

## GAUTAMA, THE BUDDHA; JESUS, THE CHRIST.

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**T**HE infinite Compassion of the Buddha, the flaming Love of the man of Nazareth, is an old new quality common to all Social Reformers or Saviors, a selfless emotion which by its beautiful might makes irrelevant and trifling distinctions between persons expressing it.

Yet contrasts between these great lovers, Gautama and Jesus, are marked.

Who was Gautama? A man living 500 years before the Christian era who after spiritual apprenticeship, fasts and questings, became the Buddha, Enlightened, and preached a doctrine which transformed India of that time into a heaven of blessedness and harmony,—a doctrine which as its founder prophesied endured for 500 years.

Who was Jesus? Some say he was the Maitreya, the future incarnation or expression of the Buddha—the next Buddha, Ari-madeya. This is unlikely since Gautama's dispensation yet has 2500 years to run and since Jesus was not the Buddha type. Buddha had his Judas, who the Burmese call Dewadat, who even claimed to be the real Teacher and who tried in various ways to betray and destroy Gautama. Some hold Jesus to be the expression of this man, since the religion sprung up from Jesus' works has endeavored unceasingly to betray Buddhism. The Siamese speak of the evil Dewadat as the God of Europe and the cause of all the evil in this world. In truth, the mission of the white-skin has been one of conquest, pillage, and destruction. In contrast to the more loving Oriental, his life has been as that of a carnivorous animal, murderous, cruel, vindictive, wantonly destructive of all life—animal, vegetable and mineral—heedless of others' good and hence of his

own. The Chinese spit after the white man passes and say that they can smell the cadaver about him.

Others believe Jesus was the Hindu Krishna, who was born of a virgin in a cave, announced by a star, hidden from a massacre of innocents, and who later performed miracles, raised the dead, healed the sick, championed the poor, and so forth, conforming to details common to all so-called "avatars". Others maintain that there is no more relationship between one avatar and another than there is between one man and another. "Who is My mother and who are My brethren?"

Be that as it may, both Buddha and Christ, the Anointed, lived in eras when many gods were worshipped, when symbols for *being* were popular.

"Come unto Me. I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet he shall live", said Jesus.

Verily one is the savior of oneself; what other savior should there be? A man pays in himself for the evil he has done, and in himself is he purified. The good and bad are purified by oneself; no one can purify another", said Buddha.

Both were attesting one Power, yet their expression of It were as black and white. Christ, the mystic: "I and my Father are one. I that speak unto thee am He."

Buddha, the philosophical monist: "Self is an error, an illusion, a dream. Ye that are slaves of the I, . . . receive the good tidings that your cruel master does not exist!"

"I am the light of the world. Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world."

And in one of the Buddhist scriptures it is written, "It is bootless to worship the Buddha. The earth and the Buddha are alike in themselves inert".

Jesus, living on the fringe of the Occident, knowing that the hideous tide of Western materialism was too strong to stem, turned revolutionist to denounce all materiality violently within Judaism. Buddha's revolt took the form of an abrogation of Brahminism itself and all current Hindu religions to found a completely new cosmology and movement of which "a little thereof saves from much sorrow".

Jesus, knowing that it was too late to accomplish brotherhood (although he could not refrain from declaring it), expressed his activity in acclaiming the Kingdom, the Father, the Spirit.

Gautama held that Spirit *could not be spoken of*; he refused to define Nibbana, and confined his activity to the presentation of an ethical-social program with rules to be followed as the only practical way for Society as a whole to attain a harmony with "the Law."

Jesus was a mystical poet and a metaphysical doctor. Buddha was (in active life) (since he refused to speak of the One) a social reformer. He presented four Noble Truths,—that misery is the essence of and inherent in all component existence; that a cessation of this "life" is the only possible remedy for suffering caused by what we might call Desire; that destruction of Desire only can be achieved by an ineffable Nibbana; that such a realization is possible by following a "Noble Eightfold Path" of right or whole belief, aims, speech, action, means of livelihood, thought, effort, and meditation. Here was a delineation of an empirical system without a god or Savior which actually was adopted with complete success (so far as systems go) by a Society finer, kinder, and more simply profound than any we even dream of today, a Society which as a result of the teaching of this *Dhamma* still persists after 2500 years in Ceylon, Bali, Burmah, and parts of China.

