

Wheel Publication No. 70/71/72

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A Biographical Sketch

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**Buddhist Publication Society
Kandy • Ceylon**

The Wheel Publication No. 70 / 71 / 72

First Edition: 1952, in Mahā Bodhi Society, *Diamond Jubilee Souvenir*.

Second Edition: 1956, Mahā Bodhi Society, Calcutta.

Third Edition: 1964, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy.

Fourth Printing: 1983, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy.

BPS Online Edition © (2008)

Digital Transcription Source: BPS Transcription Project

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In Commemoration of the Birth Centenary (1864–1964) of the Late Venerable Bhikkhu Sri Devamitta Dhammapāla known in the annals of Buddhist History as the Anāgārika Dharmapāla.

May his life be a source of inspiration to All!

Anāgārika Dharmapāla

The prospects of Ceylon Buddhism in the sixties of the 19th century were dark indeed. Successive waves of Portuguese, Dutch and British invasion had swept away much of the traditional culture of the country. Missionaries had descended upon the copper-coloured island like a cloud of locusts. Christian schools of every conceivable denomination had been opened, where Buddhist boys and girls were crammed with bible texts and taught to be ashamed of their religion, their culture, their language, their race and their colour. The attitude of the missionaries is expressed with unabashed directness in one of the verses of a famous hymn by the well-known Anglican Bishop Heber, a hymn which is still sung, though with less conviction than in the days when it first made its appearance, in churches all over England:

What through the spicy breezes
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle,
Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile;

In vain with lavish kindness
The gifts of God are strown,
The heathen in his blindness

Bows down to wood and stone.

Throughout the territories under Dutch occupation Buddhists had been compelled to declare themselves as Christians, and during the period of British rule this law was enforced for seventy years, being abrogated only in 1884, when, on behalf of the Buddhists of Ceylon, Col. Olcott made representations to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in London. Children born of Buddhist parents had to be taken for registration to a church, where some biblical name would be bestowed on them, with the result that most Sinhalese bore either an English Christian name and a Portuguese surname, if they were Catholic 'converts,' or an English Christian name and a Sinhalese surname, if they were Anglicans. The majority of them were ashamed or afraid to declare themselves Buddhists, and only in the villages of the interior did the Dhamma of the Blessed One retain some vestige of its former power and popularity, though even here it was not free from the attacks of the thousands of catechists who, for twenty rupees a month, were prepared to go about slandering and insulting the religion of their fathers.

Members of the Sangha, with a few noble exceptions, were intellectually and spiritually moribund; monastic discipline was lax, the practice of meditation had been neglected and then forgotten; and even to those who truly loved the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, it must sometimes have seemed that, after reigning for more than twenty

glorious centuries over the hearts and minds of the Sinhala race, they were doomed to be “cast as rubbish to the void,” and swept into the blue waters of the Arabian Sea by the triumphant legions of militant Christianity. But this was not to be. Low though the fortunes of the Dhamma had sunk, the great beam of the national karma was beginning to right itself, and gigantic forces were being set in motion which in the future would lift them to a position even higher than their present one was low.

Beginnings of a Great Sinhalese Patriot

Among the few well-to-do families which through all vicissitudes stood firmly and fearlessly on the side of their ancestral faith was the Hewavitarne family of Matara in South Ceylon. Hewavitarne Dingiri Appuhamy, the first member of this family with whom we are concerned, belonged to the large and respected ‘*goigama*’ or cultivator class. He had two sons, both of whom exhibited the same devotion to the Dhamma as their father. One of them became a Bhikkhu known as Hittatiye Atthadassi Thera and occupied the incumbency of Hittatiya Raja Mahāvihāra. His teacher, Mirisse Revata Thera, was fourth in pupillary

succession from the Sangharaja Saraṇāṅkara, the greatest name in eighteenth century Ceylon Buddhism. The other son, Don Carolis Hewavitarne, migrated to Colombo, established there a furniture-manufacturing business in the Pettah area, and married the daughter of a Colombo businessman, Andris Perera Dharmagunawardene, who had donated a piece of land at Maligakanda, erected on it the first Pirivena or Buddhist monastic college in Ceylon, and brought a monk from the remote village of Hikkaduwa to be its principal.

Since then the names of the Vidyodaya Pirivena and Hikkaduwa Siri Sumaṅgala Mahā Nāyaka Thera have passed, inseparably united, into the history of world Buddhism. Through the halls of this great institution of Buddhist learning, unrivalled throughout the length and breadth of Ceylon, have passed monks from Burma, Siam, India, Japan and China, and the memory of the great Buddhist scholar, mathematician and expert in comparative religion who for so many decades guided its destinies, is revered wherever the Dhamma taught in the Pali Scriptures is known. Both Don Carolis and his young wife Mallikā ardently desired a son, and when they knew that a child would be born to them their joy was great indeed. But although they both desired a son, the reasons for which they desired him were by no means the same: Mudaliyar Hewavitarne thought of a successor in the family business, while his wife dreamed of a bhikkhu who would guide the erring footsteps of the Sinhala people back to the Noble

Eightfold Path from which they had so long been led astray.

Every morning before sunrise the young bride, who was not yet out of her teens, would gather a trayful of sweet-smelling five-petalled temple flowers and offer them, together with coconut-oil lamps and incense, at the feet of the Buddha-image in the family shrine, praying to the *devas* that she might bear a son who would rekindle the lamp of the Dhamma in a darkened land. Every evening, too, she would lie prostrate in supplication before the silent image, which was a wooden replica of one of the great stone Buddhas of Anurādhapura, the ancient city whose very name awakes in every Sinhala heart an unutterably deep nostalgia for the temporal and spiritual glories of long ago.

Who knows what subtle spiritual emanations from the liberated minds of old passed through that image and penetrated the receptive mind of the Sinhala maiden, steeping the lotus of her aspiration in the dews of kindness and peace, and purifying her heart and mind until they were a fit receptacle for the Great Being who was to accomplish what even in her wildest dreams she had scarcely dared to hope for. As her time drew near, Bhikkhus were invited to the house, and on the full moon nights of three successive months the air was filled with the vibrations of the sacred Pali texts, as from dusk to dawn they chanted from the holy books. Then, on the night of September 17th, in the Pettah district of Colombo, where the national religion and culture had fallen to the lowest pitch of degeneration, there came, as though to strike the evil at

its very heart, the birth of Dharmapāla like a vivid flash of lightning from a black and stormy sky.

Young David Hewavitarne, as he was named, grew up in an atmosphere of traditional Sinhala piety. Every day, morning and evening, he would kneel in the shrine with his father and mother, take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, promise to observe the Five Precepts and chant the verses of worship with which millions of people have for five and twenty centuries expressed their gratitude to, and adoration of, Him who showed humanity for the first time the Way to Nirvāna. Nor was the practical application of the Dhamma forgotten, for sweetly and reasonably his mother would point out to him any infringement of the precepts, and gently chide him into the careful observance of them all.

It is a commonplace of educational psychology that the influences to which a child is subjected to during its earliest years more or less determine the whole course of its subsequent development, and the biography of Dharmapāla provides us with no exception to this rule. His deep and spontaneous devotion to the Buddha, his instinctive observance of the plain and simple rules of the Dhamma through the complexities and temptations of modern life, his ardent love of all that was pure and good, as well as his unsparing condemnation of whatever was unclean and evil, were undoubtedly the efflorescence of seeds which had been planted in the fertile soil of his young heart by his mother's loving advice and his father's austere example.

The spectacle of a life such as his, so fruitful in good for the whole of humanity, should be sufficient to convince any one who might doubt the advisability of bringing up Buddhist children in a traditional atmosphere, and imparting to them from their earliest years both instruction and training in the sublime Dharma. Without that early religious training young David Hewavitarne might have grown up to wear top hat and trousers, speaking English to his family and Sinhalese to the servants, like thousands of his contemporaries, and Dharmapāla, the Lion of Lanka, might never have been born, and the great difference which such a calamity would have made to India, Buddhism, and the world is now impossible for us to gauge.

It should never be forgotten that piety of the old Sinhala type was the plinth and foundation of Dharmapāla's whole character. Though well versed in his religion, he was not a scholar. Though he wrote inexhaustibly, it is not as a writer that he will be remembered. For more than forty years he worked and organised and agitated unceasingly, but not even here is the secret of his character to be discovered. Fundamentally, he was a Sinhala passionately devoted to his religion as only a Sinhala, after centuries of civil oppression and religious persecution, could have been at that time. With him religion was not an intellectual conviction but an instinct. He lived and moved and had his being in Southern Buddhism, and after centuries of stagnation, it lived and moved and had its being again in him. Herein lies the secret of his appeal to the Sinhala

people. He was not a detached scholar looking down at their simple but profound piety from the outside, as it were, but flesh of their flesh, spirit of their spirit, feeling as they felt and believing as they believed. In him all that was good in the national character was raised to a higher degree than they had dreamed was possible in modern times, and seeing him they saw and recognised themselves not only as they had been of old but as they yet might be again.

