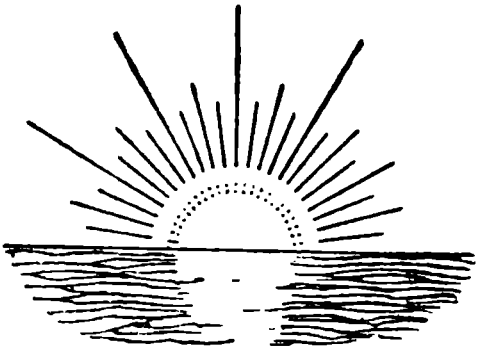
WISDOM OF THE EAST

THE RELIGION OF TIBET

A STUDY OF LAMAISM

BY

J. E. ELLAM



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TO THE MEMORY OF

ANANDA METTEYYA THERO

(ALLAN BENNETT)

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book is not intended as an effort at scholarship. It is an attempt to give as correct an account as possible of the religion of Tibet and adjacent countries for the information of the general reader. In order that this somewhat difficult subject may be the more readily understood, a brief preliminary consideration of the origin of Buddhism and of the specific teachings of the Buddha Gotama Sakyamuni is necessary.

The essay is based on a first-hand study of the subject extending over many years, first in the Southern Buddhist countries, and latterly in Tibet itself. The journey into Tibet was along the trade route from Darjeeling, by way of the Jelap Pass, the Chumbi Valley, Phari, across the Tuna Plain and the bed of the rapidly disappearing Kala Lake, through the Red Gorge, to the market town of Gyantsé.

The Tibetans were most friendly, and I was everywhere treated with kindness and hospitality. At the various gompas (monasteries) the lamas received me with courtesy and consideration. They were always ready to explain whatever I wished to know to the best of their ability ; and I was fortunate in having the services of an inter-

preter of education and intelligence. Most of the abbots and the higher lamas, especially those holding the degree of ge-shé, or doctor of divinity, are men of exceptional learning. The result was that our many conversations were both interesting and profitable.

One of the outstanding characteristics of Buddhism is its tolerance, and, as in ancient times in India, our discussions were conducted with mutual respect, even where we agreed to differ. I was recognised as *nang pa sangs rgyas pa*, that is to say, one within the folds of The Religion, although of another school, and this formed a close bond of sympathy between us. We were, at least, able to understand each other's position, which is so difficult when an advocate of theism approaches a religion essentially non-theistic in its essence. Therefore, although there is a running commentary of criticism, it is that of a professed Buddhist, and my endeavour is to present the views of my Tibetan friends in as favourable a light as possible.

Some seven centuries after the death of the Buddha, there arose in India a highly metaphysical and speculative school which departed in many ways from the comparative simplicity of the Buddha's own teaching, and it elaborated strange theories in direct contradiction of the principles laid down by the Master. It also developed an extensive and extraneous litera-

ture in the Sanskrit language. The followers of this school styled it the Mahayana, or " Greater Vehicle," as distinct from that which they called the Hinayana, or " Lesser Vehicle." The Hinayanists, however, do not admit this invidious distinction, and describe their doctrines as the Theravada, or " Traditions of the Elders." The earliest records of the life and teachings of the Buddha are those of the Pali scriptures, which alone are regarded as authoritative by the Theravadists. These two divisions are sometimes, and rather erroneously, referred to as " Northern " and " Southern " Buddhism.

The form of Buddhism peculiar to Tibet is a distinctive phase of the later Mahayana, differing widely from the Theravada of Ceylon, Burma and Siam. On account of its special characteristics, differing again from the Mahayana of Japan and the greater part of China, it is styled Lamaism.

In recent years there has arisen out of the Theravada, under the influence of Western education, a decidedly critical and rationalist school, the Navayana, or " New Vehicle," which seeks evidences for the truth of the main principles of the Buddhist philosophy in the teachings of science, and endeavours to bring Buddhism into line with modern thought. It is from the point of view of the Navayana, of which I am myself an adherent, that the following study of Lamaism is made.

EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the Editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West—the old world of Thought and the new of Action. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

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THE RELIGION OF TIBET

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF BUDDHISM

THE Buddhist religion originated in the teachings of Gotama, the son of a raja or chieftain of a small nation or tribe of Northern India called the Sakyas.

The Sakyas were descendants of those Aryan immigrants who flowed southward from the region of Central Asia many centuries earlier, and, as settled inhabitants of Hindustan, they were Hindus, their religion being what is known to-day as Hinduism. Their Hinduism, however, was much simpler than the developed forms of the Hindu religion, and its philosophies, with which we are familiar. The caste system was then in process of formation, but was less rigid than it has since become. The economic conditions were simple, more or less patriarchal and communistic. The principal gods of the Hindu pantheon were then in existence, and their sacrificial rites, formerly celebrated by the chiefs of tribes or

heads of households, had become relegated to a priestly class which formed the caste of the Brahmins, who claimed for themselves divine authority.

The sacred writings, the Vedas, and later the Upanishads, were compiled by the Brahmins, who assign the Vedic hymns to certain hypothetical supermen called "Rishis" to whom divine revelations are said to have been vouchsafed. The idea of supernatural book revelation is peculiarly Indian. The Hindu theologians hold that every line of the Vedas was divinely inspired; these hymns are said to have existed exactly as they are in the mind of Deity before the beginning of time. This, despite the fact that there are references in them to later historical events. The main end and aim of these scriptures was, of course, to establish the Brahmin priests in their position of exclusive authority and privilege.

As in the case of all "divine revelations," the priests differed in their interpretations, and speculation went farther than the letter of the written word. Thus arose various schools of philosophy. The leaders of these schools went about the country with their disciples teaching all who were willing to listen, and they engaged other schools in controversy. These controversies stimulated the intellectual life of the India of the period, and were productive of some most profound thinkers. Kings and chieftains

encouraged the philosophers at their courts and the people generally found pleasure in listening to their discourses. It is remarkable that these disputes appear to have been conducted with mutual respect and courtesy, differing, as some of them did, widely as the extremes of theological dogmatism and sheer atheism. Toleration seems to have been the general rule.

It was in this environment that Gotama, afterwards known as the Buddha, or the Enlightened One, was born about the sixth century before the Christian Era.

The ancient records state that Gotama was greatly given to speculating upon the problems of life and death, that he was deeply affected by the sorrow and suffering which are the inevitable concomitants of this transient life. He sought to find a solution to these problems and a remedy for the ills of sensate existence. Finally, he decided to leave his home, to abandon the dignity, ease and wealth of his noble state, and to go forth as a homeless wanderer in search of truth, if haply he might find it. This going forth is called the Great Renunciation. The books tell how Gotama went first to one and then to another of the holy men who claimed to have found the answers which he sought. It is said that he mastered all the doctrines of the great teachers, yogis, ascetics and mystics of his time, but that he did not find their answers satisfactory. His penetrating in-

tellect found discrepancies and fallacies in all of them.

Finally, he decided to strike out an independent line. To this end he retired into solitude, and, after a long period of deep meditation, the Light came to him when seated under a fig tree (*Ficus religiosa*). This tree was afterwards called the Bodhi-tree, or Tree of Wisdom, on account of that event, which took place at Gaya (Buddha-Gaya) in the Province of Bihar and Orissa. Thereafter, having thus attained enlightenment, Gotama was styled the Buddha. He gathered to himself disciples, and he went from place to place throughout India, gaining converts everywhere from all classes and castes, high and low, rich and poor. The Buddha definitely repudiated caste, and on many occasions showed the emptiness of the Brahmins' claims to superiority. For this reason, and because he had no use for their gods, he was regarded by them as a heretical teacher. The subsequent corruption of Buddhism was mainly due to Brahminical influences. Among other inventions is the representation of the Buddha as an incarnation of the god Vishnu, a fantasy which would have astonished none more than the Buddha himself.

Eventually the religion taught by the Buddha became the dominant faith of India. The influence of the great Buddhist Emperor, Asoka, in the third century B.C.E., and of Kanishka in

the first Christian century, effected this. Later, Buddhism tended to become effete and corrupt, and eventually it succumbed to persecution, first by the Brahmins and then by the Mohammedans, and was thus practically destroyed, so that after the twelfth or thirteenth century of the Christian Era it may be said to have disappeared from India proper. Under the Buddhist influence Indian civilisation attained to its highest levels in art, architecture, science, literature and the humanities generally. After the death of Kanishka and the fall of the Kushan Empire came the decline of Buddhism ; and with it proceeded the steady degeneration of the peoples of India under the tyranny of an arrogant priestcraft, and the artificial caste system established and supported by it, so that they became hopelessly decadent and divided, falling an easy prey to successive waves of foreign invasion.

At first no written record was made of the Buddha's life and teachings, either by himself or by his immediate disciples. At that time the mnemonic system of transmission from teacher to pupil was most in vogue. Even to-day many Brahmins hold that this method is superior to the written word. Be that as it may, it is probably true, as Professor Max Müller has said, that if the sacred writings of the Brahmins were suddenly destroyed they could be reproduced word for word by the learned men who have them

by rote. The traces of this mnemonic method are found in the Pali records where important points are repeated over and over again with wearisome reiteration, the purpose being originally to fix them firmly in the memory.

Some authorities hold that the Pali was the common language of the people, in which the Buddha spoke and taught so that all should be able to receive and understand his message. This is denied by others who claim that the language of the Sakyas was a Prakrit dialect, that Pali is an artificial language, akin to Sanskrit, and was never colloquial at all. However that may have been, it is certain that the oldest records of the Buddha's teachings which we possess are those of the Pali Pitakas, the Tipitaka, or Three Collections. These are the Vinaya Pitaka containing the rules and regulations of the religious Order (Sangha) founded by the Buddha; the Sutta Pitaka or discourses of the Buddha, and the Abhidhamma Pitaka or collection of metaphysical treatises.

The Tipitaka is said to have been first brought together and reduced to writing at the great Buddhist Council held at Rajagriha immediately after the death of the Buddha. The second Council held at Vaisali, under Yakshada, about 350 B.C.E., is stated to have been concerned chiefly with matters of discipline. The third Council was held at Pataliputra (Patna) under

the orders of the Emperor Asoka, with Mogaliputra as President, about 250 B.C.E. This, the third Council, is unknown to the Tibetan records, and most of the Chinese records also are silent about it. But the Council of Pataliputra is important since it is stated to have revised and re-edited the entire Pali canon into the form now held in Ceylon, Burma and Siam. The fourth Council, held at Jalandhara in the first Christian century under the direction of the Emperor Kanishka, is said by some to have established the Mahayana School of Buddhism. This is denied by others who hold that the Mahayana was a gradual and almost imperceptible evolution under the influence of Brahminical speculation and mysticism. It introduced many dogmas and practices which are in complete opposition to the teachings of the Buddha, and doctrines not found in the Pali books. The innovators styled their own "expanded" form the Mahayana, and dubbed the earlier Buddhism Hinayana. The Hinayana is the Buddhism of the Southern Buddhist countries, Ceylon, Burma and Siam. The Mahayana is the form, or rather, the manifold forms of Buddhism predominant in China, Korea, Japan, Kashmir, Mongolia, Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim and Tibet.

The Mahayana continued, as time went on, to expand still further in the direction of theistic, mystical and metaphysical speculations. The

result is that it is difficult to determine what the Mahayana does, or does not, teach. Compared with it, the Theravada (Hinayana) is simplicity itself.

As the late Professor T. W. Rhys Davids points out, the home of early Buddhism was round about Kosala and Magadha, in the district north and south of the Ganges, between Allahabad on the West and Rajgar on the East. He reminds us that Buddhism arose in countries where the exclusive claims of the Brahmins had never been generally admitted.

"The Mahayana arose in the very stronghold of Brahminism. The Mahayana turned itself to endless metaphysical speculation which, in early Buddhism, was not only discouraged but forbidden. As the stronger side of the Buddha's teaching was neglected, the debasing belief in rites and ceremonies, charms and incantations, which had been the especial objects of his scorn, began to spread like the Birana weed warmed by a tropical sun in marsh and muddy soil. As in India, after the expulsion of Buddhism, the degrading worship of Siva and his dusky bride had been incorporated into Hinduism from the savage devil-worship of Aryan and non-Aryan tribes; so as pure Buddhism died away in the north, the Tantra system, a mixture of witchcraft and sorcery, was incorporated into the neglected Buddhism."

The Mahayana is attributed by some authorities to Ashvaghosha (first Christian century), but its chief expounder was Nagarjuna, who was probably a pupil of Ashvaghosha. Among other inventions was the fiction that the Buddha composed and gave into the keeping of the "Naga demi-gods" certain "esoteric" teachings until such time as the world might be ready to receive them. Principal among these is a book called the Prajna-paramita, or "the other side of wisdom," a sort of apocalyptic treatise which Nagarjuna probably wrote himself.

Since the time when the Pali Pitakas were first reduced to writing, there is no doubt that these also have been elaborated and added to very considerably, with much poetic licence in the way of miraculous legend and allegory. But running through the whole is the golden thread of the Buddha's own teaching which the discriminating student may disentangle from the accretions which have gathered about it. The Pitakas, as has been said, form the canon of the Southern Buddhist countries, where the tendency has been to accept the authority as it stands, very much as though it were a "divine revelation," though the Buddha himself made no such claim for his teaching. In modern times, however, there is a growing tendency in these countries to diverge from this orthodoxy and to submit the Pali records to a process of "higher criticism"

which cannot fail to be of great advantage to Buddhism as a World Religion.

When the Blessed One visited Kalama, the son of Kesa came to him and said : " Lord, Brahmanas and sectarian teachers visit us and preach their respective doctrines, each one solemnly asserting that what he teaches is the only truth, and all the rest are false : on this account, Lord, doubt has overtaken us, and we do not know whom to believe."

The Buddha replied : " It is in the nature of things that doubt should arise. Do not believe in traditions merely because they have been handed down for many generations and in many places ; do not believe in anything because it is rumoured and spoken of by many ; do not believe because the written statement of some old sage are produced ; do not believe in what you have fancied, thinking that because it is extraordinary it must have been inspired by a god or other wonderful being ; do not believe anything merely on the authority of the priests. But, whatsoever accords with experience, and, after thorough investigation, is found to agree with reason and experience, as tending to promote the weal and welfare of mankind, only *that* should be accepted as true." [1]

There is no reason for supposing that the most original form of the Buddha's teaching is strictly

[1] *Mahaparinibbana Sutta.*

adhered to in the present Pali version. In the maze of the voluminous Pali and Sanskrit literature, what, then, shall be our guide ? The way out of the difficulty is indicated by the author of the Sikshasamucchaya: "Whatever is rightly spoken and free from error, that is the teaching of the Buddha." Nothing can be the teaching of the Lord which does not conform to reason and experience.

This is the test which the educated Buddhist applies to the teachings of his own religion.

CHAPTER II

SPECIFICS OF BUDDHISM

In the teaching of the Buddha, as set forth in the Pali books, there is no doctrine, dogma or theory concerning any First Cause, or origin, of the physical universe, whether by special creation or otherwise. This is held to be one of those questions which transcend human thought, and therefore its discussion cannot tend to edification. Even should one attempt to define a First Cause, the effort will always be defeated by the certainty that there must have been something before that, and so back to infinity, beyond the power of the finite human mind to grasp.