"Love one another", said Jesus.

"Refrain from all hatred; generate good; cleanse your own thoughts," this is the teaching of the Buddhas".

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you".

Buddha said: "If a man foolishly does me wrong, I will return to him the protection of my ungrudging love. The more hate that comes from him, the more shall be love that goes from me".

"Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart".

"The man of restless mind, of passions fierce, with eyes only for the pleasing—craving in him grows great: He forges a heavy chain".

"Thou shalt not steal".

"The member of a Buddha's order should abstain from theft, even of a blade of grass".

In forgiveness, Jesus taught: "I say not unto you, until seven times: but until seventy times seven", and Buddha: "Though a man with a sharp sword should cut one's body bit by bit, let not an angry thought arise, let the mouth speak no ill word".

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another", said Jesus.

"For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time", said Buddha, "hatred ceases by non-hatred: this is an old rule".

Always behind the simple command of Gautama was a continuation, a signpost pointing to a plan of self-salvation more detailed. "Who here has forsaken all lust, who is vowed to the homeless life, who has dried up the craving for existence, who is done with delight and underlight, come to coolness, rid of the bases of being—" And then followed a great metaphysic, an intricate instruction showing how to demolish "the bases of being", a logic, ethic, and yoga that cut deep into esoteric thought. There were thinkers to be upset intellectually as well as the simple folk to be guided and the indolent to be appeased: Buddha had to be all things to all men to establish the Law over the immortal Vedas!

The time seemed short to Jesus who made his life a rich rebuke to current materiality and who was concerned with the soon-coming end of this world and a subsequent entrance into "the Kingdom of Heaven".

Buddhism, on the contrary, was willing to take the material illusion less hastily, declaring that while we might progress into "Heaven" there were innumerable heavens and hells in the world-system (that is:—the subjective thought-system) and that to attain to any of them (there were instructions for that too) only could be to prolong the illusion, Nibbana being an undefined, utterly beyond the pairs—good and non-good, desire (love) and hate, pleasure and pain, bondage and liberation, and so forth. Gautama Buddha was the supreme teacher of the Way, but there had been three Buddhas before him in the present world-period and an indefinite number in the unceasing (for the fettered) revolutions of the great world-wheel of life and death.

"Put away anger, lay aside pride, pass beyond all fetters. Whoso clings not to the constituents of existence, to nothing whatsoever, suffering comes not nigh him".

Miracle working was considered "clinging to the constituents of existence" and perhaps the most obvious difference between Jesus and Buddha was that the latter declared himself absolutely against the working of miracles. These tricks with nature were always common to Hindu civilization and did not signify any particular spirituality; if Hindus had allowed themselves to judge their god-

men by their works they would have had a galaxy of false prophets. Buddha's chief objection to tricks or nature feats was that they were a far less efficient and lasting method of teaching than the concrete word-thought-action propaganda. He was more practically concerned with the progress of mind and the practice of training it to free itself from itself and the trammels of matter.

Yet to those who feared extinction he declared, "It is true that I preach extinction, but only the extinction of pride, lust, evil thought and ignorance; not that of forgiveness, love, charity, and truth". His tremendous compassion for all suffering, in man, the animals, and down to the last atom, led him to seek a means of wholly eliminating it. Jesus' love seemed more immediately concerned with the salvation of *humanity* by a release into heaven, a method certainly obtainable at least in some degree by the power of miracles. It was in this way that Jesus could "save" the world. Buddha held heaven to be only a partial salvation and therefore to be foregone. Yet he never would define his end:

"If any teach Nibbana is to cease, say unto such they lie;

If any teach Nibbana is to live, say unto such they err".

Knowing that even God-consciousness subtly implied a lack of it, he only could indicate that truth was beyond utterance. On the contrary, Jesus drew many parables of "the Kingdom of Heaven" and spoke constantly of "the Father".

