

The Doctrine of the Buddha

By TH. STCHERBATSKY

WE must be thankful to Professor Berriedale Keith for once more calling attention to the problem of the doctrine preached by the Buddha. The problem is indeed important for the history of Indian civilization, as well as for the comparative history of philosophy. Was there or was there not a real philosophy, or, to use an expression of the late M. Émile Senart, "une pensée maîtresse d'ellemême," in the sixth century B.C. in India? Professor Keith thinks it "really impracticable to discover with any precision the doctrine which Buddha in fact expounded". The reasons for this despair are several. First of all, an extraordinary diversity of doctrine has developed from the teaching of the Buddha in the sixth century B.C.¹ Professor Keith apparently thinks that if a doctrine has much developed, it becomes "undiscoverable". I rather feel inclined to disbelieve such an axiom. A rotten seed will have no growth; but a seed strong and healthy may produce luxuriant vegetation. The other reason is more plausible. "What assurance have we that the Pali Canon really represents the views of the Buddha with any approach to accuracy?" But, even if it contained the records of contemporary eyewitnesses, the scepticism of Professor Keith would not be shaken, for "we need", he says, "only remember the difficulties presented by the Aristotelian view of the doctrine of Plato"—in order to disbelieve an eyewitness of the highest authority. The position is really desperate. Even if the Buddha had been surrounded by a host of Aristotles, and we possessed their authentic records, we should never believe them!

Such a radical scepticism evidently makes all history impossible, and there must have been very cogent reasons to induce Professor Keith to entrench himself in this position. These reasons, I hope, will clearly emerge at the end of my article.

That the final redaction of the Pali Canon is late, was first established by Professor Minayeff a generation ago. It is besides a well-known fact that an Indian text is reliable only from the time that it gets a good commentary. These facts have become truisms.²

¹ Article in the *Bulletin SOS.*, Vol. VI, Part 2, pp. 393 ff.

² "Das glaubt heute kein Pali Forsher mehr, dass wir im Pali Kanon das Wort des Buddha vor uns haben," cf. Winternitz, *Studia Indo-Iranica*, p. 66.

But, nevertheless, the Pali Canon remains our main source for establishing the early form of Buddhism. Professor Keith himself does not really believe that the doctrine of the Buddha is “undiscoverable”; in fact, no one has ever spoken with more assurance of what this doctrine really was, and even of what it necessarily must have been. But as a dialectical preparation to introduce his preconceived opinion he feels it incumbent upon him to condemn all sources of real knowledge.

Another line of argument of the same kind is to require impossible “precision” and “accuracy” from a hostile opinion and to condemn the highest degree of precision attainable on the pretext that it is not mathematical precision. Accuracy, indeed, is not to be found at all in the Pali Canon. Accuracy is not its aim. It is misleading to seek accuracy there. Accuracy is found in later works, in works belonging to the *śāstra* class. All Buddhist literature is divided into a *sūtra* class and a *śāstra* class. The first is popular, the second is scientific. The first is propaganda, the second is precision. What an Indian *śāstra* is can best be judged by the example of the Indian grammatical *śāstras*. Who will say that the grammatical *śāstras* of Pāṇini and Patañjali want precision? ¹ Precision and its companion laconicism are here carried to the utmost pitch of perfection. It is an incomparable monument of precision. It is only natural that the habits of scientific precision which were acquired in one branch of knowledge were transferred into, and imitated in, other departments. We are in possession of a *śāstra* work which aims at rendering the teachings of early Buddhism with precision and laconicism. That is the Abhidharmakośa of Vasubandhu. It was preceded by a voluminous collective work of a conclave of the highest authorities of the time, where all the fundamental teachings, as well as all the dissensions which had separated early Buddhism into eighteen schools, were carefully recorded and expounded *en regard*. Vasubandhu’s work is a *mahā-śāstra*, a great *śāstra*. Now what is an Indian “great *śāstra*”? It is a work which in its methods, its style, and its thoroughness aims at imitating the *mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali. This was for the Indian scholar of those times the ideal of irreproachable, painstaking precision applied to a vast subject. It must be noticed that the title of “great scientist”, like the title of “great poet”, is very sparingly bestowed. Of great

¹ Professor Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 399, seems to have misunderstood my reference to Pāṇini (in my book on Nirvāṇa, p. 23, note), as if it implied that he was a contemporary of Buddha—an *Ignoratio Elenchi*, I fear.

poets, says Ānandavardhana, there were in India “ only two or three, perhaps five or six ” !

The knowledge of Buddhist philosophy has made comparatively slow progress in Europe because the *śāstra*-literature has been neglected and precision was sought where it is never to be found. For the educated Buddhist as well as for his opponent in India, Buddhism has always been considered a *śāstra*. My exposition of Buddhism, in the two works already issued, and in a third which is in the press, is exclusively founded on *śāstra* works. I have sufficiently emphasized this fact, and I have promised to consider in a prospective separate work the relation between the exposition of Vasubandhu and the original teaching of the Buddha, so far as it is discoverable.¹ This position of mine is so clear that I should have thought it could not have been misunderstood. My astonishment was therefore great when I saw that in an article under the title of “ The Doctrine of the Buddha ”, which is exclusively devoted to a refutation of my views, I am represented by Professor Berriedale Keith as endeavouring, in my two books already issued, to discover the undiscoverable doctrine of the Buddha and to do it on the basis of the Pali Canon !² I leave it to every impartial reader to characterize the procedure of Professor Keith as it deserves. In ancient Greece such a method was called *Ignoratio Elenchi*, and provoked the censure of Aristotle. Professor Keith does not scruple to resort to the Pali Canon, which has been so severely condemned by him, as his unique source for discovering the real doctrine of the Buddha. For it appears that the doctrine is not in the least undiscoverable ; it was declared to be undiscoverable only by way of a preparation to announce its discovery. Nor does he scruple, on the one hand, quietly to brush aside the data of the Canon as often as these do not fall in with his preconceived opinions, and on the other to appeal to its late date as an irrefutable argument against every hostile view.

But be this as it may be, I accept the challenge. I am prepared to follow Professor Keith on to the field where he invites me to meet him, and where he evidently feels that his position is particularly strong. I propose now to examine “ the precision ” and “ the accuracy ” with which he himself establishes the doctrine of the Buddha by the methods recommended by him.

¹ Cf. my *Central Conception of Buddhism* (R.A.S.), p. 2.

² Op. cit., p. 395.

TWO METHODS CONTRASTED

These methods are not complicated. They consist of three principles. The views we are justified in ascribing to the Buddha must, according to him, be (1) simple, (2) in accord with the trend of opinion in his day, and (3) more calculated to secure the adherence of a large circle of followers.¹ Everything refined, or above the primitive, and every unattractive idea must be rejected. In these three principles we are invited to believe, without a shade of that scepticism which is legitimate only in regard to the Pali Canon.

I must confess that I feel much more sceptical in regard to the efficacy of these three principles than in regard to the Pali Canon. Professor Minayeff, who was the first to establish the late origin of the Pali Canon, has also pointed to the way in which it must be supplemented. The dissensions which arose in the community soon after the death of Buddha, and the doctrines professed by his contemporaries, afford valuable supplementary information. We are indebted to the late Dr. Hoernle for an excellent account of the doctrine professed by one of Buddha's contemporaries, of whom no direct tradition at all has survived. The doctrine of Gosāla Makkhali-putta is neither very simple nor is it peculiarly attractive, but it starts from a definite conception of the stability of the world and attempts to explain its composition and destinies by logical deduction from that principle. It is an illuminating contrast to the Buddhist system, which is contemporaneous and starts from the opposite view of the world's instability. In his work of reconstruction Dr. Hoernle did not rely on *a priori* principles, but on a careful study of texts whose late final redaction was no secret for him. It hardly needs to be mentioned that Professor H. Jacobi, in reconstructing the early period of Jaina philosophy, did not rely upon general views of the sort recommended by Professor Keith. In reconstructing the doctrine of the Buddha we must proceed in a similar way; we must compare the records of the Pali Canon with what we know about the condition of Indian philosophy in the time preceding the age of Buddha, with what followed it, and with what was contemporaneous with it. The Sāṅkhya system is known to us from evidence much later than the Pali Canon; we nevertheless know that in some fundamental form it preceded Buddhism, and indeed bears witness to the trend of philosophic opinion

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 396.

of the day.¹ In thus attacking the position from the rear and from the front we shall establish the trend of philosophic opinion in his days, not of course with mathematical precision, but, I hope, much better than by a blind belief in gratuitous *a priori* principles established on no one knows what evidence.