The child of Mallikā Hewavitarne's dreams was now five years old, and the time had come when the already ardently devout current of his temperament was to be impinged upon by influences which would give to it a definite direction, and obstacles which would serve only to increase its natural impetuosity and inherent momentum. His first contact with the world which lay outside the charmed circle of family life, where the influence of the Dhamma permeated everything like a sweet and subtle perfume, came when he was sent to a school where the majority of pupils were Burghers, that is to say, of mixed Dutch and Sinhala descent.

It is necessary to observe at this crucial point where, for the first time, the innate genius of David Hewavitarne came in contact with forces intrinsically hostile to all that he loved and believed in, that throughout the whole of his long life his character remained wonderfully integrated and harmonious. Whether confronted with a problem of personal conduct or business ethics, whether faced by the customs of his own beloved island or the bewilderingly

unfamiliar civilisations of the West and the Far East, he stood firm and unshaken, seeing and judging all things in the clear light of the Dhamma, and doing straightforwardly and without fear or hesitation that which he knew was good and right. The suggestion that he might win a lawsuit by judicious bribery was scornfully rejected, with the characteristic comment that though the winning of the Buddha Gaya case was dearer to his heart than anything in the world he would rather lose it than resort to such detestable methods. When he saw the Niagara Falls, with their millions of tons of water thundering down every minute, he merely remarked that it was the most impressive illustration of the transitoriness of human personality that he had ever seen.

So long and deeply had he meditated upon the truths of the Dhamma that they had become part of his character, so that to think, speak and act in accordance with them was natural to him. But in spite of its inherent nobility, perhaps even because of it, such a character must sooner or later come into conflict with the cowardly conventions and mean hypocrisies of the world, so that it is perhaps inevitable that the life of a man like Dharmapāla should be one unceasing battle against injustice, untruth and unrighteousness in every conceivable form. Naturally, the conflict did not begin until several years after the period with which we are now concerned, but it is interesting to note that even at this time questions rose to his lips which his mother could not always answer, and which his father thought better repressed by

the exercise of paternal authority.

Although he never experienced any diminution of his affection for the religious traditions of his family, he could not help becoming aware that those traditions were by no means universally accepted, nor refrain from trying to find some explanation for this difference. Gradually his childish mind came to understand that the world was divided into Buddhists like his mother and father who loved the Dhamma, and Christians like his school teachers who hated it and were seeking to destroy it; but already he knew on which side of the gulf which lay between the two parties he stood, and for whom it was his duty to do battle. But in these early years he gave no indication of the attitude he was insensibly adopting, and even when, at the age of six, he joined the Pettah Catholic School (later St. Mary's School), and was one day asked to kneel down and kiss the ring of the visiting Bishop Hilarion Sillani, he obediently did so, probably without fully understanding the significance of the act.

The next school which David Hewavitarne attended was a Sinhalese private school, where he remained for two years, leaving at the age of ten. "The first lesson was taught", writes Bhikkhu Devamitta Dhammapāla (*Reminiscences of my Early Life, Mahā Bodhi Journal* Vol. 41, Nos. 5 & 6, p. 152), "according to the old Sinhalese custom of offering betel to his teacher and making obeisance to him." He also writes of the teacher that he was a strict disciplinarian who impressed upon his pupil's tender mind the necessity of keeping

everything clean and using plenty of water to keep the body physically pure. The lesson appears to have been well learned, for till the end of his life Dharmapāla was almost fanatically particular about the cleanliness and tidiness of the objects of his personal use and of his surroundings.

In the Sinhalese school he had to go through all the Sinhala books which were taught in the temples of Ceylon, with the result that he obtained a thorough grounding in the language and literature of his native land. On leaving the Sinhalese private school he was admitted to the lowest form of St. Benedict's Institute, where among his teachers were Brothers August, Daniel, Joshua and Cassion, several of whom he knew personally during the two years which he spent at the school. Every half hour the class had to repeat a short prayer in praise of the Virgin Mary, and on Thursdays the boy had to attend a special class conducted by a Brother as he was a Buddhist. On feast days he used to decorate the college chapel with sweet-smelling blossoms culled from the flowering trees of his father's garden, the family by this time having moved from Pettah to a new house in Kotahena, then a place of green paddy fields and graceful palms.

It was only to be expected that one day a reverend father should ask the lad why he should not become a Catholic, and in later years Dharmapāla himself commented that it was strange that, at a time when the power of Catholicism was so strong in Colombo, he did not become one. Moreover he made the illuminating remark that the

influence of his parents and grandparents was largely responsible for keeping him within the Buddhist fold. This contains a reference not only to his participation in the ritual of daily worship, his regular visits to the Kotahena Temple in the company of his mother, or the Jātaka stories which he read aloud in the cool of the evening, for there was another religious experience which engraved upon his mind an impression perhaps deeper than that left by any of these.

In his ninth year he was initiated into the Brahmacharya vow by his father at the temple, and advised to be contented with whatever he got to eat, and to sleep but little. The impression left by this experience was permanent, and in later years the Anāgārika or 'homeless one', as he then called himself, was accustomed to satisfy his hunger with whatever food he received, and to sleep only two or three hours at night. It behoves us to remember, in this connection, that in spite of his devastatingly energetic career of practical activities and achievements, Dharmapāla's temperament had a pronouncedly ascetic side which was no less characteristic of the man as a whole. He loved solitude, meditation and study, and if these do not occupy a more prominent position in his biography the fact is due not to his own lack of inclination for them, but to the circumstances of the times in which he lived, when the task of rousing the Buddhist world from its centuries-long slumber was the one which made the most imperative demand upon the resources of his genius. In May 1876 he was asked by the school authorities to leave St. Benedict's,

and although we are not informed of the circumstances which led to this request, it is not difficult, in view of the subsequent events of his career, to make a fairly accurate guess at what they were.

Even as a cub the Lion of Lanka had sharp claws. The next two years of young Hewavitarne's life were passed in the aggressively-missionary atmosphere of the Christian Boarding School, an Anglican (C. M. S.) institution situated at Kotte, a place six or seven miles from Colombo. Here he was daily forced to attend service at 6-30 a.m. in the Church, where the Rev. R. T. Dowbiggin would recite the prayers and read a text from the Bible. Religious instruction by no means ended here, however. In class he had to recite some verses from Genesis or Matthew, and lurid light is shed on the intensive missionary methods of the day by the fact that he had hardly entered his teens when he knew *by heart* Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, all four gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles.

The boarding master of the school was fond of liquor, and used to take delight in shooting the small birds which alighted on the trees. These revolting practices were against the teaching of mindfulness and compassion which he had learned in his own home and the boy, already beginning to think independently, could not reconcile himself with such barbarous behaviour. An incident which occurred at this period must have made his sensitive mind more keenly aware than ever of the gulf which lay between Christian missionary fanaticism on the one hand and Buddhist

wisdom and tolerance on the other, and surely added fresh fuel to the already smouldering fires of revolt. One Sunday he was quietly reading a pamphlet on the Four Noble Truths when the same master came up to him and, true to missionary tradition, demanded the offending work from him and had it flung out of the room.

Another incident which happened at this time gives us a valuable glimpse of a trait strikingly characteristic of Dharmapāla during his whole life. A class-mate died, and the teacher invited the students to gather round the dead body and join in the prayers which were to be offered. As David Hewavitarne looked first at the uneasy faces about him, and then at the corpse which lay so still on the bed, there came to him in a blinding flash of illumination the thought that prayer is born of fear, and at once his whole being revolted against the idea of being afraid of anything. In this dramatic manner he achieved that complete freedom from fear which was ever one of his most striking qualities, and entered into possession of that dauntless courage which is one of the surest signs of spiritual mastery.

Curiously enough, by continual reading of the Bible young Hewavitarne had acquired a fondness for the sonorous cadences of the *Authorised Version*, and even neglected his class studies in order to indulge his passion for the rhythmic beauty of its Jacobean diction. He did not read uncritically, however, and even at that early age his nimble wits were able to formulate questions which perplexed and irritated his teachers. The climax of his criticisms was reached when

he drew a picture of a monkey and wrote underneath it 'Jesus Christ,' for which piece of juvenile impudence he was threatened with expulsion from the school. Of course, according to Buddhist teaching it was wrong of him to have offended Christian sentiment in this way; but we must remember that it was hardly possible for a boy of his age, intellectually undeveloped as he was, to express his opinions in any other manner.

Even in his later writings we find page after page of vigorous anti-Christian invective which appears strangely un-Buddhistic, until we remember how utterly unscrupulous, cunning and implacable the forces of missionary fanaticism then were, and how terrible was the ignorant hatred with which they assailed and sought to destroy the Dharma. When the young biblical critic eventually did leave the school it was not because the authorities found his presence embarrassing, but because the food he had to eat was, as he informs us himself, "horrible," so that his father had to remove him when he saw how lean the youth had become.