"Without beginning or end, Brothers, is this Samsara. Unperceivable is the beginning of beings."[1] The Buddha discouraged the discussion of this and other "ultimate questions" as leading to nothing save "a snare of views, a labyrinth of views, a puppet-show of views, a moil of views, a tangle of views,"[2] a maze of useless speculation.

[1] *Samyutta-Nikaya.*
[2] *Majjhima-Nikaya.*

We are here, as sensate beings, in a world of constantly changing phenomena. The immediate cause of the arising of being is tanha—craving, desire for sensate life. But the ultimate cause of tanha is undiscoverable ; as a matter of fact, it has no " ultimate cause," but is eternal.

The Buddha's doctrine of Dependent Origination (Paticcasamuppado) is that of an eternal round or sequence of cause and effect called the Samsara, or wandering, and is symbolised by the Wheel. The doctrine of the sequence of Chakkavalas, or " Island Universes," bears a strange resemblance to the conclusions of modern science. These universes, with their worlds and the life-forms (beings) which spring up upon them, come into existence from the elements of previously existing universes ; and, like them, after an immense period of time, perish in various ways, by fire, internal eruption, or collision with another system. And so on to eternity. The driving force of this process is again tanha (considered in another aspect than as it applies to man), linked with karma—the law of cause and effect.

The specific of sensate life on this or any other planet, in this material, or any other, sphere of being is anicca (anitya), transitoriness, which imparts to life its outstanding characteristic of dukkha—discontent, uneasiness, irritability ; in its extreme, sorrow, suffering. That which causes the arising, time after time, of the transitory and

illusory phenomenon called the "Self," or Ego-consciousness, is, as had been said, tanha, which binds this "I" under the law of karma. Karma, as applied to the human being, becomes more specifically a moral law, determining the circumstances of one's life and rebirth in this or another sphere.

The idea of a "soul" as a self-separate entity, was set aside by the Buddha as a fallacy which cannot be established by appeal to experience, or by any reasoning. Hence he taught the doctrine of anatta (anatma)—the non-self. The "self" idea is the outcome of maya (illusion), and is the potent cause of all the antagonisms, hatreds and discords which afflict humanity, and therefore intensifies the dukkha which would be bad enough without it, involving, as it does, birth, transition, disease, decay and death, to which all are inevitably subject.

The notion of a "soul" as some sort of an intangible entity capable of existing apart from a body is repudiated as a thing wholly impossible even in thought—or at any rate in rational thought. If one should try to define, or even to imagine, a "disembodied soul" he will fail. The majority of people are fond of using words and phrases without considering what ideas they convey, or whether they convey any at all.

In the Buddhist philosophy, man is considered as a complex consisting (in the first analysis) of

five khandhas, or aggregates of being, namely, the body, feeling or sensation, perception, consciousness and mentality. Unless there is an association of these five attributes, no being of any kind, human or other, can exist.

The doctrine of rebirth was also a specific of the Buddha's teaching. But it differs essentially from the Hindu and Theosophical ideas of reincarnation.

These points will be more fully considered farther on.

The Buddha did not relegate the responsibility for existence, with all its sorrow and evil, to any supernatural agency. He taught that what we are in this life is the result of our actions (karma) in a previous life; and that, according to our actions now, so shall we be in another life yet to come. Therefore, he elaborated a moral code, the most perfect in the world. As we have thought, said and done in the past, so have we become what we are; as we think, say and do in the present, so shall we find the consequences, good or evil, in the future. We harvest in the present what we have sown in the past; what we sow in the present that we shall inevitably reap in the future. All men and women, therefore, *are what they have made themselves.* Thus we are thrown back upon ourselves for "salvation," and only as we attain to some measure of that enlightenment which the Buddha himself

gained, can we break the chain which binds us to the Wheel of Samsara—the round of birth, transition, decay, death and rebirth.

In order that those who so wish may escape from this Wheel, the Buddha laid down the Noble Eightfold Path of moral conduct, which whoso follows will pass beyond the sphere of sensate being and of the karmic law. He will experience Nirvana in this life, and his being will thereafter become merged into the state known as Parinirvana, of which nothing can be said save that it is "the Peace which passeth all understanding." Our consciousness is finite and therefore unable to form an adequate idea of it.

Nirvana is a state of moral perfection attained by the araham, or saint. It is *not* "annihilation," though the literal translation means "to be blown out." But what is blown out?—the fires of lust, hatred and delusion. And this, the Buddha taught, may be accomplished in the present life, after which there is no continuation of sensate being as we know it, with its sorrows and tribulations, but a state of Perfect and Eternal Peace.

The religion of the Buddha is essentially one of *conduct*, not of belief in dogmas or articles of creed about gods or alleged divine revelations. Whoso shapes his life and conduct upon the practical ethics of the Eightfold Path has no need of such beliefs.

The gods who frequently appear and are named

in the Pali books are those of Hinduism. They are introduced, not as objects of worship, but merely as well-known figures to point a moral or to adorn a tale. Their existence, and that of any other gods worshipped elsewhere than in India, is not denied ; but, assuming them to exist, they themselves are nevertheless limited in time and space, " bound to the wheel " under the karmic law, and they also have their arising, transition and passing away. Gods may, perhaps, serve a useful purpose with some, but the intelligent Buddhist has no use for them.

The outstanding characteristic of true Buddhism is its tolerance and its refusal to condemn even such religious beliefs as, judged by its own standards, appear to be superstitious and without foundation in reason and experience. As an infant cannot walk without support, or a cripple without crutches, so the various theistic and animistic religions serve to support those who may be mentally or spiritually undeveloped or infirm. Thus, wherever Buddhism has penetrated, it has never sought to interfere with, or to displace, the indigenous religion or its gods, still less to persecute, but simply to introduce its own teachings as a " leaven."

It is its lofty reach, far above that of any other teaching, its broad universality, its wide sympathy, its all-comprehensive understanding, which give to Buddhism, as Narasu says, sufficient

breadth and suppleness to comprehend theism as well as atheism, monism as well as dualism, polytheism and pantheism, fetichism and animism, idolatry and iconomachy, contemplative quietists and boisterous jumpers, gods and demons, saints and heroes, higher beings and lower beings, worlds above and worlds below ; and yet makes it the one religion which imposes no dogma or article of faith on any of its followers.[1]

The effect of Buddhism was always that of a civilising influence, softening the asperities of savage religions and strengthening the moral and spiritual force of those of a more elevated character. This spirit of tolerance is the strength of Buddhism. At the same time, it contains an element of weakness, on the one hand in face of the persecuting zeal of those religions which used the sword as a means of conversion, and, on the other, against the corrupting influences of alien superstition.

[1] *Essence of Buddhism.*

CHAPTER III

ORIGIN OF LAMAISM

THE religion of Tibet, prior to the advent of Buddhism, was a kind of primitive demonolatry, in which human sacrifice, and even ceremonial cannibalism, featured. Under the Buddhist influence these horrid rites were abandoned, though a good many of the practices of the older faith, known as the Bon, still persist.

Buddhism, in its already degenerate, Mahayanist phase, was first introduced into Tibet as late as the sixth Christian century, about 1,200 years after the death of the Buddha, by the Tibetan king Sron-tsan-gampo, who had married two wives, Unemtchin, a Chinese, and Bhikrouti, a Tibetan, both of whom were Buddhists.

The ecclesiastical system known as Lamaism was founded by one, Padma Sambhava, the "wizard priest," who also had two wives, Khando Ye-she Tsho-gyal, a Tibetan, and Lha-chen Mandarawa, an Indian. Concerning this Padma Sambhava, also called the Guru Rimpoché, or "precious teacher," there is a good deal of mystery. Tradition has it that he was a Mahayanist monk from the great Indian University of

Nalanda. He is said to have been of the Yogachariya school. He was a native of Ghazni, famed for its sorcery, and he went to Tibet in the year 747 C.E. Being a "wizard," he found plenty of wizardry to his hand in the ancient, animistic Bon, which under his influence became an integral part of Lamaism.

When Padma Sambhava arrived in Tibet, it is said that he found the people harried and tormented by a host of demons. He therefore set to work with his magic arts and made war upon them until they sued for mercy. The majority he spared on condition that they should become defenders of his religion and reserve their terrors for his enemies. As compensation, they were to be worshipped and fed. Hence such strange ceremonies as "The Banquet to the Whole Assembly of Gods and Spirits." The weapons which the Wizard Priest used in his battles with the demons were the dorjé—thunderbolt of the Indian god Indra—and magic spells from the Tantric books. This is a sufficient indication of the wide divergence of Lamaism, at the very outset, from the teachings of the Buddha, who forbade the use of magic arts, divination, sooth-saying and the like, as "low arts of deception."

It is not known to-day precisely what was the creed taught by Padma Sambhava himself, but it is obvious that his doctrine was the magical type of the Mahayana then prevalent in Udyana

and Kashmir. To it was added part of the ritual and most of the demons of the Bon. Padma Sambhava is said to have had twenty-five principal disciples, each of whom is credited with having possessed magical powers, mostly of a grotesque character. Thus, one of them was able to change his head into that of a horse and to neigh, another made water run uphill, and a third raised ghosts and turned a corpse into gold.

Despite the fact that he was a polygamist, a man of notoriously irregular habits, and addicted to wine, in defiance of the rules laid down by the Buddha by the observance of which his followers might be known, this Padma Sambhava is deified and worshipped as a "second Buddha"! There could be no greater contrast than between the character and teaching of this man and those of the Buddha.

Lama is a Tibetan word signifying "a superior person," and although loosely applied to all Lamaist monks, it is still applicable only to abbots and the higher grades of monks. Lamaism, although apposite, has no Tibetan equivalent, being a purely European term. The lamas call their faith simply "The Religion," and its adherents "Insiders," all others being "Outsiders."

The distribution of Lamaism at the present day extends from Kamschatka to the European Caucasus, from Buriat Siberia down to Sikkim

and Yunnan. The population of this vast area is sparse, and nothing more than a vague estimate can be made of its numbers. The population of Tibet itself is perhaps 4,000,000, all of whom may be classed as Lamaist. Reckoning with them the Kalmuck Tartars, Kirghis, Siberian Buriats, Mongolians, Manchurians, some of the Chinese proper, and the peoples of Ladak, Nepal (who are becoming more and more Hindu), Bhutan and Sikkim, somewhere about 12 or 13 millions may be described as devotees of Lamaism, but this is wholly conjectural.

Lamaism is divided into three groups, or schools. The Reformed, the largest and most important, was established by the Indian Mahayanist monk Atisha (1038–52 C.E.) who preached celibacy and moral abstinence, and deprecated the use of " magic arts." It was originally called the Kahdam-pa, or " those bound by the orders, or commandments." It was named later, under Tsong Khapa, the Gelugpa, or " virtuous ones," and to it belong both the Dalai and the Tashi Lamas, respectively the secular and spiritual rulers of the Lamaist hierarchy and of the country.

Tsong Khapa was born in the province of Amdo, within the borders of China, in the early part of the fifteenth Christian century. Under him the Gelugpa became less ascetic and developed a more elaborate ritual. At that time it is known

that a Roman Catholic mission was established in Amdo. There is a tradition that Tsong Khapa was influenced by "a stranger from the West with a long nose and piercing eyes." This may very well have been the case, and may explain the similarity between much of the ritual of Lamaism and that of the Church of Rome; the celibate and tonsured monks and nuns, candles, censers, bells, rosaries, mitres, copes, pastoral crooks, adoration of relics, confession, intercession of "the Mother of God," litanies and chants, holy water, the Trinity, organised priesthood, and so forth. Thus it came to pass that, from a system which recognised no Creator, there has developed a religion with priests who claim to hold the keys of heaven and hell, for it is said that "without a lama before the worshipper there can be no approach to God."

The rise of the Gelugpa was shortly followed by the Semi-reformed, the Kargyu-pa, which was founded towards the end of the eleventh Christian century by the Lama Marpa, and others of Atisha's followers, who found his high standard too irksome and too free from the familiar demonolatry.

The residue who remain wholly unreformed are called the Nyingma-pa, or "the old ones," as they adhere to the forms introduced by Padma Sambhava, and they are also addicted to the pre-Buddhist practices of the Bon. To admit of

further laxity, and to justify themselves, the Nyingma-pa resorted to a form of imposture not unknown to the priests of other religions. Their lamas pretended to discover scriptures which they called terma, or hidden revelations, in caves and other secret places. These they alleged to be the hidden, or "esoteric," doctrines of the Guru "Saint" Padma Sambhava. The inventors of these terma, in order to invest themselves with more authority, claimed to have been in a former birth one or other of the twenty-five disciples of Padma Sambhava. The "revelations" treat mainly of demoniacal rites. About thirty of them have been discovered, but their number has been oracularly fixed at 108, so that there is a wide margin left for future contingencies.

It is by reason of this kind of nonsensical imposture that some people to-day, who ought to know better, affirm the existence of an "Esoteric Buddhism" in the custody of an "Occult Hierarchy of Perfect Lamas," "Mahatmas," and so forth, somewhere in Tibet.

The Buddha distinctly denied that he taught any kind of secret or esoteric doctrine. Thus it is recorded in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, or "Book of the Great Decease," that, shortly before his death, the disciple Ananda asked the Buddha whether he would make a last disclosure to his disciples. The Buddha replied: "What dost thou mean, Ananda? Does the Brother-

hood expect this of me ? I have proclaimed the truth to you without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine. I am not like those teachers with the closed fist who keep back the best." And again, the Buddha said : " To three things, O Disciples, secrecy is peculiar, and not candour : to women, to priest-craft, to false doctrine. Three things, O Disciples, shine before all the world, not secretly : the moon, the sun, the teaching of the Tathagata [1]— these three, O Disciples, shine before all the world, not secretly."

The " schools " are further divided into various sects. But the difference between them is not so much doctrinal as disciplinary. For example, the Gelugpa are supposed to be celibate ; they approach more nearly in their rule to the monks of the Southern Buddhist countries. The Kargyu-pa inhabit caves as hermits. Among the Nyingma-pa celibacy and abstinence (fasting) are not enforced : they are, on the whole, much more lax than the others.

[1] *Tathagata*, one of the titles of the Buddha, meaning " He who walks in the footsteps of his predecessors," i.e. the Buddhas who preceded him.

CHAPTER IV

THE MONKS AND THE MONASTERIES

TIBET is the country of monks and of monasteries. It is said that about one-third of the manhood of the country are lamas, monks, or lay brothers. Until comparatively recently Tibet was (as Bhutan is now) dominated by chieftains of almost independent power who ruled over the valleys, and engaged in petty wars and plundering expeditions against their neighbours. As the great abbeys arose, they became places of refuge for the studious and the religious ; their heads were the only rivals to the " barons," the only protectors of the lower classes of the people, and the poor, against the extortions of their feudal superiors.

At the head of the Lamaist hierarchy are the Dalai Lama, whose headquarters are at Lhasa, in the palace known as the Potala, which has been called the " Vatican " of Lamaism ; and the Tashi Lama, whose seat is at Shigatse. Theoretically, the Tashi Lama is supposed to be the spiritual superior of the Dalai Lama.

