

THE BUDDHA AND TOTAL EXISTENCE

By John O'Sangster

When considering the subject of religion, we are faced by the truth that everything, from man to stars, from consciousness to intelligence, is subject to the external process of change. Many ancient religions have passed away, but they all played a useful part in the mental evolution of the human race by directing the mind to think more about the great spiritual forces that were then considered to be external to man. For lack of proper spiritual inspiration, these forces became symbolised as the Sun-God, or personalised on the lines of a superhuman being. Their eventual failure was due to the misconception that the Supreme Being was entirely separate from man and creation; that everything created was a kind of divine by-product. We owe it to science for discovering that every living and non-living form of matter is wonderfully designed; that everything is planned and works to scientific principles; that where there is design and planning, there must be an original thinker and coordinator; that in the ultimate analysis there is no such thing as chance, and that physical evolution proceeds from carefully planned long-term creative Thoughts.

And so, in our modern state of society, a radical change has taken place in assessing religious values and principles. It was the Lord Buddha who strongly emphasised not only the principle of eternal changefulness, but also the actual necessity for the human being to deliberately subject himself to this principle, for only by such means could man free himself from his limitations and unify himself with the universal forces that could raise him from his slavery to himself and circumstances. The Lord Buddha went further than that, for after his period of enlightenment when he became one with absolute Truth, he discovered that there was one thing which never changed – Universal Mind. It had to be so because it was the absolute of everything which exists. He then developed the Dhamma, the great law of actuality of Being which also includes the means of attainment.

This subject hinges upon that age-old question – what is Man? What is his true identity? As taken in the mass, people are only partially conscious. The fundamental purpose of our present planetary existence is to essay the admittedly difficult task of bringing one's innermost consciousness up from the deeper levels, where it lies dormant, to the actively functional level where the person is in full command of the higher faculties of the mind. The power of mind equates with the level of conscious awareness. This process, developed through transcendental meditation, represents the first stage whereby the spiritually unconscious human being becomes so radically changed that he is able to merge with and identify himself with the highest state of consciousness.

Consciousness, as with soul, mind and energy-matter, originates from a Source which is absolute, and so all these qualities or expressions are universal mental elements phased downwards to accord with the physical limitations of planetary life. Coming from such a Source, each is endowed with the full potentials, as with a seed, to evolve to the highest state of being. Simple logic therefore informs us that total existence is not that of the creative Source *and* man, but the Creator *as* man, because all that we are is of that ultimate state of Being.

The body is therefore a divine instrument for effecting the central spiritual purpose of our existence, and since we both receive and give out or radiate all higher powers of mind and feelings, it is both a receiver and transmitter. The mind controls both operations. But because of man's preoccupation with environmental life, the 'normal' limits of human consciousness, vision and perception are his own self-imposed limitations. The Lord Buddha had firmly grasped the principle that man is created with every potential to become master of himself and master of life. The first thing he had to do was to rid himself of the negative idea that he is a helpless creature ever at the mercy of fate and circumstances: an idea that was sedulously propagated by the priesthoods of some religions.

The Buddha realised that when mind and consciousness are exclusively centred upon worldly matters, the effect was to diminish man's spiritual willpower and to degrade his power of desire. In this respect rightly directed desire-power is an enormous force to be used in the process of Self-creation. For the first time in recorded history, the Lord Buddha laid down in simple terms those profound laws of life which result in purity and clarity of thought, bodily purity, rightness of behaviour and mastery of mind. Following a programme of disciplinary measures, all this is to be achieved by a special form of meditation and thought-control during which one's normal consciousness becomes displaced for a period in which Universal Mind takes over to govern, or inspire the person's life. In this way, one can become one with absolute truth, knowledge and wisdom, and the reality of love. The initial stages either take considerable willpower, or attainment can come more easily by a strongly directed desire-power. The aim is to develop a special form of concentration and thought-control in which the ordinary self is completely forgotten.

Although the physical body and the humanly developed personality eventually pass away – the latter into the oblivion of the subconscious mind, life for the soul is eternal and it retains its special individuality, or sense of identity through countless lives. Lacking the characteristics acquired during an earthly life, the actuality of the soul which passes on to other spheres of existence is composed of the sum of its accrued spiritual qualities and values – nothing more, and yet it is then far more real than that which is derived from our present power of sensory-perception. While out of the body, and throughout eternity, the soul

remains nameless, sexless and devoid of all other labels and unnecessary distinctions. And yet there is nothing vague or nebulous about such a state of higher being. In the spiritual spheres which lie beyond the grave and beyond the earth's surrounding astral zones of temporary existence, which latter are merely transit stations, souls are known to each other by the stark reality of their very being which defines them more accurately than names or masking bodies. Each soul appears as a distinctive ray of spiritual luminosity, and gives forth a particular chord of identifying sound. It is noteworthy to remember that this state of being has already been accomplished on earth by highly developed Adepts.