Then followed two months rest at home, after which, in September 1878, he attended St. Thomass Collegiate School, an Anglican institution in North Colombo. It was not long before his uncompromising championship of his ancestral Dhamma brought him into conflict with the rigid discipline of the school. Warden Miller, the head of the institution, was a pedagogue of the old type, firmly believing and unflinchingly practising the maxim "Spare the rod and spoil

the child." The students of St. Thomass were certainly neither spared nor spoiled, and so great was the awe in which the stern disciplinarian was held that the sound of his step in the corridor was enough to send a shiver of terrified anticipation through a hundred youthful hearts. Great must have been the astonishment of this dreadful figure when, one fine May morning, a slim young Sinhala appeared before him in his study, and after explaining that the day was sacred to the Birth, Enlightenment and Death of the Buddha, whom he revered as the Founder of his religion, boldly asked for permission to spend the day at home in worship and other religious observances. Recovering from his astonishment, Warden Miller explained in his sternest tones that the day was not a school holiday, and that as the head of an Anglican public school he did not feel justified in granting a holiday merely for the observance of a Buddhist festival. Whereupon David Hewavitarne picked up his umbrella and his books, and without another word walked out of school for the day.

Next morning the young rebel received not only a wrathful reprimand for his insubordination but also a few of Warden Miller's best cane-strokes on the seat of his trousers. This painful and humiliating experience did not, however, prevent him from repeating the escapade on the two remaining Wesak Days which occurred during his career at St. Thomass and on both occasions the same punishment was meted out to him as before. His fellow students did not know whether to be amused at his impudence or to admire

his courage, and Christian friends confided to him that they would not willingly have risked one of Warden Miller's thrashings for the doubtful privilege of observing Christmas Day.

But the mantle of destiny had already fallen upon his youthful shoulders, and even in his middle teens he must have been aware of the gulf of difference which lay between his own burning enthusiasm for the Dhamma and the dreamy adolescent indifference of his fellows. Not that this feeling of difference isolated him from his companions, or prevented him from making a number of friends. On the contrary, the circle of his friendship was always wide, and at a time when caste differences were keenly felt, even in Buddhist Lanka, it included boys of every class and community.

He loved to relate how the Buddha had admitted even a scavenger, that most despised member of orthodox Hindu society, into the noble brotherhood of the Sangha, and how in accordance with His Teaching even brahmin Buddhist converts had to bow their heads in worship at his feet. His friendships were not, however, of that sentimental kind so common in public schools. He made friends chiefly in order to have the pleasure of arguing with them, and he argued in order to taste the still sweeter pleasure of polemical victory. For the spirit of controversy was already rampant in him, and it is said that at this period he was unhappy if he could not disagree for the day. The favourite object of his attack were, of course, the dogmas of orthodox Christianity, and

many were the occasions on which he gleefully confused and bewildered the minds of his opponents.

To a Kandyan Buddhist schoolfellow who, weakly succumbing to the persuasions of the missionaries, had said that he supposed there must be a First Cause, the budding debater posed the question, "Did God make a First Cause?" "God is the First Cause", glibly replied his friend. "Then who made God?" came the next question. The Kandyan, now thoroughly out of his depth, stammered that he supposed God must have made himself. This was the opportunity for which Dharmapāla had been eagerly waiting. "Then God must be a Buddhist," he retorted triumphantly. "Every Buddhist is a result of his past karma. Besides, every man makes himself. Every man is a potential God. But even man, who was his own first cause, did not create the world. Gods and men can create themselves, but they can't create others."

On the following Sunday the Kandyan went to Sunday School armed with a question from Dharmapāla. "If 'Thou shalt not kill' is a commandment, why did the Crusades ever take place, Sir?" The Sinhala padre, whose mind had probably not been troubled by such a question before, replied rather naively that they had been inspired from heaven. When the answer was carried back to Dharmapāla, who no longer attended Sunday School, he was ready with his usual unanswerable objection. "Every war is an inspiration for Christians. Why should God inspire people to break his own commandments?"

The first rumblings of that great thunder of denunciation against sham religion and false philosophy which was to burst in later years from his lips were already beginning to make themselves heard, and it is an ironical fact that the biblical knowledge which he was to use with such deadly effect was fostered and developed by the missionaries themselves, who could never have imagined that they were thereby placing in the hands of their pupil the instruments of their own discomfiture. When the Sinhala padre who taught his religious class, attracted by the boy's intelligence and no doubt mindful of the desirability of inducing such a promising lad to become a convert, promised him a watch if he topped his class in religious knowledge, young Hewavitarne promptly studied hard and carried off the coveted prize. But if it was the Christian missionaries themselves who placed the weapons of debate in the hands of the youthful fighter it was a Buddhist monk who first taught him how to use them.

The Pānadura Controversy

Every day on his way to and from St. Thomas Dharmapāla used to pass the Kotahena Temple, the incumbent of which was Megettuvatte Guṇānanda, the greatest orator and debater of Ceylon in modern times. On Saturday evenings,

during the seventies and early eighties of the 19th century, the place would be thronged with devotees, for on those days the great preacher, his forefinger raised as though to emphasise every word he uttered, his yellow robe flung back dramatically over his brown shoulder as if to leave his arms free for battle, and his black eyes flashing with the fire of denunciation, would launch one of those devastating attacks on Christianity the noise of which would echo, during the following week, from one end of the island to the other. Now it was the doctrine of creation on which he trained the batteries of Buddhist reason, now the belief in a permanent individual soul, until one by one the crumbling bastions of Christian dogmatic theology were reduced to a heap of smoking rubble. These lectures, which were the first visible sign of Buddhist reaction against centuries of Christian domination, aroused wild enthusiasm on the one hand and excited violent indignation on the other.

Determined to silence so formidable an antagonist once and for all, the Christians organised in 1873 a huge public meeting at Pānadura, a place near Colombo, and Guṇānanda was challenged to meet in open debate the most able among their controversialists. Alone but undaunted, he faced the united forces of Christian orthodoxy, and so impressive was his eloquence, so powerful his reasoning, that the Pānadura Controversy, which was intended to bring discredit to the Buddhists, sounded instead the death-knell of Christian influence in Ceylon, so that never again did Catholic or Protestant dogmatism venture to cross

swords with Buddhist wisdom.

Colonel Olcott and Mme. Blavatsky

The repercussions of this historic debate were felt more widely than even Guṇānanda could have thought possible, and great must have been his surprise and delight when, a few years later, he received a letter from an American colonel and a Russian lady of noble birth expressing satisfaction at his victory, and acquainting him with the formation of the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875. With the letter came two bulky volumes entitled *Isis Unveiled*. Guṇānanda immediately entered into regular correspondence with the two foreign sympathisers, and started translating their letters and extracts from *Isis Unveiled* into Sinhalese. These translations circulated all over the island, and before long the names of H. S. Olcott and H. P. Blavatsky were repeated with wonder and delight in every Buddhist home.

David Hewavitarne, who had become not only a frequent visitor to the temple but also a great favourite of its incumbent, was among those whose hearts leapt with joy to hear of this unexpected aid, and in 1879 he had the satisfaction of hearing from his master's lips the news that the Founders of the Theosophical Society had arrived in

Bombay and that they would shortly be coming to Ceylon to help in the revival of Buddhism.

He also saw the first number of *The Theosophist*, a copy of which had been sent to Migettuvatte, and he tells us himself that it was from this time, when he was fourteen years old, that his interest in Theosophy dated. His enthusiasm for the newly-founded movement was still further increased by the lectures which the great preacher had started giving on Col. Olcott, Mme. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society, and when, in May 1880, the two Founders at last arrived in Ceylon from India, his excitement was shared by every Buddhist heart in the island, and the two visitors were received amidst scenes of religious fervour such as had not been witnessed within living memory.

After centuries of Christian persecution and oppression the Buddhists of Ceylon could hardly believe that this dignified American colonel, with his patriarchal grey beard, lofty forehead, aquiline nose, and shrewd blue eyes, and this unwieldy Russian woman, with her be-ringed fingers, puffy cheeks and dreamily hypnotic gaze—who were, to them, members of the ruling white race—had actually come to Ceylon not to attack the Dhamma, as thousands of Christian missionaries had done, but to defend and support it, that they had come neither as enemies nor conquerors, but simply as friends and brothers. However when, on that memorable May 21st, the Buddhist devotees flocked in their thousands from the surrounding villages to Galle, and saw the strange pair on their knees in front of the High Priest

and actually heard them repeat the familiar words of the Three Refuges and Five Precepts, as no other Westerners had ever done before, all their suspicions were allayed, and it seemed as though their wildest dreams had come true. The tide had turned at last and Guṇānanda felt that all his labour had not been in vain.

This is not the place for an analysis of the characters of Col. Olcott and Mme. Blavatsky, nor for an examination of the motives with which they came to Ceylon, and space does not permit us to unravel the tangled skein of Theosophical history even prior to the events with which we are now concerned. To what extent the Founders were followers of the Dhamma as that term is understood in the monasteries of Ceylon, and with what mental reservations they publicly embraced Buddhism at Galle, are matters which, though in themselves interesting and important subjects of inquiry, could make no material difference to the course of the narrative now being unfolded. We are concerned not so much with psychology as with history, and it is not only a fact but also an extremely important fact that the conversion of Mme. Blavatsky and Col. Olcott to Buddhism marked the beginning of a new epoch in the annals of Ceylon Buddhism.

