

CHINESE BUDDHISM

CHINESE BUDDHISM:

A Volume of Sketches,

HISTORICAL, DESCRIPTIVE, AND CRITICAL.

BY

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"RELIGION IN CHINA," "INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE CHINESE CHARACTERS,"
"A MANDARIN GRAMMAR," ETC.

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE number of Buddhists in the world has been much exaggerated. Formerly it was stated to be four hundred millions; and this incredibly large estimate led to careful consideration. Dr. Happer, resident for more than forty years in Canton, thinks that in China the tonsured Buddhist priests are twenty millions in number, and he declines to allow that the rest of the Chinese can be rightly called Buddhists. Dr. Gordon, of Japan, a good authority who has carefully studied Japanese Buddhism, considers that it would not be fair to represent only the tonsured Buddhists as followers of the Buddhist religion in Japan; yet it is a fact that few of the laity in China and Japan make and keep Buddhist vows. The same is true of Tauism. The most of the population of China claim to be Confucianists, and conform occasionally to Buddhist and Tauist ceremonies. The rich Chinaman calls himself a Confucianist, and therefore he must count as such. But he subscribes to the rebuilding of Buddhist temples and pagodas, because he thinks the act will bring him prosperity. He worships Tauist idols more than those in Buddhist temples; but he adores the Buddhist images also on certain occasions. He conforms to three religions, but on the whole he is made by ancestral worship properly speaking a Confucianist. His religious faith

is a sad jumble of inconsistent dogmas. As to becoming a tonsured priest, he never thinks of it, unless he grows weary of the world and aspires to monastic life as a relief from social cares and domestic sorrow. Let us include lay Buddhists who keep their vows at home, and rate the whole number of those Chinese who take Buddhist vows, monastic or lay, at forty millions. The Tauists may be roughly estimated at fifteen millions, and the Confucianists at 320 millions. It is ancestral worship that gives the Confucianists so large a preponderance.

The schoolmasters are all Confucianists. None of the books used in education are Buddhist or Tauist. Of newly published works, ten per cent. may be Buddhist and ten per cent. Tauist. These include exhortations to virtue, and treatises urging to charity. There is no demand for Buddhist or Tauist books. Eighty per cent. of all books newly published count as Confucianist, or as belonging to general literature. Booksellers, as a rule, keep no Buddhist or Tauist books. On the whole, it seems better to allow the Chinese claim, and class 320 millions of them as Confucianists. To go to school is to become a Confucianist, and even those who have no book-learning worship their ancestors.

Yet Buddhism is powerful in China by its doctrines. It has made the Chinese idolaters, and besides this it has taught them the *wind* and *water* superstition which has proved to be an effective barrier against civilised improvements and a most thorough hindrance to true enlightenment. For these two reasons, after all that can be said, still it is a Buddhist country, and the people are idolaters and the victims of Hindoo superstition. The art too is Buddhist. The favourite subjects of artists are Buddhist or Tauist. Here the ascetic element prevails, and that

familiarity with nature which marks the true Buddhist. The lion, a Persian animal, is the symbol of victory, and is a common ornament in temples as symbolical of Buddha's success in argument. The lotus also is symbolical of Buddha's appearance as saviour. He rises suddenly from the sea of misery, an object of beauty to thousands who are rescued by his powerful teaching from their hopeless delusions. The lovely flower, the *padme*, is an indispensable ornament to Buddha's throne. Buddhism taught the Chinese and Japanese artists to paint animal and vegetable forms and carve them in temples. Through this medium ideas of Assyrian and Greek art found their way to these Eastern races, and elevated them. Buddhism, by introducing to China notions of Western art, has conferred a positive benefit, and she has also inspired multitudes with a sort of hope of deliverance from suffering. Since the first edition of this book was published, several thousands belonging to Buddhist and Tauist sects in North China, having already an undefined longing for redemption stirring within them through Buddhist teaching, have found that redemption in the doctrines of the Bible and accepted the Christian faith. Buddhism alone could only awaken aspirations after belief. Christianity coming after it satisfies those aspirations.

The *Karma* and the twelve *Nidanas* or causes unveil to view the chain of a twelve-fold necessity which controls human life, an impersonal fate made up of causes and inevitable effects. This idea of destiny is suggested by events such as sudden death, sickness, and old age. In Isa. lxxv. 12 (revised version) human destiny is said to be in the hands of the goddess Meni, as the Babylonians thought. But Meni means the "divider." The Greeks believed in the three Moirai, the Fates or the Dividers.

The idea of destiny in Babylon and Greece preceded the fact of personifying. So was it in Buddhism. First the twelve causes were taught under the control of Karma; afterwards, in Northern Buddhism, Yama, god of death, divided out, as it was said, human destiny and fixed the hour of death for every one. Since it is not a Vedic doctrine, this belief in an impersonal destiny is Babylonian, and is astrological, but the keen Indian intellect separated the astrological element from it carefully and made it purely metaphysical. There are five causes at work—existence, grasping firmly, love, activity, ignorance. There are seven consequences—bodily decay, birth, sensation, touch, the senses, colour, consciousness. Buddhist logic not believing in the outer world is here seen busying itself with the senses and the sensations which are the constituent elements of our phenomenal life. This is destiny stated in the language of Hindoo metaphysics, and when it proceeds to detail, all we can take hold of is our sensations, our consciousness, our emotions, and our activity. It would certainly be clearer if put in the language of Cousin or of Sir William Hamilton. It is truly a misfortune for the Buddhists that they have not had their philosophical dogmas expounded as our Western philosophers would expound them. In describing our environment Buddhism is pessimistic. Nothing could be worse than our delusions and our condition. In promising a cure, Buddhism adopts a most triumphant tone. Buddha discovered the remedy, and God had nothing to do with it. It is in every man's power to save himself. In this system the assertion that an impersonal fate, morally retributive, rules all men's destiny, and is the basis of the metempsychosis, is Babylonian. The transmigration of souls is foreign, and the moral basis of necessary law

on which it rests is, in fact, both native and foreign. Buddha found his countrymen believing in the new doctrine of transmigration, and he himself believed it and shaped it into the twelve causes and effects. He did not resist or deny the Mesopotamian fate. He gave it logical form, and undertook to set men free from it by treating it as a delusion.

