

Satsang

Vol. II No. 19

February 20, 1975

Twice Monthly

Anecdotes From Buddhist Tradition ...Vasant

All Buddhist tradition in conformity with the Vedas aims at direct experience of Truth. One should establish himself in the state that nothing is lacking. This is the aim of all efforts. It means that there is no hankering after fulfillment of any desires. When thought arises, it is mind conditioning. Nirvana is the antithesis of this state.

Zen Buddhism which developed in Japan has two sects: RINZAI and SOTO. Both aim at the establishment of the above state which is called awakening of Buddha nature. Rinzai insists on the practice of KOANS. Koans are meant to sharpen the intellect. Two opposites or impossible situations are grouped together in a Koan. Following is a famous Koan.

"What is the sound of one hand clapping?"

Soto practice does not use Koans. In Zendo, a large sized sitting room, people gather before sunrise. They sit on Tatami mats. Black cushions line the wall in perfect symmetry. On the altar are kept the statue of Buddha, the Blessed One and the Bodhisattvas. In this room is practiced what is called ZAZEN.

Ultimate Reality is to be known by one's efforts. Buddha says:

"Therefore O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge unto yourselves. Do not try to cling to any external refuge. Truth is the lamp you hold steadfast."

(Mahaparinibbana Sutta II-33)

"Whosoever shall be a lamp unto himself, shall not cling to any external refuge, shall hold fast to the lamp of Truth, shall not look for any outside refuge, he alone, O Ananda, shall reach the pinnacle. He, however must be anxious to learn."

(Mahaparinibbana Sutta II-35)

In these words of Buddha there is no conflict with the doctrine of Grace given through the Vedas or through Jesus or Mohammed. How? Jesus insists on a strong code of conduct in The Sermon on the Mount; so does Muhammed. Shri Krishna in the Bhagawatgeeta analyses the same from the point of view of Yoga psychology.

Grace manifests within you, state the Upanishads. For Grace to unfold, one must try to purify the mind. One must launch himself on

the Path Divine, that is Yoga. You start walking and you come to know that you are not walking alone, but you are walking on the escalator of Grace. This is the meaning of the Biblical expressions:

"I will not cast out him who comes unto me"

"No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draws him."

Thus, an elective doctrine is introduced bearing on the mutuality of God's Grace and man's Free Will. This fits in beautifully with the Law of Karma, the Law of 'Reap as You Sow' of the Bible.

In the time of Buddha, it was necessary to reiterate this doctrine of Karma unfettered from the practices of existing religious traditions and he did this laying stress on human reason and its capacity to shape the world. What is liberation? It is liberation from the clutches of the MIND.

The Fivefold Path as described through SATSANG offers material aids to achieve this.

Follow the Fivefold Path of Ancient Wisdom and be happy here and now. It will bring tranquility of mind and contentment in life. This is the prize everyone is trying to achieve but only a few seem to get. This prize is yours for the asking. You must only know how to ask.

"Knock and it will open. Ask and it shall be given."

The prerequisite for asking is to initiate the process of purification of the mind. Agnihotra, the smallest process of purification of the atmosphere which leads to the purification of mind is a great material aid for happy life, here and now.

Is Buddhism a Religion?

If by religion we mean the attainment of perfection in this very life, then Buddhism is a religion. Religion transcends the normal ethical code which is mere legal morality. It inculcates a higher striving for the search after a better life to the extent that when a person ceases to search he finds the summum bonum. Buddhism eschews all theories about the unknown and perhaps the unknowable in the normal states of consciousness. It stresses the material reality and shows practical means to get rid of suffering in life.

Nearly one out of four of the world's population claims to be a Buddhist. If he truly practices the message of the Blessed One, the world would be a lot better place to live in.

Buddhism does not ask you to start with faith in the supernatural, but merely asks you to cognise the sorrow and suffering that is committant to all life. Buddhism is not so much concerned with the theories about the nature of this world; it shows the way to the refuge from the miseries of life.

Buddha, the Blessed One said:

"It is in the very nature of things that doubts would arise. One should not believe in the traditions simply because they have been handed down to us for several generations. Do not believe a thing simply because it is spoken of by many. Do not believe because some ancient sage has said so. Do not believe because some superphysical being said so; maybe it is your fancy. If after due observation and analysis it stands to reason and is conducive to the good of all, then accept it and live it." (Anguttara Nikaya)

Mere willingness to believe is not religion. One should be shown the ways to experience what one has been asked to believe. This Buddha did in no uncertain terms. A man has to find his way out of darkness and mere imagination or fancy will not help. It is more likely to delude him into a state of self hypnosis, which one wrongly equates with trance. Buddha asks his disciples to examine the truth of his methods to the farthest limits of reason before accepting to try them. We should attempt towards right conduct, elimination of lust and freedom from passion.