I now beg leave in a short summary to recall that system of philosophic Pluralism which in my opinion clearly emerges, albeit through later evidence, as the initial form of Buddhism.

THE GENERAL FEATURES OF ALL BUDDHISM

If we confine ourselves to the historically ascertained forms of Buddhism, we must distinguish between three main phases of that philosophical religion. Each of them has its central conception ; they are respectively Pluralism, Monism, and Idealism. The Sanskrit terms designating them are *puṅgava-śūnyatā*, *sarva-dharma-śūnyatā*, and *bāhya-artha-śūnyatā*. These are negative definitions meaning : (1) Unreality of the Ego, (2) Unreality of all Elements of Existence, (3) Unreality of the External World. Their implied positive meaning is respectively, (1) Plurality of interrelated and ultimate Elements of the Personality, (2) Relativity and consequent Unreality of all these Elements, and the unique Reality of the Immutable Whole, (3) Ideality of these Elements and of all cognizable things.

But if the leading principles of these three Buddhisms are so different and even so contradictory, as Pluralism and Monism, as Realism and Idealism, is there anything general at all which can be predicated of Buddhism ?

Yes, there is. Disregarding the pluralism, relativity, and ideality of the elements of existence, there are these elements themselves, the "elementariness"² of Existence, the denial of a permanent substantial Ego, and the splitting of it into separate elements—that is the central conception out of which all the subsequent diversity of doctrine developed. These elements are classified from different points of view, according to the requirements of the system, as five groups of elements in the life of an individual, as twelve bases of all cognition,

¹ In order to avoid all misunderstanding I must repeat that I assume that the metrical Upanishads were either preceded by, or were contemporaneous with, the Sāṅkhya system ; and that both preceded, or were contemporaneous with, the rise of the Dharma-theory. Under early Buddhism I understand this theory, not all its details, of course, but its very definite essence as expressed in the Buddhist Credo. There are no precise dates. In the following short summary I omit all references to texts, since they will be found in my two works mentioned above.

² *dharmatā*.

and as eighteen, or less, component principles of life in the different spheres of existence. The elements are “dependently originating”, that is, interrelated according to causal laws. They are not stable elements, but impermanent energies. Their beginningless unrest is produced by the influence of the forces of ignorance and desire. By restraint, by knowledge, and by the mystic power of Meditation they are gradually reduced and finally brought to a standstill in Nirvāṇa. The theory, which denies the existence of an eternal Soul, and which replaces it by a plurality of interrelated non-eternal Elements, is established only in order to teach their gradual reduction and final rest.

These are the general features of Buddhism in all the above-mentioned three aspects which it presents to us in its historical development. To recapitulate, they are : (1) denial of a Soul, (2) its replacement by separate Elements, (3) their classification into groups, bases, and components, (4) the law of their dependent origination, (5) their impermanence, (6) their moral unrest produced by ignorance, (7) their purification produced by the element of transcendent knowledge, (8) the mystical powers produced by the element of trance, (9) rebirth in higher realms or paradises, and, after that, (10) Nirvāṇa.

Is there any other, fourth, kind of Buddhism ? Is there any simple Buddhism without this complication of soul-denial and without a system of energies, scientifically constructed, interrelated and steering towards final quiescence ? No, there is no such form !—except in the imagination of some European scholars. For example, a Buddhism without Nirvāṇa has been recently invented, but the reason of that is only the fact that the *Mahāyāna* doctrine of the equipollency of Samsāra and Nirvāṇa—quite logical in a monistic system—has been utterly misunderstood by the inventor. Another Buddhism, without a denial of soul and, consequently, without the theory of elements, has been discovered by Professor Keith. That is a Buddhism without a trace of Buddhism in it. But it is, we are told, the Buddhism of Buddha himself !¹

THE FEATURES OF THE EARLY PERIOD

(1) *Denial of Soul*

The starting-point of Buddhism is the denial of a permanent Ego. There is in the life of the individual no abiding principle, no ego, no

¹ According to M. Jean Przyluski (*Le Concile de Rājagṛha*, p. 369) primitive Buddhism was a religion of joy (*une religion de joie*). This is established on the authority (very feeble!) of the Chinese patriarch Tsong-mi!

soul, no concrete personality. The Spirit is even much less permanent than the body. Every sensation, every thought, every mental phenomenon is instantaneous. It disappears as soon as it appears, in order to be followed by a next moment. Buddhism is called the theory of No-Soul.¹ Whosoever wishes to understand Buddhism must fully realize the decision and the vigour with which this doctrine is professed and defended. In this respect Buddhism stands alone among the great philosophies and religions of mankind. It professes a psychology without a Soul at a very early date in the history of human thought. The question naturally arises : What induced the founder or the founders of Buddhism to adopt this position ?—a position purely philosophical, which clearly indicates that philosophy had already parted company with religion. An explanation can be found in the following direction. The Sāṅkhya system of philosophy which preceded Buddhism had a Soul-theory which provoked the criticism of the Buddhists. It assumed an individual Soul as a pure spirit, a motionless, changeless, eternal light of pure consciousness. All mental phenomena, sensations, feelings, volitions were separated from it and relegated to the sphere of physiology.

This pure Soul was nevertheless somehow contaminated by a connection with Matter, from which connection it becomes delivered in a mystic way by a transcendental intuition of the Superman. This Soul-theory the founder of Buddhism is reported to have called a doctrine of fools. It is a known fact that philosophy develops not only by gradual progress in the same direction, but also dialectically, by contrasts. The union of the motionless eternal Soul with matter and its final deliverance is indeed a weak point in the Sāṅkhya theory, and the unfavourable view of it held in the Pali records may be an echo of spirited discussions which raged upon that problem at the time of Buddha.

(2) *Reality of Separate Elements*

The positive corollary from denial of Soul is the theory of the *Elements of Existence*. The principle is laid down that *every composite thing contains nothing real over and above the parts of which it is composed*. Real are only the parts, that is, the ultimate parts, the Elements. Element and Reality are synonymous. An Element is defined as a “ bearer of one’s own (separate) essence ”.² It is a separate Element, a separate Unity, a Thing as it is strictly in itself, shorn of

¹ *anātma-vāda*.

² *sva-lakṣaṇa-dhāraṇād dharmah*.

all extensions. The Individual, the Personality is nothing over and above the ultimate Elements of Matter and Mind of which it is composed. All these Elements, although separate unities, are held together in the formation of the life of an Individual, not by any spiritual substance, but by causal laws. The idea that there can be a real unity between the Elements, that they inhere in a pervasive whole with which they are identical, this idea is the first cardinal error, and sin,¹ of which the aspiring Buddhist must rid himself at all costs.

(3) *Classifications of the Elements*

The classification of the Elements of existence is a most important part of the Buddhist theory. It is mainly owing to the neglect of it that Buddhist philosophy has been so long misunderstood in Europe. The classifications are numerous, and undertaken from different standpoints. This alone shows the care that has been bestowed on the theory of separate Elements as ultimate realities. The most important classifications are the following :—

(1) By a first broad dichotomy all Elements are divided into Caused and Uncaused.² The Uncaused or eternal are Space, i.e. empty Space, and Nirvāṇa, as a place where all causes are brought to a standstill. Notwithstanding their negative character, these eternal Elements are assumed as real. All the other Elements are Caused, i.e. impermanent.

(2) By another broad dichotomy all Elements are divided into those “influenced” by Ignorance and those “uninfluenced” by it.³ In the first group the life of the “individual” is in full swing; it is shaped under the influence of an egoistic Will,⁴ unappeased by higher Knowledge,⁵ and it produces the ordinary man.⁶ The second group produces Individuals in whom the interest in life is on the wane and approaches to a standstill.⁷ They are the Saint⁸ and the Buddha.