Science and philosophy on arriving in India originated science and philosophy in that country under new forms. Buddhism forsook the Veda religion so far as to omit all mention of the gods Varuna, Agni, and the Maruts. Buddha did not cite the Vedas as authorities. He built his system on the ideas he found current in Central India. For himself, he claimed to have discovered the highest truth. The cause of his atheism was the polytheism of the time. Its extreme anthropomorphism provoked a reaction in his mind against the idea of deity. The gods, thought he, are unequal to the task of saving men from delusion. There is a wisdom that can do it, and I have discovered it. To this confidence in his own insight he was led in part by the national love for argument, and for that variety of illustration in conducting argument which the collision between foreign and native thought had awakened. To this was to be added the effect of lonely meditation. The youthful thinker was thrown on his own resources in his chosen retirement. Shutting off all avenues by which other thoughts than his own could reach him, he waited for light till it came. He had a compassionate heart, and thus his natural disposition found its way into his system, and marked his whole life-work as a national teacher. It is this enthusiastic sympathy for humanity which drew to him so many millions of adherents.

That this is the real explanation of Buddhism as a phenomenon in the history of mankind, can be shown in many ways. Southern Buddhism is in its development of thought very decidedly more Hindoo than Northern Buddhism. The impact from Western philosophy produced a slighter effect in Southern India, communication being entirely by sea. Northern Buddhism branched out in a striking manner from the old root of Buddhist ideas, and the cause should be sought in its close conflict with Persian and Babylonian thought. The Persians, when they came down from the north, charged with Aryan conceptions and beliefs, to conquer their country, were powerfully influenced by Babylonian civilisation. The Zoroastrian religion was the result. They became earnest believers in their new faith, and this access of national zeal reacted on the Buddhists in North-Western India. A characteristically new, original, and popular modification of Buddhist thinking was soon produced.

Amitabha, the Buddha who leads to the paradise of the west, is a new Ormuzd, god of light, believed in by the Persians as the supreme deity, and promising his followers eternal joy in the paradise where he dwells. Buddhism, when it proclaimed general scepticism, opened the way for free speculation. The Buddhists found the Persians as earnest as themselves, and they incorporated the Persian view of a supreme god and a future life of happiness in their own system. Buddhism, by adopting the principle of contemplation and inward light, became mystical. The Paradise of the Western heaven was evolved by Northern Buddhists in hours of contemplation. The new teaching soon attained a widespread popularity. Continued studies in ancient Chinese philosophy have convinced me that the three religions of the Chinese

have all been greatly influenced by Persian ideas. First, the ancient Chinese learned dualism from Persia, and adopted it in the Book of Changes. They also adopted the worship of the sun and stars with astrology. Then they accepted the belief in a future life in early Tauism. Finally, Buddhism brought them a later form of the future life as developed in the worship of Amitabha. Mr. De Groot, in his comprehensive work on the religion of the Chinese, agrees with me in these views, and conversation with him in China led me to expand them still more. Tibetan Buddhism lays great stress on astrology, and by so doing points plainly to Babylon.

The same is true of the Hindoos. Their cosmogonies are Babylonian. Their triad of gods, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, is based on a Babylonian model, just as the Chaldean triad of the higher gods is derived from the Accadian. Hindu sculpture is based on that of Greece. Hindoo arithmetic is Babylonian in origin. Babylonian thought was adopted by the Hindoos, because it was more refined and profound than their own. In the history of philosophy it is as true in Asia as in Europe that every new philosophy rests on its predecessors. The origin of each new philosophy can only be satisfactorily explained when attention has been adequately given to those systems of thought which, by their influence, tended to produce it.

Chinese Buddhism is Northern Buddhism, and it can only be suitably accounted for in this way. How necessary it is to make plain from what source the variations found in Northern Buddhism from the primitive standard have sprung, is clear from what one of my critics, Dr. Rhys Davids, has stated. In the *Academy* of October 2, 1880, he says that to speak of Buddha as "entering into

Nirvana" is an expression which absolutely contradicts the doctrines of the early Buddhists. My author says there are three Nirvanas—1, a pure nature, that of heretics; 2, purity gained by practising the methods of the greater or lesser vehicle; 3, the purity of Buddha's death. This I take from *Kiau chêng fa shu*, one of my best Chinese authorities. The reason is in the change which came over Buddhism through contact with Persia. Dr. Rhys Davids also assumes that the Chinese have only one date for Buddha's birth. I have carefully pointed out that they have at least two, one among them being B.C. 623, given in the Imperial dynastic histories. In fact, Northern Buddhism is undervalued by Pali scholars. It has gone through the purifying process of a thousand fights with Brahmins and other sects in India, with Parsees, Manichæans, and Christians abroad, and with Confucianists in China. The Chinese author thinks much of style, and possesses an immense répertoire of elegant phrases. The original Sanskrit is changed into these phrases, and comes to mean something much nearer to men's business and bosoms, and more polished in expression, than it did in the Indian form. The Chinese translator accepts no new idioms which can be avoided. Foreign lingo must be modified to suit Confucianist taste. It would be well if Dr. Rhys Davids would allow for the influence on Northern Buddhism of foreign systems of thought, and also take into consideration the qualities of the Chinese translators. He says Brahmajala does not mean "net of Brahma." The Chinese author says it does. I prefer to follow my authority, and leave my critic to prove that he is wrong. When the Sanskrit bears two or three meanings, the Chinese translator sometimes gives them all, wishing to get all he can out of his text. Dr. Rhys Davids, on the contrary, selects

