were his important helpers in propagating his teachings. He used Brahmans to fight Brahmans. In this way he established Buddhism in the soil of India within a very short time. Among his disciples who were the Brahmans, the most renowned ones were Sariputta and Moggallana.

Conqueror of the conquerors.

Before the Buddha returned to Rajagaha, he told his sixty followers to go and preach for the welfare of the people; and let not two of them go by one way.^[18] He himself went back to Uruvela near Rajagaha. This was the important plan of his liberation for both his country and other people from the human enemy and defilement. This was the best method of intellectual fighting we have seen in the history of the world.

In this way he could upset Brahmanism which had a center in Benares only in a very short period. He himself returned to Uruvela which was the center of one sect of Brahmanism. It was situated by the bank of the Uruvela River. There were one thousand and three hermits there. The three brothers were the chiefs of these hermits. The eldest one named Uruvela Kassapa.

The Buddha spent a long time there to convert these hermits. At last, he converted all of them. This was the first step for him to convert the king and the people in Magadha kingdom. It was because there were so many people, including King Bimbisara, who respected these hermits. They thought that these hermits were Arahants. And if the Buddha could make these hermits the follows, why couldn't he convert the people? So, after having converted all hermits, he went to Rajagaha. But he did not enter the city, only stayed at a palm grove about six miles from the capital. King Bimbisara once told the Buddha to come to teach him, whenever he had become enlightened. Now he had come, what would Bimbisara do? If Bimbisara invited him truly from the bottom of his heart, he would undoubtedly come to see the Buddha. At last, having known that the Buddha accompanied by a lot of monks had been staying in the palm grove near his capital, Bimbisara came out to see him, accompanied by his officials and a lot of people. When the people saw the Buddha and Kassapa, they did not know whom was greater. But when Kassapa showed that he was the disciple, the people concentrated their interest on the Buddha. It was very easy for him to convert the King and the people.

After having converted King Bimbisara and the people of Magadha, the Buddha went to Kosala Kingdom. This was the goal of his liberation his kingdom and people. The King of Kosala was a relative of the King of Magadha by marriage. So it was not so difficult for the Buddha to convert King Pasenadi of Kosala and the people there. And then Savatthi, the capital of Kosala, became the center of the Buddhist movement in those days. Anathapindika the millionaire and Visakha were the most prominent attendants. "Now, just as the Sakyans treat Tathagata (Buddha). For he thinks: Is not the Samana Gotama well born? Then I am not well born. The Samana Gotama is strong, I am weak. He is attractive, I am not comely, the Samana Gotama has great influence, I have but little influence."^[19] Though King Pasenadi was the conqueror of Sakyans' kingdom, nevertheless the Buddha, the son of Sakyans, now could conquer him, and so many people of many kingdoms of India. King Pasenadi and King Bimbisara were the Conquerors only inside their kingdom, but the Buddha was the Conqueror of the conquerors entirely. It was the absolute conquest. He made a conquest over not merely the Indian people, but his influence has been prevailing over the whole world.

Forty-five years of preaching and fighting

From the age of thirty-five to eighty, the Buddha, after his enlightenment, went from place to place and from town to town, preaching his Dhamma or new doctrine -- the doctrine of Kamma, the Law of Inter-related Cessation. He fought for the revival of his relatives and mankind. He taught whatever he knew and practised. His teaching was not beyond the ability of mankind to understand. Everyone had a right to think, to believe, and to practise. He taught everyone to think first and then believe and practise. He merely pointed to be happy must purify himself, as no one else could help him. He must rely on himself, not upon God, Brahma, or others.^[20]

The Buddha wanted everyone to be as his own refuge, his own lamp. It is only one's self who will be one's friend until one dies. Only one's self and the Truth are the permanent refuges for one's self. Others, such as parents, relatives and so on, are only temporary refuges.

For forth-five years, the Buddha wandered to nearly every city in Northen India or Majjhimapadesa preaching his Dhamma and obliterating the power of Aryans' faith at the same time. He was able to convert many people from every caste and class, from kings and Brahmins to folk-people. He had a very good plan of preaching. At first, he usually converted the chiefs of various religious communities, and the kings or headmen.

It was because the Warriors and the Brahmins were the competitors to each other all of the time. The kings usually were the chief leaders of the people in governing and fighting. But the Brahmins were the leaders of performing ceremonies and were the teachers of the kings too. And they thought that they were the purest caste and descended from the Brahma, the Creator of the world. However, in the time of the Buddha, the Warriors' caste was the highest and most powerful. As the Buddha said to Vasettha and Bharadvaja in Agganna Sutta.