(3) By another division all Elements are classified as physical, mental, and pure forces,⁹ i.e. such forces as are neither physical nor mental, e.g. the forces of Production and Destruction.¹⁰

¹ *sat-kāya-drṣṭi*.

³ *sāsrava* and *nāsrava*.

⁵ *prajñā amalā*.

⁷ Nirvāṇa.

⁹ *rūpa-citta-viprayuktasamkāra*.

² *samskṛta* and *asamskṛta*.

⁴ *cetanā* = *karma*.

⁶ *prthag-jana*.

⁸ *ārya*.

¹⁰ *utpāda-sthiti-jarā-anityatā*.

(4) From the standpoint of the subject-to-object relation¹ the Elements represent all things cognizable, and are divided into six subjective and six corresponding objective groups; they thus make twelve "bases" of cognition.² They are:—

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Faculty of vision. | 7. Colour and shape. |
| 2. „ audition. | 8. Sounds. |
| 3. „ smell. | 9. Odours. |
| 4. „ taste. | 10. Tastes. |
| 5. „ touch. | 11. Tactiles. |
| 6. Introspective faculty (<i>viññāna</i>). | 12. Mental phenomena (<i>dharmāḥ</i>). |

Of these, ten items (Nos. 1–5 and 7–11) are physical, while Nos. 6 and 12 are mental. The mental group thus contains only one subjective element, the Element of pure sensation or pure undifferentiated consciousness. All other mental Elements, feelings, ideas, volitions, moral and unmoral forces, are classified as objects with regard to the Element of pure consciousness. The mental phenomena, ideas, etc., are related to the Element of pure consciousness as sense-data to their corresponding sense-organs. They are the special objects of this faculty, the faculty No. 6. But for the apprehension of sense-data the participation of this faculty is likewise needed, because the sense-organs are by themselves unconscious and can, when alone, produce no conscious apprehension. Consciousness is thus introspective; it is pure consciousness or pure sensation respectively. It is extremely important to notice this character of the fundamental Element of pure, undifferentiated, so to speak, empty consciousness. The neglect of it cannot but conduce to confusion.

(5) There is another classification into eighteen, or less, component principles of individual life in the different realms of existence. It is but slightly different from the preceding one. It divides the component principles of an individual into six subjective organs of cognition, six corresponding cognized kinds of objective reality, and six corresponding kinds of sensation.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1.) | 7.) | 13.) |
| 2.) | 8.) | 14.) |
| 3.) | 9.) | 15.) |
| 4.) | 10.) | 16.) |
| 5.) | 11.) | 17.) |
| 6. The (pure) Intellect. | 12. Mental Phenomena. | 18. Non-sensuous self-consciousness. |

The first twelve items of this division are but a repetition of the preceding division. The six additional items, Nos. 13–18, represent

¹ *indriya-viṣaya*.

² *dvādaśa-āyatanāni*.

a differentiation of one and the same Element of pure sensation (No. 6), not, however, by itself—for being pure sensation it cannot be differentiated—but according to its participation with one or another sense-faculty.

The question naturally arises : why is this double classification needed ? Is it not superfluous scholasticism ? Was it not added by a later philosophy whose inventive force has not found its proper field of action ? The new classification is in fact needed for the formulation of an individual life in the different realms of existence. Only in the lower realms of gross flesh are all the eighteen principles co-operating in the production of the life of an individual. In higher realms, among the denizens of heavens, the principles Nos. 9–10 and 15–16 are absent ; the life of an Individual contains only fourteen principles. In still higher heavens, in purely spiritual realms, it consists of only three principles (Nos. 6, 12, and 18). Thus this new division is an indispensable part of the system. The preceding one is probably an inheritance from the Sāṅkhya, just as the Element of pure consciousness is evidently nothing but the dethroned Soul of the Sāṅkhyas, whose characteristic is also pure sensation or empty consciousness.

(6) The last classification which we will here mention is the most natural and popular one, it divides the Elements of an individual into five groups :—

- (i) Its body, the physical group, corresponding to ten items of the preceding two classifications ;
- (ii) its feelings, pleasant or unpleasant ;
- (iii) its ideas, or ideation in general ;
- (iv) its volitions and other faculties, moral and immoral ;
- (v) its pure consciousness.

The last is the same as No. 6 of the two preceding classifications. The items (ii), (iii), and (iv) are included in No. 12 of both preceding classifications.

This last classification is probably the original production of Buddhism, while the subject-object classification seems to be a possession of the Sāṅkhya, whence it was borrowed with modifications.

(4) *Causation*

The Buddhist Theory of Causation is a direct corollary from the denial of a permanent Ego. When there is no abiding Spiritual Substance in which the mental phenomena can inhere as qualities

appertaining to it, nor any real personality representing the common receptacle for the physical and mental elements of an individual ; when there are only detached elements ; something there must be to hold these elements together in order to constitute a concerted individual life. This tie between the elements is simply the Causal Laws. The elements constituting a personality are like a bundle of reeds tied by a cord. But even this simile is not quite adequate, since the Causal Laws do not represent any separate unit corresponding to the cord. These laws are contained in the elements themselves ; the elements are, so to speak, intrinsically law-abiding. This circumstance lies at the bottom of the fact that so many European scholars have failed to discriminate between the meaning of *Law* and *Element*. In fact, the conceptions of law, of quality, and of element are designated by the same term.¹

The elements are interdependent. As impermanent elements they constantly originate, but they originate in mutual interdependence. The causal laws are called the Laws of Dependent Origination.

If we were called upon to determine to which of the modern theories of causation the Buddhist idea comes nearest, we should answer that it is a theory of causation as *functional interdependence*. We may then remember the words of the initiator of that theory, that when the interest of philosophy for a real ego is extinct, and Reality reduced to separate sensations, nothing remains but the laws of causation as functional interdependence, to explain the regularity in the process of life. The Buddhist theory cancelled the Ego, and was *eo ipso* obliged to resort to the laws of causality, there being no other issue. It is of the highest importance clearly to realize this part of the Buddhist doctrine. The elements are interdependent ; they do not produce anything, they are strictly speaking no causes at all, they “do nothing”,² they are “unemployed”³ ; but given the presence of such and such elements, another one necessarily arises in functional dependence on them. The connection between mind and body is accordingly explained in the following manner. Being given a moment of pure consciousness,⁴ a patch of colour,⁵ and a moment of the faculty of vision,⁶ a visual sensation necessarily arises in the next moment. The element called sensation⁷ originates in functional dependence on

¹ *dharmā*.

³ *nirvyāpāra*.

⁵ *rūpa*.

⁷ *sparśa*.

² *akimcit-kara*.

⁴ *viññāna*.

⁶ *caḅsur-indriya*.

the presence of these three Elements in association¹; they being present, the visual sensation necessarily appears. The one element is mental and internal (consciousness), another is physical and external (colour), the third is physical and internal (organ). Their presence in association is followed by a new element which is mental and external (sensation). For sensation is an objective element (*viṣaya*) in regard to the Mind, which has an introspective function. Consciousness does not produce sensation out of itself, neither does the physical element of the sense of vision produce it, but it arises by itself in strict functional dependence on the presence of three elements in association. The formula expressive of Causation is therefore the following: "this being, that appears",² being given the presence of such and such elements in association, a new element necessarily appears. Students of philosophy will at once notice that the idea of causation is here brought in line with the form of the hypothetical judgment, and they will know exactly who has taken the same step in European philosophy. How the fact is to be explained and what are its implications is another question, but the fact itself is too obvious to be denied.

Is it possible to explain the origin of life, the roots of a present existence in pre-natal conditions, and its consequences in a future one, without assuming any permanent Soul? Are the causal laws sufficient to establish a future life without the survival of an uncaused Soul in a blissful paradise and without the resurrection of the flesh? Yes, they are, answers Buddhism. The life of the ordinary man, who is bereft of the knowledge of the Absolute, is a revolving wheel which can be divided into twelve parts connected by the laws of dependent origination. Life is dominated by a transcendental illusion (1),³ in dependence on which pre-natal forces⁴ (2) produce the first germ of life⁵ (3) in a matrix. Then in the embryo⁶ (4) the sense-organs,⁷ (5) sensations,⁸ (6) and feelings⁹ (7) are gradually developed. In dependence on them in the grown-up man sexual desire¹⁰ (8), the attachment to life¹¹ (9) and the

¹ *trayānām sannipātaḥ sparśaḥ.*

² *asmīn sati idam bhavati.*

³ *avidyā.*

⁴ *saṃskāra = karma.*

⁵ *viññāna.*

⁶ *nāma-rūpa pañca-skandha* in the embryonic condition.