one and denies the others. He also expects me to follow the Pali as translated by Gogerly, vouched for by Dr. Rhys Davids himself as accurate. I think, however, it is better for me to follow my Chinese guides. Native Buddhist works by Chinese are, I believe, more entertaining and interesting than those written in Pali by Hindoos. In saying this, I fear I shall not get Dr. Rhys Davids to agree with me. But however this may be, what I give is taken from Chinese authorities, except where European writers are cited expressly. I began studying Chinese Buddhism more than forty years ago. Dr. Eitel, Rev. Samuel Beal, and Mr. Consul Watters followed me, and have done well. Before they began publishing, I had already pointed out that the Chinese Buddhist schools of authorship all spread to Japan many centuries ago, and were firmly planted in that country. It is surely worth the earnest thought of Pali students that Buddhism was developed powerfully in North-Western India under Persian and Christian influence so far as to allow of the teaching of a future life, and to treat the Nirvana practically as a euphemism for death. In this state Buddhism entered China. No sooner had it arrived than controversy commenced on immortality. The Chinese Buddhists contended vigorously for the immortality of the soul against the followers of Confucius. Pali Buddhism, if it had been propagated in China, would not, probably, have originated such a controversy. It was the Northern doctrines invigorated by faith in the immortality of the soul which gave Chinese Buddhism sufficient energy to found new schools.

JOSEPH EDKINS.

PREFACE.

WHEN the first Hindoo missionaries arrived at the capital of China and were admitted to see the emperor, it was, the Buddhists tell us, in the last month of the year A.D. 68, and the 30th day of that month. By imperial command they were entertained in a building called *Pe-ma ssi*, "Office of the white horses;" so named because they had ridden on white horses on their way from Cabul. The two Brahmans enjoyed the imperial favour, and one of the books they translated has remained popular to the present time.

Thirteen years before these men reached China, the first missionaries of Christianity crossed the Ægean Sea and entered Europe. Instead of being received, however, with the smiles of those in power and enjoying imperial hospitality, they were publicly whipped and imprisoned by the magistrates of a Roman colony, and ignominiously dismissed.

Buddhism covered China with monasteries and images; Christianity covered Europe with churches and charitable institutions. A hundred authors have written on the history of the spread of Christianity in the various countries of Europe. Very few have ever studied the history of Buddhism as it has spread through China, and taught its

doctrines in every part of that empire. There is room for new information on the entrance, progress, and characteristics of Chinese belief in the religion founded by Shakyamuni.

Especially is there a need for facts on the history of Buddhism, because it is that one among the world's religions which has acquired the greatest multitude of adherents, and has also above any other carried out most systematically the monastic institute.

Isaac Taylor drew attention in his *Ancient Christianity* to the knowledge of Hindoo monasticism possessed by Clement of Alexandria, and traced the origin of the monasticism of Christianity to that of India.

Buddhism never became the State religion of China. It has grown side by side with the State religion, and obtained only the partial faith of the people. In this it differed from Christianity, which in Europe took the place of the old State religions of the various countries, after first vanquishing them all.

One of the titles of Buddha is "the Lion;" another is "the Great hero;" another is "Honoured one of the world;" another is "King of the Law." His followers love to represent him as completely victorious over metaphysical opponents by argument, and as gaining a thorough and final conquest over temptation impersonated by demons. He is also spoken of as victorious in saving from their unbelief all sorts of heretics, of men sunk in pleasure, and every class of adversaries. He has infinite pity, as well as infinite wisdom.

Such is the ideal of Buddha. Let it be compared with that of the Christian Saviour. Let the result of the teaching of Shakyamuni on the Chinese be compared with that of the teaching of Christ on Europe. Is China as

much better for Buddhism as Europe is for Christianity? If the beginnings of the world's religions are very interesting and important subjects of inquiry, their progress and development are not less so. The various causes which operated to aid the spread of Buddhism, if carefully investigated, will be a valuable contribution to the history of humanity. Koeppen has said that, at the time of Alexander's conquests, while there was a tendency imparted by him to the races he conquered, which led to the breaking up of a restrictive nationalism, and to the welding of various peoples, formerly separated by blood, customs, religions, and culture, into a higher unity in the consciousness of a common humanity, so also India was, by the propagators of Buddhism, putting forth vigorous efforts in the same cause. Alexander sought to make all mankind one. So did Buddhism. The Greek spirit and the spirit of Buddhism sympathised with each other and helped each other. In this way he finds an explanation of the rapid spread of the Buddhist religion in the Punjab, Afghanistan, Bactria, and the countries near. He then proceeds to compare Buddhism with Christianity, which he speaks of as cosmopolitan Judaism to which had been added Alexandrian and Essene elements. Just as Christianity conquered the Western world, so Buddhism the Eastern; and this it was able to do because it rejected caste and taught the brotherhood of humanity.

It must ever be regarded as a noble instinct of the Hindoo race, which prompted them to throw off the yoke of caste. But it should not be supposed that the yoke of caste was so strong then as it now is. It was easier then than now for a Hindoo to visit foreign countries. The social tyranny of caste was then less powerful.

What gave the first Buddhists their popularity? In

part, doubtless, the doctrine of the common brotherhood of men; but there were several other principles in their teaching which rapidly won adherents, and must also be taken into account.

They taught the universal misery of man, and offered a remedy. They met the yearning of humanity for a redemption by giving instruction, which they said came from the Buddhas and Bodhisattwas, each of whom was a powerful saviour to the devotee.

These saviours, instead of being members of the Hindoo hierarchy of popular gods, like those of Olympus, were either human beings or incarnations of ideas, and combining wisdom with mercy in their acts and teaching.

The early Buddhists surrounded death with a halo of lofty spiritual glory, and called it the Nirvâna. Death became synonymous with absolute peace, and so was looked on with less dread and dislike.

