

# **The Revivification of the Buddha's Dharma**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis deals briefly with the Buddha's Dharma (Religion), its unrivaled impact upon the spiritual canvas of Asia, the fundamental motivation of its Founder, its flowering "springtime", its "summer" heat and its present "winter", and most importantly the portents for its revivification and the return to its pristine glory through the only possible process – a recurrence of the "Buddha-rising" – the advent once again of the Divine Teacher – in this instance, the Buddha Maitrya-Amitabha.

## **Introduction**

The Founder of Buddhism, Siddharta Gautama, who lived in India around 563 B.C. and died in his eightieth year, is one of history's greatest leaders of mankind. He ranks among the handful of men who founded the other great Religions and his influence for the good for over two millennia upon the conduct of the greater part of Asia's humanity is unsurpassed.

While the real achievement of the Buddha consists of the rejuvenating effect His teaching exerted in purifying human society in the India of His time and extricating it from the morass of idol worship and animal slaughter into which the Hindu masses had become entangled, and which to the common man constituted the gamut of what he conceived to be "religion" – yet His Dharma of spiritual salvation, like those of the other great Faiths, also had its temporal fruit, which for centuries after the Buddha's passing provided a humane praxis of life for those then fortunate enough to have taken shelter under its mighty tree.

## ESSENCE

The sense of universality which the Buddha imparted to the power of the eternal Dharma, as we see in this most poignant passage on that greatest of all ingredients "love" – for creating and sustaining any human relationship – has never been surpassed in the beauty and breadth of its meaning since the time it was first enunciated by Him over twenty five centuries ago. *"Just as with her own life a mother shields from hurt her own, her only child, let all-embracing thoughts for all that live be thine – an all-embracing love for all the universe, in all its heights and depths and breadth, unstinted love, unmarred by hate within, not rousing enmity."*<sup>1</sup> And the virtuous life: *"Get up (rouse yourself), do not be thoughtless. Follow the law of virtue. He who practices virtue lives happily in this world as well as in the world beyond. Follow the law of virtue do not follow the law of sin. He who practices virtue lives happily in this world as well as in the world beyond."*<sup>2</sup>

The Buddha often compared Himself to the beautiful lotus blossom that grows from the world and stands above it.

*"Just as a blue, red or white lotus, although born in the water, grown up in the water, when it reaches the surface stands there unsoiled by the water – just so, Brahmin, although born in the world, grown up in the world, having overcome the world, I abide unsoiled in the world. Take it that I am Buddha, Brahmin."*<sup>3</sup> and this example is also given of themselves by the Buddha's predecessors – the Avatars of Hinduism – Ram and Krishna and is equally applicable for describing every Divine Teacher, be He Moses, Muhammad, Christ, Baha'u'llah, Zoroaster and others. And, as He proclaimed, Buddhahood is a station no "worldling" can attain or fully understand. *"Not only by disciplined conduct and vows, not only by much learning, nor moreover by the attainment of meditative calm nor by sleeping solitary, do I reach the happiness of*

<sup>1</sup> Suttanipata, vv. 149-150.

<sup>2</sup> Dhammapada, vv. 168, 169.

<sup>3</sup> Anguttara-nikaya, 11.37-39. Also Dhammapada, 58, 59.

*release which no worldling can attain. O mendicant, do not be confident so long as you have not reached the extinction of impurities.*"<sup>4</sup>

The divinity of the Buddha is also unequivocally asserted in the Mahapadana-Suttanta. And for those who think it is easy to invent true Religion, the Buddha denounces as vile heresy the view that His Dharma is something thought out by Himself and warns one of His apostles Sariputta and others through him to not categorize Him as merely another wise man who preaches a path of salvation, devised through trial and error.

*"Whoever, Sariputta, knowing that it is so of me, seeing that it is so, should speak thus: 'There are no states of further-men, no excellent cognition and insight befitting the Ariyans in the recluse Gotama; the recluse Gotama teaches Dhamma on (a system of) his own devising beaten out by reasoning and based on investigation.' If he does not retract that speech, Sariputta, if he does not retract that thought, if he does not cast out that view, he is verily consigned to Niraya Hell according to his deserts. Even if he were a monk, Sariputta, endowed with moral habit, concentration and wisdom who should here and now arrive at gnosis, I (still) say that this results thus: If he does not retract that speech and that thought, if he does not cast out that view, he is verily consigned to Niraya Hell according to his deserts."*<sup>5</sup>

No matter what heights of spirituality or knowledge a disciple may attain, if he misjudges this all-important aspect of the phenomenon of Buddhahood (Avatar), then he is verily consigned to Niraya Hell. Not only does the Buddha claim here that His own state is beyond man (further-men) but also that the Dharma itself has no relationship to any system derived by human logic or investigation, once again confirming that this unique phenomenon of the Manifestation (Avatar), the Buddha and His Message (the Dharma), is from the realm of the wholly beyond – an exaltation from the Absolute.