"The Khattiya is the best among this folk
Who put their trust in lineage."^[21]

When the Buddha wanted to upset Brahmanism, he usually approached the warriors such as King Pasenadi and King Bimbisara, etc.. He did not try to make himself the enemy of any person or community, particularly the warriors. He usually won the hearts of the people only by the way of Dhamma or loving-kindness. He was very clever in the art of conquering the hearts of every class and caste of the people. He was praised not only by his disciples, even though the members of the other religions had praised him. According to Culasaccaka Sutta of Majjhima Nikaya, Saccaka, the son of Jains, confessed to the Buddha as:

"Good Gotama, I was arrogant, I was presumptuous, in that I deemed I could assail the revered Gotama, speech by speech. Good Gotama, there might be safety a man assailing a rutting elephant, but there could be no safety for a man assailing the revered Gotama. Good Gotama, there might be

safety for a man assailing a blazing mass of fire ||| a deadly poisonous snake, but there could be no safety for a man assailing the revered Gotama."^[22]

In only forty-five years of his preaching, the Buddha unexpectedly established the greatest and most steadfast community of Buddhist Kingdom among the Brahmanic soil of India.

Entry into Nirvana.

When the Buddha was seventy-nine years old, he was in Savatthi, the capital of Kosala. He knew himself to be too old to work for the welfare of the people. Death would come to him soon. He decided to go to enter Nirvana in his relative's independent kingdom - the kingdom of the Mallas of Kusinara. One might ask why did he not go to his native kingdom, Sakka? It was because Sakka Kingdom was the vassal of Kosala. So it was not suitable for him, the Buddha, to go to enter Nirvana there. Though the Mallas were not his relatives directly, they were of the Mongoloid race like him. So they were like his relatives. Mallas' kingdom was also one of the sixteen kingdoms in those days. Furthermore, Kusinara, the capital of Malla, had been the capital of the seven Universal Monarchs, the Cakravartins, of the ancient time, and it was called "Kusavati" in the time of Sudassana, the last Universal Monarch, the Cakravartin.^[23] According to Mahasudassana Sutta, the Buddha was that Cakravartin named Sudassana of Kusavati.^[24] So it meant that he went to enter into Nirvana in his kingdom of the ancient time.

Accompanied by the venerable Ananda and a great company of Bhikkhus, the Buddha wanted from Savatthi to Rajagaha, Vesali, and Kusinara respectively. It was a very long journey and it made him very tired. He spent more than one year wandering from Savatthi to Kusinara. It was very difficult for him, the aged one, to walk. But his heart was so strong. He tried his best to wander from place to place and at the same time he preached to the monks and people wherever he went.

When he dwelt in Rajagaha, on the hill called Gijjhakuta, he told the monks the conditions of welfare of a community which was composed of seven conditions, such as meeting together in concord, rising in concord and carrying out in concord the duties of the Order, etc. So long as the seven conditions continued to exist among the monks, so long as they were well - instructed in these conditions, so long may the monks be expected not to decline, but to prosper.^[25] It was a very useful principle for the welfare and survival of the community.

At last, in the full moon day of Visakha, 543 B.C., the Buddha reached the Sala Grove of the Mallas, on the side of the river Hiranyavati. He told Ananda to spread out for him a couch with its head to the north, between the twin Sala trees and then laid down on his right side, with one leg resting on the other. It was called "Sihaseyya", or the lying of the lion.

He was so weary but continued working for mankind until the last second of his life. He told Ananda in detail what should be done to his body after his entering into Nirvana. He gave opportunity to the monks to ask him whatever they were doubtful about. He preached to Subbadda, the wonderer, the last disciple who was converted by him. He gave a chance to the Mallas to come to see him. And at last, he addressed the monks and said:

"Behold now, brethren, I exhort you, saying; - 'Decay is inherent in all component things: Work out your salvation with diligent'"^[26]

These were the last words of the Buddha -- the Great Reformer of the word, the Great Revolutionist by peaceful methods. He worked like a lion among the deers, and when he died, he died like a lion too. His life was full of deeds. He worked and worked until he entered into Nirvana. He died as the Conqueror, the Universal Monarch -- Cakravartin.

The Last Victory.

After the Buddha had entered Nirvana, Ananda told the Mallas, what to do with the remains just as the Buddha had told him. The Mallas of Kusinara treated his remains like that of Cakravartin by wrapping it in a new cloth, then wrapped it in carded cotton wool. They wrapped the body of the Buddha in five hundred successive layers of each respective kind. Then they placed the body in an iron vessel of oil, and covered that close up with another iron vessel of oil. They then built a funeral pyre of all kinds of perfumes, and upon it they placed the body of the Exalted One.[27] On the eighth day after the full moon day of Visakha, the body of the Exalted One was burnt at the Makutabaddhana. After cremation, the Mallas surrounded the relics of the Buddha in their council hall, and there they paid honour, reverence, and respect to them by all means for seven days.