When the Buddhists began to teach races to whom the subtle Hindoo metaphysics were a riddle beyond their comprehension, they taught, for the Nirvâna, a Western Heaven ruled by a newly-invented Buddha, and additional to the paradises of the Devas. This is a new doctrine of a future life which is commonly accepted by the Northern Buddhists, from the Himalayas to the Altai mountains, and from Thibet to Japan.

Another popular element was communism joined with the monastic institute. The monastery is a refuge for the unhappy, for those who have not succeeded in trade, for sickly children, for all who feel a call to enter on a monastic life. In the monastery they subsist on the common fund supplied by the gifts of the charitable. A home, a quiet life, and very little to do, was the prospect held out to those whom society can very well spare, and is not unwilling to part with.

Another popular element was the charm of nobleness attached to the monastic life. Self-denial becomes attractive, and not at all difficult to those who are sensible of this charm. The renunciation of the world, and the absorbing occupation of a religious life, seem to many who enter the gates of the monastery a pleasant dream, and very desirable.

Another attractive element in Buddhism has been the social character of the worship. The monks meet for morning and evening prayers in the presence of the images. To this should be added the agreeableness to the eye of dressed altars, lofty gilt images, and the encouraged belief that they are representative of powerful beings, who will afford substantial protection to the devotee who faithfully discharges his duty as a disciple.

Then there is the doctrine of the *Karma*. Every act of worship, every Buddhist ceremony, every book of devotion read, every gift to a monastery or a begging priest, every mass for the dead, every invocation of a Buddha or Bodhisattwa, every wish for the good of others, infallibly causes great good, through the necessary operation of the law of cause and effect in the moral sphere.

How far these and other causes have helped to spread Buddhism through the many countries where it now prevails deserves the careful thought of the European student of the history of religions. Next to India itself, China has done more for the development of Buddhist thought than any other Buddhist country. This is a remarkable fact and very useful; showing, as it does, that, judging from the past, the Chinese are susceptible to a very considerable degree of a foreign religion. They will also use intellectual energy in teaching and expanding it. Let any one who doubts this look over Kämpfer's account of

Japanese Buddhism. He will there find nearly all the Chinese sects described in this volume occurring again. They have been transplanted entire with their books and discipline into that island empire,—a striking proof of the vigour of Chinese Buddhism.

Why should they not accept Christianity with the same zeal, and apply to the task of teaching it as much mental force?

Dr. Draper says,¹ “From this we may also infer how unphilosophical and vain is the expectation of those who would attempt to restore the aged populations of Asia to our state. Their intellectual condition has passed onward never more to return.”

My own conviction is, that so far as this theory of despair affects China, it is not warranted. The eras of intellectual expansion in that country may be briefly enumerated in the following way:—After the Chow period, the most famous of all, came that of Han, when classical studies, history, and Tauist philosophy flourished together. Then followed a Buddhist age. Then came an age of poetry and elegant literature, that of the T'ang dynasty. After this came the time of the Sung philosophers, who were most prolific in moral and critical writings tinged with a peculiarly bad philosophy of nature. The present is an age of classical criticism, a reaction from that of the Sung writers.

We have six distinct periods of intellectual vigour, covering nearly three thousand years, and what do we now see? The intellectual vigour connected with Buddhism and Tauism dead, past any hope of a resurrection. Confucianism is still living, but it is not very strong. The people have an excellent physique, adapting them for

¹ Draper's *Intellectual Development of Europe*, vol. i. p. 57.

various climates. They emigrate extensively. They have at home an autonomous empire of immense dimensions, administered by printed codes of laws, and such a mode of governing as to enable them to keep that empire from falling to pieces in a time of foreign wars and rebellions.

They are not then to be despaired of intellectually. What they need is to be educated in the mass, to be elevated by the diffusion of a living Christianity, to have improvements in the physical condition of the poor, with a system of scientific instruction in every province, and a development of the mineral and manufacturing resources of the country.

No one need despair of the intellectual progress of the people, or of their susceptibility of spiritual development. Christianity fosters mental growth, and the science of the West is eminently stimulating to thought. The descendants of the men whose mariners sailed with the compass seven hundred years ago, and whose schoolmasters were at the same time making use of printed books in education, will not fail to respond to these powerful influences.

That Buddhism has affected Chinese literature and thought to a considerable extent, is shown in the following pages. It taught them charity, but it did not impart a healthy stimulus to the national mind. It made them indeed more sceptical and materialistic than they were before, and weakened their morality.

But since Buddhism has had among the Chinese its age of faith, prompting them to metaphysical authorship, and the formation of schools of religious thought, and also impelling them to undertake distant and perilous journeys, to visit the spots where Shakyamuni passed his life, it must be admitted that there is a very promising prospect for Christianity, and that the beneficial effect on

the people must be in proportion to the excellence of the Christian religion.

Perhaps Dr. Draper, in view of the facts contained in this book, would not be unwilling to modify his theory of the necessary decline of nations so far as it appertains to China, or at least allow the people of that country a further tenure of national life, till Christianity and education have had a trial.

The present volume is the fruit of many years' studies. Some parts of it were written nearly twenty-five years ago ; nearly all is the fruit of Chinese reading.

Dr. Eitel of Hongkong and Mr. Thomas Watters have since written ably and extensively on the same subject. But my mode of treatment differs from theirs, and in my revision it has been an advantage to have the results of their researches before me. My own collection of native books on Buddhism has increased, while my acquaintance with the actual form of this religion in its popular development at the present time has been considerably enlarged.

The facts here collected on the esoteric sects are adapted to throw light on the history of Buddhism in India, and will help, it may be, to define the position of the Jains.

In the section on *Feng-shui*, I ask attention to the view there given on the influence of Buddhism in producing the modern Chinese doctrine of the physical influences of nature, and the part that, through the Buddhists, India and Greece have both had in producing the superstitious materialism of the Chinese in its modern shape.