If at the Pānadura Controversy, Christian fanaticism suffered its first serious repulse, by the ceremony at Galle, Buddhism scored its first positive victory, and that this victory was won for Buddhism by the Founders of the Theosophical Society is impossible for any fair-minded

person to deny. At any rate, boundless was the gratitude of the Sinhala Buddhists to the two converts through whose instrumentality the power of the Dhamma had been so abundantly demonstrated, and their triumphal tour from South Ceylon up to Colombo was the occasion for a series of outbreaks of popular enthusiasm. On their arrival at the capital in June, young Hewavitarne, his eyes bright with expectation and his heart thumping wildly at the prospect of seeing the idols whom he had until then been worshipping from afar, walked all the way from St. Thomas to the place where Col. Olcott was to deliver his first lecture.

At the close of the meeting, when everybody had left, his uncle and father remained behind, and with them the fourteen-year old boy. His uncle had already become a great favourite with Mme. Blavatsky, and more than half a century later, only a few months before his death, Dharmapāla wrote that he still remembered the delight he felt when along with them he shook hands with the Founders as they said good-bye. He adds that he was intuitively drawn to Mme. Blavatsky, though he never suspected that she would later carry him off to Adyar in the face of the protests of his whole family, together with those of the High Priest Sumaṅgala and Col. Olcott himself. However, that day was still four years ahead, and in the meantime the youthful enthusiast continued to attend St. Thomas. In spite of his strictness, Warden Miller liked the rebellious Sinhala boy for his truthfulness and one day told him, with rare candour, "We don't come to Ceylon to teach

you English, but we come to Ceylon to convert you.” Hewavitarne replied that he could not believe in the Old Testament although he liked the New.

In March 1863 the Catholic riots took place, when a Buddhist procession, which was passing by St. Lucia’s Church in Kotahena to Migettuvatte Guṇānanda’s temple, was brutally assaulted by a Catholic mob, and Dharmapāla’s indignant father refused to allow him to study any longer in a Christian school, even though he had not yet matriculated. On his departure from the school Warden Miller gave him an excellent certificate. The next few months he spent eagerly devouring books in the Pettah Library, of which he was a member.

The range of his interests was always remarkably wide, and we are told that at this period of adolescent intellectual ferment his favourite subjects of study were ethics, philosophy, psychology, biography and history. Poetry he loved passionately, especially that of Keats and Shelley, whose *Queen Mab* had been his favourite poem ever. since he had chanced to find it in a volume of poetry in his uncle’s library. “I never ceased,” he says, “to love its lyric indignation against the tyrannies and injustices that man heaps on himself and its passion for individual freedom.” Shelley’s poetry, the bulk of which was composed under the blue skies of sunny Italy, has a particularly exhilarating effect when read in the tropics on a starry night, when the palms sway to and fro in the moonlight, and the scent of the temple-flowers drifts intolerably sweet from the trees

outside, particularly when the reader is in his late teens, and perhaps it would not be too fanciful to trace in the noble accomplishments of Dharmapāla's maturity the lingering influence of the poet of *Prometheus Unbound*. At any rate, he felt a strange sense of kinship with one who as a schoolboy had rebelled against the rigid dogmas of orthodox Christianity, and he wondered if Shelley and Keats had been reborn in the deva-world or on earth, and whether it would be possible to trace them in their present reincarnations and convert them to Buddhism.

Such are the dreams of youth, always aspiring after the impossible, ever enamoured of the unknown. Dharmapāla admits, in his *Reminiscences*, that from boyhood he was inclined towards the mystic, ascetic life, and that he was on the lookout for news about Arahants and the science of Abhiñña, or supernormal knowledge, even though, as he relates, the Bhikkhus of Ceylon were sceptical about the possibility of realising Arahantship, believing that the age of Arahants was past and that the realisation of Nirvāna by psychic training was no longer possible. But his thirst for direct spiritual experience, his craving for personal contact with beings of supernormal spiritual development, was by no means quenched by the worldly scepticism of the official custodians of the Dhamma, and it was with a thrill of joy that he read A. P. Sinnett's *The Occult World*.

The Theosophical Society

He decided to join the Himalayan School of Adepts, the necessary qualifications for which had been described in an article entitled "Chelas and Lay Chelas" which he had read in the pages of *The Theosophist* only a month before, and accordingly wrote to the "Unknown Brother" in November 1883 a letter intimating his desire to join the Order, and enclosed it in another letter to Mme. Blavatsky at her Adyar address. Three months later, in January 1884, Col. Olcott returned to Ceylon at the request of the Colombo Theosophists in order to institute legal proceedings against the Catholics for their murderous and unprovoked attack on a peaceful Buddhist procession, and Dharmapāla lost no time in meeting him and expressing his desire to join the Theosophical Society. The Colonel replied that the boy's letter had been received, and that he was prepared to admit him, even though he was under age.

The ceremony of initiation accordingly took place in the temporary headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Maliban Street, two other Sinhala Buddhists being initiated at the same time, and his grandfather, who was then President of the Society, paying the initiation fee of ten rupees. The young aspirant began to feel that his dreams of a higher life were beginning to come true; and as his thirst for occult knowledge increased it was inevitable that he

should be drawn by the powerful magnetic influence of Mme. Blavatsky, who had accompanied Col. Olcott to Ceylon. Holding the boy spell-bound with her hypnotic stare, she would speak to him in deep, guttural tones of the mysterious Brotherhood of Adepts who from their remote Himalayan fastnesses directed the destinies of the Theosophical Society of the Master K. H. and of the Master M., playing with a master hand upon his youthful sensibilities until Dharmapāla would feel himself being swept away on a current of uncontrollable enthusiasm.

Wholehearted devotion at the feet of the unseen Masters, whom he of course understood to be followers of the Lord Buddha, and a fervent aspiration to dedicate himself to their service, now became the ruling passion of his life, and when Mme. Blavatsky quoted to him the message that the Master K. H. had sent to A. P. Sinnett, "*the only refuge for him who aspires to true perfection is the Buddha alone,*" it awoke in his heart reverberations which were to last from that day until the hour of his death. How deep was the impression made upon him by these pregnant words is best measured by the fact that nearly half a century later he was still writing them at the head of every alternate page in his diary, sometimes in a firm bold hand, sometimes in letters made shaky and almost illegible by acute physical suffering. At the time with which we are dealing Dharmapāla was completely under the influence of the Russian seeress, so that when she conveyed to him a personal message from the same Master, asking him to accompany her to Adyar and continue to be

her disciple there, he embraced with eagerness the opportunity of qualifying himself still further for direct contact with the members of the Adept Brotherhood.

Mudaliyar Hewavitarne agreed that he should go to Adyar in December, and all arrangements were made to leave Colombo. Col. Olcott and Dr. Franz Hartmann arrived from Madras to escort the party, which in addition to Mme. Blavatsky now included Mr. and Mrs. Oakley-Cooper and Rev. C. W. Leadbeater from London. On the morning of the day fixed for their departure, however, the boy's father told him that he had had an unlucky dream in the night and that he should therefore not go. Of course, the young disciple of the Masters protested vigorously against this unexpected frustration of his cherished desires, saying that as he was being taken to Adyar by Col. Olcott nothing would happen to him. His fears not set at rest by this reply, the Mudaliyar took his son to see his grandfather, who was also opposed to the Adyar journey. All three of them then entered a carriage and went to see the High Priest Sumaṅgala who, to Dharmapāla's dismay, also added his voice to the chorus of opposition. The boy gave vent to his grief, asking them why they should interfere with his karma, whereupon the High Priest deputed his assistant, Bhikkhu Amaramoli, to go with the party to Col. Olcott and finally settle the matter in consultation with him. They all went, and Col. Olcott positively declined to take him against the wishes of his family and the advice of the High Priest. At this point, when Dharmapāla had sunk into the depths of despair, Mme.

Blavatsky rushed upon the scene dramatically declaring that there was no cause for fear in going to Adyar, as she herself would be responsible for his safe return; but that if he was not allowed to go he would surely die. Frightened by this prediction, Mudaliyar Hewavitarne committed his son to Mme. Blavatsky's care, and exhorted him to lead the life of a Bodhisattva. The Mudaliyar's fears were of course the outcome of paternal love and solicitude for his first-born. Besides, he had given him an English education with the intention of qualifying him to carry on and develop the family business, so that it must have been a sore disappointment for him to see how decidedly his son's mind was turning away from material interests, how innocent he was of all worldly ambition. However, he was not only an affectionate, albeit stern, father, but also pious Buddhist, and reflecting that David's departure was in the interests of the Dhamma reconciled himself to the inevitable.

Adyar and Return to Ceylon

Dharmapāla had gone to Adyar with the intention of studying occultism, and there is no doubt that Mme. Blavatsky could have been of considerable assistance to him in pursuing his studies in that recondite field. But curiously

enough, instead of encouraging his enthusiasm for the occult, she turned his interests in a quite different direction. Calling him to her room one day, she made him sit by her and told him that he need not take up the study of occultism, but that he should study Pali, where all that was needed could be found, and that he should work for the good of humanity, after which she gave him her blessings.