The first " Grand Lama " was dGe-'dun grub

pa (1391–1475 C.E.), and it was not until the succession of Nag-dban Blo-bsan rGya-mts'o (1617–1682) that the title of "Dalai" was assumed. His other titles are Kyam-gon Rimpoché, "precious (or holy) Protector," and Gyal-wa Rimpoché, "precious (or holy) Ruler." The Tashi Lama is called the Pan-chen Rimpoché, "precious (or holy) Teacher."

The whole ecclesiastical system is under a council of "Chutukis" presided over by the Dalai, or the Tashi, Lama. The Chutukis are appointed from among the heads of the great monasteries, and they resemble in many ways the cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church. They are all Rimpoché, "incarnation," lamas. Some are elevated to their dignity by the Dalai Lama, whilst with others the title is inherent in the abbacy and assumed by each successive incumbent. Below the Chutukis come the Chumbhilkhan, abbots of lesser monasteries, often supposed to be the incarnations of various mythological beings.

When these "princes of the church" assemble at the great annual festival in Lhasa, known as the Feast of Lights, their pomp and circumstance is as imposing as that of the Roman priests on similar great occasions.

The ordinary monk is called gelong, meaning "virtuous mendicant," a literal translation of bhikkhu, the original Pali name for the Buddha's

disciples, members of the Order of monks, the Sangha. The common clergy, not fully ordained as lamas, are called Trapa.

The principal dignitaries and officials of the monasteries are the Reincarnation (Rimpoché) Abbot or the Appointed Abbot, the Treasurer, the High Steward the Professors, the Proctor, the Dean, the Sacristan and the Tea-dispenser. With the exception of the first, in some cases the second, and the professors (whose position is due to their learning), all these are elected, when the offices become vacant, by the other monks.

Some writers describe the Rimpoché lamas as "Living Buddhas," a wholly erroneous and improper term, betraying a complete ignorance both of Buddhism and of Lamaism. Neither the name, nor the idea, is known in Tibet. There is no "Living Buddha," in the sense implied, either in Tibet or elsewhere in this world, at the present time.

The succession of the Dalai Lama is determined by a peculiar set of circumstances. He is not supposed to be an incarnation of the Buddha Gotama, or of any other Buddha, as is generally believed to be the case. It is the Dhyani *Bodhisattva* Avalokitesvara (Avalokita) who is thought to be incarnate in each successive Dalai Lama. It would be more correct to say that the Dalai Lama is overshadowed by Avalokita

(Tibetan: Chenresi), since Avalokita is all-pervading, immanent in all things.

But the Tashi Lama is imagined to be overshadowed by the Dhyani *Buddha* Amitabha, and so is, theoretically, the spiritual superior of the Dalai Lama. In actual practice this amounts to nothing, as the Dalai Lama holds the secular power. This was shown not long ago when the Tashi Lama fled into Mongolia to escape the Dalai Lama's displeasure.

The selection of a new Dalai Lama, whenever this supreme office of Church and State falls vacant, is the occasion of a lengthy and elaborate procedure. It is held that the "soul" of the Dalai Lama is always reborn in a child, and the selection is made by certain oracular signs. Inquiry is made throughout the country as to any male infants, whose birth, just at the time of the death of the Dalai Lama, may have been attended by unusual events or miraculous omens. The selected infants are tested by a court consisting of the chief incarnation (Rimpoché) lamas and the principal State officials. The babies have set before them a number of objects, some of which were in daily use by the deceased Dalai Lama, and the names of those who correctly select these are written down on slips of paper. The slips are rolled up, pasted down and put into a golden vase. Then, for a month or more, constant prayer is recited by over 100 high lamas

in relays. Finally the most eminent lama present, in the presence of the whole assembly, takes a pair of long pliers which he inserts into the narrow neck of the vase and picks out one of the scrolls at hazard. In the old days, when Tibet was subject to China, the scroll thus selected was handed to the Chinese Amban, or political resident, who opened it and read out the name of the child. That child was thereupon proclaimed Dalai Lama.

In the case of lesser ecclesiastical personages, search is made for an infant bearing some physical mark or peculiarity characteristic of the deceased. For example, Sengchen Lama was an incarnate lama of very high rank at Shigatse. Because he persuaded his nephew, the Governor of Gyantse, to take the Indian, Sarat Chandra Das, in his train for a few days to Lhasa, the lama was barbarously murdered. The Dalai Lama, whose power is supposed to extend to the spiritual as well as to the material world, abolished his reincarnation *ex cathedra*. But, curious to relate, a child was born immediately after the death of the lama with precisely the same, and most uncommon, physical peculiarity—the absence of a left knee-cap.

The lamas, however, have no spiritual power over the laity in any way resembling that of, say, the Roman Catholic Church. There is confession, but not absolution. Anyone who has committed

a sin may consult a lama as to the manner in which he may " make merit " such as will counteract the evil consequences (karma) of his sin. The lamas' power lies in their alleged ability to bring good or to ward off evil by means of their religious ceremonies, and moreover, many of them are greatly feared on account of their supposed knowledge of the magic arts by which they may bring disaster, or even death, upon those who offend them or refuse to recognise their authority. All of them, and not only the Dalai and Tashi lamas, are supposed to possess the *afflatus divinus* in some degree, as being the earthly manifestations of some one or other of the many superhuman powers. High lamas of great sanctity are thought to reincarnate. These are called Rimpoché lamas. In some cases, among the Nyingma-pa, where celibacy is not the rule, the succession runs from father to son. There is also an order of nuns, and the abbesses of some of the convents are said to be " incarnations " of certain divine or superior beings, as Dorjé Phagma, and Dolma (Tara) the Virgin Mother. Thus there is a never-failing stream of supernatural power running through the whole hierarchy.

The nuns occupy a very subordinate position. Although they live under rule, shave their heads, may not wear ornaments, and dress in a manner resembling the monks, they are little more than

lay devotees. With the exception of such abbesses as are incarnations of female Bodhisattvas, they have no spiritual authority. But some of them discharge a more useful function. Those who are dedicated to Dolma, "the Virgin Mother of Mercy," "She who hears the cry of all the world," are loved and revered for obvious reasons.

High up on the mountain-side on the Lhasa road, to the north of the town of Gyantse, is situated one of their convents. The nuns are dressed in the customary red, monastic robes, differing little from those of the monks; their heads are shaved, and they wear long-haired, sheepskin caps dyed a bright red. They conduct their own services in the adjacent temple, reciting the prayers and observing the ritual, and they are strictly celibate. When called, they go forth to succour the sick and the dying. They are, indeed, sisters of mercy, who have taken the vows of renunciation of all things worldly.

The temple contains golden, or gilded, images of the Buddha Gotama, his disciples, and sundry saints, Dolma, the Deliveress, occupying the place of honour. Upon the walls, and from the beams overhead, hang wonderful pictures woven or painted on silk in colours and gold thread, of saints and scenes from the life of the Buddha.

Daily calls are made for the services of the nuns. A messenger arrives from an encampment

of nomadic shepherds in the far-off wilds. "Will the good sisters come with prayers and nursing for one who may be dying?" Such a request is never refused. Four nuns are told off by the abbess, and presently they return to report to her. They are equipped for their journey, each with a small valise strapped to her back, a satchel over her shoulder and a stout staff in her hand. The lady abbess reads a short prayer, blesses them, and they depart. Their journey may perhaps be of many days and nights. But they are not deterred by rain, hail or snow, or the fierce gales that rage over the desolate wilderness. They live on what they carry with them, never soliciting alms, but accepting what is freely offered, blessing the giver. At night, when there is no shelter available, they sleep in the open in perfect faith, entrusting their safety to the Holy Mother of Compassion. No man dare molest them, not even the robbers who infest the mountain passes. There may be danger from wild beasts, but it is said that none of these will ever approach the nuns of Dolma to do them an injury.

The gentler creatures of the wild come regularly to the convent, going from cell to cell to beg a handful of food or to receive a caress. The birds sit upon the walls, the larger ones resting in their long, migratory flights at certain seasons. The smaller birds walk about the courtyards picking up the grain which is scattered for them,

and they will fly to the sisters, perching on their arms and shoulders, feeding from their hands.

The good abbess, a few years ago, was a woman of many years, and it cannot be long before she, like her predecessors, will "lie in the lap of Dolma," in that love and peace which passeth all understanding, and for which she has laboured all the days of her life.

In every town, at every turn as the road winds through the valleys, there are the monasteries, set high up on the mountain-sides. They are on the plains, by the lake shores, and, if there are islands, they are there also. The larger monasteries, especially of Lhasa, Shigatse and Gyantse, are centres of learning with colleges attached to them. The knowledge imparted consists of reading, writing and elementary arithmetic, and the learning is that of the Tangyur and the Kangyur, the two collections of the sacred canon of Lamaism, of their commentaries, of sundry biographies and history, of Tantrism and the tantric books, and of the works of the famous Tibetan poet Milaraspa. Some of the monasteries inculcate medical and surgical knowledge of a weird and peculiar kind mostly derived from the Chinese. The highest scholastic degree is that of Ge-shé, or doctor of divinity ; the fully ordained lamas, of whom there are several grades, are called Gelong ; below the lamas come the

Ge-tsu, or deacons; the Genyé are the "freshmen" or novices.

Many of the high lamas are men of undoubted sanctity and real erudition, and, as such, are held in very high esteem by all classes. But human nature is the same among the lamas as among the priests of any other religion. Thus a good many of the lamas, although all can read and write after a fashion and are familiar with the routine of temple and monastery, can hardly be regarded as particularly intelligent, pious or moral. Some of the larger monasteries are disgraced by a class of hangers-on or servants, a sort of lay brothers, who have failed to pass even the entrance examination of the novices. Of such are the famous, so-called "fighting monks" (they are not really monks) of Lhasa and other places, idle, dissolute ruffians, whose presence forms a very real danger to the foreigner even though he may be an invited visitor. To preserve order during the temple ceremonies there is appointed a special officer, a kind of provost marshal, armed with a large stick with which he freely castigates the disorderly element. This, in itself, is evidence of the character of some of the men who are allowed to attach themselves to the monasteries after they have proved themselves unfitted to become lamas.

The best class of lamas occupy themselves in study, meditation and the religious services.

Some act as scribes and copyists, and others are artists who paint the pictures and frescoes in the temples, on the prayer walls and wayside shrines. A few are craftsmen, though the images are mostly produced by a special guild who are not priests. Several of the monasteries have printing presses for the reproduction of religious books and other publications, but only two have large presses with the monopoly of printing the Tangyur and the Kangyur, the sacred "canon" of Lamaism.

The Kangyur, or "Translated Commandments," which comprise translations from the Indian Buddhist texts and some from the Chinese, consists of 100 or 108 volumes of about 1,000 pages each, including 1,083 separate works. The Tangyur, or "Commentaries," contains 225 volumes. Its contents cover the life and sermons of the Buddha, the rules of the Buddhist Order, metaphysics, ritual, tantric works, mystical theology, and so forth. To attain the dignity of a fully fledged lama, the student must acquire a passable knowledge of these subjects, which necessitates many years of study. A Doctor of Divinity is necessarily a man of very great learning in these matters, and he is regarded with the greatest respect and consideration.

When a boy is destined for the religious life, he is usually sent to a monastery at the age of ten or eleven years. He is attached to some

monk, if possible a relative, to whom he becomes a pupil and acts also as attendant or servant. As the boy grows up, it depends very largely upon himself whether he passes his examinations, the more advanced of which are by no means easy, becomes a scholar and so wins to high position as abbot, or whether he sinks into the position of the ruffians before mentioned. But, to a certain extent, the monk or lama, his tutor, is held responsible for his progress even to the suffering of punishment on account of his pupil's delinquencies until the latter has passed a certain age, or is given up as a hopeless dunce.

The Vinaya rules, which the priests are supposed to observe, are elaborate, and number 253, but it is to be feared that they are often honoured in the breach more than in the observance. With the Gelugpa celibacy is the rule, but with the Nyingma-pa this is not enforced, concubinage, but not marriage, being permitted. In the nunneries celibacy is supposed to be the rule, though it is said that this is sometimes disregarded in relation with the Nyingma-pa.

A certain number of lamas live in solitary places, or in caves, as hermits. A peculiar institution is that of the "entombed hermits." The principal place for these is at Dongtse, on the road between Gyantse and Shigatse. It is situated in a desolate valley, a little off the main road, about twelve miles from Gyantse. Here

there is a number of caves or cells, the entrance to each of which is built up with masonry, with a small, securely locked door for ingress. Beside the entrance is a tiny hole with a small shutter about five inches square. Within the cell the ascetic is immured for a certain number of years, or even for life, entirely cut off from the light of day, solitary and alone. The small aperture is for the purpose of supplying the inmate with his meagre daily ration of water and parched corn. This terrible practice is supposed to confer a peculiar sanctity upon the hermit, and is said to have been introduced by Hindu Mahayanist ascetics. It certainly has no sanction from the teachings of the Buddha, who repudiated all such body- and mind-destroying asceticism as painful, useless and as not tending to enlightenment.

The monasteries, and the temples attached to them, vary in size from quite small buildings accommodating ten or a dozen lamas and monks, to those which resemble small towns with a population of several thousands, as at Sera, near Lhasa, Tashilhumpo (Shigatse) and Gyantse. Most of the monasteries engage in trade and commerce. All of them possess lands and cattle. The position of their tenants resembles that of the serfs of the Middle Ages in Europe. They pay a proportion of their produce in kind to the monasteries, and all of them are liable to discharge such labours as transport of the lamas'

baggage when they travel, or the goods sent out from the monasteries, the repair of the temple and the monastic buildings, roads, and so forth. On the whole, the monks themselves lead an easy, idle life, though some assist in the fields at harvest time.

Many of the monasteries are thus richly endowed, and their abbots keep up a state appropriate to their wealth and dignity. When they go abroad, they are attended by a retinue of servants and armed retainers quite in the style of the mediæval churchmen of high rank. Some individuals, however, renounce all such pomp and circumstance, and observe vows of poverty and abstinence. When they are men of great learning, as is often the case, they are reverenced by the people as saints ; and their influence, as such, is greater, even, than that of their more showy confrères, of whom they are, not infrequently, the superiors in ecclesiastical rank. In such a case, it is curious to observe an abbot halt his following, dismount from his caparisoned steed and do obeisance to a figure resembling a poor, tramping beggar, clad in travel-stained and faded robes.

CHAPTER V

TANTRISM, WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY

In the Middle Ages, and even down to late Reformation times, Europe was infested with demons and evil spirits, whilst witchcraft was a recognised, if infamous, profession. But, as knowledge grew, the " devils " assumed less substantial and malignant forms, until to-day there are few found to do them honour, whilst a charge of commerce with Satan himself would be laughed out of court.

But Tibet is still a land of demons and of sorcery, of oracles and wizards, of necromancy and of soothsaying. The earth and the air, the mysterious depths below and the wide spaces of the atmosphere above, are the dwelling-places of innumerable spirits, mostly evil, some of whom are local, whilst others go to and fro seeking whom they may devour. They lurk in the streams and lakes and in the caves ; they dwell on the mountain tops among the clouds. The earth demons are particularly powerful, and for this reason great care has to be taken when digging in the earth. Thus it happened that the training of a young Tibetan, who was sent to England to study

mining engineering, was wasted. The lamas were horrified when they learned what it was that he proposed to do. The demons, therefore, were left undisturbed and with them the mineral wealth of the country.