PEKING, October 1879.

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CHINESE BUDDHISM.



INTRODUCTION.

Buddhism deservés examination—Researches of Remusat, Burnouf, Koeppen, and St. Hilaire—Sanskrit manuscripts from Nepaul—Buddhist books reveal to view the ancient Hindoo world—The opening scene of the *Kin-kang-king*.

At the present time, when foreign intercourse with China is increasing every year, and our knowledge of that country is extending in proportion, an account of the history and literature of Buddhism in that land will perhaps find more readers than at any former period. The traveller will not fail to inquire why this Indian religion has sunk into such helplessness and decay as he observes. The philosophical historian naturally will wish to know the causes of the vast extension of Buddhism, and of its present decline. The Christian missionary would willingly learn the amount and nature of the religious feeling possessed by the monks, and the strength of the opposition which the religion of Christ has to expect during its propagation, from them and from the Buddhist laity. Especially the statesman needs to be informed how far the Chinese people are likely to be offended by the introduction of Christianity, and whether the opposition to idolatry which it excites will strike at any of their most dearly-cherished prejudices and beliefs.

A religion that has extended its sway over so many Eastern nations, and whose converts far outnumber those

of any other sect in the world, deserves minute investigation. The present sketch will be necessarily too brief to do justice to the subject, but it is hoped some results will be brought forward that may assist the foreign observer to explain the great and long-continued success of the Buddhistic system, the causes of its growing weakness, and the many indications of its hopeless decay.

Among European scholars Remusat and his successors in the study of Chinese literature have bestowed considerable attention on Buddhism, and their labours have been rewarded with many interesting and valuable results. Especially is the world indebted to Burnouf and St. Hilaire for their work in this field of Buddhist inquiry, and lucid exposition of their results. The aid to be derived from their investigations has not been neglected in the account now given to the reader. Further, the most direct means of gaining information is to study some parts of the voluminous works extant in Chinese on this subject. The numerous Indian priests who came to China early in the Christian era were indefatigable translators, as is shown by what they have bequeathed to their disciples. These monuments of the highly civilised race that spoke the Sanscrit language, give to the inquiry a special literary interest. They were till lately inaccessible in their original form. The European students of Sanscrit for a long period sought in vain for an account of Buddhist doctrines and traditions, except in the writings of their adversaries. The orthodox Indians destroyed the sacred books of their heretical brethren with assiduous care. The representations they give of the views of their opponents are necessarily partial, and it may be expected that what Colebrooke and others have done in elucidating Buddhism from the polemical writings of the Brahmans, would receive useful corrections and additions as well from Chinese sources as from the Sanscrit manuscripts of Buddhist books obtained by Hodgson.¹

¹ During his residence in Nepaul. Of these works, the *Lotus of the Good*

An extended critique of the Buddhist literature of China and the other countries professing Buddhism, such as Burnouf planned and partly accomplished for India, would be a valuable contribution to the history of the Hindoo race. The power of this religion to chain the human mind, the peculiar principles of its philosophy, its mythological characteristics, its mode of viewing human life, its monastic and ascetic usages, all result from the early intellectual development of the nation whose home is south of the Himalayas. In the Buddhist classics it is not the life of China that is depicted, but that of Hindostan, and that not as it is now, but as it was two thousand years ago. The words and grammatical forms that occur in their perusal, when deciphered from the hieroglyphic Chinese form that they have been made to assume, remind the reader that they spring from the same stem of which the classical languages of Europe are branches. Much of their native literature the Buddhist missionaries left untouched—for example, the highly-wrought epic poems and dramas that have recently attracted the admiring notice of Europeans; but a large number of fables and tales with a moral are found in Chinese Buddhist books. Many specimens of this peculiar mode of composition, which, originating in Greece, was adopted by the Hindoos, and spread into the various literatures of modern Europe and Asia, have long since been made to wear a Chinese garb.¹ Further, the elements of grammar and the knowledge of the alphabet, with some important contributions from mathematical science, have reached China through the same medium. Several openings are thus presented into the old Hindoo world. The country where speculative philosophy, with grammatical and arithmetical science,

Law, in Chinese *Miau-fa-lien-hwa-king*, has been translated by Burnouf, Paris, 1852. The Rev. S. Beal, Professor of Chinese in University College, London, has translated from Chinese *A Catena of Buddhist Scrip-*

tures, and *The Romantic Legend of Sâkyâ Buddha*.

¹ Of these works Stanislas Julien has translated *Les Avadanas*, consisting of tales and apologues. 1859.

attained greater perfection than anywhere else in ancient times, is seen spreading its civilisation into the neighbouring countries, and producing remarkable and permanent changes in the national life of China. To witness this, as may be done in the Buddhist books, cannot be regarded as devoid of attraction. The very existence of Buddhism is sufficient evidence of the energy of the Indian race as it was long ago. The Mongols, Thibetans, and Singhalese, with the inhabitants of the Indo-Chinese peninsula, combine with the Chinese and Japanese to prove by the faith they still maintain in Buddhism the enthusiasm of its first missionaries, and their power to influence mankind. Buddhism was not always that decrepit and worn-out superstition that it now appears.

Having said thus much by way of preface, it is time to introduce to the reader's attention the founder of the religion. No way of doing this suggests itself as more suitable than to translate from the opening scene of a popular Buddhist work called the "Diamond Classic" a few passages, where he appears in the midst of his disciples, instructing them in some of the principles of his system. The time, according to the Singhalese chronology, was in the sixth century before Christ. The place is Sha-wei,¹ a city in Central India. The hero is Shakyamuni himself, *i.e.*, Buddha or Julai. The subordinate characters are the Bikshu² or religious mendicants, who are so denominated because they beg instruction for the mind and food for the body. They consist of two classes, says the editor of the Diamond Classic. Those who have abandoned vice and are aiming at virtue are the small Bikshu. Those who are released from both alike are great Bikshu. Among the latter, who

¹ Sha-wei was on the north of the Ganges, about 200 miles above Benares. It is also written Shravasti. All the upper part of the valley of the Ganges was embraced in what was known as Central India.