Years later Dharmapāla wrote in his "Reminiscences" that there and then he decided that henceforth his life should be devoted to the good of humanity, and the history of Buddhism during the last sixty years is the witness of how faithfully he observed his youthful vow. He also writes that "In those days the theosophic atmosphere was saturated with the aroma of the devotion of the Himalayan Masters to the Lord Buddha as is seen in the articles in the 'Theosophist' of the Adepts showing their devotion to the Buddha Gautama", and it could not have been without regret that after staying for only a short while at Adyar, he returned to Colombo, where he began faithfully carrying out his pledge. Meanwhile, the missionaries of Madras, rightly fearing that the presence of Col. Olcott and Mme. Blavatsky was prejudicial to the spread of Christianity in India, had been conducting a series of savage attacks on Mme. Blavatsky, impugning her character and alleging that her psychic powers were not genuine but fraudulent.

A couple called the Coulombs, whom she had discharged from her service, were bribed to furnish fabricated evidence, the husband (a carpenter) faking trap-doors, etc., in a

cupboard to prove trickery, the wife forging letters purporting to come from Mme. Blavatsky herself. These letters the missionaries purchased and printed in their magazine. Shortly afterwards, the Society for Psychical Research published the report of an agent named Hodgson whom they had sent to India to investigate the phenomena which had been produced at A. P. Sinnett's Simla house in 1880, and who had based his findings on the evidence of the Coulombs, ignoring the fact that neither of them was present when the most important phenomena occurred, and deliberately suppressing the verdict of an expert graphologist, to whom he had submitted parts of letters attributed to a Master and some writing said to be by Mme. Blavatsky, that "Mme. Blavatsky was not the writer of the letters attributed to the Master."

These two blows, coming as they did in quick succession, created a panic in the Theosophical camp and fearing legal entanglements and difficulties with the Government neither Col. Olcott nor the Council would permit her to bring an action for libel, even though evidence against the Coulombs had been obtained, and in spite of the fact that the attacks were based on forged letters. Despite her protests Mme. Blavatsky was hurried away from Adyar, and once away from the headquarters excuses were easily found to prevent her from returning. The steamer which took her back to Europe called at Colombo and Dharmapāla went on board to say good-bye.

It was their last meeting, but so deep was the impression

she had succeeded in making upon the youth's plastic mind that for the remainder of his life he cherished her memory with affection and gratitude, firmly believing her to have been the innocent victim of a foul conspiracy. In his eyes she was a Buddhist and the agent of Masters, who were also Buddhists, and after her death it was with increasing concern and indignation that he saw the organisation she had founded, and which had, as she once wrote, her "magnetic fluid," turning under the leadership of Mrs. Besant away from Buddhism first to Brahmanism and thereafter to a succession of pseudo-religious mummeries each wilder, more extravagant, and further removed from Mme. Blavatsky's teachings than the last. It was the Anāgārika's suggestion that Alice Leighton Cleather wrote her well-known book *H. P. Blavatsky—Her Life and Work for Humanity*, which was published in book form in 1922 after appearing as a series of articles in the *Mahā Bodhi Journal*, and perhaps we shall not be guilty of serious error if we assume that Dharmapāla's mature views on the subject were in substantial agreement with those expressed in this work.

Leaving Home as Brahmachari

At the time of which we are writing, when he was in his

twentieth year, he believed, with the majority of Sinhala Buddhists, that the interests of Buddhism and the interests of the Theosophical Society were identical. In these circumstances it was but natural that when, a few months after Mme. Blavatsky's departure, he wrote to his father a letter asking for permission to leave home and lead a brahmacari life as he wished to devote all his time to the welfare of the Sāsana, he should also request permission to stay at the Theosophical headquarters, on the grounds that the Society was working for the good of Buddhism. His father at first demurred, asking who would look after the younger members of the family if the eldest son left home. Firm in his determination, Dharmapāla replied that each one had his own karma to protect him, and in the end the Mudaliyar had to agree to the arrangement. His mother, too, gave her blessings, saying that had it not been for his two younger brothers, who still required her care, she would have joined him in the new life he was about to adopt. The young man was now free to go forth from his home to the life of homelessness, free to dedicate his life to the service of humanity, and with characteristic enthusiasm he at once plunged into the work of the Theosophical Society. In a tribute which appeared shortly after his death an admirer has painted a vivid portrait of the Anāgārika's life at this period:

“Nothing was too small or too big for him. He would clean his own room, make his own bed, attend to office work, write all the letters and take them to the post himself, not as

a matter of virtue but as a part of his daily routine, He would interpret for one, he would prepare a programme for another, he would translate a lecture for some one else, he would write original articles for the newspaper, he would discuss the policy of the paper with the Editor and would correct proofs for him, and he would interview those who visited the office. He wrote to people all over Ceylon inviting them to visit the Head Office and to contribute their 'good will' towards the progress of the cause. All were alike to him, whether one was old or young or a school boy, learned or ignorant, rich or poor did not matter; he instinctively knew what each was able to contribute towards the common good. He spent well nigh fifteen to sixteen hours a day in intensive work. He had a pleasant manner, cheerful at all times: his written and spoken words were eloquent and their sincerity went to the hearts of all those who met him. This bundle of energy and goodwill continued his useful career at the Buddhist Headquarters for nearly five years. He helped in the foundation of schools, and in Buddhist propaganda. He attracted men to the new organisation till the Colombo Buddhist Theosophical Society became a power in the land."

This description might have been written at almost any time during the fifty subsequent years of Dharmapāla's career, for his tireless energy in doing good, his unflagging zeal for the propagation of the Dhamma, increased rather than diminished with the passing of years, so that we might fittingly apply to him the verse:

*Appamatto pamattesu suttesu bahujāgaro
abalasaṃ' va sīghasso hitvā yāti sumedhaso.*

“Heedful among the heedless,
wide awake among those who sleep,
like a swift horse the wise man advances,
leaving the feeble hack behind.”

—Dhammapada, v. 29

Touring Ceylon

In February 1886 Col. Olcott and C. W. Leadbeater arrived in Colombo to collect money for the Buddhist Educational Fund. Dharmapāla was then employed as a junior clerk in the Education Department, and his meals used to be sent daily from home to the Theosophical headquarters where he stayed. Col. Olcott had planned to tour the whole island, and for this purpose he needed the services of an interpreter. But when no one to accompany him could be found he declared that he would be merely wasting his time if no Buddhist was willing to go with him on his tour. Dharmapāla promptly offered his services, and applied to the Director of Education for three months leave.

Previous to this he had appeared in the Clerical Examination, pledging to himself, however, that if he passed he would not join Government service, but dedicate

instead his whole life to the service of humanity. The trio set off from Colombo in the Colonel's two-storied travelling cart, Olcott and Leadbeater sleeping at night in the upper storey, while Dharmapāla occupied the lower berth. For two months they travelled up and down the country, thus inaugurating that long series of historic missionary drives which was eventually to make the bearded Colonel and his youthful companion familiar figures in the Sinhala countryside, and which was to surround them before the end of the decade with a halo of almost legendary fame.

The tour of 1886 occupies an important place in Dharmapāla's development. Besides bringing him in touch with the hopes and fears, the virtues and failings, of thousands of his fellow-countrymen, it also gave him a glimpse, through the commanding and active personality of Col. Olcott, of the practical efficiency of the western races. As interpreter he stood between two worlds, and it was not merely words but ideas which he had to translate. Circumstances made him the common denominator between ancient wisdom and modern knowledge, between the traditions of an old but decayed people and the innovating vitality of a people newly-born, and the constant need of passing rapidly from one pole of understanding to the other gave his mind an elasticity and nimbleness of movement of great value to the development of his character.

Before long he was not only functioning as the mouthpiece of Col. Olcott's or Mr. Leadbeater's ideas, but forcefully

speaking out his own independent opinions on the various socio-religious problems of his day, many of which came under his clear-sighted scrutiny as he passed through the villages of the interior. He saw that many un-Buddhistic foreign customs had crept into the life of the people, and with youthful enthusiasm he extolled the glories of ancient and bewailed the degeneracy of modern Lanka. He fulminated against the habit of eating beef, railed against the use of foreign names and foreign dress, and to the huge delight of his listeners led them in smashing the head-combs which the Sinhallas had adopted from the Malays.

He saw how wide and deep was the influence of the Christian missions, how it had eaten into the vitals of the people and was corroding all that was noblest in the national character. He saw, too, how the villagers' faith in and observance of the Dhamma were slowly crumbling before the attacks of the missionaries and their hirelings, and it was with all the eloquence of which he was capable that he interpreted Col. Olcott's magnificent vindications of Buddhism and his impassioned appeals for its revival throughout the length and breadth of the land. Contact with the people who ploughed the fields and planted the paddy not only gave him a first-hand knowledge of his country's problems, but also prevented him from developing any of the bookish humours of a scholar. The peasants that assembled to hear the white Buddhist speak were mostly illiterate, and in order to make Olcott's message intelligible to them his interpreter had to draw upon all his resources of

wit and repartee, humour and homely illustration. Not that he ever made them feel he was talking down to them. He spoke as one of themselves, as a Buddhist and as a son of Sri Lanka and as such they accepted the young preacher and took him to their hearts. When Col. Olcott left Ceylon for Madras, Dharmapāla and Leadbeater carried on the lecturing tour alone.