The philosophy, or science, if so it can be called, of Tibetan magic is Tantrism. This constitutes a feature of Lamaism which no outsider can hope to understand. Books have been written upon it by Europeans, with no more result than to show how little the writers understand it. Its practitioners are mostly the Nyingma-pa lamas, or the priests of the pre-Buddhist Bon religion called Dugpa. The latter are " black magicians " of the deepest dye.

The founder of Tantrism, which is an elaborate system of sorcery, was one, Asanga, a Mahayanist monk of Peshawar, about 600 C.E. He wrote the tantric textbook called the Yogachchara Bumi Sastra. The Hindus believe that this knowledge was revealed by the god Siva.

Intense, introspective meditation, in order to attain the necessary psychic " poise," is the preliminary to the practice of Tantrism. Thereafter, the recitation of the mantras, together with the performance of the elaborate ritual laid down, is said to give the practitioner (call him adept, magician, charlatan or what we will) power over the " occult world " and its denizens.

The mantras are charms or spells in rhythmic

form. Some of them consist of seemingly meaningless words or sentences. For example, the following is a free translation of a famous one ascribed to Padma Sambhava : " My body is like a hill. My eyes are like the ocean. My mind is like the sky." Another, by the same expert, runs : " When I pass the bridge, lo ! the water floweth not, but the bridge floweth." In the original, it is the syllabic rhythm which produces the effect, not the words or sentences themselves.

Associated with the mantras are the yantras, mystic diagrams, generally combinations of triangular forms or figures. A yantra with six or eight sides, with a mantra beneath, is supposed to possess great occult power. Bijas are the radical letters or syllables of mantras, or syllables representing the name of the deity to whom the mantra is addressed ; or syllables which denote the parts of the body over which the deity is supposed to preside. Mudras, employed during the recitation of mantras or bijas, or in meditation, are mystical figures made by twisting the fingers and hands in various ways. These figures are supposed to resemble certain animals or objects and they add to the potency of the spell.

Oracles are a popular institution, and every monastery has its soothsayer versed in occult lore. No man would ever think of concluding any weighty business, of undertaking a journey or contracting a marriage, without first obtaining

advice from this source. It is firmly believed that the hermits in their retreats among the mountains and the monks in their cloisters are, many of them, adepts in the black art, learned in astrology, and possessed of the power of telling fortunes ; that they can summon spirits from the vasty deep, control the demons of the storms and the seasons, and put spells upon men, animals and the harvests.

The oracle usually resides in a monastery, and has a special place assigned to him for his ministrations. After he has communed with his " spirit guides " he seats himself in his chair. Sometimes he goes into a sort of trance, at others he is almost frantic, according to the nature of the " control." The applicants must, of course, disburse a fee. The oracle, *en rapport* with the spirits, gives his replies to an attendant scribe who notes them down and hands them to his awe-struck clients. These replies are carefully preserved and religiously acted upon. No doubt, as in the case of similar proceedings nearer home, a record of the successes is kept, whilst the failures are ignored and, in time, forgotten. Thus the credit of the oracle is sustained to the profit of the monastery.

The sorcerer, or wizard, has a somewhat different mode of procedure. In full " canonicals " he is an imposing figure. He wears a tall, pointed hat with a brim of yak's hair, on either side of it

a coiled serpent ; it is surmounted by a miniature skull, with peacocks' feathers and long streamers. The man is clothed in a long gown with a sash or girdle of human bones, and has a magic mirror on his breast. He carries a bell, cymbals, and a small drum made out of a human skull, a dagger, a sword, a sling, bow and arrows, wherewith to defend himself from the demons, a divining arrow and other properties. His fantastic equipment, his frantic bearing, gestures and contortions, his cries and howls, are sufficient to frighten any demon into submission, as well as to impress the onlookers with the efficacy of his powers. These wizards go about the country exorcising the demons who cause disease among men and beasts, and bring misfortune, failure of the crops, or unseasonable and destructive storms.

The sorcerer is much sought after for the relief of pain or the cure of disease. He appears in all the terrors of his magical costume ; he calls upon the wizard priest, Padma Sambhava, and offers a libation and incense to the demons of disease. He beats upon his drum, clashes his cymbals, and calls the local spirits by name to assist him. The advent of these spirits can be seen (by the wizard) reflected in the mirror. The first to come is the tutelary spirit, followed by others, and lastly that which it is desired to cast out. The divining arrow is then applied to the affected part, and there appears a drop of blood without abrasion

over the painful spot. This is considered to be miraculous, and the patient is led to believe that the demon is now cast out.

Astrology and divination play a great part in the profession of the lamas. The horoscopes are of several kinds and are most elaborate. The horoscope of a child is always taken at birth, and it is consulted through life on important occasions, at marriage, before any great enterprise is undertaken, or in case of sickness. Divination is performed by rosaries, cards, pebbles, dice, by threads, the burning of paper, omens and so forth, and provides a comfortable livelihood for those skilled in these arts. A favourite subject is the foretelling of the circumstances of one's future rebirths.

The preparation of amulets containing charms is another lucrative business, as no Tibetan would be easy in his mind unless protected by one or more of these things carried on his person.

In view of the vogue of crystal-gazing and palmistry, of the oracular pronouncements of "Madame Mystère" of Bond Street, considering the craze for mascots, from golden pigs, lucky beans and "Fums Up," to black cats and stuffed monkeys, we cannot say that we are much more enlightened than the Tibetans.

CHAPTER VI

CHORTENS, PRAYER WHEELS, FLAGS AND WALLS

ONE of the common objects of the country-side in Tibet is the chorten, found everywhere, and not only in the monastery and temple grounds. The chorten was originally intended to contain relics, but is often a cenotaph in memory of some departed saint who was buried elsewhere. Sometimes it serves the purpose of a kind of gateway, a road or path running through the base. In this case, the relics, if any, or holy texts are overhead and the traveller passes beneath them, no doubt to his spiritual advantage. As with everything else connected with Lamaism, the chorten has its own peculiar symbolism. The solid plinth upon which the rest of the structure is erected represents earth. Upon it is set a hemisphere representing water ; upon this is a cylindrical, or tapering, pillar-like piece representing fire, topped by a crescent for the air, and above this is a trident, or leaf-shaped object for the ether. The upper part of the " fire column " should carry a tiered umbrella, the symbol of royalty. By the " occult " school another meaning is attached to the four main parts of the chorten

(ignoring the trident), that they symbolise the four planes of being, namely, the physical, astral, mental and spiritual.

The prayer, or, as it should properly be called, *praising* wheel is a contrivance peculiar to Lamaism, and this, together with the "Mani," is said to have been introduced by the celebrated Lama Stagsang-raz-chen in the sixteenth century. Upon the wheel is inscribed the famous formula, "Om! Mani Padme Hum!"—"Hail! the Jewel in the Lotus!" that is to say, the Truth (Dharma) contained in the Universal Buddha-Spirit (Adi-Buddha). Within the wheel are contained sacred texts or mantras, as well as the formula.

These wheels vary in size from the small ones twirled in the hands of the pious, to rows of larger dimensions set in the monastery walls; some are of great size, the largest sometimes being so contrived as to turn by the action of running water. They symbolise "the turning of the Wheel of the Good Law," namely, the teaching of the Buddha, and are supposed to produce a good psychic "atmosphere" inimical to evil influences, and they are used also as an aid to meditation. By the "occult" school the syllables of the formula, which is always engraved on the wheel, are said to indicate the six aspects, or spheres of existence in which a being may be reborn by virtue of his karma, and they also form the symbolism of the Buddhist flag:

Om (white), the heaven worlds ; Ma (blue), the astral, the abode of powerful, infra-divine spirits ; Ni (yellow), the human sphere ; Pad (green), the animal world ; Me (red), the " ghost world," purgatory ; Hum (black), hell.

The hand wheel consists of a cylinder made of metal, wood, bone or ivory, and upon the cylinder appears the formula. Inside the cylinder, which turns on a pivot fixed into a handle, are coiled and packed as tightly as possible long ribbons of paper upon which the same words are written or printed many thousands of times. Attached to the cylinder is a small weight to give it the necessary impetus. Each turn of the wheel is equivalent to a repetition of the sentence as many times as it is inscribed. One can go on twirling the wheel whilst conversing, reading a book, walking along a road, or admiring the view ; the sum of pious merit goes on steadily mounting up.

Prayer flags are found everywhere, above the temples and in the courtyards, on the roofs of houses and in the fields. The wind fluttering them is supposed to carry the inscribed petitions to the ears of the invisible powers. There are four principal types of prayer flags : (1) the Lung-ta, or horse symbol, almost square, about four to six inches long with the figure of a horse in the centre. The text varies according to the Bodhisattva or saint addressed. It is hung upon the roofs of houses. (2) The Cho-pen, long and

narrow, of varying size, from a few inches to eight or ten feet in length. It is erected in fields, or upon hills, tied to trees or bridges, or across streams. Its texts are similar to the first, but it has no horse symbol. (3) The Gyal-tsan-dse-mo, or Victorious Banner, is an expanded form of the Cho-pen, having more texts, and usually bearing the "eight glorious symbols" of which the lotus is the base. (4) The gLan-po-stob-rygas, or Great Fortunate Banner, bears crossed dorjés, a garuda bird, a peacock, a "jewelled elephant," "jewelled horse," the eight-leaved lotus disk, the eight glorious symbols and an elaborate number of texts.

Many of these flags may be displayed together, and the tops of their poles or sticks are often ornamented by the tiered umbrella of royalty. The materials of which the flags are made depend upon the wealth of the devotee. The very poor may only be able to afford cheap and flimsy paper flags crudely printed. A number of people of the poorer class will sometimes subscribe towards a flag of noble proportions, and its erection is made the occasion of a solemn religious service with festivities to follow.

Prayer walls are frequently encountered, usually in the middle of a road. On these are drawn or sculptured representations of Buddhas, heavenly and earthly, saints and other holy personages, with, of course, the ubiquitous inscription, "Om!

Mani Padme Hum ! " and they often have prayer wheels built into them for passers by to turn. Passengers, to show their respect, should keep them on the right-hand side. In circumambulating any religious structure, it is proper always to pass round from left to right, " clock-wise," which is also the direction in which the prayer wheel should be turned. To do the reverse is very improper, equivalent to saying one's prayers backward !

The rosary is common to all schools of Buddhism as an aid to meditation. That of Lamaism consists of 108 beads in order to ensure the repetition of any pious formula at least 100 times for each round of the rosary. This number has also a mystic significance, as Chenresi (Avalokita) and Dolma have each 108 names. The two ends of the string of beads are passed through three extra beads, the centre one being the largest. These are called dok-dsin, or holding beads. The triad symbolises the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, and also the mystic Trikaya which will be referred to later. Attached to the rosary is a pair of strings of ten small, pendent, metallic rings as counters. One string is terminated by a small dorjé, and the other by a small bell. The counters on the dorjé string register units of bead rounds, and those of the bell string tens. Attached to the rosary are such odds and ends as tooth-pick, tweezers, small keys, etc.

The beads are made of every substance from gold, pearls, emeralds and other precious stones, amber, coral, lapis lazuli, to human bone, shell, wood, seeds, glass, etc. The usual types of rosary are: the yellow, wooden rosary of the Gelugpa; red sandal wood of the Nyingma-pa; Raksha (seeds) for the demons; white conch shell for Chenresi; layman's rosary of unequal-sized beads; human skull disks; snake spine.

CHAPTER VII

"DEVIL" DANCES

THE so-called "devil" dances in which the lamas take part are a most picturesque institution. They are really nothing more "devilish" than ancient folk-dances, in the main illustrative of some historical, legendary or mythological event, when the good spirits overcome the powers of evil. They should properly be called lama dances.

At certain great, annual festivals there are elaborate series of these performances. Seating accommodation is provided for high lamas, abbots of distant monasteries, officials and other persons of rank. Around the open space where the dances are performed is packed a great crowd of Tibetans, all in holiday attire, a good-natured, orderly throng. They follow the various "acts" with close attention, serious when the occasion is solemn and wildly hilarious when the comic element is introduced.

For many hours, troops of masked figures, arrayed in gorgeous costumes, dance slow and stately steps, some benign, some malign, some

good and some evil. The masks, mostly of enormous size, would make the fortune of a Western pantomime! Among them are Ku, the king of the ogres, red of visage, with gnashing tusks and a horrible expression of bloodthirsty ferocity; Lang, the black bull; Tag, the tiger; Senggye, the white lion; Khyung, the green garuda bird; Teu, the mischievous brown monkey; Sha-wa, the antlered stag; and the Yak, black, with gigantic horns. Then come the Tur, or grave-yard ghouls, whose masks represent monstrous human skulls; the Sa-chak-pa, or earth demons; and the A-tsa-ra, or demon buffoons, white, with their moustaches and hair done up into coils. Most of the demons are garlanded with skulls and pendent human bones, and their masks have grinning teeth and glaring eyes. Skeletons prance about in black tights on which the white, painted "bones" show up in a most realistic manner. The hostile and destructive beings are armed with wooden swords and spears, and bows and arrows. Other masks are comical or jovial, or wear amusing expressions of extreme boredom, according to the characters they represent.

All the while the orchestra raves and crashes, huge ten-foot copper trumpets, horns of various sizes, whistles, gongs and clappers. The court is a perfect rainbow-maze of constantly changing combinations of colours, a ceaseless swirl of rich

silks and embroidered costumes. And there is an unending trumpeting and pounding, rising at times to a deafening roar; but, on the whole, the music is not unpleasing, with a distinct rhythm to which the dancers move slowly or rapidly, leaping or swaying in time as their parts demand. The intricacy of the dances, and the way in which they are carried through, without mistake or hitch from start to finish, provide evidence of long training and laborious rehearsal.

So, for several days, the succession of plays proceeds until the senses reel. Comedy follows tragedy, gods follow devils, chanters follow dancers, wild gyrations succeed slow and stately measures. The masks and costumes are constantly changing, for these are seldom used a second time.

The meaning of one of the mystery plays that I saw was clear enough without my interpreter's explanation, as also two of the historical pieces. In the first, a sacred triangle was traced upon the ground, and a most realistic "corpse" made of dough was placed inside. Certain good and evil beings appeared to hold a council concerning it, but were unable to come to an agreement as to who should have the body. Then the lamas entered and blessed the spirit of the dead, speeding the soul to a happy rebirth. After they had left, a group of hideous, shrieking fiends rushed in, leaping and howling round the body. Particu-

larly gruesome was the manner in which they ignored it at first, drawing nearer and nearer, looking down at it, and then dancing away and returning. For a time the lamas' charms prevailed, but presently their influence became weak and the demons seized upon the corpse and began to tear and devour it. Then the lamas entered again and the devils scattered, the prayers were renewed, and so, through their power, the "soul" of the dead man was saved.

Another dance illustrated the legend of the slaying of the great demons Matram and his wife Krodish by two Bodhisattvas. Matram and Krodish were particularly horrifying in appearance. Certainly the world would be better without such monsters, and so the Bodhisattvas determined to destroy them. At first, in their mild aspect, the Bodhisattvas were unable to prevail, so they assumed terrifying forms, one appearing with the head of a horse and the other with the head of a sow. Soon it was all over with the demons, and the Bodhisattvas, assuming their normal aspect and garments, celebrated their victory by a solemn, religious dance. It is from this legend that Dorjé-phagma, or the Sow-headed Lady Dorjé, is derived, and she is supposed to be incarnate in the lady abbess of a famous convent in Tibet. This dance is said to have been first performed by Padma Sambhava in order to overcome the opposition of certain

malignant spirits who sought to prevent the building of the Samyé monastery.