⁷ *ṣaḍ-āyatana.*

⁸ *sparśa*, it is not at all "contact", it is a *caitasika-dharma*, one of the 46; this fact alone must have suggested looking in the tables of the Elements for the meaning of all the terms.

⁹ *vedanā.*

¹⁰ *trṣṇā.*

¹¹ *upādāna.*

fully developed life ¹ (10) with its moral and unmoral deeds arise in due order. In dependence on the deeds of this life comes rebirth ² (11) and the tribulations of a new life, which is again followed by a new death ³ (12), and so on. The rotation of this twelve-spoked wheel has no beginning, but it will have an end when the element of transcendental illusion, which is at its root, is removed and absolute knowledge, inseparable from final deliverance, is attained. There is absolutely no need for an eternal soul. Causal laws explain the process of the beginningless toil of life much better than the hypothesis of an uncaused eternal spiritual substance. Such is the answer of early Buddhism. It assumes survival in blissful paradises as a reward for virtuous deeds, but it imagines life there as subject to causal laws without assuming any uncaused element. The only uncaused element is Nirvāṇa, which is a complete cessation of all life. It is the element of extinction, defined negatively, but it nevertheless is in early Buddhism an element, a reality, a unity.

Now, is this theory of causation, of which some aspects are so formidably modern, something quite impossible in the moral atmosphere of the sixth century B.C. in Hindustan, or is it to a certain degree prepared by preceding developments and capable of being regarded as agreeing with the trend of philosophic opinion of the day? It is indeed a direct answer to the corresponding theory of the Sāṅkhya school, it is allied to the Sāṅkhya theory of causation by the filiation of contrast. I need not repeat that descent by contrast in philosophy is as legitimate as the descent by similarity or repetition. It is also an answer to two other theories which probably were already in vogue in those days in India. Sāṅkhya assumed an eternal pervasive matter which only changed its manifestations; it is causation "out of oneself". Another theory denied causal uniformity altogether; it was a theory of "causation at random". A third theory, the precursor of the later Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, assumed the real production of one thing by the obtruding activity of other things; this is called causation "out of another self". To all these three theories the Buddhist reply was: "not out of one's own self, not out of another's self, neither at random does causation proceed, there is no real causation (in the sense of production), there is only dependent origination."

¹ *bhava*.

² *jāti*.

³ *jarā-maraṇa*.

But first of all the Buddhist theory was an answer to Sāṅkhya, just as its denial of soul was an answer to the Sāṅkhya soul-theory. If an exceedingly ingenious suggestion of the late M. Émile Senart is accepted, the technical term expressing the Sāṅkhya theory of causation is a contamination of the one used by the Buddhists to designate what from their standpoint is the cardinal error¹ of ordinary mankind, an error of which the aspiring Buddhist must at the outset rid himself irrevocably.²

5. *The Forces*

A common feature of all Indian religions and all Indian systems, except that of the Materialists, is the belief in the law of Karma, that is, the belief in the influence of past deeds upon present events and of present deeds upon future life. It is the foundation of morality, because it teaches that retribution for one's deeds will come necessarily, either in this life or in a future one, either at once or in a very remote future, and neither virtue nor crime will remain unrequited. The popular, crude form of this belief is metempsychosis. In philosophy the belief takes different shapes according to the system. In Buddhism the belief is of course fitted into the theory of elements. Karma is an element, it is identified with the will. Indeed, what is Karma? The earliest definition answers: "Karma is the Will and the Wilful Action."³ Its function consists in the arrangement of the separate interrelated elements into the shape of an individual life.⁴ Life is shaped through Karma, that is, according to one's own deserts.

Since the universe represents the sum-total of individual lives, of their subjective as well as their objective parts, the universe, i.e. this world, as well as the heavens, is shaped by Karma. The will is thus the central force in the life of the individual, as well as in the formation of worlds. But it is not the only force; there are others besides. It follows from the definition of Karma that all moral and unmoral faculties or tendencies of the individual are also Forces. Nay, even feelings and ideas are included in the list of elements as Forces. The forces are called co-operating forces,⁵ for the evident reason that a force never produces something alone, but, as we have seen, while

¹ *sat-kārya-vāda = sat-kāya-dṛṣṭi*.

² There is a difference between the elaboration of the theory in the *Abhidharma* and its simple form in the *Sūtras*, but the idea is quite the same.

³ *cetanā celayitvā ca karaṇam*.

⁴ *dharma-saṃcetana*.

⁵ *saṃskāra*.

examining the law of causation, the presence of several elements in association is always needed in order that another element may arise in functional dependence upon them. Since there are no forces other than co-operating forces, we may, for simplicity's sake, call them forces shortly ; the real meaning will remain the same.¹ Thus all mental faculties are regarded as companions of the faculty of the will and included in the class of elements called forces. There are the general forces besides, the forces of production, decay and destruction,² which accompany the appearance and disappearance of every element in life. They are not mental forces, neither are they matter,³ they are energies simply.

We have seen in examining the law of causation that every element is a cause, with the exception of empty space and of Nirvāṇa. It is a co-operating cause in the sense of dependent origination, since when definite elements are present in association, a new element necessarily arises in functional dependence. All these elements are "caused",⁴ i.e. non-eternal, impermanent, and distinguished by this broad division from the "uncaused" or eternal ones. But they are also, in their turn, causes⁵ in respect of those elements which will arise after them. Thus in a broad sense all elements, except the eternally motionless ones, are forces. The term *force* refers directly to (1) the will, (2) all mental faculties, except the mind itself, regarded as the element of pure consciousness, (3) general forces, and, in a metaphorical sense, (4) all the elements except space and Nirvāṇa. I must again repeat that it is of the highest importance fully to realize the precise meaning of the term *samskāra* in Buddhist philosophy. The term has also a wide application in religion and in common life. But in Buddhism it has a special sense ; it is a technical term of the theory of elements. A force in Buddhism, first of all, *eo ipso*, is a unit, an ultimate reality, an element, an uncompounded element. It is never a compound ; it is the negation of composite being. The term "co-operating force" (*samskāra*) and the term "co-operatingly caused" (*samskrta*) have often been mistranslated as meaning something "compound", but the real meaning is "taking part in composition", hence "un-compound". Nirvāṇa and empty space, which are neither causes nor caused, which are eternal and unchangeable like a "mountain peak",

¹ *samskāra* = *sambhūya-kārin*.

² *utpāda-sthiti-anityatā* = *utpāda-nirodha*.

³ *rūpa-citta-viprayukta*.

⁴ *samskrta*.

⁵ *samskāra*.

never take part in the composition of anything (*asaṃskṛta*). This has been mistranslated as meaning “uncompound”, whereas all elements are uncompound. To be an element means to be an element *of a compound*, but not to be compound oneself. A product is for our habits of thought always a compound, whereas the Buddhist theory considers the simple element as produced with respect to its antecedents. Nirvāṇa and empty space do not actively take part in the composition of anything. All other Elements of Matter and Mind do so take part. The term *saṃskāra* is very common in Buddhist scriptures. Not a page of the Pali Canon can be translated correctly without realizing its precise meaning, but this is only possible in the light of the theory of elements. The terms “produced by co-operating forces” and “dependently originating element”, or simply “element” are convertible terms.