² This Sanscrit word is pronounced

according to K'ang-hi *Bi-k'u*. The orthography here adopted for Chinese and Sanscrit words, agrees nearly with that of Sir T. Wade and of the French writers on kindred subjects. For *ou*, the *oo* of Morrison, *u* is here written.

have gone deeper than the others into the profundities of Buddhist doctrine, are included those called Bosat and Lahan, or, as these characters are now pronounced by the Chinese, P'usa and Lohan.

The chief minister of the king having at Rajagriha heard Buddha's instructions, and been deeply impressed by them, wished to invite him to some suitable dwelling. Jeta, the king's son, had a garden. The minister offered to buy it. The prince said by way of jest that he was willing if he would cover it with gold. The minister, who was childless, obtained gold-leaf and spread it over the garden. The prince then gave it him free of cost. According to another account the minister ordered eighty elephants loaded with gold to come immediately. The prince, admiring the doctrine which had so affected the minister as to make him willing to give all this gold for a hall to teach it, gave it for nothing. In a house "in this garden, which lay outside the city Sha-wei, Buddha with his disciples, 1250 in number, assembled. It was the time of taking food. Buddha put on the robe" called *seng-gha-li*, and with his *pat*¹ or "mendicant's rice bowl" in his hand, entered the city to beg for food. When having gone from door to door he had finished his task, he returned to his lodging-place. "His meal being ended, he put his robe and rice vessel aside, and washed his feet," for it was the practice of this religious reformer to walk with naked feet. "He then sat cross-legged on a raised platform," remaining some time in meditation before he began to teach.

"At that time the aged Subhûti, who was sitting among the crowd of disciples, arose. With his right shoulder uncovered, and kneeling on his right knee, he raised his joined hands respectfully, and addressed Buddha in the following words:—"Rare is it to meet with the world's

¹ In modern Chinese the *t* is dropped and the *a* (*a* in *father*) changed to *o*. In Sanscrit the word is *pātra*.

honoured one,¹ Julai,² who in the best manner protects his disciples (Bosat), keeps them in his thoughts, and gives them his instructions. World-honoured sage! (*Shi-tsun*) if good men and good women exhibit *the unsurpassed just and enlightened heart*, how should they place it firmly, and how should the evil risings of the heart be suppressed and subdued?" The words in italics, corresponding to the Sanscrit *anutara samyaksambuddhi*,³ are written with Chinese characters in the text, and are explained by the commentator as consisting of *an*, "not," *utara*, "superior," *samya*, "right and equal," *sambodi*, "rightly knowing." Buddha replied, "The question is a good one, and you have truly described my disposition. It is thus that a resting-place can be found and the heart controlled." The words *ju-shi*, "thus," says the commentator, refer not to what precedes, as in Chinese syntax, but to what follows, according to the usage of Sanscrit grammar. Subhūti then expresses his anxious desire to hear the instructions of the sage, who consequently addresses his disciples called Bosat and Great Bosat (*Ma-ha-sat*). "All men, whether they resemble in their nature oviparous animals," that are light and fly, or imitate the moral dispositions and reflecting habits of "the mammalia, or are like the fish," sprung from spawn, instinctively following the multitude in the path of evil, "or are of the same class with animals born by transformation," and pass through remarkable changes, should enter that state which is final and unchangeable⁴—the Nirvāna,⁵ "Whether they still

¹ A title of Buddha—*Shi-tsun*; in Sanscrit, *Lokēśvararāja* (Eitel's *Handbook of Chinese Buddhism*), or *Lokādīyeshī'a*, v. Remusat's *Mélanges Asiatiques*, vol. i. p. 164.

² *Julai* is the Chinese translation of *Tathagata*. It means literally "thus come," and is explained, "bringing human nature as it truly is, with perfect knowledge and high intelligence, he comes and manifests himself."

³ These words are pronounced in old Chinese *a nu-ta-la sam-mia sam-bo-di*, and in Mandarin *a neu-to-lo san-miau san-p'u-t'i*.

⁴ Without remainder, *Wu-yü*.

⁵ *Nit* is translated by the commentator "go out if," and *ban*, "harassment." By the French Sinologues it is identified with Nirvāna, the happy condition of perfect rest at which the Hindoos aim. The dictionary *Ching-tsz-t'ung*, says, that "the

think" on the phenomena of the sensuous world "or have ceased to think," *i.e.*, become so far enlightened as to pay no attention to passing scenes, "or are neither with thought nor without thought," that is, have become entirely indifferent to life or death, appetite or aversion, love or hatred, "they should thus seek salvation in destruction." Why do not all living men obtain this immeasurably great release? "If the Bodhisattwa (Bosat, *he who knows and feels*) has for his aim self, or man, or the world of living things, or old age, he is not a true Bodhisattwa." Buddha now bade Subhûti resume his seat, and went on to inform him concerning the fixed place of rest for which he had inquired. "The Bodhisattwa in action should have no fixed resting-place for his thoughts. In what he does he should not rest on colour, sound, smell, taste, collision, or any particular action. He should not rest in forms of things, that is, allow himself to attend to any special sensational phenomena. If he thus acts, his happiness and virtue will be boundless." Buddha is asked by his disciple for a further explanation of this doctrine. He replies by inquiring if the four quarters of space can be measured by thought. Receiving a negative answer, he says that the same is true of the doctrine that the Bodhisattwa in acting without regard to particular objects obtains great happiness and virtue. He then asks if with the material body and its senses Julai or Buddha can be truly perceived. No, says the disciple, for body and form are not truly body and form. Buddha himself replies by denying the existence of all matter in the words "whatever has form is an empty delusion. If any one sees that all things having forms are not forms, *i.e.*, nothing, he then

Chinese equivalent of this Sanscrit term is, to announce that he is at rest, and that it is applied to describe the death of Buddha, because his is not a true death like that of other men, whose *tsing-shin* (soul) does not die." The sound *ban* was selected, it

may be, by a Hindoo who pronounced the word Nirbana. It is called in some translations Nirwan. The Hindoo translator would pronounce Nirwana. The Chinese character used for *ni* was called *nit* in some parts of China, and *nir* in others.

truly perceives Julai" in his formless and matterless reality; that is, has attained to a profound understanding of Buddhist doctrines.