The Fivefold Path of Vedic wisdom offers all material and mental aids to progress on the Path of Buddhahood. It offers all aids to practice The Sermon on the Mount as given by Jesus. It is the basic code taught by all prophets.

Buddhism does not approve of prayer as we understand prayer today. True prayer is not begging. Buddha speaks about PRANIDHANA, self discipline, to clear up the confused mind. The prayer is as follows:

"May I become a healer unto the sick, their servant. May I serve the poor with all they need. I surrender my righteousness, all being that the poor may gain it in the end. My mind has to surrender to gain NIRVANA (Liberation). I surrender myself to all living beings though they revile me forever. May I never become a cause to bring misfortune to anyone. May I become a lamp to them who need a lamp, a servant to them who need a servant. As the elements are for the service of all creatures, so may I be in the service of all till they attain peace."

Buddha asked his disciples to proclaim a life of holiness. This may be compared to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God by Jesus. Buddha stated:

"Charity is my strength; forbearance is my apparel."

When a Buddhist BHIKKU (renunciant) was told of the perils in the path if he tried to preach the message of the Blessed One, he replied:

"If people abuse me I shall think they are good since they do not beat me. If they beat me I shall think they are good since they do not kill me. If they intend to kill me, I shall say they are good since they free me from this miserable bodily garb."

We are reminded of Jesus' last words, "Forgive them Father for they know not what they do."

Buddhism, The Moral Precepts

Three sins of the body: Murder
Theft
Adultery

Three sins of mind: Greed
Hatred
Wrong understanding

Four sins of speech: Idle talk
Lying
Slander
Abusive language

These are the ten transgressions. All our Karma, all our action becomes evil by these ten transgressions.

Buddha stated:

"If a person is in the habit of committing these transgressions and does not repent, sins will rush towards him as the river water rushes to the sea. When the habit gets powerful, it becomes more difficult to get rid of it. If, however, such a person becomes conscious of his weaknesses and decides to counteract them, the evil, that is, his sins disappear day by day and he obtains Bodhi (Enlightenment)."

"A wise man should note his own misdeeds and not those of others." (Dhammapada)

"Let love overcome anger. Let good overcome evil. Hatred can never cease hatred. Love alone does it." (Dhammapada)

Buddha preached MAITRI, i.e. perfect love towards all. This leads to contentment in life. A loving heart is the passport to liberation.

Buddhism and the Law of Karma

Buddha emphasised the Law of 'Reap as You Sow'. This is known as the Karma Vipak Theory. Vipak is the resultant of Karma. If we suffer now it is the reaping of what we have sown in the past. If a person is full of love towards others, he will enter blissful state. If suffering is to be eliminated, one must practice MAITRI, that is "LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF". The aim of human existence is perfection which is liberation in this very life. By performing good Karma, you get rid of the vicious cycle of evil Karma and evil Vipaka. You thus enter a virtuous cycle. By this, the purification of the mind is hastened. Then you perform Karma because it is your duty to do so, and hence, there is no attachment to the result of Karma. This further hastens the purificatory process and eliminates the craving for desires. Buddha calls this TRISHNA which literally means thirst. Craving for the fulfillment of desires leads to the cycle of birth and death and hence liberation means freeing ourselves from this craving.

The Middle Way

It is not evil to satisfy the necessities of life. To protect the body from the weather, to keep it clean and trim is necessary.

Mere mortification of the body is not advisable. It might lead to pain as well as vanity. This is no penance. It is important to reduce the lust and greed as the first essential step. Mere mortification of the body may lead us to a confused state. It may not lead to knowledge. Even as indulgence in luxury is to be avoided, one has to avoid the other extreme of self mortification. Both of these do not make for progress on the path of liberation.

"This is the Middle Way, O Bhikkus, that keeps away from both the extremes."

"The religious person always desires to learn. He studies ancient wisdom. A truly learned person is free from fear and apprehensions of all sorts and engages not in polemics of words. The venerable person is not one who is bent by his years and whose hair is white, for with all these he might be a fool. He is the one who directs his inquiry into DHARMA (Teachings of Buddha) and restrains his conduct accordingly. He is the one who is pure and full of Love and who deepens his search into the hidden treasure of this knowledge. The perfect man is not the one who possesses beauty of form like the flowers; not he whose speech and conduct are at variance; but he who has cut off the very roots of evil and who is devoid of any hatred. The spiritual person is not the one who is a slave of desires like the rest of men, but he who has no wicked desires and personal preferences. A bhikku is one who has cast out every root of sin, who has no evil tendencies and who observes continence in all purity. An enlightened person is not the one who merely observes outside rules but one whose heart harbours no hankering after gratification of desires and who is unmoved by events. He is brimming with MAITRI (Universal Love). The man who follows the DHARMA talks less and is ever watchful." (Buddha)

The aspirant of BODHI (Enlightenment) has to practice meditation to achieve tranquility of mind. Meditation is DHYANA in Buddhist terminology. DHYANA starts with reflection on the world and the life and the concomittant misery that accompanies at every stage. This leads to the necessity of controlling the outgoing tendencies of the mind. (Pantanjali in his famous Yoga Aphorisms calls this Yoga.) This has to culminate into elimination of passion. This results in enlightenment when all attachment goes and action is performed as a duty without attaching oneself to the fruit thereof.

