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佛學論文

TOPICS ON BUDDHISM

ATTA OR ANATTA

by Brother Upaya

In Asia the question of soul or no soul has been debated for over twenty-five hundred years. Schools of thought have been split on this delicate subject and in consequence thereof, either the extreme, that there is a personal soul, or, that no soul exists during life or after death. This humble preceptor will try to explain the mean, or the Middle Way of Buddhism.

Let us examine the question of whether the ego-consciousness continues to exist after death and decay of the body. Brahman teachers speak of the senses as follows: "Not the eye sees, but the seer in the eye; not the ear hears, but the hearer in the ear; not the tongue tastes, but the taster in the tongue; not the nose smells, but the smeller in the nose; not the mind thinks, but the thinker in the mind; not the feet walk and the hands act, but the actor in the hands and feet."

Since man has the aforesaid senses or qualities, he is deluded into thinking "I am this person, I possess eyes, ears, nose, tongue, etc." This agent of activity in man, is often called the soul or the atman. When death occurs, we all agree that these senses cease to exist in the deceased. However, and this is the crux of the subject, such senses do not die. It is only the body that identified itself as the ego that dies. These senses, the same in every way, appear in other human bodies.

The body in order to function, depends upon the senses. The component parts of the body are comprised of inanimate elements. The Brahmin may postulate all sense experience as Brahma and he would not be in error. The Buddhist, either of the Theravada or Mahayana school, may call all this sense phenomena, as KARMA and he too, would be correct.

If we look upon our senses as something having the Quality of permanence in the form of a separate ego-consciousness, we would

negate every known scientific fact. If we look upon the senses, as LAW, KARMA, or as the natural laws of the universe, We begin to understand much of the formless and the deathless, a something without a beginning or without any conceivable end. The seeker after wisdom, will at once recognize this as the all-important center of man's being. That such senses exist and function in the body, but cease to act and yet exist when the body decays, few would care to deny.

"Impermanence characterises everything in the universe" is a law that can stand the investigation of any scientist or philosopher. Since it is the eye that sees not, but the sense of sight or law, that does the seeing, we know therefrom that this LAW is a universal law, without any conceivable beginning or end. The Buddha taught that the beginning of life and the laws that govern, cannot be apprehended by the intellect. It may be safely assumed though, that if not one atom of either hydrogen or oxygen remained in the universe, it still would require two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen to make water. The law remains inactive and become active again when the atoms of Hydrogen and oxygen appeared upon the scene. This then, like the law of the senses, is deathless, without a beginning or, without any end. All beings function within this law, and escape from its coils can come only to the all-enlightened ones. If one identifies oneself with the integral whole, our true nature, often expressed as the universal law, such a one attains a peace of mind that comes from understanding. From understanding comes wisdom; from wisdom comes Bliss.

A SERMONETTE

In the name of the omniscient Teacher, in the name of the compassionate One, knower of the past, present and future—Hail!

"How is there joy, how is there laughter, as this world is always burning? Do you not seek a light, ye who are surrounded by darkness?" Dhammapada.

Let us briefly examine light. Not the light that illuminates material things, but rather the Light awareness brings to the sincere seeker for enlightenment. Awareness brings wisdom which in turn illuminates men's hearts.

Reflection brings compassion. But is compassion for your fellow-men alone enough? Or, should compassion be extended to all living creatures? These are closely related questions. If your lamp is filled with the oil of compassion that burns only for human beings, then you are using an improper grade of fuel. But if your lamp is filled with the oil of universal love that is extended to all living creatures, small or large, born or yet to be born, then you are radiating an empyrean effulgence upon the whole world.

By every act of unselfishness, in every word of gentleness, with every thought of kindness, you are trimming the wick of compassion's lamp so that the blessed Light of the Holy Teaching may shine into other hearts. Without unselfishness, without gentleness, Without thoughts of kindness, you cannot have compassion. If you do *Not* have this noble quality, you cannot give it to others. One must first possess before he can give.

The question may arise: How may one recognize another who has the quality of compassion? To find this quality this humble one invites you to look into the eyes of a mother as she ministers to her child who is suffering from an incurable disease. Look into the eyes of the physician as he tries to ward off the approaching chill of death from his patient. Look even deeper into the eyes of your teacher and you will see into the inner recesses of his heart. In all these instances, you will find compassion.

When compassion enters our hearts, love too, will come. If there is one thing that survives death and decay of our being, it is love born from the great mother Compassion. It shines into many hearts, hearts that have been darkened with malice and greed. It radiates its shimmering beams even into the darkest tomb. It is the glow of a new beginning, a new grasp upon a better life that comes after the old. It dispels all doubt about our coming and going. It utterly routs hatred and embraces love. It is the brightest star in the glowing firmament. It has a lasting quality that death will not dispraise. It is the doctrine of universal love as taught by the world-honored one, the Buddha. It is the loving character of gentle women and kindly men. It is the eternal Light that leads us to everlasting Bliss.

Benediction: May the eternal Light of Unlimited Compassion be your guide and lead all beings into the peace of Nirvana.

—Brother D. Upaya

海外華僑佛教徒 先行籌組聯誼會

內政部長在修訂中華大藏經會 歡迎菲華佛教居士茶會上建議

【臺北訊】八月一日下午，內政部長在修訂中華大藏經會歡迎菲華佛教居士茶會上建議，華僑佛教徒應先籌組聯誼會，以加強團結，並向政府建議，將華僑佛教徒納入宗教團體，以資保障。內政部長在茶會上，對華僑佛教徒之熱誠，表示感佩，並謂：政府對於宗教團體之發展，一向予以支持，惟目前華僑佛教徒之組織，尚多零散，若能先行籌組聯誼會，將有助於政府之管理，並可藉以維護華僑佛教徒之合法權益。華僑佛教居士代表，對部長之建議，表示熱烈響應，並謂：華僑佛教徒，素以慈悲為懷，若能組織聯誼會，將可加強彼此之聯繫，並共同為弘揚佛法而努力。

普度拜拜 素改拜拜 前期邀請五蘭經

【臺中訊】臺灣佛教會，為普度拜拜，素改拜拜，特於前期邀請五蘭經，以資弘揚。該會表示，普度拜拜，素改拜拜，乃佛教徒之重要活動，旨在弘揚佛法，普度眾生。此次邀請五蘭經，將有助於佛教徒之團結，並共同為弘揚佛法而努力。該會並表示，將繼續舉辦各類弘法活動，以服務社會，弘揚佛法。

珠爾瓦代表致贈，該團團長施性統代表接受。

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色香足，真奉佛又真奉公；還期都做善根人。

【高雄訊】此間高雄佛教會，為普度拜拜，素改拜拜，特於前期邀請五蘭經，以資弘揚。該會表示，普度拜拜，素改拜拜，乃佛教徒之重要活動，旨在弘揚佛法，普度眾生。此次邀請五蘭經，將有助於佛教徒之團結，並共同為弘揚佛法而努力。該會並表示，將繼續舉辦各類弘法活動，以服務社會，弘揚佛法。

【臺北訊】此間中國佛教會，為普度拜拜，素改拜拜，特於前期邀請五蘭經，以資弘揚。該會表示，普度拜拜，素改拜拜，乃佛教徒之重要活動，旨在弘揚佛法，普度眾生。此次邀請五蘭經，將有助於佛教徒之團結，並共同為弘揚佛法而努力。該會並表示，將繼續舉辦各類弘法活動，以服務社會，弘揚佛法。

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