

THE RELIGION OF RELIGIONS

BY ANAGARIKA DHARMAPALA (1928)

THE Buddha Dhamma is the religion of religions. Long before Jesus and Mohammed appeared, the Tathagata Buddha preached the religion of Truth to the people of India. The contemporary religious promulgators who preached Religion were Purana Kassapa, Makkahali Gosala, Ajita Kesakambala, Pakuda Katyayana, Sanjaya Belattiputta, and Niganta Nathaputta. Purana Kasyapa specialized in the doctrine of inaction. We quote the words of the translator of the Samannaphala sutanta regarding the teachings of the above-named six teachers as follows:

Purana Kassapa said to King Ajatasattu - To him who acts, O King, or causes another- to act, to him who mutilates or causes another to mutilate, to him who punishes or causes another to punish, to him who causes grief or torment, to him who trembles or causes others to tremble, to him who kills a living creature, who takes what is not given, who breaks into houses, who commits dacoity or robbery or highway robbery, or adultery, or who speaks lies, to him thus acting there is no guilt. If with a discus with an edge sharp as a razor he should make all the living creatures on the earth one heap, one mass, of flesh, there would be no guilt thence resulting, no increase of guilt would ensue. Were he to go along the south bank of the Ganges striking and slaying, mutilating and having men mutilated, oppressing and having men oppressed, there would be no guilt thence resulting, no increase of guilt would ensue. Were he to go along the north bank of the Ganges giving alms, and ordering gifts to be given, offering sacrifices or causing them to be offered, there would be no merit thence resulting, no increase of merit. In generosity, in self-mastery, in control of the senses, in speaking truth there is neither merit, nor increase of merit.

Makkhali Gosala in answer to the King said : There is, O King, no cause either ultimate or remote, for the depravity of beings ; they become depraved without reason and without cause. There is no cause, either proximate or remote, for the rectitude of beings. They become pure without reason and without cause. The attainment of any given condition, of any character, does not depend either on one's own acts, or on the acts of another, or on human effort. There is no such thing as power or energy, or human strength or human vigour. All animals, all creatures, all beings, all souls, are without force and power and energy of their own. They are bent this way and that by their fate, by the necessary conditions of the class to which they belong, by their individual nature and it is according to their position in one or other of the six classes that they experience ease or pain.

There are eighty-four hundred thousand periods during which both fools and wise alike, wandering in transmigration, shall at last make an end of pain. Though the wise should hope by this virtue or this performance of duty, or this penance, or this righteousness will 1 make the karma that is not yet mature, mature; though the fool should hope, by the same means, to get gradually rid of karma that has matured neither of them can do it. The ease and pain, measured out as it were, with a measure, cannot be altered in the course of transmigration; there can be neither increase nor decrease thereof, neither excess nor deficiency. just as when a ball of string is cast forth it will spread out just as far, and no farther, that it can unwind, just or both fools and wise alike, wandering, in transmigration exactly for the allotted term, shall then, and only then, make an end of pain.

Ajita Kesakambali, who wore the garment of human hair, said

"There is no such thing, O King, as alms or sacrifice or offering. There is neither fruit nor result of good or evil deeds. There is neither father nor mother, nor beings springing into life without them. There are in the world no

recluses or Brahmans who have reached the highest point, who walk perfectly, and who having understood and realized, by themselves alone, both this world and the next, make their wisdom known to others. A human being is built up of the four elements, and **when he dies the earthly in him, returns and relapses to the earth, the fluid to the water, the heat to the fire, the windy to the air, and his faculties pass into space.** The four, bearers of the bier take his dead body away to the burning ground. **The talk of offerings, this talk of gifts is a doctrine of fools.** It is in empty lie, mere idle talk. **Fools and wise alike on the dissolution of the body, are cut off, annihilated, and after death they are not. "**

Pakuda Katayana said to the king

The following seven things are neither made nor commanded to be made, neither created nor caused to be created, they are barren, steadfast as a mountain peak, as a pillar firmly fixed. They move not, neither do they vary, they trench not one upon another nor avail aught as to ease or pain or both. And what are the seven? The four elements - earth, water, fire, and air - and ease and pain, and the soul as a seventh. So there is neither slayer nor causer of slaying, hearer or speaker, knower or explainer. When one with a sharp sword cleaves a head in twain no one thereby deprives any one of life, a sword has only penetrated into the interval between seven elementary substances. (Compare Bhagavad Gita).

Sanjaya Belattiputta said : If you ask me whether there is another world - well, if I thought there were, I would say so. But I don't say so. And I don't think it is thus or thus. And I don't think it is otherwise. And I don't deny it. And I don't say there neither is, nor is not, another world. And if you ask me about the beings produced by chance or whether there is any fruit, any result, of good or bad actions or whether a man who has won the truth continues, or not, after death-to each or any of these questions do I give the same reply.

Niganthanatha said to the king

A Nigantha, O King, is restrained with a fourfold self-restraint. He lives restrained as regards all water; restrained as regards all evil; all evil has he washed away; and he lives suffused with the sense of evil held at bay. Such is his fourfold self-restraint. And since he is thus tied with this fourfold bond, therefore, is he, the Nigantha called Gatatto, Yatatto, thitatto..