In these few passages from the *Kin-kang-king* or "Diamond Sutra," some of the most prominent doctrines of Buddhism are brought to view, viz. :—(1.) The happiness of the Nirvâna or state of unconsciousness which frees him who attains it from the miseries of existence. (2.) The mischievous influence of human life, with its struggles after particular forms of happiness, and of the sensuous world with its deceptive phenomena. (3.) The non-existence of matter, to be convinced of which is to take the first grand step on the road to enlightenment.

This introduction into the Buddhist sphere of thought makes the system appear to be based rather on philosophy than on any religious principle. More will subsequently occur to confirm the correctness of this opinion. With regard to the real character of Buddhism, piety towards the Ruler of the world does not form either its foundation or the result to which it aims to elevate its votaries. It will be seen that, while striving to escape from the evils incident to life, and from every selfish aim, it is nothing but selfishness in an abstract philosophical form, stripped of the grosser qualities which are manifested in the common course of human history.

In enumerating the various kinds of sensations conveyed to our minds by the senses, a verb "to strike or pierce," *ch'u*, is employed in place of "touch," the familiar term of our own popular philosophy. All these sensations are said by the Buddhists to be produced by the respective organs with which they are connected. They are called the six kinds of "dust" or "worldly things"—the unwelcome accretions that attach themselves to our garments as we walk through the world. "Action," *fa*, said to emanate from the "will," *yi*, is classed with them as the sixth mode assumed by worldly phenomena.

The preceding specimen of Buddha's teaching, sur-

rounded by his disciples in a city of ancient India, is sufficient to introduce the subject. The principal facts in the life of that sage will now be detailed. Buddha will be here represented as he appears in the Chinese biographies. They describe him as a sort of divine man, possessed of unbounded magical power, and visiting the most distant spots, as, for example, the paradises of the gods, in an instant of time.

In giving an account of Chinese Buddhism, I feel the importance of exhibiting Shakyamuni in the form which is familiar to the Chinese devotee. It is well, in our picture, to retain the details of a marvellous nature which have been so abundantly added by the Northern Buddhists to the simplicity of the first narrative. Man cannot live without God. This was an effort to recover the divine. When God, through the absurdities of polytheism, was pushed out of view, the substitute was Buddha, the perfect sage, the model ascetic, the patient and loving teacher, the wonder-working magician, the acknowledged superior of gods and men. Such was the conception worked out by the Hindoo mind to take the place of the old polytheism of India, and accepted by all the Buddhist nations north of Shakyamuni's birthplace. In the history of religions it is of extreme importance that this fact should be recognised and appreciated.

A LIFE OF BUDDHA

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.



CHAPTER I.

LIFE OF SHAKYAMUNI TILL HIS APPEARANCE AT BENARES
AS A TEACHER.

Previous lives — Chronology — The seventh Buddha — Birth —
Early life — Becomes a hermit — Becomes Buddha — Legendary
stories of his early preaching — *Hwa-yen-king* — Extramundane
teaching — Appearance at Benares.

IN examining the Buddhist writings, the reader is at once reminded that he has entered a field where he is deprived of the trustworthy guidance and careful adherence to facts and dates of native Chinese authors. Not only is this true of works that contain the wilder extravagances of Indian mythology, and introduce the wondering disciple to the scenery and inhabitants of numberless other worlds, even those that wear an historical look, and yield the most information, do not fail thus to betray their foreign origin. The doctrine of transmigrations, and an eternal succession of *kalpas* past and future, is tempting to the biographer who wishes for variety of incident. He can place his hero wherever he pleases, in the universe boundless in space and time of the Indian imagination. The founder of Buddhism, Shakyamuni, or the "Sage of the house of Shakya," is a case in point. It is said of him that before his birth more than two thousand years since in the present *kalpa*, he had during many previous ones taken religious vows,

and honoured the Buddhas who then instructed the world. His name is associated particularly with Dipankara, in Chinese, Janteng, a fictitious Buddha, who received him as his disciple, and foretold that he would in a subsequent *kalpa* become Buddha, and bear the name by which he is now known. The time when this happened was too long ago to be expressed by common Chinese numerals. It was at a distance of numberless *kalpas*.¹ In modern Chinese temples, an image behind that of Julai sometimes represents Janteng. In the *kalpa* immediately preceding the present, Shakya is said to have risen to the rank of Bodhisattwa. He was then born in the heaven called Tushita,² and when the time was come his soul descended to our world. He came on a white elephant having six tusks. The date of Shakya's birth is very variously given. The Siamese, Peguans, and Singhalese, all using the Pali versions of the Buddhist classics, differ among themselves. The numbers as stated by them are B.C. 744, 638, and 624.³ The Chinese historian, Ma Twan-lin, mentions two dates as assigned by various authorities to this event, viz., 1027 and 668. The former is what is commonly given in Chinese books. Burnouf rightly prefers the chronology of the Southern Buddhists. Their discrepancies between themselves form an objection, but not at all a fatal one, to such a conclusion. The uncertainty that involves this question, is an instance of the difficulty attending researches in Indian chronology and history, as contrasted with the fulness and accuracy of Chinese writers. What was the original language of Buddhism is another point not yet fully determined. The settlement of it would throw light on the chronology. Only one of the dates can be right, for there is no doubt as

¹ *A-seng-gi-kap*. The Sanscrit word *Asankhyā* means "innumerable." *Kalpa* is applied to periods of time varying from a few hundreds to many thousand years.