A third dance was that of the Black Hats. This celebrates the slaying of the wicked Tibetan king, Langa Darma, who persecuted Buddhism in 899 C.E. One, Pal-dorjé, a lama of Lha-lun, disguised himself as a strolling, black-hat devil dancer of the Bon, and he hid in his ample sleeves a bow and arrows. He appeared dressed in black, riding on a black pony. His dancing below the palace attracted the king's attention, and he was summoned into the royal presence to receive a reward. The dancer took an opportunity to shoot the king with an arrow. In the resulting confusion the lama succeeded in mounting his pony and escaping. He swam the Kyi river, and his pony, which had been blackened with soot, emerged from the water its natural colour, white. At the same time the lama turned his clothes and his hat, which were white on the inside, and so got clear away. This lama has since been canonised and is now a saint in the Lamaist calendar. All these incidents were shown in the pantomime, some parts of which were exceedingly funny, as they were intended to be; and, of course, numerous good and evil spirits, demon buffoons, clowns and others, had much to do with it, to the great joy of all beholders, evoking roars of laughter.

The lamas said that, in more modern times,

these dances have been much improved, and they are intended to convey moral lessons to the spectators. Certainly, there is nothing objectionable about them, and they, doubtless, have their value.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GODS OF LAMAISM

At first sight, Lamaism presents the appearance of a complicated mythological polytheism to which is added the propitiation of innumerable good and evil spirits, demons of the localities, of the mountains, waters and desert places, " devil " dances, and magical rites and ceremonies of all kinds.

Among the better educated of the lamas, these ideas are explained as symbolisms with allegorical meanings behind them, though they are accepted literally by the less intelligent of the monks as well as by the illiterate laity.

The Buddhist, observing all this, will reflect upon the third of the " Ten Fetters " (*sannojanas*), which are : (1) Self-illusion ; (2) Doubt (as to the possibility of attaining salvation through enlightenment) ; (3) Superstition and faith in ceremonialism (that outward observances, such as prayer, sacrifice, listening to sermons, adoration of relics, and ritual in themselves lead to salvation) ; (4) Sensual craving ; (5) Anger ; (6) Craving for existence in the sphere of pure form,

i.e. free from sensuality ; (7) Craving for formless existence in the arupa heaven worlds ; (8) Pride ; (9) Restlessness (in concentration) ; (10) Illusion (avijja).

The lamas defended ceremonialism and ritual as in the nature of " supports " for the mentally or spiritually undeveloped and infirm. But the objection that springs to the mind of the matter-of-fact Navayanist is : " Why conceal your teachings behind symbols when it is less trouble to state their meaning (if they have any !) in plain language ? So long as the infirm, not to mention the lazy, are content with artifice they will never learn to walk of their own, unaided efforts, which it is the purpose of Buddhism to encourage. Moreover, these things have more the appearance of the properties of priest-craft than of the accessories of the school-master.

There is, however, something to be said for the opinion of a certain learned lama, abbot of one of the larger monasteries. His reply to this criticism was to the following effect : The mind of man is prone to superstition. If left to themselves, ignorant people will invent their own superstitions, and the more ignorant they are the worse will those superstitions be. Better that they should find such ideas prepared for them with a definite object in view. You must remember that all men are not on the same

mental level. The deeper, philosophical teachings are beyond the capacity of the majority. If, on the whole, the influence leads to a better life, why should not a little superstition be permitted ?

In this view there is, perhaps, a certain amount of truth. But the danger is lest superstition should be fostered for the purpose of strengthening the priestly power over the minds of the people, and such is undoubtedly the case with Lamaism.

At the very outset we find that the Lamaist theology has developed doctrines and features which lead in a direction diametrically away from the teaching of the Buddha. The fact that one has to use the word " theology " in relation to them is a sufficient indication of their non-Buddhist character. Principal among these is the concept of the Adi-Buddha, or Universal Buddha-Spirit. It is borrowed direct from Hinduism and is the same as the Brahman, namely, the impersonal source of all things, that which is without beginning or end, formless, nameless and inconceivable, in and by which all phenomenal existence manifests. From this notion proceeds the idea of the personal soul or self, as being the " thing " which enters the body at birth and quits it at death.

This doctrine is the precise antithesis of that taught by the Buddha, which was definitely

anatma (anatta), the non-existence of any such spirit, or soul, whether universal or individual. This belief is the very first "fetter" which one has to cast off before he can set foot on the threshold of the Noble Eightfold Path of Salvation: it is the most pernicious of illusions, which will inevitably mislead its victims into the deepest morass of error. Even Ashvaghosha says: "All false doctrines invariably arise out of the *atman* conception. If we were liberated from it, the existence of false doctrines would be impossible." [1] From this, it would seem, the early Mahayana did not exhibit this corruption; but, later, we find it producing precisely the effect foretold by the Buddha, namely, "the snare, the labyrinth, the puppet-show, the moil, the tangle of views."

Following upon this, in order to permit the Adi-Buddha to manifest objectively, the Mahayana invented innumerable Dhyani (or "heavenly") Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (potential Buddhas), supposed to be emanations of the Adi-Buddha. Of the Dhyani Buddhas, only five are supposed to manifest in relation to the earth. These are Vairocana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amogha-siddhi. Each of these has, in addition, its corresponding Dhyani Bodhisattva and earthly Buddha, those of the Dhyani Buddha Amitabha (Amida) being Avalokites-

[1] *Sraddhotpada Sutra.*

vara (Avalokita) and Sakya Muni (Gotama Buddha).

All these greater powers, Dhyani Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, are spiritual, belonging to the "formless worlds" (arupaloka), though manifesting in the world of form; they are supposed to be personal, objective beings, capable of responding to the supplications of their devotees.

Here we have a complete reversal of the Buddha's teaching. He propounded the doctrine of Arahatship (sainthood). Only a Buddha is capable of discovering this doctrine. A Buddha is essentially a human being, a man, who by self-denying effort, continued through many different births, has acquired such perfection that he is able, when sin and ignorance have gained the upper hand, to save the world from impending catastrophe. He first becomes an Arahat, then, until he has attained enlightenment, a Bodhisat (potential Buddha), and finally a Buddha. The notion of the Adi-Buddha from which Dhyani Buddhas spring full-fledged, as it were, is an absurdity. There can be no Buddha without a course of evolution. It is only by the application of concentrated energy in mental processes through generations that the complete self-possession and mastery of mind which characterise Nirvana can become possible of achievement.

The human Buddhas (as Gotama) are considered, in the Mahayana, to be existent in the world of form, although beyond the necessity of rebirth, and they are able actively to assist the efforts of struggling humanity. In this connection is propounded the theory of the Trikaya, or Trinity, namely, that every Buddha has three "bodies": (1) Dharmakaya, the "Body of the Law," the abstract essence or nature of the universe, the ultimate reality, the Absolute; (2) Sambhogakaya, the "Body of Compassion," the personified ideation of the Absolute as the symbol of moral perfection; (3) Nirmanakaya, the "Body of Transformation," or the Absolute manifested in the world of form as the phenomenal appearance of the human Buddha.

A Buddha who appears on earth is said to be both Nirmanakaya and Sambhogakaya because he has renounced the "Dharmakaya Vesture" in order to come to earth to help mankind. He has attained Nirvana, but refuses Parinirvana (the ulterior state beyond Nirvana) for the purpose. If a Buddha does not concern himself with earthly affairs, he is said to be Sambhogakaya. The Buddha who passes into Parinirvana is said to be Dharmakaya, that is to say, he becomes merged into the All. This, however, must not be misunderstood, in the sense of Hinduism, as becoming one with any kind of "god," personal or impersonal.

"The Buddhist's goal is Buddhahood, and the essence of Buddhahood is Dharmakaya, the totality of all those laws which pervade the facts of life, and whose living recognition constitutes enlightenment. . . . Dharmakaya is the norm of all existence, the standard of truth, the measure of righteousness, the good law." [1]

The Arahat, or saint, who has attained Nirvana becomes first a Bodhisattva, and, as such, may choose whether he comes to earth as a human Buddha, or becomes a "Pratyeka Buddha" in the heaven worlds. The term Bodhisattva also denotes those Arahan who have but one birth before they attain Nirvana. The Bodhisattvas, male and female, are very numerous according to Lamaism. Of these, the next to appear on earth as a Buddha is Maitreya, a view also held by "Southern" Buddhism.

Below the Bodhisattvas are the saints. Lower still are the hosts of local spirits and demons of all kinds, most of whom are mischievous and capable of causing diseases and calamities. Therefore they have to be propitiated in various ways. It is these beings of whom the people go most in fear, who bulk largely in their thoughts as approaching more nearly to their daily lives and avocations. The lamas alone have the powers of exorcism, hence their services are indispensable

[1] Narasu, *Essence of Buddhism*.

on all occasions and enterprises of importance, in order to ensure that there shall be no interference by these inimical influences.

Such are the "gods" of Lamaism. Their numbers and their names are legion.

CHAPTER IX

THE TEMPLES AND THEIR SERVICES

THE arrangement of the temples tends to strengthen these beliefs. It will be of interest, therefore, to describe one of these. It is the great Ba-kor Chodé, or Golden Temple, at Gyantse, so called from the chorten-like building adjoining the temple proper, the roof of which is overlaid with copper plates shining like gold in the sun.

Within the porch, one is confronted by the terrific images of the Guardians of the Four Quarters: Nam-tho-sre, King of the Yakshas, Guardian of the North, whose colour is green, carrying in his hand his symbol, a lion; Phag-kye-po, King of the Kumbhandas, Guardian of the South, whose colour is yellow, carrying a sword; Yul-khor-sang, King of the Gandharvas, Guardian of the East, whose colour is white, carrying a guitar; and Je-mi-zang, King of the Nagas, Guardian of the West, whose colour is red, carrying a chorten or reliquary. These have nothing to do with Buddhism, but were borrowed direct from the mythology of Hinduism. The

interior of the porch is decorated with frescoes of saints and other figures, and there is a large painting of the Wheel of Life.

There was never any objection to my entering the temple whenever I chose. But, if there was a service in progress, it would not have been considered good manners to wander about, any more than in an English cathedral under such circumstances. On these occasions the assembled lamas and monks would be sonorously chanting, to the occasional accompaniment of cymbals, horns, pipes and drums, the effect of which was always impressive in the extreme. Within the nave is a figure of Maitreya, the Buddha to come, much larger than life-size, with the most benignant face I have ever seen on such an image. The interior of the building is decorated with mural paintings, painted and embroidered silken banners, etc., those on the pillars playing a part in the processional services.

Beyond is the sanctuary, or chancel, wrapped in mysterious gloom, relieved only by the glimmering of countless tiny lamps and the glowing tips of incense sticks. Within may be dimly discerned great images, wonderfully wrought, representing the Buddha Gotama, the mystical Dhyani Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, disciples and saints.

It is strange that the Buddha Gotama is not always found in the Lamaist temples, or that,

when present, he does not always occupy the central position of honour. In some temples, the "wizard priest," Padma Sambhava, usurps this place. He is usually represented as sitting in front of a screen of lotuses, wearing a mitre-shaped hat. He holds a dorjé in his right hand and a human skull-cap filled with blood in the other. He is attended by his two wives, one on his left holding a skull-cap of blood, and the other on his right holding a jar of wine.

Other principal images may usually be distinguished as follows: The Buddha Gotama is gilded and represented as a normal human being with his legs folded beneath him, seated in an attitude of meditation. His expression is mild and benevolent. Avalokita, the great god of Mercy, the Great Pitier, the Seer with Keen Eyes, is white in colour and is usually represented as possessing four hands, the front pair joined as in the act of worship, the upper right holds a rosary and the upper left a lotus flower. Or he may possess eleven hands and a thousand arms, each hand with an eye in its palm, symbolising his universality. In Karmapa temples the chief place is given to the founder of this sect, Karma Bakshi, with Dorjé-phagmo, the Sow-faced Lady Dorjé; Dolma, the Unlooser, the Deliveress, Virgin Mother of Mercy; and Chak-dor, Wielder of the Thunderbolt.

Among the Bodhisattvas, Maitreya, the Buddha

to come, is never represented as seated cross-legged in the Oriental fashion, but always standing, or seated as a European sits upon a chair. This is the only image so represented, a curious fact in view of the idea, prevalent in all Buddhist countries, that the next Buddha will appear in the West.

The images are awe-inspiring in their placid impassivity, giving the impression of latent, superhuman power. In front of them are ranged bowls containing water, but seldom flowers except on special occasions. Then the bowls will contain rice with flowers, rice with incense sticks, etc., and others scented water. On the altar are placed the dorjé-thunderbolt and the musical instruments used in the services.

On either side of the nave there may be chapels, dedicated to Bodhisattvas, saints, or the shrine of some famous abbot or other holy man, each with its lamps, bowls, incense, and other appurtenances. In the Ba-kor Chodé, the two side chapels are those of the Dhyani Buddhas Vairocana and Akshobhya and they are exceedingly gorgeous.

Communicating with this temple by means of a dark passage is a room devoted to the magical practices of the Bon, never used now for this purpose, I was told. It is a veritable chamber of horrors, containing monstrous images of Hindu

gods, such as Siva the Destroyer and the blood-thirsty goddess Kali, of demons and evil spirits, human and animal skins, hideous masks, grotesque dresses, and implements of necromancy and sorcery such as the Buddha specifically condemned. One large image had a shawl, or veil, over its face. When I asked that this might be removed, my guide (the prior) politely excused himself.

In the building before referred to, which stands close by the temple proper, there are the three Halls of Initiation. In one of these halls are nine wonderfully executed mandalas, or designs with " occult " significance, painted upon the walls, and one of the Wheel of Life. In another hall are ranged life-sized statues of former abbots, some twenty in number, all of them fine works of art. There is also a shrine containing the relics of a one-time abbot famous for his holiness, with the throne which he used in his lifetime. There are many other shrines in this building containing images of lesser divinities. Such are the Syang-tchubsems-pa, who reside in the Tusita heaven. They include historical as well as imaginary personages. Among them are the two wives of King Srong-tsan-gampo. The Bla-ma are a company of priests and saints, recognisable by their priestly robes. Among these is Tsong-khapa, the reformer of Tibetan Buddhism; and Nag-dban Blo-bsan rGya-mts'o

(1617–1682 C.E.), the fifth Dalai Lama and founder (in 1642) of the temporal power of the Dalai Lama in Lhasa. There are also the Tchhos-kyong, Drag-pa (or Dharmapalas), demons, horrible of aspect, devouring human beings, with gnashing teeth, and coloured blue, red and green, crowned with skulls, having tusks and glaring eyes. They are supposed to be manifestations of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas who accomplish the salvation of men by threats and fear when milder methods have failed. Most of them, however, are purely Bon deities. Others are derived from Hinduism. Thus, Tshang-pa is Brahma; Seng Ghi-mkah-sgro-ma is Kali; Me Lha is Agni, the god of fire, and his symbol in Tibet, as in India, is a goat or ram; Lhamo is Devi, a female demon, or fury, riding upon a horse, her crown and saddle-girths of human skulls.