The correct perspective from which to view the Buddha and His doctrine would be, according to His own words, as one of the fully enlightened

<sup>4</sup> Dhammapada, vv. 150, 151.

<sup>5</sup> Majjhima-nikaya, I.68, 71-72.

Beings – continuously manifesting Themselves for the guidance and salvation of humanity – the fully omniscient Teachers of mankind.

*“Do not call the Tathagata by His name nor address Him as ‘friend’, for He is the Buddha, the Holy One. The Buddha looks with a kind heart equally on all beings, and they therefore call Him ‘Father’. To disrespect a father is wrong; to despise him is wicked.”<sup>6</sup>*

We are cautioned from falling into the trap of relating Him to any objective reality. The lesser can never truly define or understand the greater, and it is futile to think of the Buddha in terms of man-conceived dimensions or attributes. The Tathagata (Buddha) cannot be grasped. He leaves no trace by which He can be tracked. All that can be said is that “He is”, and it is idle to pursue and define His Reality in spatio-temporal terms: *“Since a Tathagata, even when actually present, is incomprehensible, it is inept to call him – the Uttermost Person, the Supernal Person, the Attainer of the Supernal – that after dying the Tathagata is, or is not, or both is and is not, or neither is nor is not.”<sup>7</sup>*

## ACHIEVEMENTS

The Buddha’s Teaching of salvation and love, like the Religions of the other great Divine Teachers, also established a mighty but humane civilization with its own temporal organs and artistic grandeur, first within His own native land and then in most of the lands of Asia, bestowing a sense of morality in life where there had been none and a wider view of humanity to those who had reached the stage of nationhood, eventually bringing within the pale of its influence a fifth of the human race.

### Spiritual “Springtime”...

Contemporary records of those times tell us that during the Buddha’s lifetime His Faith spread to the Indo-Gangetic plain. It took another three

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<sup>6</sup> Mahavagga, I.6

<sup>7</sup> Samyutta-nikaya, 111.118

centuries to reach Ceylon (Sri Lanka), which was the exception in being opened to the Buddha's Dharma (Teachings) this early in its history. From Ceylon the Dharma spread to Burma seven centuries later and it would be another three centuries before it would reach Thailand and Cambodia and later to Indonesia. Buddhist missionaries also from Ceylon entered China a thousand years after the Buddha's passing and then Korea and Japan soon after.

We are fortunate in having accounts of those temporal achievements of the Buddha's Dharma in the land of His birth, left to us in the narratives of various Chinese monks and Greek dignitaries who travelled to the courts of some of the great Indian monarchs who had espoused the Buddha's Gospel. And those records, related briefly, will serve to give us some idea of how great and dynamic was the pure Path in those times and what it has now become – obscure and unfrequented, lost and awaiting a "Buddha-rising" to restore it once again to its former glory.

### **... and its "Summer Heat"**

First, let us begin with Asoka (274 - 232 B.C.), foremost among the monarchs who espoused the Buddha's teachings and spread them across the length and breadth of India as well as such foreign countries as Ceylon, Greece, Egypt, Persia and Rome. This same Asoka, who had slaughtered tens of thousands in his thirst for empire, after acknowledging his allegiance to the Buddha became a being transformed. History shows no equal among kings or commoners to match Asoka's missionary success and moral stature, and we must constantly bear in mind that this was over two millennia ago. The influence his missions exerted is one of the greatest civilizing factors in the world's history. They were established in lands where the inhabitants were, for the most part, savage and superstitious, and spiritualized them. They became great centers of commerce and learning where once they were wild and savage. His edicts like a string through pearls, established a common system of values both humane and just. All this great flowering of culture occurred over two thousand years ago, and today in our times, despite the tremendous changes that have come upon those regions through military conquests, natural disasters and the impact of other great ideologies, the proof of the heights of civilisation that they reached and the humane progress that was