6. *Dissensions about the Theory of Elements*

We need here examine the chief tenets of only two schools, because they are directly concerned with the theory of elements. The school of the *Sarvāstivādins*, according to Professor Keith, maintained that “everything exists”. Such a tenet is, of course, meaningless, as long as we are not told what “everything” means. Everything means all the Elements. And that they exist means that the past and the future also exist, the past because it has an influence on the present, and the future because it is foreshadowed by the present. The Element thus consists of a permanent “essence” and a momentary “manifestation” in the present. Such a theory was in danger of shifting into Sāṅkhya, with its permanent matter and its momentary manifestations. The Sarvāstivādins protested, maintaining their belief in the instantaneous character of existence, but they could not agree that the past and the future were absolute blanks. The origin of the dissension is traced by tradition to the time of the founder of Buddhism, and his utterances are adduced by both parties in support of their respective views. That these utterances need not be strictly authentic is very clear from the fact that the schools accuse one another of introducing spurious texts into their canonical collections. However, the dissension itself is an historical fact, and since it was concerned with the theory of Elements, it clearly proves that the theory existed at the time of the origin of the sect and even before, whensoever the schism may have taken place.

The other dissension which we will here mention is the chief tenet

of the *Vātsīputrīya* school (*Vajjians*). They maintained that the personality,¹ although not a real unit, not a real Element, was nevertheless something conditionally real. They did not admit any eternal Soul. This would have been quite impossible for a Buddhist. But they at the same time maintained that the interconnection of the units of which the personality consists was not merely imaginary. Not only did they not admit any permanent Soul, but they did not allow to personality full reality, because reality, according to the system means a unit, and a unit is an Element. The personality is not an Element ; it has no place in the list of them. It appears neither among the non-eternal nor among the eternal Elements. But it nevertheless, was something which held together the separate Elements constituting the personality and survived in a future existence. The opponents answered that this personality was nothing but a soul in disguise, and rejected it. Neglecting the law of contradiction, the *Vātsīputrīyas* retorted that their personality was something both existing and non-existing at the same time. Such a neglect of the law of contradiction is not uncommon among the early philosophic schools in India ; it is analogous to a very well-known feature of the pre-Platonic philosophy in Greece.

Now what does the character of this dissension mean ? Is it not a clear indication that the conception of an Element as a unit, as an ultimate reality, was firmly established in the habits of thought of the contending parties ? The trend of the philosophic opinion of that time, as the *Sāṅkhya* system clearly shows, was to seek behind the cover of phenomenal reality its subtlest ultimate elements, and to conceive phenomena as collocations of these elements or as the co-operation of subtlest forces. The *Sāṅkhya* system included these infinitesimal elements in a pervasive and eternal Matter. The Buddhists cancelled this Matter, and difficulties at once arose. It is a natural difficulty for a philosophic mind to imagine a reality absolutely discontinuous. Hence the doubts of the *Vajjians* and of the *Sarvāstivādins*. But the doubts could not have arisen, if the system of pluralism was not already present in its main lines, containing denial of soul and its replacement by ultimate elements, not inhering in any permanent substance, but holding together exclusively through the laws of dependent origination. Buddhism means no Soul, pluralism, existence of elements, co-operation, dependent origination, instantaneousness of being, its unrest, moral progress, appeasement, and Final Quiescence.

¹ *pudgala*.

7. *Salvation*

These are the main lines of the ontology and psychology of early Buddhism. But they do not contain the chief aim of the system. Like all other Indian systems, Buddhism is a doctrine of salvation. There are three ways of reaching final deliverance: the path of religion, consisting in minute observance of sacrificial rites; the path of knowledge, consisting in philosophy; and the path of devotion, consisting in a mystical union with the adored deity. Buddhism, as well as its neighbour, the Sāṅkhya system, belong to the path of knowledge. The system of elements aims at explaining the gradual evolution from the unquiet life of an ordinary man through the appeased life of the Saint towards final quiescence of the Buddha in Nirvāṇa. It is important to realize that the supreme bliss is Quiescence, and that it is always contrasted with the movement of life, which is suffering. It is quite misleading, and leads to grave confusion, when the term *duḥkha* is translated as "misery". Even the blissful existence in the highest heaven contains a portion of attachment to life, albeit infinitesimal, and only in this sense, only because it is not Nirvāṇa, is it *duḥkha*. Life is an evil, but it contains in itself the germs of deliverance from pain. These germs are also elements or forces, forces of moral perfection, the so-called Bright Elements conducive to Saintliness and Buddhahood. By a natural process of evolution they will gradually predominate and gradually reduce the evil and disturbing elements of life. The full number of all the elements partake in the formation of individual lives only in the lowest spheres of existence, where their working is in full swing. But this world is not the only one among existing worlds; there are other, higher realms, there are the Buddhist heavens. Buddhism is not only analytically destructive it is also poetically constructive. It offers us magnificent views of the appeased life of the saints in paradise, which, theoretically regarded, is but another way of co-operation between the same elements which were active in the lower planes of existence, although they are now reduced in number and changed in character. The central element in the lower planes was will, the central element in the higher realms is wisdom. It exercises a purifying and pacifying influence upon the whole complex of the forces which constitute the individual life. There are in the human mind, even in its lowest manifestations, two faculties which are exceedingly precious, because they contain the germ of future perfection. These are the faculty of appreciating an object and analysing it into its elements,¹ and the faculty of concentrating

¹ *mati* = *prajñā*.

attention upon something to the exclusion of other thoughts.¹ The element of appreciative analysis develops into the element of sublime wisdom²; and the element of concentration develops into the element of sublime ecstasy. This last element when fully developed confers on the individual some mystic powers. With the exception of the Mīmāṃsaka system, no Indian system of philosophy is completely free from mysticism. The mystical part can be insignificant, as e.g. in the Nyāya system; it may be predominant, as in the Yoga system; it may be comparatively moderate, as in the Sāṅkhya, the Buddhist, and the Jaina systems. It is impossible to understand Buddhism without realizing that the whole system of the elements of the universe is controlled by the central element of will in the lower spheres of existence and by the central elements of wisdom and ecstasy in the higher realms. All elements are from this point of view divided into those which become appeased by wisdom,³ and those which are excluded by trance.⁴ By wisdom wrong views, the ignorance of the truths of Buddhism, are first of all brought to a standstill. But it is only through the mystic power of trance that the number of physical elements can be gradually reduced and finally extinguished altogether in the purely spiritual realms. The mind of the saint living in these lofty regions is always concentrated, it is in a condition of continual trance. His body is transparent, light, and radiant, his movements are swift without effort; his housing, his clothing, and his food, which is entirely spiritual, are provided by nature; there is no manual work; there is no gross sensuality, no sexual love; there is no hatred and no envy; there is full equality, there are no crimes, no government is needed. The duration of life is enormous, but it is nevertheless not eternal. The saint will die, and may be reborn in a still higher, purely spiritual realm, where he will have no body at all, or a spiritual body. His condition of mind in these realms will be complete rapture in a single idea either of the infinity of space, or of the infinity of pure consciousness, or of the infinity of the idea of naught; it can be in a dreaming half-conscious state, it will be near complete extinction, but still it will not be eternity; he will die, and only in Nirvāṇa will eternal rest be attained. This is the kind of bliss which Buddha has promised to his followers. It is not a resurrection of the flesh in a sensual paradise, it is a rebirth in a pure land of bliss, and, after that, extinction of life in Final Quiescence.

¹ *samādhi.*

³ *dr̥ṣṭi-heya.*

² *prajñā amalā.*

⁴ *bhāvanā-heya.*

Here again Buddhism does not stand alone with its idea of salvation. Like the Sāṅkhya and Jainism, it is a path to salvation through knowledge and trance and after an existence of bliss in meditative heavens. Its originality lies in the analysing spirit which conceives these higher existences also as a co-operation of separate elements linked together into individual lives through causal laws. Just as in the lower spheres of gross desire the individual life is composed of elements of eighteen different kinds, so in the realms of transparent bodies it is composed of elements of only fourteen kinds, and in the purely spiritual realms of only three kinds. In the Sāṅkhya system deliverance through knowledge comes at once. As soon as the liberating intuition comes, matter, although eternal, has ceased to exist for the delivered soul. In Buddhism, since there are no eternal substances, deliverance is reached gradually through the gradual extinction of the separate elements.

It would take us too far if we were to expound here the Buddhist and the Sāṅkhya theories of instantaneous being. Notwithstanding their fundamental difference, they belong to the same "trend of opinion".