Buddhahood

The Bodhisattwa attains Buddhahood by practicing the precepts of Buddha, the Blessed One. Each one has the wherewithal to become a Buddha when he is born in human frame. The totality of Laws governing life and nature and their recognition by reflection is termed DHARMAKAYA in Buddhist tradition. The greatest stress is laid on the fact that each one of us may attain Buddhahood in course of time if one makes the necessary effort in the right direction. This may be compared to a sentence from the Bible, "...each one may be called the Son of God". Pursuit of pleasurable sensations creates hankering after them. This leads to series of births and deaths. This is the root of all sorrow.

Once we learn to curb the blind impulses and harmful appetites, the intellect

is purified and the power of discrimination between the right and the wrong is strengthened. This leads to clearer understanding of the Laws that govern life. This gives us strength to pursue the path of happiness and the gates of liberation are opened. Then, we go into the state of NIRVANA. Such a person works for the good of all having no desires of his own to be satisfied. He identifies himself with all that is good. His compassion knows no bounds, encompassing all, irrespective of whether they love him or hate him.

Buddha is called TATHAGATA. This means he traversed the path and then he tells others about it. Each one has to do the same. This does not necessarily exclude the doctrine of Grace. The practice of virtue creates a self-propelling force which brings about the illumination of the intellect and one enters the PRAJNYA state mentioned in the Bhagavatgeeta. This may be termed unfoldment of GRACE as this is done by the self-propelling power of virtue.

The Avatar of Buddha

Buddha manifested on earth at a time when the Vedas were wrongly interpreted by the learned men of his times. YAJNYA, the ancient method of purification of the atmosphere through the agency of fire which leads to purification of the mind had become a great liability due to wrong introduction of animal killings. This vitiated the atmosphere instead of purifying it and led to great strain on the mind of man. He lived in times when the learned scholars threw about philosophical syllogisms in the name of religion which had hardly any use for the people.

Buddha, therefore, laid great stress on doing right Karma (performance of virtuous deeds) without attaching oneself to the fruits thereof. He never answered any question if the questioner wanted merely to satisfy his idle curiosity. He eschewed discussions about the unknown and the unknowable. His allotted task included the luring away the devils who had a firm sway over people's minds. Therefore, he gave cogent replies to the ivory tower philosophers about God, soul, etc. He noted that mere talk about soul never leads anyone anywhere except towards further confusion.

Buddha clearly came to reiterate the message of the Vedas. Whenever the Eternal Law, given at the time of creation is trampled down on a large scale, the Divine Messengers come down to do the allotted task of resetting the energy cycle. They use the language suited to the times they manifest. When the allotted task is done, they depart. The basis of the message of all prophets, Avatars, saints, Paigambar is the same. The same message is now presented through SATSANG as the Fivefold Path.

- Practice AGNIHOTRA for the purification of the atmosphere.
- Practice DAAN (Sharing assets in a spirit of humility) for lessening attachment to worldly things.
- Practice TAPA (Self-discipline, austerities, mind purification) for fruition of thy affirmations.
- Practice KARMA for self purification.
- Practice SWADHYAYA (Self study) for liberation.

This is the Fivefold Path.

You become a better Christian, Muslim, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist by the practice of the Fivefold Path. You become a better person at your job whether you are in trade, business, industry or profession. The tension on the mind disappears and you get

the strength to follow your Prophet or to follow whatever spiritual discipline you wish to chalk out for yourself.

Purification of the mind is the essence of any message or programme to become happy. Fivefold Path offers you all the necessary material and mental aids to achieve this. The aim of the journey on the Fivefold Path is succinctly stated by Jesus.

"LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF"

AGNIHOTRA Atmosphere Makes Plants Happy

In early 1974, Vasant was asked to submit to preliminary tests the effect of post Agnihotra atmosphere on plant life. About a year ago, experiments were conducted in Washington, D. C. by a trained scientist. The first experiment was conducted with an additional vibrational dose of certain sequential Mantras in the post Agnihotra atmosphere. Preliminary results were encouraging. The experiment was repeated to note the effect by simultaneously connecting two plants to the electronic apparatus. The oscillations of the graph and the concurrence was noted.

It was suggested that experiments should be further carried out by means of KIRLIAN photography to note the energy transformations, their intensity and fallout. This system of photography does not involve the use of a camera. It was invented in the Soviet Union by Madama Valentina Kirlian and her scientist husband. The American scientist who suggested that experiments be made on plants is noted for his special work on plant life.