When the news of Buddha entering into Nirvana had spread in all directions, there were many kings and headmen of many kingdom, who, after having heard this news, sent messengers to the Mallas to receive portions of the relics of the Buddha.[28] At first the Mallas would not give away any part of the relics to anyone. Those kings and headmen began to fight for the relics. At last, Dona, the Brahman, mediated and conciliated those assembled crowds, and then divided the relics equally into eight parts with fair division. And he, himself asked for the vessel which he used to measure the relics. Soon after the Moriyas of Pippalivana heard the news of the Buddha's entering into Nirvana, and sent a messenger to Mallas. They could take away only the embers.[29]

All of them put up the sacred cairns of Thupas over the relics of the Buddha and celebrated. There were eight cairns for the relics, and one for the vessel and one for the embers.[30] So there were "Stupas" of the Buddha's relics in many places and in many kingdoms in India. Not only he himself, but even his relics and embers were meaningful to the Buddhists, the people of all casters of India in those day. The great kings and many chief leaders worshipped his relics. This was his last victory, the victory after death. Now he was the Cakravartin, the Supreme Monarch in the Brahmanic concept. He was recognized by all people including Brahmans as the Cakravartin.

If the Buddha had entered into Nirvana in a great city such as Rajagaha or Savatthi as Ananda had suggested, his body might not be done like that of the Cakravartin, and his relics would not spread to the other kingdoms. The great kings like Ajatasattu and the King of Kosala would certainly not have consent to divide the relics with anyone. And doubtless no one would have dared to fight with them. In this way, the Buddha's relics would have remained only in a great city such as Rajagaha. It was his last but not the least of his plans. Everyone worshipped his relics as they were the most valuable property of the whole Buddhist world. He was the Cakravartin, the Universal Monarch, although he was once just an ordinary king. [The end]

Notes:

1. "Lakkhana Sutta", Sacred Books of the Buddhists, Vol. IV, Dialogues of the Buddha, Part III, translated by T.W. Rhys Davids and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, London: Published for the Pali Text Society by Luzac & Company Ltd., 1975, p.138.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
2. "Agganna Sutta", Dialogues of the Buddha, Part III, p.80.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
3. "Lakkhana Sutta", Dialogues of the Buddha, Part III, p.137.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
4. "Ariyapariyesana Sutta", The Middle Length Sayings, Vol. I, tr. by I.B. Horner, London: Luza & Company Ltd., 1954, p.207; "Mahasaccaka Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. I, p.295; "Bodhirajakumara Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. II, p.281; "Sangarava Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. II, p.401.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
5. "Ariyapariyesana Sutta", The Middle Length Sayings, Vol. I, pp.207-208; "Bodhirajakumara Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. II, p.281; "Sangarava Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. II, p.401; "Mahasaccaka Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. I, p.295.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
6. "Mahasihanada Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. I, pp.91-110.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
7. "Ariyapariyesana Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. I, pp.214-15; "Bodhirajakumara Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. II, p.281.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
8. "Ariyapariyesana Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. I, pp.213; "Bodhirajakumara Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. II, p.281.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
9. "Ariyapariyesana Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. I, pp.214-15; "Bodhirajakumara Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. II, p.281; "Mahavagga", The Book of the Discipline. Vol. IV, tr. by I. B. Horner, London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1951, pp.11-2.[\[Return to Text\]](#)

10. "Mahavagga", The Book of the Discipline. Vol. IV, pp.15-8.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
11. L. De La Valle Poussin, The Way to Nirvana, London: Cambridge University Press, 1917, p.53.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
12. "Mahavagga", The Book of the Discipline. Vol. IV, pp.19-21.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
13. Narada Thera, Buddhism in a Nutshell, Colombo: the Ceylon Daily News, Lake House, 1954, p.22.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
14. "Culakammavibhanga Sutta", M.L.S. Vol. III, tr. I.B. Horner, London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1959, pp.249 and 253.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
15. Attasalini, The Expositor Vol. I, tr. by Maung Tin, London: the Oxford University Press, 1920, p.88.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
16. Narada Thera, Buddhism in a Nutshell, pp.24-5.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
17. Graves Chamney Houghton, Manava-Dharma-Sastra, or The Institutes of Manu, London: Cox and Baylis, 1925, Vol. II, ch. VIII, p.286.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
18. "Mahavagga", The Book of the Discipline, Vol. IV, p.80.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
19. "Agganna Sutta", Dialogues of the Buddha, Part IV, tr. by T.W. Rhys Davids, London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1921, p.80.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
20. "Mahaparinibbana Sutta", Dialogues of the Buddha, Part II, tr. by T.W. Rhys Davids and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1959, p.108.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
21. "Agganna sutta", Dialogues of the Buddha, Part IV, p.94.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
22. "Culasaccaka Sutta" M.L.S. Vol. I, pp.289-90.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
23. "Mahaparinibbana Sutta", Dialogues of the Buddha, Part II, tr. by T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1959, p.108.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
24. "Mahaparinibbana Sutta", Dialogues of the Buddha, Part II, pp.199-232.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
25. "Mahaparinibbana Sutta", Dialogues of the Buddha, Part II, pp.78-85.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
26. "Mahaparinibbana Sutta", Dialogues of the Buddha, Part II, p.178.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
27. Ibid. pp.182-83.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
28. Ibid. pp.187-90.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
29. Ibid. pp.189-90.[\[Return to Text\]](#)
30. Ibid. pp.190-91.[\[Return to Text\]](#)

Source

<http://www.ripl.or.kr/Archives/Academic/e002.htm>