achieved by the power of the pure Dharma are still evident from the structures of great edifices and social patterns among the populace of those lands. And we can gauge the tremendous sway the Buddha's teachings held over the heart and mind of this great conqueror from the edicts which Asoka had carved in rock to announce to all his subjects the lessons of the Dharma: "Devanampriya (beloved of the gods) desires towards all beings: abstention from hurting, restraint in behaviour, and treatment equal with one's self and softness. And this conquest is considered the principal one by Devampriya, viz, the conquest by morality. And this (conquest) has been won repeatedly by Devanampriya, both here and among all beyond the borders. This conquest, which has been won by this everywhere, a conquest (won) everywhere (and) repeatedly, causes the feeling of satisfaction."<sup>8</sup>

And it was this same Asoka who, prior to his conversion to Buddhism, lived in the lap of grandeur unrivaled by Susa in all its glory or the magnificence of Ecbatana, (capital of Alexander the Great), who so changed his rule from destruction to construction, from death to life, that Greek chroniclers of his empire record that famines and wars were almost unknown. Irrigation received special attention – the greater part of the country was under irrigation and bore two crops a year. Artificial lakes and dams were constructed wherever feasible, trade flourished, and a cosmopolitan crowd of merchants from various parts of Africa, Greece and Asia could be seen in the bazaars of Asoka's capital of Pataliputra. Goods from Southern India, the Golden Chersonese, China, Mesopotamia and the Greek cities of Asia Minor were displayed in the stalls, and like everything else in the Empire, their sale was strictly regulated and controlled. Silks, muslins, the finer sorts of cloth, cutlery and armour, brocades, embroideries and rugs, perfumes and drugs, ivory and ivory work, jewellery and gold (seldom silver) these were the main articles in which the merchants of his empire dealt. Accounts of this wealth were related by Persian travellers who visited his empire. The Artha-Sastra (codex of Commerce) gives elaborate shipping regulations, and there was considerable coastal trade – Indian merchant vessels crossed the Indian Ocean to the mouth of the Tigris and to Aden. In their trade compacts and social relationships too, the subjects of Asoka were not lacking in

<sup>8</sup> Asoka's Rock Edict, No. XIII, Shahbazgarhi and Girnar.

excellence. Truthfulness was the predominant Indian characteristic of those times, and this is confirmed by Greek travellers: "No Indian has ever been convicted of lying." In signing contracts, witnesses and seals were considered to be superfluous, and houses were left unguarded. The women were well treated, and wives had their dowries as their private property. A husband could be punished for cruelty, and offences against women were severely dealt with. Slavery was unknown.

After Asoka's conversion to Buddhism by his barber Upagupta of Mathura a low caste, he foreswore war and governed in the light of the law only – the Dharma or the Law of Piety laid down by the Buddha: The reverberations of the war-drums became the reverberation of the drum of the Law – the only true victory is that effected by the Law of Piety – and he earnestly adjured his sons and grandsons to bear in mind, if ever they would be tempted by the lust for empire, the worthlessness of conquest by force. The conquest of the Law, he assured them, is alone a conquest full of delight. As time went on, Asoka became more and more religious. He had entered the Buddhist order as a lay brother; he now became a monk and determined to use the Civil Service inaugurated by his grandfather (Chandragupta Maurya) to propagate the Law throughout his dominions. "Everywhere in my dominions my (officers)... shall tour for the following instruction in morality as well as for other business. Meritorious is obedience to mother and father. Meritorious is liberality to friends, acquaintances and relatives and to the Brahmanas and Sramanas. Meritorious is abstention from the slaughter of living beings. Meritorious is to spend little and store little."<sup>9</sup>

In order that the people might clearly understand what was expected of them, edicts were engraved on rocks or pillars set up in places where they were most likely to attract the attention of the passerby. These were erected at places as far apart as Peshawar, Kathiawar, the Nepal frontier, Orissa and Mysore – "the Law, wherever pillars of stone or tables of stone exist, must be recorded, so that it may long endure." The Law, as enjoined by Asoka, was strictly practical and suited to the popular understanding. No mention is made of metaphysical subtleties. It consists of compassion, liberality, truth, purity, gentleness and saintliness

<sup>9</sup> Asoka's Rock Edict, No. III, Girnar.

of life, "hearkening to elders, reverence to the aged, and seemly treatment of Brahmins and ascetics, of the poor and wretched, yea, even servants."<sup>10</sup> These virtues said Asoka's dictums will bring the only true happiness, in this world and the next. Asoka's first thought was for the comfort and well-being of his subjects. On the main roads, shade-trees were planted, wells dug, and hospitals erected for men and animals. Education, as in most Buddhist countries, was widely disseminated by the monasteries, otherwise the edicts would have been of little avail.