In addition there are paintings of the Youl-lha, guardian spirits of lands and monasteries; the Sa Dags, hobgoblins of the houses, mountains, waste places, waterfalls, and so forth.

Buddhism does not deny the existence of other spheres of being than this of earth, inhabited by entities other than man. Gods and demons appear in the Buddhist scriptures, but in the discourses of the Buddha they are introduced merely for the purposes of familiar illustration. No special importance is attached to gods, and

they are certainly not held up as objects of worship, adoration or propitiation. They are all perishable, and their lives last no longer than the people, or the civilisation, which has given rise to them. The worship of any god is, from the strict Buddhist point of view, idolatry, for it is quite impossible to avoid anthropomorphising the idea of god. The lay Buddhist whose feet are upon the Path, the Arahat who has attained Nirvana, and especially the Buddha, are superior to all gods, whose imperfections are often such as would disgrace the average human being.

The gods are considered as within the Samsara —the all but eternal round of arising, transition, passing away and re-arising, under the law of karma. The Buddhist attitude towards the god-idea has led to its being styled atheistic. But it should rather be regarded as super-theistic, for the reason that the Buddha-thought does not deny the god-idea, but goes beyond it, and teaches the Lokuttara Dharma, the existence of a Supernal Realm outside the Samsara, " beyond the Universe." Even in Lamaism, " God " is not regarded as the ultimate.

The services peculiar to Lamaism illustrate the wide divergence of this religion from the teachings of the Buddha, and they present a striking contrast to the ceremonies in the temples of Ceylon, Burma and Siam.

The most remarkable of these is called the Banquet of the Whole Assembly of the Gods and Spirits.

A large congregation of lamas and monks assembles, together with a full orchestra. In the seat nearest the altar sits the Abbot. In front of him is a table on which are arranged the following objects: a rice cone; a saucer with loose rice in it for scattering at certain points during the service; a bell for ringing at proper moments; a vase containing holy water; a dorjé. Opposite to him sits the Umdzé, or chief celebrant, also with a table before him upon which are set a vase of holy water, a dorjé and a bell. Next to the Umdzé is the Deputy Umdzé, who plays the large tsho-rol cymbals. Below these three dignitaries are seated the lamas in order of precedence, and behind them the monks and lay brothers. By the door is stationed the Chho-timba, or "Provost Marshal," armed with a large stick, whose function is to prevent unauthorised persons from entering, and to keep order among the monks and lay brothers, which he does with resounding thwacks, for the lay brothers are a turbulent crowd, anything but pious or reverent in their behaviour. The Chho-timba also has a table upon which are an incense vase, a bell and a dorjé.

Over the altar is stretched the canopy called nam-yul, or sky, on which are depicted the

dragons of the heavens. The central image is that of Padma Sambhava, with a large silken umbrella suspended over it, and flanked by Dhyani Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and others. In front of the altar are arranged four tiers of cakes. On the first (upper) tier are three large cakes, for the Guru Rimpoché (Padma Sambhava) in the centre, with wine in a skull and blood in a skull; for the Tutelary Spirit, and the Spirit with the Lion Face. The second tier bears cakes for the following, in order from left to right: the "Ruler" of Tibet's Guardian; the Demon Blacksmith; the Lord of the Rakshas; the Locality Protector; the Nagas, black and white; the Buddha Gotama (in strange company indeed!); the Spirit Nun of the Di-kung Monastery; the Five Everlasting Sisters; the Spirits of the Drowned; the Homestead Spirit; the Country God; the Black Demon, the Red Demon and the Locality Demon; the Demons who cause disease; the Demon Protectors of the Ter caves where the hidden revelations are deposited; the Black and Red Demons and Naga of the parent monastery of the priests of this temple. In the third row are the "eight essential offerings," namely, water in a bowl, cake, perfumed water, rice with an incense stick, a lamp, rice with flowers, water, water. In the fourth row are an indefinite number of cakes as an extra course for all, with the addition of some wine, meat and

other eatables. The altar and the tiers are illuminated by a large number of butter-fed lamps.

The articles on, or near, the altar include the following: a miniature chorten, or reliquary; several sacred books; a holy-water vase with a metal mirror hanging to the spout, the water being tinged with saffron and sprinkled by means of a fan of peacocks' feathers and the holy kusa grass; a large metal mirror to reflect the images of the spirits; two pairs of cymbals; a conch-shell trumpet; a pair of copper hautboy pipes; a pair of long, telescopic, copper horns; a pair of human thigh-bone trumpets; a pair of tiger thigh-bone trumpets; a large drum, small drum, and human skull drum.

The order of the feast is as follows: An invitation to the deities and spirits to assemble, chanted with a great clamour of horns, drums and cymbals. A chanted request for the guests to be seated, and to partake of the essence of the food offered. Whilst they are supposed to be enjoying themselves, hymns are sung, with musical accompaniment, lauding the goodness and admirable qualities of the guests. A sort of litany is recited, with prayers for favours immediate and to come. Finally, the special delicacy, tshog, is offered to all on plates, a plate for each row of guests, and one for the lamas.

Then follows the ceremony of Kang-so, or "the expiation for religious duties left undone," which wipes off all arrears. A novice throws up in the air several cakes to all the demi-gods and demons not specially invited to the feast. One cake is then given to each lama in order of rank, this food now supposed to be consecrated owing to the gods and spirits having partaken of it. Each leaves a small portion which is collected on a plate in the same order. Above these fragments is placed a whole cake, and the service called Hlak-dor is done, when the whole of the leavings is thrown on the ground outside the temple doors to those evil spirits not yet subjected by Padma Sambhava or subsequent saints. A large number of dogs and crows, already waiting, fully aware of what is coming, quickly dispose of the pieces. The service is then at an end.

There are many other services and ceremonies which it would be tedious to describe in detail. Some are quite simple, and would be approved by the most "orthodox" of Theravadists. Others are as elaborate and ornate as any of those associated with the Roman Catholic Church, which they often resemble in startling ways. There is a form of "high mass," services for the dead, and a kind of "eucharist" in which blood, wine and bread figure. Whether this last was derived from the Romish missionaries by Tsong Khapa,

or whether it has to do with the vagaries of Padma Sambhava, it is impossible to say. Concerning the origin and meaning of some of these things, the lamas were extremely reticent, or perhaps they do not know.

CHAPTER X

LHASA, THE POTALA AND TASHILHUMPO

EFFORTS to obtain permission to visit Lhasa, the mysterious capital of Tibet—not quite so mysterious since the Younghusband Military Mission of 1903—were unavailing. Only three or four Europeans have succeeded in reaching it in recent years, under unusual circumstances, or in disguise. One of these installed the telegraph and telephone lines which connect Lhasa with British India. Another was a British general who "tramped" from China through Tibet by special permission. A third was an adventurous scholar who was stopped, as he thought, not so much by Tibetan opposition as by other influences; so he went disguised as a coolie and succeeded in getting there at the risk of his life. A fourth was a learned French lady who had lived for some years at Kumbum in Mongolia, on the Tibetan border. She also walked in the guise of a Tibetan woman pilgrim to holy places, reached Lhasa, and finally arrived safely in Darjeeling.

I had no disposition to emulate these feats, and

so, when a friendly letter was received from the Tsong-do (National Assembly) in Lhasa regretting that for certain "political" reasons (not specified) permission could not be granted, I obtained my impressions at second hand. I had read practically everything available about Lhasa. I had a collection of good photographs, a map of the city, and many minute descriptions by lamas and others who knew every corner of it intimately. Thus it is possible to give a short account of the city little less accurate than if I had been there myself.

As the city is approached from the south-west, no view of it is obtained until the long range of rocky hills, which forms a natural barrier, is overpassed. Immediately then, a marvellous panorama of Lhasa, and its great, fertile plain, comes into view.

The dominant feature of the landscape is the enormous building known as the Potala, the palace of the Dalai Lama, towering above the plain. As one approaches nearer, the vast size of it becomes even more impressive, and it is seen to be a collection of connected buildings pierced by innumerable windows. The effect of great height and bulk is produced by the Potala being erected upon the sides and on the summit of an isolated, rocky hill.

Three hundred feet in height, the Potala has many storied terraces, supported and flanked by

buttressed masonry battlements and retaining walls, 60 feet high in places. The whole forms a gigantic edifice of stately architectural proportions. The central part of the palace, crowning the summit, is of a dull crimson colour, from which it derives the name of the Red Palace. Above this are five golden pavilions. The great wings on either side, and below, are dazzling white. Colossal stairways on either side lead up from the gardens.

The Red Palace contains the Chapel Royal, the Throne Room, and the apartments of the Dalai Lama. The golden pavilions on the roof form a shining landmark visible for many miles across the plain.

The Potala is not of very great age. It was built by the first Dalai Lama (1640), who was appointed by the Chinese and given the title of Dalai, or "great as the ocean." He is also styled by the Tibetans Gyewa, or Gyalwa-Rimpoché—"Precious Gem of Majesty." The Dalai Lama named his palace after the mythical Indian residence of his "divine prototype," Avalokita, the Lord of Mercy. There are two other Potalas, the original being at Cape Kormorin, and one on the east coast of China, dedicated to the same divinity.

As one approaches, the Potala assumes the appearance of a fortress surrounded by a loop-holed wall on three sides, and, on the fourth,

defended by precipitous rocks whence the buildings sweep upwards in a bold scarp. It would appear to be almost impregnable to anything save modern artillery. Yet it was sacked by an undisciplined horde of Tartars who took Lhasa by storm in 1710. They were driven out by a Chinese army which was sent to the rescue.

The main entrance to the Potala is not particularly imposing. A steep, stone-paved causeway leads to the foot of a long flight of stairs which is carried up to just below the dark, crimson walls of the Red Palace. There is here a portal opening into a paved court-yard. Within is yet another door entering upon a perfect labyrinth of passages from which numerous staircases ascend, the principal one leading to the corridor which connects with the Throne Room, the Chapel Royal and the private apartments.

No European, and few Tibetans, have ever seen the whole of the Potala. It would take many days to explore, and even such parts as are accessible would demand more than a brief sketch to describe adequately. The inner recesses of the palace are said to penetrate into the heart of the rock upon which it is built, and there are believed to be secret vaults wherein, according to the popular idea, are stored treasures of fabulous value.

The pillared galleries and splendid corridors in

the vicinity of the Throne Room and the Chapel Royal are gorgeous in their painted and gilded magnificence. Colonnades of crimson pillars support elaborately carven beams and panelled ceilings, and, in places, the ceilings have richly embroidered silken canopies stretched across. The walls are decorated by mosaics and frescoes painted with the minuteness of miniatures on ivory, and beautiful and delicate designs with figures of deities and saints. The great doors are carved and gilded, picked out with silvery white, dark blue and red.

The Throne Room is a lofty hall, the decorations of which resemble those of the corridors, but are still more magnificent and elaborate. The throne itself is a raised dais with a cushioned seat, and behind it is the great relic shrine richly ornamented with gold and precious stones.

The Chapel Royal has the same general appearance as most Lamaist temples, save that its altars, images and appurtenances of worship are richer, many of them being of gold. On one of these altars is a finely executed image, in solid gold, of Avalokita. A special room contains statues, or images, of the previous Dalai Lamas, thirteen in number, whose names are : dGe-'dun Grub-pa, 1391–1475 ; dGe-'dun rGya-mts'o, 1475–1543 ; bSod-nams, 1543–1589 ; Yon-tan, 1589–1617 ; Nag-dban Blo-bsan rGya-mts'o, 1617–1682 (the first to assume the title of Dalai) ;

Ts'ans-dbyas rGya-mts'o, 1683–1706 (deposed and murdered); sKal-bzan, 1708–1758; 'Jam-dpal, 1758–1805; Lun-rtogs, 1805–1816; Tsul-K'rims, 1819–1837; mK'as-grub, 1837–1855; 'P'rin-las, 1856–1874; T'ub-bstan, 1876. The last named, the present incumbent, is represented in miniature for the time being.

Such is the centre and focus of that strange phase of Buddhism known as Lamaism; the Vatican, as it has been called, of the Buddhist Pope. But this is an erroneous simile, since the authority of the Dalai Lama does not extend beyond the devotees of Lamaism, and these are very much in a minority as compared with the true Buddhists.

The Jo-Khang, or cathedral, at Lhasa is the very heart of Lamaism; is itself Lhasa ("dwelling-place of the gods"). The city merely consists of the buildings which have sprung up around it. It was founded by King Srong-tsan-gampo in 652 C.E., but has been added to and restored at various times. The entrance gates open upon a court-yard, along the sides of which are pillared and covered galleries. There is an outer chapel near the entrance to the inner court, and here, by the wall to the left, is a throne occupied by the Dalai Lama when present at various ceremonies.

At this place preaches, on stated occasions, one of the most important dignitaries of the Lamaist

hierarchy. He is the abbot of the Galden monastery, founded by Tsong Khapa, appointed to the Ser Ti Rimpoché—" precious, golden throne "—on account of his great learning. He is esteemed as the Supreme Master of the intricate philosophy and ritual of Lamaism, and his title is Galden Tipa—" He who sits upon the throne of Galden." He preaches seated under a canopy to an audience of lamas specially chosen by their superiors. They go there by command, yet it is considered a great honour to be thus selected. The present Galden Tipa is described as an aristocrat and an ascetic, a man of most refined, intellectual and commanding aspect. He preaches without any of the mannerisms of the orator, as one who knows. His audience, composed of men who themselves possess great erudition, is there to listen and to learn, not to question. If there is a " Mahatma " in Tibet, it is the Galden Tipa, Ser Ti Rimpoché—to give him his full style and dignity.

Passing from the outer court, by means of a long, dark passage, one reaches the inner court. At one end is a splendid shrine protected by an open iron-work trellis. It is flanked by two statues of Maitreya. Upon the pillared walls are depicted hundreds of Dhyani and Pratyeka Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and saints. Just behind the outer walls is a dark passage running all round the court leading to chapels dedicated to

various divinities, and to the central shrine. Here, just before one enters, is a statue of Tsong Khapa.

The image which has the place of honour in the Holy of Holies is that of the historical Buddha, represented as a youth and a Royal Prince. This image is alleged to have been made from life in India, then carried to China, and finally brought to Tibet. This story is doubtful, to say the least of it. The style of the image is Chinese rather than Indian. Moreover the Buddhist iconography did not develop until after the rise of the Mahayana school, some centuries after the death of the Buddha.

The value of the offerings laid before this image in the course of a year is beyond computation. It is not surprising to learn that its monastery, though comparatively small, is the wealthiest in the country. Its lamps are of pure gold, and all the ornaments about the image are covered with enormous, uncut gems.

By way of grotesque contrast, the floor above is mainly devoted to the worship of the female Bodhisattva Palden Lhamo. She is represented in many forms and guises. After the protean fashion of many Bodhisattvas, she is sometimes a terrible female demon, a ferocious fury; at others, a beautiful, mild and gracious lady; the hearer of prayers; or again, the goddess of disease and death, of war, pestilence and famine.