Buddha saw the trinity—ignorance-activity-spirituality, inertia-flux-balance, birth-fruiting-passing on, the embassy-the Word-the Father—repeated ceaselessly, a game played on creation as if it were its essence as it is indeed the essence of suffering. It was this illusion that he warred against,—the inability to unite the three into a realized one. Again, Jesus was more opportunely concerned with lifting men out of the second to the third, from blind activity to spirituality, from the world to the Father. Jesus' love was immediate; Buddha's compassion was calmer, more thoroughly Oriental, for it recognized that the whole trinity (including spirituality) had to be surmounted, that the seeds of hell itself were planted in heaven.

It was for this reason that the disciples—if they could be called such—of the fourth Buddha understood him so much better than the disciples of Jesus understood their preceptor; it is for this reason that the line of Buddhas is so distinctly separate from the more populous line of savior-avatars.

Jesus may have used "the Father" as a blanket term for the unification of the three states of being and introduced "Heaven" only to popularize the inexpressible. He may have incorporated ignorance-activity into one concept, eliminated spirituality or the third state entirely, and contrasted his (devil) concept with his Truth. This, however, is improbable and perhaps impossible since his characteristics were so meticulously similar to all other world-saviors, since if he had meant this his terminology could no longer have been that of a mystic and qualified dualist, since he held Heaven and the end of the world so seriously, and since he felt his mission to be for eternal salvation (with the unsubscribing damned), whereas Buddha had nothing to do with the saving of souls, holding them to be unreal, and projected a frankly temporary, practical doctrine of selflessness, non-killing, non-hatred, and the rest.

Difficult as it is to draw distinctions accurately between two prophets living so far in the past and themselves 500 years apart, easy as it may be to declare superficially the parallelism of the good brothers, it is nevertheless apparent that on the questions of divinity, vicarious sin expiation, social reformation, the Absolute, and miracle mongering, there were sharp differences between them.

Jesus was one with the Father—Buddha would not discuss It; Jesus was somehow suffering for the whole world—Buddha's last words were "work out your own salvation with diligence"; Jesus presented a general pacifist ethic—Buddha was far more detailed in mind-salvation instruction; Jesus promised a heaven for the elect and a contrasting punishment—Buddha tried to dispel the illusion of heaven *and* hell; Jesus performed miracles in order to make the world more like heaven—Buddha refused to employ or to allow his pupils to employ such means of teaching, always throwing the individual's salvation back on the individual himself.

Like Krishna, Jesus claimed Godhood—Buddha declared himself merely a man and hence a figurehead. Jesus declared himself the only-begotten son of God (at least it is so presented)—whereas Buddha was active in demolishing beliefs in *long lines* of avatars.

In short, Jesus was another Osiris, Horus, Indra, Prajapati, Mithras, Attis, Dionysus, Montezuma, Quetzalcoatl, a bonafide "savior", a redeemer (as all Sun-gods had been), a Presence and a Life that men thought they in some manner had lost, and therefore worshipped. Buddha, unlike all avatars, holds a unique posi-

tion as the one enlightened teacher presenting a salvation solely by oneself, a simple instruction of how without saviors to attain this, and a repudiation of all divinations and god-spells (gospels). Buddhism never has been a religion but an ethic, the one movement that (while it remained Buddhism) never has taken life, animate or inanimate, nor subscribed to the outward symbol trumpery that is the very groundwork of all "religions".

Jesus' suffering and resurrection was the sign of all men coming to God, the proof that death would be swallowed up in victory. But this conquest of death indicates a fear of it (which accounts for the crucifixion) and Buddha saw this as another illusion in time and progress which had to be passed beyond,—that the birth-death-resurrection unit had to be balanced equally and then melted into an undefined. Here was the whole distinction between Greek and Hindu Monism, or, more exactly, between two stages in the Oriental initiation. At the earlier stage, if death had not been wholly embraced, the novitiate had to die. Again,—to say God is Love shadowed a smaller love to be transformed; to refuse to say—indicated either a *thorough* at-one-ment with "Love" or an honest materialism.

Yet as Kabir says,

"No avatar can be the Infinite Spirit  
For he suffers the results of his deeds."

"Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but One, that is, God." But then again comes the "I and my Father are one"!

Other prophets who were not concerned with salvaging the world or reforming Society said what apparently neither Jesus nor Buddha dared teach. Vasishtha declared "The wise man knows no bondage or liberation, nor any error of any kind: all the three are only in the conceptions of the ignorant."