Jails were thrown open on the anniversary of the Emperor's coronation. Prisoners under sentence of death were given a respite in which they could lodge an appeal and were visited by pious men who would prepare their souls. Governors were given wide latitude in granting pardons. One of Asoka's chief reforms was to carry into practice the Buddha's law of ahimsa (non-violence), kindness to all living things. He gradually and progressively stopped the slaughter of animals, setting the example himself. The royal hunt was abolished, killing for the royal kitchens was cut down, animal sacrifices were forbidden, and a closed season was introduced for various beasts and birds.

One of the Emperor's chief concerns was to introduce complete religious tolerance. There were to be no wars of religion in his empire. He warned his people of the evils of schism and deprecated the habit of exalting one's own views at the expenses of others. Though a convinced Buddhist, he extended his patronage to Brahmins, Jains and other sects with complete impartiality. A characteristic action was the construction of the costly caves at Barabar for the naked ascetics of the Ajivika sect founded by Gosala, the rival of Mahavira. Asoka proclaimed, that, "The growth of the essentials (of Dharma) is possible in many ways. But its root lies in restraint in regard to speech, which means that there would be no extolment of one's own sect or disparagement of other sects on inappropriate occasions and that it should be moderate in every case, even on appropriate occasions. On the contrary, other sects should be duly honoured in every way on all occasions. If a person acts in this way, he not only promotes his own sect but also benefits other sects. But if a

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<sup>10</sup> Asoka's Rock Edict, No. XII, Girmar.

person acts otherwise, he not only injures his own sect but also harms other sects."<sup>11</sup>

Asoka and then after him his son Mahinda who took the Dharma to Ceylon, were followed by a line of worthy successors. Among them Kanishka, Harsha and others. All shining products of the Buddha's Dharma.

### The Dharma's "Winter"

It is only too obvious that the Noble Eight fold Path which had purified a major portion of the human race in the past, is now too overlain with the brambles of superstitious rites, narrow allegiances, hatreds and greed – all products of ignorance regarding the Dharma's real aim. Only a Buddha can now renew the eternal Dharma and, utterly purified, offer it once again to humanity as the sure path to salvation. Only a Buddha can again imbue the Dharma with its ancient potency and enlarge its scope to make it a haven of hope and motivation to one and all, regardless of colour, caste or creed. Covered up with man-made accretions, superstitions and rituals the Dharma has been converted into a preserve of the elite and their instrument for personal gain and no longer what the Buddha intended it to be, free as the air for all to breathe as their birth right: "*The Dharmma has been taught by me without making a distinction between esoteric and exoteric. For Buddhas have not the closed fist of a teacher in respect of mental states.*"<sup>12</sup>

### ... and Eclipse

As is only too evident, the Reality of the Buddha-Dharma has long since ceased to play any part in our lives and has instead been substituted by meaningless practices and superstitious rites before statues of mud, stone, silver and gold produced by the hand of man mostly for commercial purposes – the very practices that the Buddha emphatically forbade: "*Rituals have no efficacy; prayers are vain repetitions and incantations have no saving power. But to abandon covetousness and best to become*

<sup>11</sup> Asoka's Rock Edict, No. XII, Girnar.

<sup>12</sup> *Digha-nikaya*, II.100

*free from evil passions, and to give up all hatred and ill will, that is the right sacrifice and the true worship.*"<sup>13</sup>

While empty chantings and yellow robes linger on, the spirit is no more. The Dharma is no longer able to motivate the rhythm of our hearts or the vibration of our minds. We have, most of us, totally disobeyed the Buddha. How then can one expect to be enlightened despite such flagrant disobedience? The pure Dharma is no longer a living force in our behaviour towards our fellow beings, instead it exists only as some passive formula in the lifeless pages of books, or in temples of cold stone. Hardly one among ten thousand gives mind to the admonitions of the Buddha and cares to know His purpose for us. Even fewer bother to endeavour to tread the Noble Eight-fold Path, which is a way of living – not a way of outward appearances and empty talk – to forge us into impregnable barriers against the insidious inroads of moral decay.