² Tushita now pronounced *Tushito*.

³ See Klaproth's *Life of Buddha*, and Turnour's *Examination of the Pali Buddhistical Annals*.

to Buddha's identity. If Sanscrit was the language in which he taught his disciples, it must have been just dying out at the time, for the old Buddhist inscriptions, in the countries watered by the Ganges, are in a dialect derived from the Sanscrit and differing little from Pali. The mother-tongue of the Hindoos must then have been already supplanted by a derived dialect in the time of Ashôka, king of Central India, who reigned near Patna, as both the Northern and Southern Buddhists inform us, about 150 or 200 years after Buddha's death. It is to his age that those monuments are ascribed. Perhaps a discussion as to whether the Sanscrit or Pali versions of the sacred books were the earlier, may have led to a designed altering of dates by the Northern or Southern school of Buddhism. The deception was an elaborate one, by whichever party it was practised, for the interval from the death of Buddha until modern times is in the writings of both schools filled up by a series of events and dates.¹ The lives of some of the patriarchs, as given in Chinese books, appear too long. Ananda, a favourite disciple of Buddha, is made to die eighty-three years after him. Of his successors in the office of patriarch, the first two held it for sixty-two and sixty-six years respectively. The average of the first fourteen patriarchs is more than fifty-two years to each. Without forgetting the simple and abstemious habits of these ancient ascetics, their lives must be regarded as prolonged beyond probability. Perhaps the most convincing argument for the claim of the Pali to be that which was spoken by Buddha himself, is that the ascertained interval between him and Ashôka is too short for the formation of a new language.

The work called *San-kiau-yi-su*² places the Buddha called Shakyamuni in the seventh place among those whom

¹ The suggestion of Turnour to account for the sixty-five years discrepancy of the Singhalese and Greek dates is, that dates were altered to reconcile Buddha's prophecies with facts.

This throws light on the design of the Northern Buddhists in antedating Buddha's birth by 447 years.

² *San-kiau-yi-su*, "Supplementary account of the three religions."

it commemorates as having, on account of their perfect enlightenment, received that title. The list begins with the ninety-eighth Buddha of a preceding *kalpa*. He is called the Biba Buddha. The two next, who are supposed to live toward the close of the same vast period of time, are called Shi-chi and Baishevu. The three first Buddhas of the present *kalpa* are said to have been named Kulusan, Kuna-shemuni, and Kashiapa. In Ward's *Mythology of the Hindoos*, it is said, "The Buddhists assign to their hero ten incarnations, and designate the histories of these incarnations by the names of ten Hindoo sages." But the true history of the religion begins with Shakyamuni.

Where all is fictitious, it matters not very much whether the preceding six Buddhas were incarnations of Shakyamuni Buddha, or were separate in their personality. There appears to be no ground for believing in any Buddhism before Buddha. Given a hero, it is easy to invent for him six preliminary lives, or six predecessors in the same dignity. One would like to know whether the Mohammedan series of seven sages, selected out of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, from Adam to Christ, is imitated from this Hindoo series of seven sages.

The effects of the teaching of each of the past Buddhas are recorded. The most ancient of the seven is said to have saved 34,800 men. The figures diminish, step by step, to 20,000, the number attributed to the immediate predecessor of the historical Buddha.

The names of the most faithful, and also the two proficient disciples, are given in the case of each Buddha. The city in which they lived is also mentioned, and the tree under which they were fond of delivering instruction. The favourite city of Shakyamuni was Shravasti, and his tree, the Bodhi tree. His disciples were too many to number. His faithful disciple was Rahula, his son, and his two most proficient pupils were Shariputra and Maudgalyayana.

The true history of the Buddhist religion begins with

Shakyamuni. He was the son of Suddhodana, king of the city Kapilavastu, near the boundary of Nepaul. The king of Kapilavastu was subject to the king of Magadha, a country in Southern Bahar, to which the Ganges provinces were then tributary. Suddhodana is called in Chinese *Tsing-fan*—"He who eats food freed from impurities."

Buddha was born B.C. 623, and attained the rank of Buddha at thirty-five years of age, in B.C. 588, the sixteenth year of the reign of Bimbisara. He died at seventy-nine, in the eighth year of the reign of Ajatashatru, B.C. 543. These are Ceylonese dates, and are, says Turnour, too late by sixty-five years. According to the Siamese and Birmese chronology, the birth and death of Buddha are assigned to the years B.C. 653 and B.C. 628. Koeppen prefers the former dates, on the ground that they are usually accepted by the Southern Buddhists, and the date of the Nirvâna is sanctioned by a very extended official use. He suggests that the Buddhists of China and other northern countries were influenced by the prophecy uttered by Shakyamuni, which stated that his doctrines would spread in China a thousand years after his death. It was in A.D. 64 that Buddhism entered China. The Nirvâna, therefore, should have its date a thousand years earlier. From this we may understand why the Chinese Buddhists place the life of Buddha so much earlier than do their brother believers in the south. Koeppen also remarks that Ceylon was converted to Buddhism much earlier than countries north of India, and that historical events are, therefore, more likely to be correctly recorded in Ceylon. The events in Buddha's life were fresher in remembrance when the early Buddhist literature of Ceylon was compiled, than when Buddhism spread in China and other northern countries.

The accepted date in China for Buddha's birth is B.C. 1027. His name was Siddharta, and that of his mother was Maya. She died ten days after his birth. The question in regard to this date is thus treated by the author of *Fo-tsu-t'ung-ki*. He first gives six grounds for accepting