In this connection it is good to look for the definition given of the agnostic in the Brahmajala sutta, which is as follows: There are Bhikkhus, some recluses and Brahmans who wriggle like eels and when a question is put to them on this or that they resort to equivocation in four ways, viz., in the first place, Bhikkhus, some recluse or Brahman does not understand the good, as it really is, nor the evil. And he thinks: I neither know the good, as it really is, nor the evil. That being so, were I to pronounce this to be good or that to be evil, I might be influenced therein by my feelings or desires, by ill-will or resentment. And under these circumstances I might be wrong and my having been wrong might cause me the pain of remorse and the sense of remorse become a hindrance to me. And so he answers when questions are put to him thus: I do not take it thus. I do not take the other way. I advance no different opinion and I do not deny your position. And I do not say it is neither the one nor the other.

There was some recluse or Brahman, dull and stupid, and by reason of his dullness he hesitates to answer questions, and when he does answer it is like this " If you ask me whether there is another world I would answer I do not know ".

The Tathagata is not a theorist and He therefore condemns dogmas and theories concerning the past and the future. The various dogmatic theories found in the Brahmajala sutta have been condemned by Him. By his omniscient wisdom He discovered the Law of Cause and Effect, and when that Law is applied to the past He found it worked and also it would work in the future. The Law of Cause and Effect was the touch stone of the two great psychic factors which He made use of to find out the working thereof. He looked to the past and found that consciousness had lived in variations under differentiating conditions. He found that consciousness

did not cease after the dissolution of the physical body but that it was reborn according to the karma of the individual in accordance with the great Law of Cause and Effect. The great Law of Cause and Effect was applied to the Law of Relativity showing how the individual Consciousness continues to work. The mind is ceaselessly at work in both ways whether guided by Ignorance or by Wisdom. The perfected mind of the Arhat is guided by Wisdom and is free from the contaminating influences of the threefold evils. The perfected mind does not create sankharas giving birth to fresh karma. The mind under the influence of Avidya (Ignorance) is ceaselessly creating fresh karma, now good, now bad.

When Malunkyaputta guided by Ignorance asked the Tathagata whether the world is eternal or not eternal ; whether it is finite or not finite ; whether the soul and the body are one ; or whether they are different ; whether the present personality after death is born again or not ; whether the personality after rebirth will cease to exist whether the present personality neither does exist nor ceases to exist hereafter, the answer of the Tathagata is that the denial or affirmation of these questions has nothing to do with the observance of the principles of the holy life. The Tathagata was no dogmatist. These questions are foolish for one who has realized the In-finite. Some people seem to think that the silence observed by the Lord in answer to the foolish questions indicated that He was an agnostic. Nothing of the sort. Everyone of these questions have been analysed and rejected because the purified consciousness of the holy Arhat has realized that absolute peace by means of Wisdom. It was a new science of Wisdom that the Tathagata promulgated which when comprehended gave the mind the peace unshakeable and happiness infinite. To realize this state it was necessary for the disciple to observe the principles of the supreme eightfold path whereby right insight, right aspirations, right speech, right deeds, right livelihood, right endeavour, right fixity of thought, right illumination can be gained. All foolish questionings cease when the mind comprehends the four noble truths, the first of which points out the existence of grief, sorrow, anguish, lamentation, disappointment, despair, and the causes whereby such sorrows are caused. The fear of death is lost in the mind of him who realizes the third noble Truth. Deathlessness becomes manifest to him who has destroyed Ignorance by means of Wisdom. Nirvana is infinite bliss. It is beyond expression, and ineffably sweet. It is *acala sukha* - unshakeable happiness. Foolish dogmas about the existence of a creator, the necessity of a suffering saviour to lead men to a heavenly existence are rejected by the scientific thinker who accepts the immutable law of cause and effect. The Dhamma of the Tathagata may be called the religion of religions. The foolish dogmas of pagan religions posit the existence of creators, weeping saviours, eternal hells, and other tomfooleries. There is no hell for him who observes the principles of the Middle Doctrine promulgated by the omniscient Tathagata. Popes, priests, rituals are fetters to be destroyed by means of wisdom.

To the undeveloped barbarian the mythological fables of Arabia, of Babylon, Assyria, India and other lands, may appear true, but the analytical consciousness of the scientist without rejecting them, tries to find out the source of the myth. Pleasure-loving people do not care to seek Truth and Truth does not manifest except to those who are prepared to make sacrifices and renounce sense-exciting enjoyments. To the early disciples Jesus spoke of the Holy Ghost, which is another name of Supernal Truth and Jesus made the solemn declaration that " If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." Jesus said " that I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now. " The supernal Law of Truth and Righteousness is hidden from the mind of the man who does not care to make sacrifices for the realization of Truth in this life in perfect consciousness. The Lord Buddha is called the Dhammakaya, the body of Truth, for He is Truth, for did He not say, he who sees Truth sees me. His holy body was a tabernacle for the residence of Infinite Truth. The mind of man is worth more than earthly kingdoms, and to allow it to be contaminated by petty bickerings and to be influenced by hatred, anger, illwill, covetousness and unscientific beliefs and superstitions is not wise. The wise man rises above abuse, revilings, slanders and think nothing of the ill-treatment he receives at the hands of people who have no idea of the sublime.

The Prince Siddhartha of the solar line of Sakyas, son of the Raja Suddhodana, made the great renunciation in His 29th year and went through bodily sufferings; for six years and reached the climax of bodily pain. Beyond that he could not go. He fell down in a swoon, and the angels thought that He was dead. After a time He gained consciousness and then He thought that there must be another Way to gain Truth. It was the recollection of the

inward bliss that he had experienced as a baby under the Jambu tree at the royal ploughing festival, which gave Him the clue to discover the secret of the Middle Path.

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