At Vasant's suggestion before making the experiments, the plants were removed from their original abode and were kept in totally different surroundings. Vasant bathed the plants with gentle touch before each experiment. The reaction of the plants before the experiments were also noted.

At one stage, it was suggested to Vasant that he form a part of the circuit connecting the plants and the measuring instrumentation. Vasant did not agree to this as it might introduce one more factor of impulses which might complicate the results.

The scientist friend who wishes to remain anonymous at this stage saw in the experiments a new possibility to devise an electronic shutter which may have many practical uses. Due to Vasant's departure for Europe, further experiments could not be undertaken.

Recent Trends in Western Spirituality

Dr. Karlfried von Duerckheim, the famous psychoanalyst cum philosopher from Germany, delivered a lecture in New Delhi in November, 1974. He was teaching at the Kiel and Leipzig Universities. His special subject was Zen Buddhism. He spent many years in Japan. In 1960, he spoke at the Chicago Religious Congress on "Religious Experiences Beyond Religions". The following extracts are taken from his speech.

"The Western world is passing through a deep crisis. The reason for this does not lie only in the field of economics such as the oil problem. For even if all these economic problems were to be solved, another force demanding change is more and more occupying the Western mind. I am talking about a trend which concerns the whole meaning of life; the recognition that it can not be found by a quantitative improvement of external conditions alone. The Western mind is drifting away from a mere quantitative and materialistic aspect to an awareness of the importance of quality, that is, our inner demands. Western civilization has been largely concerned with the organisation of its external life and has thus neglected the inner development of the

human being. In conquering the world, the Western mind is losing its soul. Today, with this dark cloud hovering over the skies of the Western civilisation, a light is nevertheless seen, hailing the dawn of a new age, a new humanity, becoming a new epoch."

"...I would, right from the very start, like to emphasise that the new recent trends in Western spirituality do not represent a new ideology which takes no account of the real conditions of life, but represents a new Realism which is based on true experience. This movement is, politically speaking, more to the left than to the right, not only in the usual sense of the word, driving towards socialism, but it tends to reject outmoded forms of belief in all fields of our spiritual life, replacing them with new ways and new values..."

Vasant's comments on the above.

The learned Doctor has stated the situation in no uncertain terms. Countless persons are taking seriously the search for the inner Being. The initial explosion manifested in the form of Hippyism, a few years ago. It was a rebellion of the younger generation against the legalistic concepts of morality handed down to us by artificial religious complex structured on the messages of the Prophets and Avatars. Dogma ruled the roost and inquiry was choked with an iron fist. The situation, however, ripened in course of time. The process was hastened by the galloping advance of the material sciences in a very short chronological period. Many ages of were sandwiched within the life span of fifty years and the concomittant social conditions put a great strain on the mind of man.

The hippy rebellion came to its natural end when the human mind could no more be calmed by hippy methods. A true rebellion needs proper orientation and this was lacking. Hippyism was a type of nonconformism with the crusted society. It later on became a type of Hippy conformism which had served its purpose. The young people rebelled against it.

People these days are finding ways and means to begin this search. Sometimes they meet half baked prophets who are sometimes likely to mislead them. If at all, they can take them thus far and no further. The revival of Hatha Yoga is a sign of this new eruption. However, people forget that YAMA and NIYAMA (do's and don'ts) come before ASANA and PRANAYAMA. This culminated in the whispering announcement of the profficient Yoga teacher: "Learn Yoga for Sex".

The Fivefold Path of ancient Vedic wisdom offers the means as a package deal to suit the modern times of thorough scientific inquiry. It is offered ready to serve as instant coffee, instant tea or TV dinner. It begins with purification of the atmosphere. This leads to the purification of PRANA. PRANA and mind are like two sides of the same coin and hence the purificatory effect is transposed to the realm of the mind. Once the mind is unburdened and the tension disappears, the person feels free and his thinking takes a new turn. He automatically gains a little more control over his six enemies, that is, lust, greed, anger, envy, temptation and pride. This brings about clarity in vision and one discards the vicious circle of evil intent and evil deeds. One is ushered into a virtuous circle of Love towards all and good deeds. This is the first step. When one starts doing the right Karma, always he is on a safer plane.

Meditation becomes a routine affair and tranquility reigns supreme. One becomes a more profficient person, whatever be his station in life. We have to learn to make the journey of life an endeavour of joy. This is easily achieved by the practice of the Fivefold Path.

Editor: Vasant V. Paranjpe

Publisher: Sally Hobart Kocak for Fivefold Path, Inc.

Parama Dham (House of Almighty Father)

RFD #1, Box 121-C

Madison, Virginia 22727

U. S. A.

Published on the first and third Thursday of each month

Reproduction by permission only.