### **Flickering embers still testify to its past glory**

Despite the multitude of different concepts about the Buddha's Teaching that we find proliferating today, championed by the various schools of Buddhist thought, yet a few aspects of His Dharma are still nominally subscribed to by all Buddhists. Principally, they concern the fundamentals of a pure life as laid down in the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eight-Fold Path. The Four Noble Truths are: Duhkha (sorrow), Samudaya (the cause of Sorrow), Nirodha (the removal of Sorrow) and Marga (the way leading to it). The Noble Eight-Fold Path sums up the Buddha's Doctrine on how to attain Nirvana (salvation). The first two stages deal with the correct attitude: Right View and Right Aspiration. The next three state the moral and social requirements to be met: Right Speech, Right Conduct and Right Means of Livelihood; and the last three concern the mental and spiritual disciplines necessary; Right Endeavour, Right Mindfulness, and Right Contemplation.

Despite the utter simplicity of these fundamental precepts of the Buddha's doctrine, the average person finds it easier, on the whole, to worship his so-called "gods" than to practice these precepts in everyday life. Hence

<sup>13</sup> Milindapanha, p. 111. Also, Dhammapada, vv. 19, 20.

the Buddha constantly reminded His followers that the Dharma is to be an act of living the life, a carrying out of one's duties towards one's fellow creatures, and not mere chanting of supplications. To enable His followers to be on guard against straying from the protection of His system, it is said that He asked them to constantly remind themselves of their Faith and their obligations by bringing to mind the three Jewels.<sup>14</sup>

*To the Buddha for refuge I go.*

*To the Dharma for refuge I go.*

*To the Samgha for refuge I go.*

*For the second time to the Buddha for refuge I go.*

*For the second time to the Dharma for refuge I go.*

*For the second time to the Samgha for refuge I go.*

*For the third time to the Buddha for refuge I go.*

*For the third time to the Dharma for refuge I go.*

*For the third time to the Samgha for refuge I go.*

In slightly altered form it is the creed for all the great Faiths. Here, it simply depicts a universally accepted phenomenon in Religion – the Divine Manifestation, the Buddha – finding and proclaiming once again the eternal Dharma and entrusting it to the care of the Samgha to nurture it and tend it to grow in order to make it into a safe refuge for the humanity of that time.

Every Religion worth the name begins with a burst of spiritual enlightenment like the dawn lighting up the night sky. In time it achieves its noonday brilliance and then finally its setting, and the night of the spirit follows to await yet another Avatar, a new Buddha-rising to bring forth a new awakening, new hope. The original direct contact and living belief in every Religion gives way to indirect and loose contact through intermediaries (monks, priests, etc.), themselves far removed from the Source. The living faith, born of dynamic inquiry is replaced by complacency and institutionalized vested interests which guarantee salvation by ritualistic performances, such as bathing in a holy river, or making an offering at a famous temple, or worshipping a tooth or tree. Tourists travel the paths once taken by the devout pilgrims and the holy

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<sup>14</sup> Buddhist catena

places become market places for adventurers who prey upon the unwary and superstitious. The disinclination of the masses to give up the easy life plays into the hands of those self-appointed guardians (the bhikus, sannyasins, acharyas, etc.) of man's soul, who further their own ambitions for power and pelf, and who survive and fatten only by feeding on their hapless victim – imprisoning the psyche and strangling the spiritual within man – until at last, the Divine Sun appears once more to dispel the spiritual darkness and its night-creatures and permits the soul of man to again breathe free. This is the story of man and His Religion. One without the other does not exist. And so it is for all of us, even more so now as we survey our own situation, within whichever Faith we have placed our allegiance.

Having completely profaned the Dharma's precepts in every conceivable manner through our acts towards our fellow beings, we try to assuage both the Buddha and Mara (the Evil One) by periodically offering sacrifices of some worthless trinket while all the time aware that the true sacrifice for achieving Nirvana (spiritual liberation) does not consist of some material trifle or some rites to be performed only at fixed seasons, but, is an incessant operation every moment of our life where every function down to our very breathing is laid on the altar of purity. To recognize the magnitude of our present predicament we have only to ask ourselves - what if anything, remains of that Triple Refuge (The Three Jewels) – the Buddha, the Dharma and the Samgha\*? Yes, and the Samgha?

