

Voice of BUDDHISM
Sept./Dec. 1975

The Future
Buddhism

THE COMING OF THE MAITREYA BUDDHA

By: VENBLE, ANANDA MANGALA THERA

There are some, who in their leisurely arm-chair religious references, attempt to state that 'Jesus was Maitreya Buddha' while some others enthusiastically proclaim the 'Bahai-Ullah' is the Maitreya Buddha. Therefore, let me make a few observations regarding the concept of the coming of the Maitreya Buddha according to Buddhist Tradition.

Venerable Sariputra's Question

It was Venerable Sariputra who posed the following question to the Buddha:

"The Hero that shall follow you
As Buddha, of what sort is he?
The account in full I seek to learn,
Declare to me, Thou Seeing One!"

The Buddha replied:

"Our cycle is happy one,
Three leaders have already lived,
They are Kakusandha, Konagama
And Kassapa.
The Buddha now Supreme am I,
But after me comes Maitreya,
While still this happy cycle lasts,
Before its tale of years lapse,
This Buddha shall be called Maitreya
Supreme and Chief of all Men"

The Buddha gives a report of previous existence of Maitreya Buddha-to-be. The Gautama Buddha clarifies the conditions under which the coming of Maitreya Buddha will be fulfilled. Reference is made to the decline of the Buddha Dhamma in the following manner:

"How will it occur?
After my Passing Away
The Five Disappearances should
Gradually occur:

1. The Disappearance of the Attainments
2. The Disappearance of the Method
3. The Disappearance of the Learning
4. The Disappearance of the Symbols
5. The Disappearance of the Relics."

The Disappearance of the Attainments

It is said that after some thousand odd years from the time of the Passing Away of Gautama Buddha the Disciples (Monks, Nuns and Layfolks) will not be able to employ the skills of excellent training as laid down in the "Letter of the Law and the Spirit of the Law" and thereby will be a gradual diminishing of the skills of acquiring analytical depth in relation to Buddha Dhamma, which alone assist in the Attainments of the Paths and the Fruits of Ariyahood:

1. The Arahat
— One in whom all Defilements have been eradicated
2. Anagamin
— The Never-Returner
3. Sakadagamin
— The Once-Returner
4. Sotapanna
— The Stream-Winner

With the death of the last 'Stream-Winner' it may be construed as the Attainment having Disappeared. This should be interpreted to give every encouragement to the Sangha to live within the opportunities afforded to the Sangha within the 'Patimokkha Sila', while the laity are channelled through the observance of 'Five Precepts' and meditative reflections. It is only the lack of training facilities in the grooming of the Sangha that will ultimately bring about the disappearance of the Attainments. So long as there are avenues where the pristine purity of the Buddha Dhamma is expounded the opportunities for Attainments would not have disappeared.

The Attainments are possible when the Ten-Fetters that bind us to sansaric suffering are gradually eliminated or eradicated.

The Attainments are possible so long as there are opportunities available and the exercises done to grasp the following :-

Anicca - the fact of impermanence in a world of conditionality.

Dukkha - the basic truth that there is suffering in a world of such insecurity.

Anatta - the lack of any substance called 'self' in an environment of impermanence and suffering.

The Attainments have not gone out of sight so long as people are able to analyse the following:

Lobha - that greed that is uncontrollable is not conducive towards ultimate happiness - therefore the skill to diminish this greed.

Dosa - attitude of hatred and ill-will are miserable states - therefore the decreasing of these through love and compassion.

Moha - clinging to a world of delusion - attempting to construct a state of permanency around such experience of constant change blocks reality - therefore to grow in wisdom through meditative reflection.

The Disappearance of the Method

The Disciples unable to realise the Dhyana (Meditative Absorptions) - the insight born through Vipassana Knowledge will stagger away from the Path and the Fruit and be found only capable of holding on to the basic moral standards of :-

1. Abstaining from killing
2. Abstaining from stealing
3. Abstaining from incelibacy (monks and nuns) and layfolks from adultery.
4. Abstaining from falsehood.

Then as time passes by the Disciples will only be able to live up to the abstinence of the Four Parajikas: viz - killing, stealing, incelibacy and pretentious spiritual achievement.

So long as there are a thousand or a hundred disciples able to keep to these basic restraints the Method would not have disappeared. When the last disciple shall break the precepts or shall die, then alone

shall the Method be reckoned as having disappeared.

3 The Disappearance of the Learning

So long as the Text of the Tripitaka (*Abhidhamma Pitaka*, *Sutta Pitaka* and *Vinaya Pitaka*) and their Commentaries are made available for study it is not possible to reckon the Disappearance of the Learning.