Such is in its essence this theory of elements, which constitutes the theoretical part in the first period of historical Buddhism. Its central conception is one of a plurality of separate elements connected by the laws of functional interdependence. The whole system is deduced with irrefutable logic out of this conception. There is only one point where the solid ground of logic is forsaken and Buddhism appeals to mysticism: that is, its theory of final deliverance, which is attained partly through mystic powers. We have endeavoured everywhere to show that this Buddhist system is a legal heir to the Sāṅkhya, and consequently it is well established chronologically in India at the time when we know the Buddha to have lived. It is so established by its predecessor the Sāṅkhya, by its contemporaries, the six heretical teachers, and by its successors, the schools of the Hinayāna, in which it was controversially discussed.

Now, who is the author of this system? It is not Buddha, answers resolutely Professor Keith. But why? The doctrine of the Buddha is undiscoverable, we have no evidence! But is not the system itself a very eloquent evidence? If Buddha is not responsible for it, who then is? If we really know nothing of the preaching of the Buddha, let us call this unknown author the Buddha, as all the Buddhist world

in fact calls him. But now Professor Keith discards his scepticism ! He knows very well what the Buddha Gautama could and what he did preach. He does not want the evidence of the Pali Canon, or if he wants it, he will correct it in accordance with his three general principles.¹ The system described above is "refined",² it is not simple ; being refined, it is far above the trend of opinion in Buddha's time ; and it is not attractive enough for the masses. Therefore another must have composed it, not Buddha. But who ? It is "the product of later scholasticism".³ Professor Keith firmly believes that the intellectual and moral value of Buddha's teaching must have been very low. He was "a commanding personality", but a feeble philosopher.⁴ He lived in a "barbarous age". We must "lay aside our natural desire to find reason prevailing in a barbarous age".⁵ Then we shall see that Buddha obtained his commanding position not by philosophy, but by far simpler means. He had claims to a place as high as the rank of the greatest of the gods".⁶ He evidently had no need to deny the existence of a soul, and he certainly knew nothing about "elements", and such things. In fact, "the crudities of Buddha's views become painful to modern rationalism."⁷ But they are "simple", and therefore attractive to the masses. If the Buddha had preached Nirvāṇa as annihilation of life, the least his audience, living in a barbarous age, could have done would have been to clear off. He therefore promised them blissful residence in a paradise called Nirvāṇa. Professor Keith does not give any details of this blissful existence, but since he insists that it was very attractive to barbarians, one may easily imagine what it must have been.

Such is the simple way in which Professor Keith explains the immensely powerful appeal of the doctrine of the Buddha to all the nations of the world, an appeal which is by no means limited to the civilized nations of the East, but has found a strong echo among the educated classes of modern Europe ! And if we ask on what evidence Professor Keith establishes his account of the "trend of opinion" in Buddha's days, we shall see that there is absolutely no other evidence than the rejected Pali Canon. Thus the Canon must be interpreted on the strength of our knowledge of the trend of opinion, and the trend of opinion is to be established on the authority of the Pali

¹ Ibid., p. 396.

³ Ibid., p. 403.

⁵ Ibid., p. 26.

⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

² Ibid., p. 402.

⁴ *Buddh. Phil.*, p. 147.

⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

Canon ! When it is needed, Professor Keith becomes a firm believer in the authority of the Pali Canon.¹

But let us, for the sake of argument, concede the point and assume that the Buddha believed in an eternal soul and its blissful survival in a paradise called Nirvāṇa, and that he declared himself to be “a great god”. We must then assume that in the time between Buddha’s death and the final redaction of the Pali Canon some obscure reformer whose name has not been preserved, dethroned Buddha from the dignity of a great god, cancelled the soul, and replaced it by a pluralistic system of philosophy. This obscure man evidently did not care to be attractive and did not mind complications. In answer to this, Professor Keith delivers himself in the following way : “The Nikāyas,” says he, “exhibit so slight a development of philosophical insight as to render it impossible to accept the suggestions of Professors Rosenberg and Stecherbatsky as to the significance of the doctrine of the Dharmas.”² What is then the meaning of the term *dharma*, and of all the terms directly connected with it in the Nikāyas ? This terminology, we must not forget, is specifically Buddhistic : it has been framed for the expression of Buddhist ideas, and is inseparable from them. In Professor Keith’s work, *Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon*, we find sufficient evidence that, if the explanations there given are admitted as accurate, the development of philosophic insight is, to say the least of it, very slight. There is apparently no development at all. “Dharma means object or thing without any metaphysical implication of a far-reaching nature,”³ “a sense which unquestionably is common in the extreme in Buddhism.” However, “ideas”⁴ are dharmas ; are they “things” ? The “feelings”⁵ are dharmas, and “consciousness”⁶ is also a dharma ; are they “things” ? May

¹ In his account of the Vinaya (pp. 119 ff.), Professor Keith does not scruple to ascribe to the Buddha himself the rules of conduct of the monastic order and of the layman. However, if he had had an opportunity to look into the review of the Vinayas of all other schools compiled by the late Professor Wassilieff from Chinese sources (the MS. is preserved in our library, and has never been published), he would have seen that the *vinaya* was much more shifting ground than the *dharma*. This is also easy to understand *a priori*. A consistent philosophical doctrine is a much more solid basis than the rules of conduct, which are supplemented according to circumstances.

² *Bulletin*, VI, pp. 403–4.

³ *Buddh. Phil.*, p. 73.

⁴ *saṃjñā*.

⁵ *vedanā*.

⁶ *vijñāna* = *citta* = *manas* ; the equation is emphasized evidently in contrast to the Sāṅkhya triplet *buddhi*, *ahamkāra*, *manas*, which are different faculties. The Nyāya later on answered by the equation *buddhir* = *upa-labdhir* = *jñānam*, N.S., I, i, 15.

even the physical elements, colour, shape, sound, odour, taste, touch, etc., properly be called "things"? Is it then not more proper to call them elements, since the term equally applies to physical and mental items? That is what Professors Rosenberg and Stecherbatsky have suggested. There is, of course, the danger of metaphysical implications, which must be faced, but otherwise the term element seems more appropriate.

We have seen that one of the twelve "bases of cognition" in the classification of all elements according to the subject-object principle is called *dharmāḥ* (in the plural) simply.¹ This item contains non-sensuous elements only, i.e. all elements exclusive of all sense-organs, of all sense-data and of the element of consciousness itself. Professor Keith suggests that "the plural of the term (*dharmā*), which is presumably the older, as it is by far the most frequent, arises from things being regarded as manifestations of the natural and spiritual law which underlies reality."² This long definition is, of course, not found in the texts, but is his own elaboration. Does it mean that in the singular the "thing" is not a manifestation of the law, but in the plural it becomes so? Had not the classification in twelve *āyatana*s escaped his attention, Professor Keith would have known that the plural *dharmāḥ* is used as a technical term to designate *āyatana* No. 12.³ If he then looks into the passages of the Nikāyas where this term is used in the plural, these passages will at once be clear to him, and he will be able to produce an intelligible translation of them. But then he will at once be obliged to accept the whole system. The doctrine is so logically compact that as soon as you accept a bit of it, you needs must accept the whole.

Another term, which is "common in the extreme" is *saṃskāra*. The terms *dharmā* and *saṃskāra*, says Professor Keith, "come to be used practically as identical."⁴ Consequently, *saṃskāra* must also mean a "thing". But it does not mean a "thing" at all. It means "dispositions" or "impressions resulting in dispositions". However, the predominant *saṃskāra* is the will.⁵ It is also "an Element", and "a mental Element"⁶; but is it really a "thing" or a "disposition"? Nor is it very easy to understand what it does mean when we are told that these dispositions are "without self, evanescent, and full of

¹ It is the *dharmā-āyatana*, the *āyatana* No. 12.

² *Buddh. Phil.*, p. 73.

³ Cf. above, p. 875.

⁴ *Buddh. Phil.*, p. 60.

⁵ *cetanā* = *karma* = *saṃskāra*.