They were still in the villages of the interior when a letter arrived from the Colonial Secretary informing Dharmapāla that he had passed the examination and had been appointed to a better post. Now completely absorbed in Buddhist work, the erstwhile junior clerk felt that the time had come to turn his back upon Government service for ever, so without delay he replied saying that he was going to work for his religion and requested the Colonial Secretary to accept his resignation. After their return to Colombo his father advised him to accept the post and hand over his earnings to the Theosophical Society for Buddhist work. He also took him to call on the Colonial Secretary, who asked him to withdraw his resignation; but despite their persuasions Dharmapāla was not to be shaken in his resolve, and in the end he was delighted to see that the last tie binding him to a worldly career had been broken. Henceforth he was free to devote himself single-mindedly to the work for which his own aspirations and the blessings of his teachers had already consecrated him.

'Sandaresa' and 'The Buddhist': He Becomes 'The Anāgārika Dharmapāla'

From this time onwards it becomes more and more difficult to do even a semblance of justice to the many-sided activities of the greatest Buddhist missionary in modern times. During the years 1885-89 he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the affairs of the Buddhist Theosophical Society, and with the financial support of his grandfather and the co-operation of C. P. Goonewardana, Williams Abrew, Don Carolis and others the organisation prospered. At Col. Olcott's request, Leadbeater prepared a shorter version of his *Buddhist Catechism*, the first part being translated into Sinhalese by Dharmapāla with the help of Sumaṅgala Nāyaka Mahā Thera, the second by two teachers of the Buddhist English School, James Perera and Wimalasuriya. Both parts were published at the Buddhist Press which Col. Olcott and Dharmapāla had established with the money obtained by issuing debentures.

Resolving that this press should become the property of the Buddhist Theosophical Society, Dharmapāla requested his grand-father, who owned more shares than anybody else, to present them to the Society, and once he had agreed to do so it was not difficult to persuade the other shareholders to

follow his generous example. After liquidating the debts of the *Sandaresa*, their Sinhalese weekly, and establishing it on a firm foundation, Dharmapāla decided that it was high time the Buddhists of Ceylon had an English weekly as well. Thirty friends contributed ten rupees each, and with the sum thus raised English type was obtained from Madras, and in December 1888 The Buddhist was issued under Leadbeater's editorship as a supplement to the *Sandaresa*. The Sinhalese organ gave publicity to the rural and urban branches of the Ceylon Theosophical Society, reported the progress of the educational fund, and appealed for the opening of more Buddhist schools to counteract Christian propaganda, while its English counterpart concentrated on more technical expositions of the Dhamma in relation to Western science and psychology. The latter not only enjoyed a wide circulation among the English educated upper classes of Ceylon but also circulated in Europe, America, India, Japan and Australia, thus encircling the earth with the Word of the Buddha, and preparing the way for its more famous successor, the *Mahā Bodhi Journal*.

Parallel to his journalistic ventures Dharmapāla carried on his preaching activities among the people, touring indefatigably from village to village in Col. Olcott's bullock cart, giving lectures, distributing Buddhist literature, and collecting funds for the educational work already inaugurated by the Theosophical Society. Meanwhile Leadbeater had started a number of Buddhist Sunday Schools in different parts of Colombo, besides establishing

an English school (later Ananda College, one of the most celebrated schools in Ceylon) for the benefit of a few personal pupils, among whom was his young favourite Jinarajadasa, afterwards famous as the fourth President of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. It was during this period of intense activity that Don David Hewavitarne assumed the name of Dharmapāla, or Guardian of the Law, under which he was subsequently to win the admiration and homage of Buddhists all over the world.

In spite of his preoccupations in Ceylon Dharmapāla was able to find time for a number of trips to Adyar. Under Col. Olcott's active supervision the world headquarters of the Theosophical movement had expanded at an amazing rate, but with the advent of T. Subba Row the influence of Mme. Blavatsky had declined, the Buddha had lost ground to Sankara, and after seeing that the occult room had been dismantled Dharmapāla felt that the Masters had left the place.

Japan

In 1887 Dharmapāla read an article on Japan in an issue of the *Fortnightly Review*, and a desire to visit the Land of the Rising Sun at once took possession of his mind. Two years later, in 1889, it was fulfilled. The Buddhists of Japan,

hearing of Col. Olcott's splendid services to the Dhamma in Ceylon, were eager that he should visit their country as well, and therefore sent him a cordial invitation. The emissary to whom was entrusted the responsibility of escorting the Colonel to Japan arrived in Colombo in December 1888, and after being entertained there by Dharmapāla was so pleased with the selfless young Buddhist worker that he extended the invitation to him also. Col. Olcott, seeing in the visit an opportunity of linking the Mahāyāna Buddhism of Japan with the Theravāda Buddhism of Ceylon, decided to accept the invitation, and urged his young friend, who had accompanied the emissary Noguchi to Adyar, to go with him.

Back went Dharmapāla to Colombo, and booked passages on the *S. S. Djeninah*, a French liner. Olcott arrived soon afterwards, and on January 17th 1889, the day before their departure, the Buddhists of Ceylon held a farewell function in their honour at the Theosophical Society Hall. After delivering a splendid discourse, in the course of which he invoked the blessings of the devas and the Triple Gem on the mission, Sumaṅgala Nāyaka Mahā Thera handed over to Col. Olcott a Sanskrit letter of good wishes addressed to the Chief High Priests of Japan. This historic letter, the first official communication which had passed for centuries between a Southern Buddhist dignitary and the heads of one of the most important branches of the Northern Buddhist Sangha, expressed the renewed hope that the Buddhists of Asia would unite for the good of the whole

Eastern world. With the precious document in their charge, Olcott, Dharmapāla and the poet Noguchi left the shores of Ceylon, and after calling at Singapore, Saigon, Hong Kong and Shanghai (where Dharmapāla began to suffer from the intense cold, and saw snow for the first time in his life), the party arrived at Kobe, where the Chief High Priests of the seven leading sects of Japanese Buddhism had assembled on the jetty to receive them.

Col. Olcott had to respond alone to the warm welcome which they were accorded, as Dharmapāla was too ill to do more than sit on the deck and watch the proceedings. But to the young Sinhala's delight and gratification all seven high priests insisted on coming on to the deck and paying their respects to him as the representative of the Buddhists of Ceylon. The visitors were then conducted to the Tendai Sect temple in Kobe. Above the main gate the Buddhist flag fluttered in an icy wind, bearing huge Japanese characters which Noguchi translated as "Welcome to Dai Nippon." Inside the temple they found an enormous audience of Japanese youths waiting to hear a message from the West, which the imagination of Far Eastern Buddhists has always associated with the holy land of India.

After Col. Olcott had spoken in his usual impressive manner, Dharmapāla addressed them emphasising the cultural and religious unity of Japan and Ceylon, and pointing out that the present meeting was the first recorded contact in history between Sinhala and Japanese Buddhists. He concluded by saying that they were proud of Japan,

eulogising her as “a sovereign star in a continent of servitude,” words which not unnaturally drew loud and prolonged applause from his auditors.

Almost immediately after their reception at Kobe, Col. Olcott and Dharmapāla left for Kyoto, where they witnessed the celebrations which attended the promulgation of the New Japanese Constitution of 1889. Not long afterwards a convention of Chief High Priests was held in the Chiongin Temple, and Col. Olcott addressed them on his mission. Dharmapāla, who was now suffering from rheumatic fever, had to attend the convention in an invalid’s chair, but in spite of physical suffering great was his elation when Col. Olcott read Sumaṅgala Nāyaka Thera’s Sanskrit letter of goodwill to the Buddhists of Japan, a Japanese translation of which was presented to each High Priest.

The bearded American Theosophist and the slim, ascetic, young Sinhala Buddhist realised that they were playing the leading roles in one of the most important scenes in the great drama of modern Buddhist revival, marking as it did the first official contact which had taken place between the sundered branches of the Buddhist world for nearly a thousand years. But when the curtain had fallen on this historic scene Dharmapāla was forced to enter the Government Hospital at Kyoto for treatment, while Col. Olcott embarked upon his triumphal tour of Buddhist Japan. But if in the Colonel’s case Mohammed went to meet the mountain, in Dharmapāla’s the mountain came to meet Mohammed.

Doctors, priests, students, teachers, writers, philosophers and businessmen poured in an endless stream to his bedside, so that by the time he was ready to leave the hospital Dharmapāla had not only added to his knowledge about Japan but also become an enthusiastic admirer of the Japanese. He was enthusiastic too about the ancient Buddhist city of Kyoto, where he saw the Daibutsu, the great image of Amitabha which is the biggest bronze statue in the world, and a temple which, when illuminated at night, glittered resplendently with five hundred golden figures of the Buddha. A few days before his departure from Japan, the officers and students of the Bungakurio, the Japanese Military Academy, several of whom had attended him during his illness with the utmost devotion, invited him to witness a huge military parade which was to be held in his honour.

Five hundred students participated in the parade, which was followed by athletic sports. The five-coloured Buddhist flag fluttered above the gathering, and the grounds were decorated with five hundred lanterns. The representative of the Chief High Priest, together with other officers of the Hongwanji Sect, attended the function, and deeply moved though he had been by the boundless hospitality accorded him Dharmapāla could not help feeling the incongruity of this union between Buddhism and militarism, even as he had previously been shocked by the way in which the majority of the Japanese clergy combined their religious duties with family life.