How goes it with the Samgha? What has the Samgha become today? It is, indeed, remarkable how closely interwoven the monastic community was with the life of the clans in Magadha in the first centuries of Buddhist history. The assemblage of monks composing the Samgha was a simple and natural instrument created by the Buddha in the India of that time to serve, by virtue of their special devotion, sacrifice and diligence, as the elder brothers to the lay community. The Samgha's mission was to emphasize for their own advancement of spirit and for the weal of the laity the concentrations and actions prescribed by the Dharma to attain Nirvana. Unfortunately, the five simple commandments of the Buddha –

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\* (clergy)

1. *Abstention from taking lives on all occasions*
2. *Abstention from covetousness*
3. *Abstention from false speech*
4. *Abstention from intoxicants*
5. *Abstention from going wrong about sensuous pleasures*<sup>15</sup>

– are no longer the code by which the Samgha, not to mention the lay Buddhists, conduct their lives. This, despite the Buddha's explicit warning: "... *O mendicant, be not negligent. Let not your thought delight in sensual pleasures, ... that you may not cry out when burning. 'This is suffering!'*"<sup>16</sup>

The Samgha, the promulgator and guardian of the Dharma, in times long past, is now riven with division and intrigue and has itself become the major contributory factor in accelerating the Dharma's decay and its present tragic plight.

Instead of transcending national boundaries and promulgating the universal message of love and compassion entrusted to it by the Buddha, the Samgha has in most if not all Buddhist countries subordinated the interests of humanity to national goals and narrow ambitions of national leaders, clearly involving itself in the course of empire and conflict, similar to the acts of the clergy of the other Faiths, but, totally against every principle of the Buddha's Dharma. By such ways has the Samgha lost the allegiance of the common man as well as the respect of the rulers who see it as weak, opportunistic and unprincipled, too preoccupied with holding on to its declining influence over the superstitious by its all too blatant attempts at magic and miracles, wholly against the Buddha's admonition: "*I forbid you, O bikkus to employ any spells or supplications, for they are useless since the law of Karma governs all things. He who attempts to perform miracles has not understood the doctrine of the Tathagata (Buddha).*"<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Sthananga-Sutra, p. 266

<sup>16</sup> Dhammapada, v. 371

<sup>17</sup> Mahaparinibbana Sutta.

The Buddha, more than all others and like His peers, the Avatars (Divine Messengers), saw only too well that the tricks of magicians, and manipulation of physical phenomena cannot in the end have any lasting effect on the real purpose of His mission – the salvation of humanity, the restoring of faith and virtue within the human heart – since that could only be achieved through Love, Truth, Justice and living the life. This transformation of human nature effected by the Buddha and the Founders of other world religions, is clearly the greatest miracle of man's history, for it is the true cause of the flowering of great civilizations, before which a jump from the earth to the moon, the cure for cancer, heart transplants, etc., pale into insignificance and without which none of those could ever have seen the light of day.

### REQUIREMENT FOR REVIVIFICATION

For the Dharma to once again become relevant to the needs of our world, it is clear that its message will have to be renewed to address the entire human race, since humanity now stands in need of not merely a reiteration of the Dharma's high and noble principles, but – far more urgent – its dynamic participation in providing both direction and example for overcoming the real problems which plague society in these most perilous of times. Lifting mankind from the depths of despair and anguish to the dawn of a new day of joy is the only task now worthy of the Dharma's mettle if it is to successfully meet this challenge and fan anew the dying embers of faith in the breast of a desperate and cynical humanity into a blazing fire, which will evaporate the frigidity of aloofness and hostility and forge its allegiance into an invincible host, capable of making this earth into a paradise.

But in order to achieve this all-important goal of re-establishing the Dharma on to its former pedestal of life-bestowing potency for humanity, it is first necessary to restore humanity's faith in that process of salvation unequivocally proclaimed by the Buddha and all the other Divine Teachers – the unfailling Law of Progressive Revelation.