By calling upon the power of Right Desire, the earnest seeker transforms lower desire to higher desire, and he leads his mind from untruth to truth, from worldly darkness to spiritual light, from ignorance to knowledge, from foolishness to wisdom, from self-love to all-love; from pain, suffering, disease, corruption to peace, imperturbability; happiness and eternal life; from unreality to reality; from phenomenal being to actual being. Each person is then actively living his religion, and is guided by the mighty truths of the Lord Buddha's Dhamma.

Knowledge and physical science are of very great use, but the greatest science of all is the Science of Mind, because it leads to true existence, creative fulfilment, and to a wonderful sense of personal satisfaction. Meditate upon these things, therefore, and make the mind 100% receptive to the induction, or flow of that Universal Mind which is the fount of all our ideals of perfection. Hold the mind steady and undisturbed by the transient flow of thoughts. You would be a Power? - then make yourself powerful by unifying yourself with the greatest Power. With practice, and following the meditative state, the mind becomes tremendously brighter, stronger, and is then possessed of far greater command of all organs and senses. Mental clarity is at a peak, and problems are solved intuitively rather than by laborious thinking.

ALL is Mind; all happens in the mind, and by mind. All that we see or contact with our senses – after passing through the brain-centres as percepts, finally ends up as an idea, or concept in the mind. And everything material, including our body, is a mental construct in the final analysis. So, also, is the entire Universe. The energy which produces matter and all the starry systems is the toned-down energy of Creative Thought. The whole system of evolution is derived from basic creative ideas which are planned to evolve through their individual cyclic periods of evolution, and which manifest and sustain themselves by their own super-mental energy. Thoughts are therefore things, and things are thoughts. The Thinker and the thought are one, and it is exactly this principle which holds everything that exists in the universe by a vast system

of thought-relationship. Just as the Creator's thoughts extend to the periphery, so too, we can cause our thoughts to extend to the creative centre.

From the highest to the lowest mental plane, every form of creation is a thinking process. First we think, and then we plan, and then we make it. Everything in our world first originated as an idea. The principle is the same throughout creation. This is also true of ourselves, for our creation does not end at birth. Quite apart from physical genetics, we literally make ourselves what we are by the manner in which we think, and our thinking is essentially a process of suggestion. We live in a world of suggestion. They are continually falling upon us from our environment, from our fellow human beings, from history and from the educational system. The power of suggestion, constructive or destructive, is the great formative power. We develop our good or bad by the strength and constancy of our applied suggestions.

Thought is therefore the mainspring of life, and the nature of our thoughts governs the quality of our feelings. As we habitually think and feel, so we form a mould which produces our character and influences the pattern of our life. People are stuck with bad characters because they have never been instructed in right-thinking. We limit our very being, our life – in terms of real values, and even our sense of identity with the Universal Life by the sheer limitation of our thoughts. And in terms of the actuality and reality of our being, we succeed or fail in Self-creation by the use or non-use of our inherent spiritual potentials. Hence the tremendous importance of giving deep thought to the principles and right methods of Self-creation.

The false pride and self-love of the human ego is a great stumbling-block to Self-creation. We should learn to humble ourselves before the grandeur and prof

undity of Nature. Even the perfection and beauty of a flower is something to ponder over. We call it a flower, and dismiss it as something below us, but we should remember that it is as much a living expression of the Creator as ourselves. To the Creator, nothing is great or small, nor less important, for Absolute Love cannot be qualified by degree. Everything is ensouled. It is impossible to conceive anything of beauty and perfection which is without a living soul that strove through the ages for those qualities. Life is still life into whichever form it flows. The spiritually discerning can see beauty and perfection even in what some people are pleased to call ugly creatures. There is no ugliness, only an environmental difference. All are born of a Great Love and are susceptible to true love. Many stories have been told of wild animals which responded with friendship to people having a special love for them.

The foregoing remarks were designed to widen and deepen our thinking, to underline the necessity of feeling oneself one with all life, for reverencing all

life, and for feeling that the whole universe is within you. Total existence is essentially a unity – one Whole Thing, or as a poet visualised it “We are all parts of one stupendous Whole...”

Extract from Sri Lankaramaya Vesak Annual Year 1977 Published by Singapore Sinhala Buddhist Association, St. Michael’s Road, Singapore.