During the remainder of Dharmapāla's visit bouts of illness alternated with brief periods of lecturing and sightseeing, and eventually he was forced to leave the country sooner than he wished. A farewell address was given to the Chief High Priests of the Japanese Buddhist Sects, who handed over to Col. Olcott a reply to Sumaṅgala Nāyaka Thera's Sanskrit letter of goodwill. This letter reciprocated the High Priest's fraternal greetings, expressed the hope that in future the two great divisions of the Buddhist world might know each other more intimately, and described with satisfaction, the wonderful success which had attended the mission. All Kyoto was decorated for the occasion, and in the evening, at a meeting attended by the Governor and other high officials, Col. Olcott spoke on India and Ceylon, and Dharmapāla poured out his love and gratitude to Japan in a highly emotional speech which was wildly applauded.

After bidding the Colonel an affectionate and tearful farewell at Osaka Dharmapāla embarked for Ceylon, while Olcott, who had already delivered forty-five lectures all over the country, left for Kinsui Province to deliver ten more. The captain of the *Caledonia*, the ship for which Dharmapāla had exchanged the *Natal* at Shanghai, was a friend of Mme. Blavatsky, and it was therefore natural that he should soon be on friendly terms with his Sinhala passenger. He extolled Mme. Blavatsky to the skies, declaring that she was a "Miracle of nature," and Dharmapāla of course agreed enthusiastically with these eulogies of his beloved teacher. But when the captain

confided that Olcott was jealous of her, and that he had engineered her departure from India, his young listener, ever faithful to his friends, hotly repudiated the suggestion, saying that if they had been jealous of each other the Masters would never have committed the destinies of the Theosophical Society to their joint care. After that they hardly spoke to each other again, and Dharmapāla made friends with an Italian with whom he played chess, and a Frenchman who prophesied war in Europe. His loyal, affectionate and grateful nature could never bear in silence an attack upon a friend, and at this period especially devotion to the Colonel was one of the major passions of his life.

A few years later, when serious charges were made against the Swami Vivekananda in Calcutta, it was Dharmapāla who spoke publicly in his defence with such vigour that he was at once restored to popular favour. To him a friend in need was a friend indeed, and great was his disappointment, therefore, when in the course of his career he discovered that people whom he had defended, helped and trusted were slandering him behind his back and secretly plotting to frustrate his plans. Ever frank, honest, open and outspoken himself, Dharmapāla heartily detested every form of trickery, subterfuge and intrigue.

Boldly and uncompromisingly he stated his objectives; fearlessly and wholeheartedly he strove to realise them. In a world where diplomacy in politics, cheating in business, misrepresentation of facts in journalism, and deceitfulness

in all the relations of life, have become the order of the day, straightforwardness such as this does not always make for material success, but as a sign of absolute integrity of character it is one of the hall-marks of spiritual greatness, and as such must ever command our admiration and respect. Whatever Dharmapāla did was noble and upright, and it was therefore done, not in the obscurity of shadows, but in the full blaze of the all-revealing light of day.

Back in Ceylon

Colonel Olcott returned from his mission to Japan, where his activities had inaugurated a major revival of Buddhism, in the middle of June 1889, accompanied by three Japanese priests who intended to study Pali and the Theravāda traditions of Ceylon. A meeting of welcome was held in the Theosophical Society headquarters, which were gay with Buddhist flags and Japanese lanterns, and Col. Olcott told a crowded audience of the success of his mission and paid warm tribute to the work of his young Sinhala colleague. Receptions over, he and Dharmapāla plunged once more into the work of the Buddhist Theosophical Society, travelling together by train and bullock cart from one end of the country to the other, day after day for more than a year they collected funds, opened schools, and addressed

meetings. Whenever Olcott was called on Theosophical business to India or Europe Dharmapāla carried on the work either single-handed or in co-operation with one or another of the European Theosophists who had started coming to Ceylon to help in the revival of Buddhism.

On one such occasion, when he was touring with Dr. Daly in the hill country near Kandy, he discovered at the Hanguranketa village temple a palm-leaf book on meditation, and requested the incumbent of the temple, Bhikkhu Ratnapala, to get it transcribed for him. Many years later the same work was published by the Pali Text Society, and translated by F. L Woodward as *The Manual of a Mystic*. In the course of his travels Dharmapāla came across a number of such books, but in spite of all his enquiries he never succeeded in finding even a single person, whether monk or layman, who could instruct him in the actual meditation practices which they described.

Being from boyhood of strongly mystical temperament, as we have already pointed out, it was impossible for him to rest satisfied with a merely theoretical knowledge of the subject, and in spite of all difficulties, after making a careful study of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the *Visuddhi Magga*, he embarked upon the regular practice of meditation, rising each day before dawn for the purpose. The personal diaries which he kept for more than forty years abound in references not only to the practice of yoga, but to his unremitting efforts to achieve absolute mental purity, his ceaseless cultivation of goodwill to all sentient beings and

bear eloquent testimony to the fact that beneath the dynamic activity of the selfless worker for Buddhism there lay the serenity and mindfulness of the yogi.

At the Adyar Theosophical headquarters, whither he had gone to attend the Annual Convention of 1890, he joined the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society, and received some practical instructions on meditation from an old Burmese gentleman who had come with the deputation sent to Col. Olcott by the Buddhists of Rangoon, who had already collected a lakh of rupees for the propagation of Buddhism in foreign lands, inviting him to come to Burma and assist them in their work.

Pilgrimage in India

Col. Olcott left for Burma with the deputation while Dharmapāla, who had been spending most of his time in study and meditation, decided to visit the Buddhist holy places in Northern India, and invited the Japanese priest Kozen Guṇaratana, who had accompanied him to Adyar from Colombo, to go with him. He agreed, and they left on January 12th, arriving at Bombay, where they spent a couple of days sightseeing, on the 14th, and at Benares on the 18th. Hearing from his host of a yogini known as Maji (Reverend Mother) who lived in a cave on the banks of the Ganges,

Dharmapāla at once went to see her, and after what he describes as a pleasant chat she presented him, at his request, with a rosary. The next day, January 26th, Babu Upendranath Basu drove them over to Sarnath, where the Lord Buddha had preached His First Sermon nearly five and twenty centuries before, and after describing the ruined appearance of the place Dharmapāla remarks in his diary for the day, "What a pity that no Buddhists are occupying the place to preserve them (the stupa and carvings) from the hand of vandals."

First Visit to Buddha Gaya: 1891

Yet it was not at Sarnath, but at Buddha Gaya, which they reached on January 22nd 1891, that Dharmapāla Hewavitarne, then in his twenty-ninth year, received the inspiration which was to change not only his own life but the whole course of modern Buddhist history. The crucial moment of his career had come. At last he stood face to face with his destiny. The happenings of that most decisive day in his whole life, when for a moment the fate of Buddhism in modern India, with all the incalculable consequences thereof, hung trembling in the balance, is best described in the words of his own diary:

"Jan. 22. After taking breakfast we went in the

company of Durga Babu and Dr. Chatterjee to Bodhgaya—the most sacred spot to the Buddhists. After driving 6 miles (from Gaya) we arrived at the holy spot. Within a mile you could see lying scattered here and there broken statues etc. of our blessed Lord. At the entrance to the Mahānt’s temple on both sides of the portico there are statues of our Lord in the attitude of meditation and expounding the Law. How elevating! The sacred Vihāra—the Lord sitting on his throne and the great solemnity which pervades all round—makes the heart of the pious devotee weep. How delightful! As soon as I touched with my forehead the Vajrāsana a sudden impulse came to my mind. It prompted me to stop here and take care of this sacred spot—so sacred that nothing in the world is equal to this place where Prince Sakya Sinha gained Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree ... When the sudden impulse came to me I asked Kozen priest whether he would join me, and he joyously assented and more than this he had been thinking the same thing. We both solemnly promised that we would stop here until some Buddhist priests came to take charge of the place.”

It is characteristic of Dharmapāla that when he made this momentous decision the question of the ownership of the temple never even occurred to him. He saw that the most sacred spot in the Buddhist world was being shamefully

neglected, its sculptures carted away, the image desecrated, and he assumed that as a Buddhist he had not only the duty but also the right to stay there and protect the holy place. Nor did the Government officials whom he met give him, as yet, any cause to think otherwise. The keys of the Burmese Rest House, built twenty years before by King Mindon of Burma, were given to him, and as soon as he had settled down there he started writing the first of those thousands of letters which he was afterwards to write in the interests of the Buddha Gaya Temple. He wrote to scores of people in Ceylon, Burma and India describing the appalling condition of the sacred spot, and pleading for the revival of Buddhism and the re-establishment of the Sangha there. He also wrote long articles in Sinhalese and English respectively to the *Sandaresa* and *The Buddhist*.