⁶ *caitasika-dharma*.

misery" !¹ Why should the will be "an impression resulting in a disposition full of misery" ? Fancy you happen to have a disposition which is "without self" (i.e. which is no disposition at all ?), but nevertheless evanescent and full of misery, you may then be sure that you have had a *saṃskāra* ! The appearance and disappearance of every element is accompanied by the forces of production and destruction.² These forces are *saṃskāras*, but are they indeed "dispositions, full of misery" ? The meaning of *saṃskāra* is "consistent and intelligible", says Professor Keith in one case,³ but in another context he complains of its "vagueness".⁴ However, if he had looked into the tables appended to my *Central Conception*, the vagueness would have disappeared. He would then have known exactly which *dharmas* are never *saṃskāras*, which are always *saṃskāras*, which may be and may not be *saṃskāras*, which are mental,⁵ and which are "non-mental".⁶ But then he would also have seen that the system of *dharmas* is present on every page of the Pali Canon in the meaning suggested by Professors O. Rosenberg and Th. Stcherbatsky.⁷

A very important term is *viññāna*, "pure consciousness" or "pure sensation". Its meaning becomes at once clear when its position in the subject-object classification of the elements is considered. Feelings, ideas, volitions are situated in the objective part. The corresponding subjective part, the introspective faculty which apprehends them, is pure consciousness, formless consciousness. Just as in the systems of Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya, consciousness is in Hīnayāna formless (*nirākāra*), whereas in later Buddhism it contains forms (it is *sākāra*). In this meaning the term appears as the third member in the chain of causation, as the fifth group in the *skandha* classification, as the sixth item in the *āyatana* classification, as the

¹ Ibid., p. 60.

² *utpāda-skhiti-jarā-anityatā*.

³ Ibid., p. 50.

⁴ Ibid., p. 86.

⁵ *citta-samprayukta*.

⁶ *citta-vṛṣṭiprayukta*.

⁷ It is curious that, pp. 201–2, the Sarvāstivādin classification of the seventy-five dharmas is called "a not very happy attempt at an *objective* description", whereas the redistribution of exactly the same seventy-five dharmas in *skandha-āyatana-dhātu's* is called a "*subjective*" [sic] classification! This is accompanied by the remark "in the whole scheme we find little of philosophic insight or importance in this, clearly a very important side, in its own eyes, of the activity of the school". The sarcasm would have been more effective if it had been better grounded. Professor Keith ascribes to the Sarvāstivādin school what is common to all schools, and the *āyatana* and *dhātu* divisions, which are found everywhere in the Pali Canon, he ascribes to the Abhidharma of the Sarvāstivādins! If we add to this the double account of the "chain of causation" and the double account of the "*skandha*-division, we see how the "history" of Buddhism is written by him.

sixth and thirteenth to eighteenth items in the *dhātu* classification. It is present in every living organism from the first moment of its being engendered. That is its position as the third member of the twelve-membered chain. The moment of conception means already the presence of the element *viññāna*, it is the primordial element of pure consciousness, the life-principle of a living organism and in this respect the central among all the elements of a personality, the Buddhist substitute for the soul. All differentiation of cognition, all content of cognition, all ideation, every cognition capable of coalescing with a name, is relegated to the group of ideas, under the term *saṃjñā*. The contrast between *viññāna* and *saṃjñā* is fundamental; it corresponds to a certain extent to the contrast between sensation and ideation of modern psychologists, and is very drastically put forward by the Buddhists in their classification of the elements of a living personality, where pure consciousness, which is here the same as pure sensation, is separated from ideation as a separate and fundamental item in the complex of Elements forming a personality (*puḍgala*).

Now all this, as Professor Keith remarks on another occasion,¹ is "too coherent and logical to be primitive". He accordingly says²: "the mention of *saññā* along with *viññāna* is otiose and a decisive proof of the lack of psychological interest or acumen of the observers." He translates *viññāna* sometimes by Intellect, sometimes by Consciousness, sometimes by both, and remarks³ that it "comprehensively covers mental phenomena in the Canon". It has escaped his attention that the comprehensive term for mental phenomena or mental faculties is *saṃskāra*.⁴ *Viññāna* is the only mental Element which is not *saṃskāra*, it is not a mental phenomenon,⁵ but the *mind* itself.⁶ This again is "too coherent and logical to be primitive". Of all the terms of the fivefold division (in Skandha),⁷ Professor Keith has understood only the term *vedanā* "feeling".

¹ Ibid., p. 107.

² Ibid., p. 86.

³ Ibid., p. 84.

⁴ viz., *citta-saṃprayukta-saṃskāra*.

⁵ *caitta*.

⁶ *citta*.

⁷ In order to appreciate this classification of mental phenomena in the Buddhist "Psychology without a Soul" into Feelings, Ideas, Volitions, and Pure Sensation, it is sufficient to follow the ever-changing and inconclusive attempts which manifest themselves in European psychology, beginning from the times when the Soul was divided into "parts" up to modern times, when the greatest indecision continues to reign regarding the places to be assigned to some important items. Bain's division into Feeling, Volition, and Intellect (*vedanā*, *cetanā* = *saṃskāra*, *saṃjñā*) has no place for sensation (*viññāna*); he says sensations are partly feelings and partly intellectual states". On the contrary, Warren and a number of other psychologists declare "sensation and ideation" to be the fundamental types of experience. This would

Professor Keith declares that it is “absurd to assign to Buddhism faith in the uniformity of the causal process or of nature.”¹ Why should it be absurd? Because “universal causation is an idea wholly foreign to the Canon” and the Chain of Causation “is intended to explain the coming into being of misery”. The origin of misery is then very curiously explained. The explanation starts by positing the element of ignorance, which is but the ignorance of the four “noble truths”. Forgetting his scepticism, Professor Keith declares that in these truths “we may, indeed, for once believe to have reached a doctrine, which goes back in form to the Buddha himself, his central teaching”. Why is it the central teaching, and what does it teach? The “truths” are just the same and just as fundamental in the Sāṅkhya, the Yoga, the Nyāya systems and in medical science! There is therefore either nothing or very little Buddhistic in them.² However, the neglect of these “noble truths” has, as interpreted by Professor Keith, very grave consequences. It produces . . . what?—“Dispositions”!³ These “dispositions” are of a peculiar kind—they produce . . . consciousness! It follows evidently that the preceding “dispositions” and ignorance of the truths were unconscious! Consciousness which is “visible”⁴ (?!) does not remain idle. It produces “name and

correspond to the difference of *viññāna*- and *saṃjñā-skandha* (it is the same as *nirvikalpaka* and *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa*). But this classification has no separate place for feeling and will; and besides, what is most important is this: when I divide consciousness into sensation and ideation I should not mix them up. I should have a sensation without ideation, i.e. pure sensation, i.e. sensation without the slightest ideation. Brentano's division into representation, judgment and emotional phenomena, distributes the intellect into two items and has no separate place either for sensation, or for will. It comes near to the Buddhist division in this respect, that the will is united in the same item with all emotional phenomena of hatred and love (*saṃskāra-skandha*). No European classification has any separate place for pure sensation (*viññāna-skandha*), although W. James discusses its possibility. Thus the Buddhist classification into (1) pure sensation, (2) feeling, (3) intellect, and (4) will, compares not unfavourably with the indecision of European psychology. The critique which Professor Keith applies to *saṃskāra-skandha* is quite unintelligible. *saṃskāra-skandha* means, just as in Brentano's classification, “Phänomene von Hass und Liebe,” including the will as the chief phenomenon or force (*ceṭanā*, *rāga*, *dveṣa*, etc.).

¹ Ibid., p. 113.

² Cf. my *Conception of Nirvāna*, p. 17.

³ Professor Keith, *Buddh. Phil.*, p. 100, gives vent to his “amazement” at “the creation of two curious bodily complexes alone by ignorance” (!?). He remarks that “the confusion is significant of the lack of skill of the interpreters”. It has escaped his attention that the element of ignorance means in this context the counterpart of Nirvāṇa. When Nirvāṇa is attained, there is no ignorance and no rebirth; the *saṃskāras*, and among them ignorance, are brought to a standstill. The doctrine is by no means exclusively Buddhistic.