Krishna taught Arjuna "He who thinketh It to be a slayer and he who thinketh It to be slain; both of these know not, for It neither killeth nor is killed. Neither is It ever born, nor doth It die. He who knoweth It to be imperishable and eternal, unborn and unchanging, whom and how can that man kill or cause to be killed?"

And Sankaracharya: "There is neither death nor birth, neither bound nor striving for freedom, neither seeker after liberation nor liberated—this is the absolute truth."

But the truth that even the teacher and disciple are dreams—

lies—impermanent sections of cosmic emotions—karmas—is rarely ever accepted by teacher and disciple.

Indeed, it is the peculiar characteristic of the Savior-Teacher type, lost in ecstatically sorrowful spacial love-forest, that its clinging to illusion to destroy it, its compassion for the apparent reality of matter, should be immense,—that the Master ever should postpone his own “freedom” in order to “help” others to freedom. So Buddha declared that until the last atom went into Nibbana before him, it was not for him. The type does not see or rather *realize* an Absolute in which all qualities (including non-good, murder, destruction, and the evil-suffering attributes) are one; it does not see error dispelling itself (and hence a fixed postulate perfect per se) but rather sees itself descended willingly to abet error’s elimination. Others than avatars *the saviors from salvation*, may have uttered higher truth or seen only one inexpressible in Christs or Buddhas, but theirs has not been the compelling sympathy of the Savior-Teachers. The world still seems to need its kings of humanity, its princes of love.

Perhaps the comparison between Gautama and Jesus is unfair for, whereas we have authentic stone-tablet records of the life and sayings of Buddha, the Jesus we know apparently was foisted on the Occident by the Roman Empire out of a political necessity arising from the threatening growth in Rome at that time of Mithraism, which became so popular a religion (sculptural evidences of it still remain in England) that it had to be suppressed by physical force and perhaps by *imitation* of its baptism, eucharist, twelve disciples, cave birth, and so forth, all current in the religion of Mithra (and many others) and possibly available in a newer (by 600 years) less dangerous *priestcraft calling itself Christianity, one of a number of small priest-cults, persecuted and (being weaker-willed and more compromising than other minority Christian groups) no doubt willing to be subsidized (like the majority-socialists!) even if some facts and ethical standards had to be distorted and denied, and to become a Church,—which itself became thoroughly corrupt, “excommunicating”, and “church-like” by the time of the Nicæan Council, 325 A. D.*

Even if there had been little or no bases of fact in the Christian cult *as a whole*, the current common avatar (Christ) life was widely known and easily available (even in the form of an antique Babylonian Mystery-play in the crucifixion scene of which one

player, usually taken from a gaol, had to die in actuality); there was an abundance of pre-christian gospels and sayings practically identical with "Jesus" to draw upon; and the numerous sects of Gnostics, Therapeutie, Essenes, all of whose teachings were of the same mould, easily could have supplied a "demand" for gospels, as Edward Carpenter explains in his *Pagan and Christian Creeds*.

At any rate, if there was a real man, Jesus, His teachings certainly must have been far more full and complete than the story we have to draw upon. It is quite probable that "Christos" was originally a derivation of "Krishna" and that "Jesus" never lived, but that a certain Apollonius whose life paralleled the gospels account of Jesus, and who went to Egypt and India for instruction, was the physical basis for the Roman Christ-myth. For Europeans in those days, a "religion" was as necessary as an "Art" is to us; both can be sops to man's spirit and convenient preservers of bourgeois and class-ruled governments.

All this, however, does not invalidate the variance between two great Orientals, a philosophical teacher who reformed Society, and a religious mystic yet unnamed who condemned it and who probably had to amend his words to suit an Occidental (pagan) civilization decaying with undue rapidity.

Indeed, all Buddhas and Christs only appear in decadent ages, and are at best only symbols of the One-prophets of a Golden Age (just as that age is itself a symbol of *That* beyond ages) in which there shall be no need of Buddhas, when every man will be his own Christ. This, granted that Buddhas or Christs, the apparent writer or the reader, ever exist at all.