Her images here represent her in both aspects. One of them is black in colour, clad in human skins, riding upon a mule and eating brains out of a skull. As the goddess of battle, she is surrounded by lethal weapons. This shrine, or chamber of horrors, is inhabited by hundreds of mice, considered to be incarnations of monks and nuns (!) and so held as sacred, and therefore entirely tame. In another part of the cathedral is a large chapel to Srong-tsan-gampo and his two wives.

As for Lhasa itself, only the fact of its being so remote and difficult of access, coupled with its romantic associations, would tempt the traveller. It is true, however, that the journey, which traverses the most marvellous scenery in the world, is worth all the trouble and expense.

But Lhasa ! It is described as " the metropolis of filth," and the Chinese are rude enough to say that it is " a city of devils who feed upon excrement." Not even in China, they say, can any city be found that is so indescribably dirty. Not only are the streets full of holes into which the unwary may stumble and fall, but there are in the middle of them open cess-pools, specially constructed, and used both by men and women without concealment. The filth, the stench, the vile abomination of the streets of Lhasa are, from all accounts, beyond anything of the kind in the world.

Yet the houses are, for the most part, well planned and built, and they present quite an imposing appearance from the distance. Those of the better classes are three or four stories in height. The entrance to such a house is by way of a large gateway opening into a courtyard in the centre of which is an odoriferous midden. On the ground floor are stables in which ponies, yaks, mules and sheep are kept. The first floor is occupied by the servants, and the upper floor by the family. The rooms are usually well furnished and cosy. In one of the rooms will be the family altar, with its images and accompaniments, some of which are exceedingly valuable, and several rare, religious pictures on silk. The only drawback is the absence of fireplaces, though sometimes there is a stove in the centre of the room. To meet the rigour of the intensely cold winter, the Tibetans merely don more and thicker clothing.

The outer circuit of Lhasa is traversed by what is called the Circular Road. It is an exceedingly sacred road. To walk all round it is a religious proceeding equivalent to visiting every sacred spot within it. All day long one may see strings of pilgrims wending their pious way, twirling their prayer wheels.

Quite close to Lhasa are the two largest monasteries in Tibet, Depung, with some 7,000 monks, three miles away ; and Sera, with 6,000 monks,

about two and a half miles distant in another direction. These, together with Tashilhumpo, 150 miles to the west, near the Tsangpo river, are the Universities of Tibet. They resemble towns rather than monasteries.

Depung was founded about 1414 C.E., and has four colleges. The summer residence of the Dalai Lama, called the "Paradise Palace," is situated here. Sera was founded about 1417, and is romantically built on the lower slopes of a barren range of hills. It is planted with cypress, holly and other trees. Sera has three colleges. There is considerable rivalry between the two places which sometimes breaks out into active feud, when the "fighting monks" proceed to enjoy themselves until their respective abbots restore order with dire threats of excommunication.

Tashilhumpo, the seat of the Tashi Lama, was founded about 1445. It has four colleges, and the streets of tall houses, the squares and temples, are surrounded by lofty walls with five gates. The palace of the Tashi Lama is a large building of dark-coloured brick with a copper-gilt roof. The cathedral has a roof supported by 100 pillars and will accommodate 2,000 to 3,000 monks. A peculiar feature of Tashilhumpo is a lofty building called the Go-ku-pea—"the Stored Silken Pictures," nine stories high. On certain festival days during the year

there are displayed on the face of this building great silken pictures of the Buddha, and other notabilities of Buddhism, the value of which, could they be transported to Europe, would be immense.

CHAPTER XI

THE MEANING OF LAMAISM

A PLAIN account of the doctrinal peculiarities of Lamaism is no easy task. In view of what has been said, the statement that the essential teachings of the Buddha, as understood and accepted by the "Southern" Buddhists, are also held as the central truths of Lamaism may seem strange.

We are told (by Theosophists, for example) that the Atma doctrine is part of "esoteric" Buddhism; but, in Lamaism, this is regarded as the exoteric teaching, whereas Anatma (Anatta = non-Atma) is the esoteric truth communicated only to those who have passed through the Halls of Initiation. But the teaching of the Buddha himself certainly contained no esotericism. In Buddhism proper, meditation takes the place of prayer. The purpose of this is samadhi (concentration) so as to attain the jhanas (the nearest English translation is the quite inadequate word "trances"), through which is gained "the purely mental reflex" in appearance like a glowing star. Thus the devotee develops certain supernormal

faculties and attains knowledge of the super-normal sciences (abhinna) and powers (iddhi) which pertain to the subliminal consciousness. But there is nothing esoteric about it.

The acquirement of such powers, which are entirely natural, and have no connection with "magic" as popularly understood, does not justify attempts at miracle-mongering and the working of wonders. According to the Vinaya rules which bind the Bhikkhu, or member of the original Order (Sangha) founded by the Buddha, anyone who even claims to possess such powers, much more seeks to exhibit them, by that very word or act ceases thereupon to be a member of the Order.

Upon one occasion certain of the disciples asked the Buddha to permit the working of wonders for the purpose of converting people. The Buddha replied to the following effect: "There are three kinds of miracles. The first is the miracle of power, as walking on the water, raising the dead, and so forth; when the believer sees such things, his faith may be deepened, but they will not convince the unbeliever, who may think that those things are done by the aid of trickery. I therefore see danger in such miracles; I regard them as shameful and repulsive. The second is the miracle of prophecy, thought-reading, sooth-saying, fortune-telling, and the like. Here also may be disappointment, for these, too, may be

merely trickery. The third is the miracle of instruction ; when a man is thus induced rightly to employ his intellectual and moral powers, that, indeed, is the true miracle." [1]

From the Buddhist point of view, conversion by miracle, by oratory, through sorrow or emotional exaltation, cannot be permanent. Hence the Blessed One, without denying the possibility of conversion by what seem to be fortuitous accidents (samvega), forbids the making of converts by any other means than instruction, persuasion and argument. The appeal of Buddhism is to the reason rather than to the emotions, though the latter are not ignored. Thus, at no time throughout its long history has Buddhism been guilty of persecuting those of other beliefs, nor has a single drop of blood ever been shed in the course of its propagation. Buddhism, indeed, may claim to be the only religion which has never sought to extend its power by the sword or by force.

There are, of course, no " miracles." A miracle, in the strict sense of the word, means the arbitrary violation of the laws of nature by some superhuman being. No such thing can happen. Buddhism teaches that everything occurs in conformity with law, without exception. Even the " gods " are subject to the laws of nature. From the Buddhist point of view, all the " order "

[1] *Kevadda Sutta.*

that exists in the world arises from the simple fact that, when there are no disturbing causes, things remain the same. The observed grouping of things and sequence of events we speak of as "the order of the world," and this is the same as saying that the world is as it is and no more. Every natural law merely describes the conditions on which a particular change is dependent. "A law of nature does not decree that something shall take place; it merely states how something happens." [1]

In the Pali books various methods of meditation are explained, but there are teachers who have special methods of their own which they keep secret and divulge only to certain of their chosen disciples. This is all the "esotericism" there is in Buddhism. A good deal of nonsense, however, is found in some books, mostly written by Theosophists, in this connection.

Ignorant people, explained a learned lama, must have something tangible or objective, something they can visualise, to worship; hence the images, gods, demigods, saints, demons, etc. Only those who are sufficiently advanced are capable of understanding that these have no real existence. "But what is 'real' existence?" he asked. "Truly, there is none in that which is transitory. Hence the suffering, misery, uneasiness, unsatisfactoriness, of all phenomenal

[1] Narasu, *Essence of Buddhism.*

existence. Neither is there any permanent ego, soul nor self (atma), individual or universal." What he meant was that, in the last analysis, there is no noumenon to be found behind the phenomenon, which is precisely the teaching of the Buddha, and forms one of the three pillars of his philosophy, namely, "Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta."

We may, if we please, regard all the curious exoteric garnishings of Lamaism as the trappings in which it is bedecked. Thus it is clearly stated that there has never been any idea that the Dhyani Buddhas, Bodhisattvas of the type of Avalokitesvara (Chenresi), the Yidams and Dakinis of Tibetan Tantrism, represent any real *personages* whatsoever. Each and all simply personify the different aspects of the One Knowledge and also of the One Nescience. Through all this display of seemingly fantastic beings and still more fantastic stories—all through this extraordinary symbolism—it is the interplay of knowledge and of ignorance, the five khandhas (Sanskrit: skandhas) and Nirvana, which must be understood.

Thus the whole difficulty is cleared up, and the complicated Lamaist system presents no mystery. But it remains the fact that the masses of the people and the less literate of the lamas and the monks see no farther than the "puppet show," which, to the Navayanist, appears to be an unnecessary obscuration of the truth, leading,

as we have seen, to the fostering of superstition in its most pernicious forms.

As regards the doctrine of Pratitya Samutpada (Pali, Paticcasamuppado), or Dependent Origination, this is taught in Lamaism as one of its "esoteric" doctrines, precisely as it is openly stated in the Theravada. Thus it is said "*Pratitya samutpadam panshyanti te dharmam panshyanti: yo dharmam panshyati sa buddham panshyati.*"—"Whoso has understood the chain of causation has understood the inner meaning of the Dharma, and he that has grasped the Dharma has perceived the essence of Buddhahood."

The Doctrine of Dependent Origination is, in brief, that nothing can come into existence, nothing can happen, without a corresponding and adequate *natural* cause. The Buddha taught that "A fruit does not originate of itself, nor was it made (created) by another; it originates by virtue of a cause; it ceases on the cessation of a cause."[1] But there can be no "first cause." There is no absolute beginning. There is no change, instituting a series of changes, which has not been preceded by some other change. The Buddha taught nothing of the beginning or end of the universe, because this knowledge transcends the power of the human intellect; being beyond thought, it is beyond words, and thus it is meaningless to talk of a "first cause."

[1] *Samyutta Nikaya.*

The Samsara (literally, " wandering ") is defined as " the unbroken chain of the Five Aspects of Existence, or Khandhas, which, constantly changing from moment to moment, follow continuously one upon the other through inconceivable periods of time." It is the illimitable and eternal Ocean of Being in this and other spheres which moves in a never-ending series of circles, or cycles.

Hindu philosophy endeavours to determine this, and Lamaism accepts the solution in respect of the existing universe, as follows :

In the Beginning there is only an infinite Non-Existence, or rather, Non-Manifestation, a Vast Darkness, a Vast Silence. There is " Be-ness," the potentiality, but no objective Being. There is a " noumenal " quiescence, but no phenomenal activity. There is only That which can have no Name because It has no Form. It is referred to in Hinduism by the mystic syllable " Om."

We read in the Rig Veda : " That One alone, unbreathing, lived ; with It the shadowy veil substituted (not Being nor Non-Being) ; other than It nothing was. Before the birth of all things, this world lay sleeping in the womb of Prime Cause, like gloom in darkness hidden." " From this arise life, mind, and all the senses, ether, air, fire, water, earth the support of all. . . . And there lay floating an inchoate mass—the

seed of life and matter—remnant of bygone creations, of hopes deferred and ends unrealised."

In the Beginning, there is only the undifferentiated One. In It there is a stirring—*the awakening of desire.* Whence comes the stimulus of this uneasiness, whence the promptings of this desire ? The Rig Veda has told us—the hopes deferred and ends unrealised of bygone creations. Thus, even here, the First Cause evades us !

There is predicated the Brahman (the Adi-Buddha of Mahayana Buddhism), the impersonal, unknowable "Spirit of the Universe." It is eternal, immaterial, causeless. It pervades and interpenetrates all planes of existence from the highest god to the atom. It is no Being, but should rather be regarded as an abstract potentiality. There emanates from this the Atman, or Atta, the "spiritual" part of gods and men : also called Ishvara, the spiritual soul, that which "remains unmoved, the witness and the spectator" ; in a word, God, as the Power which, acting upon the "inchoate mass," evolves the Cosmos.

There are manifested the various "planes" of being, and of material existence. There come into activity vast hierarchies of spiritual beings, at the head of whom is represented Brahma the Creator (not to be confused with Brahman), conceived as a personal god, the fashioner and

controller of all phenomenal activities on all planes of existence.

On earth, or rather, in touch with earth conditions, are devas, or angels, whose concern is to aid in the advancement of humanity, the control of various natural forces and processes, and so on, down to the minor nature spirits. Most of these beings are conceived as capable of propitiation for good, and are to be reached by prayer and devotion. But there are other spiritual or, rather, "astral" beings with characteristics wholly evil, conceived as hostile to the better spirits, working against them and to the detriment of humanity.

It is from among these beings that man has derived (or imagined) the deities, good, bad and indifferent, of his various religions, and they form the gods, demons, etc., of Lamaism.

The Manifestation, or Emanation, continues from the spiritual spheres, throughout all the realms of the "astral" and the material universe, and of being, through the animal kingdom, and below, until its ultimate point is reached in the world of matter.

After this comes the Great Dissolution of the Universe. There exists again the Absolute alone, That which can only be referred to by the mystic syllable "Om." This is of Hindu origin, and was the sacred word with which all the hymns of the Vedas, and afterwards all works which

treated of theology, were begun. It is composed of three letters, *a*, *u* and *m*, the *a* and the *u* combining to form the diphthong *o*. The Hindus look upon it as a vocal representation of the Supreme Being in his character of Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the Universe. Thus, the *a* is said to represent Vishnu, the Preserver; the *u* Siva, the Destroyer; and the *m*, Brahma, the Creator. Another explanation is that it is composed of the initials of the three personifications of the triad of elements, which is a more ancient trinity than that of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. The *a* would then represent Agni, or fire; the *u* Varuna, water; and the *m* Marut, wind, air. The reverence attached to this monosyllable may be inferred from the fact that some transcribers of manuscripts have been afraid to write the awful word itself, and have substituted some other!

The period of the Great Cycle (Mahamanvantara) is estimated at 311,040,000,000,000 earth years.

After a further immense period of rest, consisting of a like fifteen figures, arises another Manifestation, and the whole process is repeated. Thus the solution of the First Cause is not found in the Absolute "Om," for this contains within itself the *effect* of its previous Manifestation, which is again the *cause* of a further Manifestation. From the Buddhist point of view, truly, this

Absolute is No-Thing; it is the shadow of a Vast Illusion. Even if we accept the idea of the Mahamanvantara (and Buddhism does not reject it), each such cycle is but the successor of those which went before; and this present cycle of which we are aware will be followed by yet others. They are, to the Buddhist, simply the cycles of the Samsara.

The Samsara is symbolised pictorially by the Wheel of Life which, in Lamaism, is a much more elaborate affair than that of Theravada Buddhism. The Tibetan Wheel is represented as in the grip of a monster, Mara—the Personification of Craving Desire. At the hub in the centre are depicted a cock, a hog and a snake, Mara's "three daughters"—lust, stupidity and anger. The wheel is divided into six compartments illustrating (facing the picture), above, the heaven worlds—heavenly luxury, bliss and suffering, this last a consequence following upon the fact that even heaven is transient and subject to the law of karma; left, the human world in its various phases; right, the world of the "titans," powerful infra-divine beings, supposed to be either in conflict with, or planning war upon, the heaven worlds. Below, centre, the hells; left, the astral world of "tantalised ghosts"; right, the animal world. The outer circle, or tyre, represents the "causal nexus," and is divided into twelve segments which, reading clockwise, contain figures

symbolical of Unconscious Will, Conformations, Consciousness, Self - Consciousness, Perception, Contact, Feeling, Desire, Indulgence, Individual Existence, Birth, Decay and Death.