But with the passage of time irreligious people will on the increase Nature will begin to revolt not yielding the rain in due season and the crops will no longer flourish due to environmental pollution. Gradually opportunities for learning will begin to decline. Through this process there will be a gradual lack of knowledge of the Learning through mis-use in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* and the *Sutta Pitaka* will gradually fade away through non-reflection.

The time will come when the Disciples will remember only the Jataka Stories and the Vinaya Pitaka. Only well conducted Disciples will remember the Vinaya Pitaka. But as times marches on the Disciples will be unable to recall to mind the Jataka Stories. They will still remember the Vinaya Pitaka. However, after a long period of time the Vinaya Pitaka too will Disappear. But so long as a four line Stanza can be recollected the Disappearance of the Learning would not have occurred.

Then one day there will be a proclamation made with a reward to anyone who can recall to mind at least one Stanza uttered by the Buddha. The failure to respond to this proclamation should be reckoned as the Disappearance of the Learning.

The Disappearance of the Symbols

When the dispensation of Gautama Buddha reaches Five Thousand years, the time will come for the Disciples to do away with the symbols of the robes, begging bowl, and wander about like other ascetics. The Disciples will have little regard for the Robe and will make attempts to diminish the size of the robe and the style of wearing same. The Disciples will become more and more involved in very mundane issues like Trade, Farming, Politics, and other household Affairs. The Disciples will renounce peaceful methods and even harass wild beasts and birds in the forests. It is only

when such occurrences take place should it be reckoned that the Symbols have Disappeared.

The Disappearance of the Relics

When the Buddha Dispensation has far gone beyond the Five Thousand years the Relics of the Buddha will begin to receive less honour and recognition. Such Relics of the Buddha will only be found wherever there is veneration offered to them. However, a time will come even this veneration to the Relics will fall into a lapse. It is at this period of time when the Relics are supposed to come together and form an Effigy of the Buddha before disintegrating with the elements through flames of fire. Not a single human being will be found at the place where this occurrence will take place. But there will be Gods from the ten thousand worlds who will bear witness to this occurrence and be illuminated. This is to be known as the Disappearance of the Relics.

Who shall behold the Coming of Maitreya Buddha?

Many will not be able to behold the Maitreya Buddha who fall into the following situations :-

1. Those who have caused Schism within the Buddha Dispensation.
2. All such who have been caught by proximate karma.

The fortunate ones who will be able to behold the Maitreya Buddha are those who can be regarded as :-

1. the generous and charitable.
2. those with moral restraints, observe the religious days and perform religious duties.
3. those who build shrines, useful institutions, plant trees, make bridges, clear highways, make parks and groves for the benefit of the people.
4. those who find pleasure in the performance of meritorious deeds.
5. those who have promoted the religion of the Buddha, served its Doctrine and waited upon the Sangha.
6. those who fed the hungry and attended the sick.

7. all such who have cared for their parents and performed respectable duties to the elders.

All such who have the privilege to listen to the Dhamma as expounded by the Maitreya Buddha and take the initiative themselves to walk upon the Path shall attain the fruit of such dedication.

The Fully Enlightened Gautama Buddha uttered this Stanza to show who were those who will become Buddhas after Him:

“Maitreya excellent, Rama,
Pasenadi Kosala, Bhibhu,
Dighasoni and Samkacca,
Subha, the Brahman Todeyya,
Nalagiri, Palaleyya,
These Ten are Future Buddhas,
And in due course, in time to come
Wisdom Supreme shall they attain.”

A Multi-religious Society

In a multi-religious society we must cultivate respect towards the religions of others. The Buddhists know that the Upanishads, Vedas, Bhagwat Gita of the Hindus; the Tora of the Jew, the Bible of the Christians, and the Quran of the Muslims are very much revered by those who have faith in such scriptures.

Our Wisdom Book

The Tripitaka of the Buddhists even though not a Book of Revelations is a recorded history of the Mission of Gautama Buddha during His 45 years of spreading a Message of Love and Compassion. The Tripitaka contains answers to the “Questions that Arose”. The entire Text is the unique achievement of a Man grown towards Wisdom. It contains such highly civilized concepts and also a scientific explanation of the Universe and the World Systems.

Are We Heathens?

There is no reason for Buddhists in a multi religious society to feel lesser to any other. We should be able to educate ourselves about the Sublime Teachings of the Buddha and also educate other religious people about the Fundamental Principles of the Philosophy of the Buddha. Buddhism is a peaceful religion and a patient one. The greatness of the concept of Maitreya (Love) and Karuna (Compassion) in Buddhism is not an uncivilised shrunken concept of the World and all that is in it.