⁴ i.e., belongs to the class of *sanidarśana*-elements (!?).

form", i.e. it unites "with matter to form the individual", and then the senses are developed. After that, "contact" arises which, according to the "scholiasts", means consciousness again, but "consciousness arising from contact". The preceding existence was evidently contactless. Contact produces feeling and from feeling "thirst", "grasping", and "becoming". There was evidently no becoming before, and even "grasping" managed to exist without becoming. Birth, misery, and death come after "becoming"! We can believe Professor Keith when he says that "the coherence of the whole is not effective and we can hardly suppose that even to its compilers the construction had much demonstrative force".¹ Such is the "explanation of misery", the central teaching of Buddha!

Professor Keith treats of the twelve-membered *pratītya-samutpāda* doctrine twice, pp. 96 ff. and 179 ff., as if it were two different doctrines. He does the same in respect of the *skandha* doctrine, pp. 85 ff. and 200 ff. The exposition is such that the same doctrine could have been repeated five or six times, without any possibility of recognizing it as the same. When we come across a term like "the assumption groups" (*upādāna-skandha*),² we naturally think "what on earth may these assumption groups mean? How absurd!" But when we look into the tables of the Elements and begin to realize that the "assumption groups" simply mean the ordinary man as contrasted with the Saint, we then see that the translator is alone responsible for the absurdity.

It is useless to accumulate further examples. With the single exception of the term *vedanā* "feeling", Professor Keith has not translated correctly a single one of the multitude of terms specially framed for the expression of Buddhist ideas. The characteristics of "absurd", "ludicrous", "ridiculous", "otiose", etc., which he pours upon these ideas, do not in the least affect real Buddhism. His failure is an eloquent proof in favour of the theory of Dharmas. Without this clue to Buddhist terminology, Buddhism is incomprehensible. Nay, the Buddhist Credo, this short Credo which is so different from the Credos of all other religions, which simply says that "Buddha has taught the causal origin of the elements of existence and their extinction in Nirvāṇa"—this Credo remains a riddle as long as we do not know what the elements are. Neither is it possible to extract a genuine doctrine of the Buddha by applying the *a priori*

¹ *Buddh. Phil.*, p. 109.

² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

principle that he must be personally responsible for the most absurd among all absurdities.¹ I apologize for representing some current explanations of Buddhistic ideas in a ridiculous shape. But their thoughtlessness cannot be better shown. They are thoughtlessly dragged from one book into another, and their absurdity is a disgrace to European science. We must make an end of all these “misery”, “assumption groups”, “things”, “dispositions”, “contacts”, “graspings”, “becomings”, “noble truths”, “compounds”, etc. Before making conjectures about the history and prehistory of Buddhism, it seems indispensable to know what its terminology means, or else we shall be writing not the history of Buddhism, but the history of our “dispositions” and “assumption groups”!

In conclusion, I must add some remarks on the puzzling problem of Nirvāṇa. Professor Keith insists that it necessarily must be something “real”.² The reason is that it must be “simple”, in accord with a “barbarous” age, etc. But this is evidently begging the question. It has apparently escaped his attention that there is no deficiency of paradises in Buddhism.³ There is no resurrection of the flesh—this idea seems absurd to the Buddhist—but a new and radiant body, a new and purified consciousness are created in blissful paradises as a continuation of a virtuous life, according to the laws of dependent origination. Life in the paradise is of enormous duration, but it is not eternity. Real eternity is absence of change, and that means absence of life. Eternity means extinction (*nirodha*) of all energies (*saṃskāras*), Entropy. It is curious that Professor Keith insists upon the necessary “reality” of Nirvāṇa in opposition to my views, whereas if anything is clear to the reader of my two books, it must be that in Hīnayāna Nirvāṇa is a Dharma, consequently, a reality, a separate reality, an ultimate reality, an element. This has

¹ *Buddh. Phil.*, p. 63—it is suggested that Buddha’s agnosticism means that he really knew nothing about Nirvāṇa, “he allowed men to frame their own conceptions.” “From the general poverty of philosophical constructive power exhibited by such parts of the system as appear essentially Buddha’s (? !), one is inclined to prefer this explanation.”

² Cf. article in the *Bulletin*, p. 398.

³ Professor Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 92 ff., apparently confounds the meaning of *rūpa*, by throwing into the same bag the *rūpas* or *rūpa-skandha*, *rūpa-āyatana*, and *rūpa-dhātu*. That the meaning of *rūpa* is quite different in all the three combinations is clearly seen from the table appended to my *Central Conception*. To what confusion this want of discrimination leads is seen from the fact that the Buddhist heavens are thus converted, p. 92, into a “world of Matter” (!).

been changed in Mahāyāna, but in Hīnayāna no one denies that Nirvāṇa is real, just as no one denies that a long future life in a paradise is promised to virtue.

What is the definition of Nirvāṇa as an Element? It is an "uncaused" element.¹ "Uncaused" means eternal, never changing. Are there other eternal elements? Yes, there are. The element of empty space is eternal and never changing, not living, but real. Thus Nirvāṇa in the system is brought into line with eternal and empty space. Are both these negative elements unreal? Professor Keith seems to be naïvely convinced that there can be no real naught, that annihilation cannot be real! We have arrived at the core of the problem. Was there or was there not a real philosophy at the time of the Buddha, "une pensée maîtresse d'elle-même"? For in philosophy the reality of the naught is a very familiar idea. Omitting all realistic schools in India, and beginning with Democritus, who believed in the reality of empty space and all pre-Aristotelian philosophy in Greece; beginning with N. Cusanus in Europe up to Hegel and Bergson, the reality of the naught has been treated from many different sides. Bergson maintains even that the naught contains much more than the something, and Bradley (*Logic*, p. 666) insists that "the negative is *more* real than what is taken as merely positive".

Now there are unmistakable signs that the idea of naught occupied the minds of early Indian philosophers intensely. They practised concentration of the mind upon this idea in the state of trance. The constructive poetical imagination of the Buddhists has created worlds, the denizens of which are for ever merged in a motionless contemplation of that unique idea. There are worlds whose denizens are for ever merged in the intuition of infinite empty space, others are motionlessly contemplating the boundless realms of pure consciousness, others are eternally staring at the boundless naught. These poetical pictures are again analytically constructed in accord with the theory of the elements. Life consists here of three elements only.² They are non-eternal, changing, living, causally produced³ elements. Therefore they produce life which is non-quiescent⁴ still. It is a contemplation of the naught, not its realization. Its realization is Nirvāṇa. To

¹ Professor Keith translates *asamskṛta* as "uncompound" Element. This is quite wrong. All elements are uncompound; not a single one is compound. The term "element" and the term "uncompound" are convertible.

² The *dhātus*, Nos. 6, 12, and 18.

³ *samskṛta*.

⁴ *duḥkha*.

construct a Buddhism without a Nirvāṇa and without the theory of elements is a hopeless undertaking. And if it is so, Professor Keith will be obliged to change his pre-conceived idea of the simplicity, attractiveness, and absurdity of Buddhism and look for another explanation of the appeal of these ideas to the noblest instincts of civilized humanity.

That his estimate of Buddhism is preconceived appears clearly from the fact that he has two theories concerning it, a special and a general one. The special one affects Buddhism only; Buddhism is absurd. The general one affects all things Indian—nothing can be absurd enough for “Indian minds”.¹ Taking his stand on these two theories, Professor Keith declares² that even if the Buddha was the author of the theory of elements, “it is clearly no great intellectual feat to reduce the world into the concerted appearance of discrete evanescent Elements regarded, together with Space and Annihilation, as the ultimate realities.” Professor Keith deals lightly with philosophy! Adopting the same supercilious attitude of nonchalance we might also say, “is it after all a great intellectual feat to have reduced the world to two substances with two attributes as Descartes has done, or to only one substance with two attributes as Spinoza has done”? However, in a spirit of justice to all nations, and of a true appreciation of great intellectual feats, we will rank the founder of Buddhism with Descartes and Spinoza among great men. They all were *Mahā-puruṣas* and *Mahā-paṇḍitas*.

¹ *Bulletin*, l.c., p. 394. Cf. *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda* by the same author, on p. 494 the characteristic utterance “. . . even for India such a thought is absurd” (viz. that Kṣatriyas gave instruction on Brahman)!

² *Ibid.*, p. 395.