The Theravada Wheel is simpler. It symbolises the operations of the law of karma, and is in four divisions, showing (1) the twelve links of the chain of cause and effect, with the three " connections " which unite (*a*) the past with the present, (*b*) the " two groups " of the present, and (*c*) the present with the future ; (2) the twenty " conditions " ; (3) the " four groups," one past causal, one present resultant, one present causal, and one future resultant, explaining the active or passive nature of the corresponding links ; (4) the three periods of the past, present and future, indicating the " time sequence."

All of this, namely, the operation of the law of karma within the Samsara, is taught by Lamaism. It is exactly what does happen in the unfolding, or evolution, of a universe. But the words " beginning " and " end " are relative terms. In Buddhist phrase, " the wheel rolls on." The only way out of this succession of " vicious circles " was pointed out by the Buddha. It is the Noble Eightfold Path of High Moral Endeavour which leads to Nirvana, and beyond, to that stage of highest spiritual perfection which is called Parinirvana. Concerning this no words serve :

"When they curiously question thee, seeking to know what
It is,
Do not affirm anything, and do not deny anything.
For whatever is affirmed is not true,
And whatever is denied is not true.
How shall anyone truly say what is and what is not
While he has not himself fully won to What Is ?—
And, after he has won, what word is to be sent from a Region
Where the chariot of speech finds no track on which to go ?
Therefore to their questionings offer them silence only,
Silence—and a finger pointing the Way."

As regards the constitution of man, Lamaism follows Hinduism again, namely, that it is sevenfold: (1) Atma, the spiritual, (2) Buddhi, the "vehicle" of Atma, (3) Manas, mind, intelligence, (4) Kama, the animal passions, (5) Linga Sharira, the astral body, (6) Prana, the life principle, (7) Sthula Sharira,[1] the physical body. These are symbolised by the seven water bowls and small lamp present in all Lamaist temples, and also on the family altar of every household, arranged before the shrine thus: O O O O X O O O. The O's represent the bowls and the X the lamp. The three bowls on the right represent the higher triad—Atma, Buddhi, Manas; the four bowls on the left stand for the lower quaternary—Kama, Linga Sharira, Prana, Sthula Sharira; the lamp indicates the "link" between the triad and the quaternary. When meditation or prayer is in progress the lamp is lighted, and the symbol is

[1] The Hindu-Sanskrit terms are used here.

then said to be "active." The water should be renewed at least once a day.

This septenary classification will be familiar to those acquainted with the cult known as modern Theosophy, which is no more than Hinduism with a "stiffening" of Mahayana Buddhism. The claim that it is "the ancient wisdom religion" at the root of all other religions has no foundation in fact. It certainly formed no part of the Buddha's teaching.

Where Buddhism parts company most decisively with Hinduism is in the conception of the Atma as a permanent, unchanging "something" forming an eternal ego, self or soul, which at death separates from the body, and is capable of maintaining a conscious existence apart from it. This argues a dualism, whereas the teaching of the Buddha was essentially monistic. "Anatta" is the most difficult teaching in Buddhism to those whose minds are obsessed by dualism, and it is not clearly understood even by many Buddhists.

It has already been said that the Buddha rejected the Atma theory so far as this indicates an eternal, unchangeable soul which passes over from life to life. If there is no such soul, what is it, then, that reincarnates? Nothing reincarnates, and this is why the word "rebirth" is used in Buddhism instead of "reincarnation."

From the Buddhist point of view, man is a

compound being. In the first analysis, he consists of what are called the Five Aggregates of Existence (Pali: khandhas). These are (1) the body, the "vehicle," (2) sensation, feeling, (3) perception, (4) consciousness, (5) the mental faculties, or psychic attributes (sankhara). For the purposes of our present inquiry it is not necessary to go into the subdivisions of the five aggregates. It may, however, be said in passing that the Buddhist psychology covers the whole range of the phenomena of the conscious and the subconscious mind, and the constitution of the body in relation to these, with the most minute exactness.

In the Buddha-thought, the whole being is considered as an essential unity, albeit that it is a compound or complex. It is capable of being taken to pieces for the purposes of analysis and study, but when the parts are dissociated it is no longer a being. As a whole it is called Namarupa. Namarupa is generally translated "name and form," which is meaningless. Rupa means the body, the vehicle: Nama is the psychic side of man's nature. The word Namarupa exactly indicates the essential monism of the Buddhist philosophy; that is to say, the physical and the psychical are not to be considered as separate and distinct, but only as two sides of one and the same thing.

Without a body, a vehicle, to contact the

environment, there can be no sensation, perception, consciousness, nor mentality. Take away any one of these aggregates, and there can be no *being* of any kind whatsoever. Namarupa is simply a name given to an assembly of parts, and when the parts are dissociated there is no Namarupa. Illustration is made of a chariot, which is but a name we give to a vehicle composed of a body, shafts, wheels, etc. Dissociate the parts, and there is no chariot. Or a box, which is an object composed of four sides, a top and a bottom. Take away the sides, the top and the bottom, and there is no box. It is exactly the same with Namarupa.

To say that there can be a being, such as is conceived in the Hindu, or the conventional Western, idea of a "soul," which consists of mental faculties and consciousness, but without the organs of perception and sensation, is about as sensible as to say that one can have a box without four sides, only the top and the bottom, or a chariot without a body, only the wheels and the shafts. None of these things has any existence at all in the absolute sense; only by the association or assembly of their parts do they appear as phenomena.

"In the *absolute sense* there are only numberless processes, countless waves in this ever-surging sea of forms, feelings, perceptions, tendencies and states of consciousness, and none

among all these constantly changing phenomena constitute any permanent entity called 'I' or 'self' (Atma), nor does there exist any Ego-identity apart from them."

Beyond or behind the phenomena, what?—Nothing! From the Buddhist point of view, the idea of a noumenon, as a thing in itself (Atta, or Atma), behind the phenomenon is an illusion. It is *the* great illusion which causes the intellectual derailment of every school of thought into which it enters. We speak of the "sky," and we say that the sky is clear, that it is blue, or that it is dull or overcast, or we speak of the glories of a sunset sky. But we know that there is no such *thing* as a sky present at all. It is simply a name which we give to an appearance. It is exactly the same with Namarupa.

The physical body we know to be made up of elements which are in a state of flux, of inflow and outflow, so that the body of a child is not in any particle the same as that of a youth, nor this of the man of middle age. It is the same with the far more rapid changes of sensation, perception, consciousness and mentality, which last, if anything, might be called the "soul." This has been likened to a flame, a shifting iridescence. It grows or wanes by what it feeds on, passions and desires, arising from, or passing through, the khandhas. Through it shoot all colours of desire, of hopes and fears, ambitions,

love and hate, anger and pride and lust. Never for one fraction of a second is it still or at rest. This is the "I," the "Self," what men call "the Soul." Immortal? It is so mortal that one moment of time spans its life. "Strictly speaking, the duration of the life of a living being is exceedingly brief, lasting only while a thought lasts. Just as a chariot-wheel in rolling rolls only on one point of the tyre, and in resting rests only on one point, in exactly the same way the life of a living being lasts only for the period of a single thought. As soon as that thought has ceased, the being is said to have ceased." [1]

The physical body is less mortal than the "soul." And yet this flame flits on from life to life, arising ever and anon as "I" again, for the energies of which it is composed are eternal. But these energies cannot find expression unless combined with the other khandhas. Hence the recurring phenomenon of rebirth, although there is no permanent ego, I, self, or soul there at all!

Everywhere the Namarupa persists; the same five aggregates. Even the "gods" of the Devaloka, from the Great Brahma downward, are possessed of these aggregates, and are under the same law of transition, arising, passing away and re-arising. There is no support for the

[1] *Visuddhi Magga.*

theory of an unsubstantial, bodiless entity not subject to the law of change. There are no grounds for assuming the existence of a permanent thing-in-itself (atta, or atma). This "I," or Self, or Soul, is not, on close investigation and analysis, found to be so permanent and unchanging. So there is no reason for assuming that the "I" which arose in this life as the result of past causes (karma) is the same "I" that then was; or that this "I" which will arise in another form elsewhere as the result of present causes, will be the same "I" as now.

In the words of the Buddha: "Surely, Brothers, it would be more correct to say that the body (rupa) formed out of the four elements is a self, instead of these subjective aspects (nama), for it is evident that this body . . . may last for a year, for two years . . . or even a hundred years and more; but that which is called thought, or mind, or consciousness, is found day and night in a state of incessant change, passing away as one thing and returning as another thing." [1] Again: "Strictly speaking, the existence of a being (namarupa) is extremely brief and lasts only during the interval of a single thought. So soon as the thought ends the being also ends, for: the being of the future moment will live in the future, but has not lived in the past, nor does it live now; the being of the

[1] *Samyutta Nikaya.*

present moment lives just now, but has not lived in the past, nor will it live in the future; the being of the past moment has lived in the past, but does not live now, nor does it live hereafter." [1]

Thus the seemingly paradoxical formula in which the Buddha summed up the central fact of rebirth: "*Na ça so; na ça anno*,"—"It is not he, nor is it another,"—like so many other paradoxes in our strange and complex life, is found to be correct in fact and in experience. This is the Anatta Doctrine, which is the central pillar of the whole Buddhist system of religion and philosophy.

If we admit, as perforce we must, that the "I" at this moment of time is the successor of, but by no means the same as, that which existed two, five, or ten years ago, then there is good reason for assuming that the "I" which arose to consciousness at birth is the successor of "I's" preceding it. It is true that there are certain characteristics about the nama (psychical) "I" which can be recognised as the same as those of ten or twenty years ago. But this is also true of the rupa (physical) "I" which then existed, and which we know is not now the same in any particle. It may be said that this new physical vehicle is not the successor of that which went before in another life. How do we know that?

[1] *Visuddhi Magga.*

The "world stuff" (material) is one, and the "soul[1] stuff" (psychical) is one. The two are one, to be exact, for there is no dualism in the universe. But there is continuity. Is there not good reason to claim that Namarupa is really a continuum? May not the "I" vibration which expressed itself in *this* birth be nothing more than the direct effect of the "I" vibration from a preceding death? Such, at any rate, is the Buddhist teaching. In any case, what we call death does not mean the cessation of anything, but is only a point of change; nor does what we call "birth" mark the actual beginning of anything, but is only a point of continuation.

There is nothing that "passes over" in the sense of the metempsychosis or reincarnation of an *entity*, in the constant change and flux of the "psychic I." This is why, in Buddhism, the word rebirth is used instead of metempsychosis or reincarnation, because there is no "psyche," as such, to reincarnate. That which "carries over" is simply the psychic energy of the sankhara, or tendencies (of the character) which, linked with tanha (craving desire for sensate life, "the will to live") and karma, stimulate into activity a new being capable of giving continued expression to those tendencies. There is no break in the sequence. The phenomenal being

[1] There is no other single English word to express what is meant.

vanishes here, only to appear elsewhere in this world or in another sphere.

Although the septenary classification of the constitution of man is accepted as an "approximate" truth, nevertheless this, the strict an-atma (anatta) doctrine, is held to be the precise, inner truth by the lamas. But it is thought to be so difficult of comprehension that it does not enter into the teaching at all until the student approaches the grade of Ge-shé.

It will be recalled that the Buddha, after his enlightenment, hesitated to proclaim a teaching "intelligible only to the wise." It was this "ultimate truth" of Anatta which presented the difficulty and caused the hesitation.

Karma (Pali: kamma) means, literally, action. The law of karma applies to all phenomena, to all forms of existence and of being. It is the law of cause and effect, of action and reaction, of consequences, of compensation, throughout all animate and inanimate nature. As applied to the human being, karma becomes specifically a moral law, determining the place, time, circumstances, etc., of one's birth, life, death and rebirth. The sequence of thought, word and deed (action), causally related to, the effects of, previous thoughts, words and deeds, shape the character of the individual from moment to moment. The reaction, or consequence, or "counterbalance," may be immediate, or so remote that the cause

may have been forgotten. But it will come, and there is no power, human, divine or infernal, that can divert or prevent it. "Just is the Wheel, swerving not a hair."

The idea of "vicarious sacrifice" involves a hideous injustice such as the Buddhist would hesitate to attribute to any god, however ferocious. No god, saint, intercessor or priest, not even the Buddha himself, can deliver a man from the consequences of his evil deeds. No devil, demon or priest can rob a man of the fruits of his good deeds. The Buddha said: "If a man speaks or acts evil of mind, suffering follows him close as the wheel the hoof of the ox that draws the cart. . . . If a man speaks or acts uprightness of mind, happiness follows him close like his never-departing shadow."[1] Again: "You must labour for yourselves, the Buddhas are only teachers."[2] "Be ye a refuge unto yourselves. Betake yourselves to none other outward refuge. Hold fast to the truth as to a lamp. Hold fast to the truth as to a refuge. Seek not safety in anyone else whatsoever outside yourselves."[3]

It is in this direction that Lamaism has developed its worst corruption. It is taught that the lama-priests have the power "to bind or to loose," that they can, by their prayers and

[1] *Dhammapada.*
[2] Ibid.
[3] *Mahaparinibbana Sutta.*

ceremonies, take away the consequences of good and evil karma, can speed the departing "soul" to the abodes of bliss, or cast it down to the nethermost hells. Such a claim as this is entirely antagonistic to the teaching of the Buddha. It is an arrogant and unfounded pretension to power which no lama-priest, or any other, possesses.

The Buddha himself made no claim to "divine inspiration." The thero (elder) and the bhikkhu (monk), members of the Order (Sangha) founded by the Buddha, have no sacerdotal or priestly authority delegated to them by a "god" or other supernatural being. Their influence, and the degree of respect accorded to them by the laity, depend only upon the moral excellence of their life and character, and their learning. They are to set an example by the first, and so to instruct others by the second that they shall endeavour to emulate that excellence.

To live a blameless life in this world is the ideal of the Buddhist. If he can do this, he need have no fears as to what may happen to him hereafter. In such a case, the powers of good will insure his welfare, and the powers of evil will be impotent to work him harm.

CONCLUSION

THE foregoing sketch of Lamaism does not, of course, claim to be exhaustive. To describe fully the intricacies of its imaginative mythology, to attempt to unravel its hair-splitting, often nonsensical, metaphysics, to explain its elaborate, wearisome and wholly useless ritual, in detail, would involve several large and tedious volumes.

But, from what has been said, it will be understood how wide a gulf separates the religion of Tibet, appropriately called Lamaism, from Buddhism. The teaching of the Buddha is to be found in Lamaism, but so deeply buried amid a tangled jungle-growth of myth and superstition that it is hardly recognisable. There have been, at least, two reformers of Lamaism, Atisha and Tsong Khapa. Though they were an improvement upon that sinister personage, Padma Sambhava, they had themselves wandered so far into the morass of Mahayanist speculation and mysticism that they achieved very little.

What is needed in Tibet to-day is another reformer who shall endeavour to clear the jungle and bring to light the buried truths of Buddhism. But it is to be feared that his life would not be

a lengthy one. He would find himself confronted by the " vested interests " of the Lamaist church and its priests. Such interests are ever more powerful than spiritual truth unless it is proclaimed by some personage of surpassing genius and power such as the Buddha himself.

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