*"The Buddhas who have been and who shall be;*

*Of these am I and what they did I do ...*"<sup>18</sup> And: *"All the Buddhas are exactly the same as regards Buddha-dhammas."*<sup>19</sup>

A continuity of Religions is clearly asserted here by the Buddha, Who also affirms that these periodic Spiritual Sunrises are identical in their essence. However, while the essence of the Dharma is eternal in the realm of its own Reality, yet its appearance and operation in this phenomenal world is subject to the unvarying law of change. Nothing in the phenomenal world is eternal. Even the glory of the Dharma, is finally obscured from humanity as we stray farther and farther away from its truth, by our greed and wrong-doing. Thus, lost to the eyes of mankind, the pure Dharma awaits the advent of yet another Buddha – Maitrya – to unearth it and, Who, after once more sweeping it clean of men's fancies and corrupting machinations, must restore it to its pristine purity, its ancient glory, to serve as a shining beacon, so that humanity's storm-tossed ship, may find again its safe haven.

*"That, verily, is a safe haven, that is the best haven; after having got to that haven a man is delivered from all pains."*<sup>20</sup>

A continuity of Religions – each joined to the other in progressive succession and thus explaining the need for renewal as well as the reason for their successive obsolescence – is an immutable spiritual law. No earnest and open-minded follower of the Buddha can any longer deny that magnificent Wats and Temples and statues of clay and precious stones are no substitute for the true Teacher. Nor can a collection of forms, outmoded rites and empty phrases provide that vital potency of the Dharma's ancient essence in order to triumph against the onslaught of a perverse age whose coming darkness the Buddha so clearly and fully foretold.

History has no example to offer on how religions can be revived by any humanly conceived scheme or mechanism. As any student of history knows, such attempts have only led to division and fragmentation, not a

<sup>18</sup> Digha-nikaya, I.103-104. Mahavastu, I.160

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Dhammapada, vv.192

revivification of the original creed or of its pristine purity. To wit Martin Luther's "protestations" against corruption in Roman Catholicism merely created Protestantism, and similar examples can be easily cited in all other faiths.

Nothing short of a "Buddha-rising" – the advent of the promised Buddha Maitrya-Amitabha can sweep away from the Dharma the morass of accretions which centuries of human greed and ignorance have created to obscure its pristine message of salvation and well-being. And only a "Buddha-rising" can recreate the pure concept of the Samga and mould it into a dynamic instrument for offering a revived Dharma as the panacea for our travailing age – the safe haven for humanity.

## Conclusion

The Buddha boldly proclaimed the recurrence of "Buddha-risings" – progressive revelation of the Divine – at long intervals of time and placed His own mission within the framework of that process of "Buddha-risings" – as one among others.

His famous narrative concerning the advent of His Successor – Maitrya – begins with His apostle, Sariputta asking the Buddha:

"The Hero that shall follow you,  
The Buddha – of what sort will he be?  
I want to hear of him in full.  
Let the Visioned One describe him."<sup>21</sup>

To which the Buddha replies:

*"I will tell you, Sariputta,  
Listen to my speech.  
In this auspicious aeon  
Three leaders have there been:  
Kakasandha, Konagamana  
And the leader Kessapa too.  
I am now the perfect Buddha;*

<sup>21</sup> Anagatavamasa.

*And there will be Metteyya too  
Before this same auspicious aeon  
Runs to the end of its years.  
The perfect Buddha, Metteyya  
By name, supreme of men.”<sup>22</sup>*

The Buddha then describes at length the legendary exploits and attainments of Maitrya (Metteyya) and then entertains Sariputta's further questions concerning the time and conditions relating to Maitrya's appearance, all of which He answers in detail.

While, unlike the adventist scriptures of other Faiths, the prophetic utterances of the Buddha regarding the Promised Maitrya-Amitabha do not lend themselves to “one-liners”, nevertheless, after years of research into the adventist scriptures of both the Theravada and Mahayana schools of Buddhism, the author's 500 page thesis *Buddha Maitrya-Amitabha Has Appeared* (ISBN. 81-85091-83-8)<sup>23</sup> conclusively proves that Baha'u'lláh the Founder of the Baha'í Faith is indeed the risen Maitrya-Amitabha awaited by the Buddhists to effect the revivification of the Dharma.

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<sup>22</sup> Anagatavamsa. Also, Anguttara-nikaya, i.87, Vinaya-pitaka, ii.235ff.

<sup>23</sup> Refer to Buddha Maitrya-Amitabha Has Appeared (ISBN.81-85091.83.8) by Jamshed K. Fozdar. (In Singapore from STP Distributors Pte. Ltd.)