For some time he received no replies, and great was his agony of spirit when he began to think that his appeal had gone unheeded, and that the Buddhist world, still sunk in the torpor of centuries, was indifferent to the fate of the Mahā Bodhi Temple. Shortage of money began to add to his difficulties, for he had brought with him enough to provide the necessities of a few days only, but with his determination strengthened rather than weakened by the difficulties he was undergoing he resolved to die of starvation rather than quit the sacred place. In spite of mundane anxieties the atmosphere of the moonlit nights, when the imposing structure of the temple stood in bold relief against the starry sky, played upon his spiritual

sensibilities to such an extent that one day he writes in his diary:

“February 17. This night at 12 for the first time in my life I experienced that peace which passeth all understanding. How peaceful it was. The life of our Lord is a lofty and elevating subject for meditation. The Four Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path alone can make the devoted pupil of Nature happy.”

At last the letters for which he had been waiting with such eagerness, and the money which he so badly needed, began to arrive and Dharmapāla no longer felt that he was alone with his enthusiasm in an indifferent world. Not until he met Mr. G. A. Grierson, the Collector of Gaya, did he begin to glimpse the enormous obstacles, the deeply-entrenched vested interests, which blocked his path. Hitherto he had been led to suppose by the minor officials with whom he had discussed the matter, that the Mahā Bodhi Temple was Government property, and that there would be no difficulty in transferring it from the management of the Hindu Mahānt to the custody of its legitimate proprietors, the Buddhists. But now, to his astonishment, Mr. Grierson informed him that the temple together with its revenues, belonged to the Mahānt, adding that with the help of the Government it might be possible for the Buddhists to buy it from him.

Having by this time spent more than six weeks in Buddha Gaya, Dharmapāla at once left for Calcutta, intending to

raise funds in Burma for the purchase of the temple. In Calcutta, then not only the political but also the intellectual metropolis of India, he stayed at the house of a Bengali Theosophist, Babu Neel Comal Mookerjee, who became a lifelong friend of the Anāgārika and a loyal supporter of his mission. Together they visited various places of interest in the city, including the Indian Museum and the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal where, to his great delight, Dharmapāla made the acquaintance of Sarat Chandra Das, famous for his travels in Tibet, and for his knowledge of the language and religious literature of that country. He also won the friendship of Narendra Nath Sen, the editor of the *Indian Mirror*, a Theosophist whose eloquent pen was for many years ready to plead for the revival of Buddhism in India.

From Calcutta Dharmapāla sailed for Rangoon, where he spent most of his stay with Moungh Myhin, a Theosophist and a student of Buddhist yoga, who encouraged him in his plans for the restoration of Buddha Gaya to Buddhist hands, and promised to help financially. Other Burmans also became interested in the scheme, and although unable to raise the funds for which he had hoped, Dharmapāla was by no means disappointed with the success of his mission. He noted that the Burmese were better versed in the subtleties of their religion than were his own countrymen, and that in Burma the practice of meditation had not been allowed to die out as in Ceylon. He sailed for Colombo via Adyar with high hopes, determined to found a society for the reclamation of Buddha Gaya. On his arrival at Madras he

heard of the unexpected death of Mme. Blavatsky. “The loss is irreparable”, he wrote in his diary. “Humanity will feel the loss. The spiritual world lost its dearest well wisher, guide and Teacher in her. Who will take her place? I little expected that she would die so soon. The E. S. must be carried on if the T. S. is to live and do good; but who will be the agent between the world and the Masters?”

Establishment of the Mahā Bodhi Society: 1891

The Buddha Gaya Mahā Bodhi Society was founded in Colombo on May 31st 1891, The Ven. Hikkaduwe Sumaṅgala Nāyaka Mahā Thera presided over the inaugural meeting, at which Dharmapāla related how the impulse to restore the sacred shrine to Buddhist hands had come to him as he knelt beneath the ancient spreading branches of the Bodhi Tree. After the High Priest had spoken in support of the scheme the office-bearers of the newly-born Society were elected, with Ven. Sumaṅgala as President, Col. Olcott as Director, Weerasekera and Dharmapāla as Secretaries, W. de Abrew as Treasurer, and Pandit Batuwantudave and twelve others as members of the Committee. The formation of one more society did not

attract much attention in those days of widespread Buddhist revival, and Dharmapāla not only experienced difficulties in rousing the interest of the laity, but also in finding monks willing to accompany him to Buddha Gaya.

But by this time he was used to difficulties. Determined that on the Full Moon Day of the month of Asalha, when the Buddha preached His First Sermon, members of the Sangha should once more be in residence in Buddha Gaya, he appealed first to the Siamese, then to the Burmese Sect, and in the end succeeded in obtaining four monks Dunuwila Chandajoti, Mātale Sumaṅgala, Anurādhapura Pemānanda, and Galle Sudassana. On July 10th the party set out on its historic mission, reaching Calcutta on the 15th and arriving at their destination a few days later. In the evening of the day following that of their arrival the full moon rose bright and glorious in the blue sky, and Dharmapāla notes with satisfaction in his diary that after seven centuries the Buddhist flag had been hoisted at Buddha Gaya:

“Ah, how beautifully it flutters in the moonlight breeze! May the mission be a success! I hope and sincerely trust that the priests may be a light to the people and they will lead a life of purity and show the people of India the intrinsic merits of our holy religion. On 22nd January last I pledged that I will work on to make this sacred spot to be cared for by our own Bhikkhus and I am glad that after seven months of hard work I have succeeded in establishing a Buddhist Mission.”

Sanguine words! Having installed the four monks in the Burmese Rest House, Dharmapāla opened negotiations with the Mahānt for the purchase of a piece of land, and at this point begins the story of his unequal struggle with the second wealthiest landlord in the whole Province of Bihar, a struggle in which we hardly know whether to be more astonished at the invincible determination displayed on one side, or at the incredible baseness and brutality on the other. The intervention of Government, and the ambiguous nature of its policy in the matter, only served to “make confusion worse confounded,” and it is impossible for us even to outline all the vicissitudes of Dharmapāla’s single-handed struggle to secure for the Buddhists a foothold in their own most holy shrine. First the Mahānt promised a piece of land, then denied that he had promised, and in the end agreed to give a much smaller piece. Hereupon Mr. Grierson entered the scene, first ordering registration of the deed to be postponed, and then suggesting that a different plot of land should be selected.

Annoyed at Grierson’s interference, the Mahānt told Dharmapāla to return to Ceylon and come back and discuss the matter later. After shuttling for some time between the two parties Dharmapāla succeeded in appeasing the Mahānt and persuading him to part with the plot indicated by the Collector. But this time the size of his original offer was reduced by half, and Dharmapāla had to interview his notary no less than seven times before the deed was considered to be in order. Weary of all these vacillations,

which were only a foretaste of what was yet to come, Dharmapāla decided to organise an International Buddhist Conference, and after his return from a brief visit to Ceylon the conference had its memorable sitting at Buddha Gaya on October 31st 1891, on the eve of the Lt.-Governor of Bengal's visit to the holy spot.

Representatives from Ceylon, China, Japan and Chittagong attended, and the Japanese delegates informed the conference that the Buddhists of their country, would be willing to purchase the Temple from the Mahānt, in consequence of which it was resolved that a deputation should wait on him with a proposal to this effect. It was further resolved to call for subscriptions from all Buddhist countries for the construction of a Buddhist monastery, to establish Buddhist propaganda and to undertake the translation of Buddhist texts into the Indian vernaculars. Ever an enthusiastic admirer of Japan, Dharmapāla had hoisted the Japanese flag beneath the Bodhi Tree side-by-side with the Buddhist flag, and it is more than likely that when the Lt.-Governor and his party visited the place the sight of it not only reminded him of the Russo-Japanese problem, but also suggested to his mind the possibility of the Japanese using Buddha Gaya as spearhead of their ambitions not only in India but throughout the whole of Asia. At any rate he refused to meet the Buddhist delegation, and sent Dharmapāla a message through Mr. Grierson to the effect that the Temple belonged to the Mahānt, and that the Government could not accede to the

Buddhist request that it should intervene and restore Buddha Gaya to their control.

Mahā Bodhi Journal

On October 25th Dharmapāla gave his first public lecture in India, at the Albert Hall, Calcutta, under the presidency of Narendra Nath Sen, his subject being “Buddhism in Its Relation to Hinduism.” At the beginning of 1892 the office of the Mahā Bodhi Society was shifted to Calcutta, where the Bengali intelligentsia looked with sympathy upon the object for which it had been founded, and in the month of May Dharmapāla started the *Mahā Bodhi Journal* in order to facilitate the interchange of news between Buddhist countries. The first issue of the magazine, which has now been published uninterruptedly for more than sixty years, consisted of eight closely-printed quarto pages, and bore as its motto the Buddha’s great exhortation to His first sixty disciples, “Go ye, O Bhikkhus, and wander forth for the gain of the many, the welfare of the many, in compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of gods and men. Proclaim, O Bhikkhus, the doctrine glorious. Preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure” (*Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga*).

The Journal was edited by Dharmapāla, and his two articles

on "A United Buddhist World" and "The Mahāyāna School of Buddhism" were the first of the hundreds of articles which he was subsequently to write for its pages. It is interesting to find him controverting Sir Monier Williams' opinion that the Southern School of Buddhism belongs to the Hinayāna, maintaining instead that "the Buddhism of Ceylon belongs to the oldest school of the Mahāyāna", and asserting that only "The eighteen schismatic schools, offshoots of the *Theravāda* school, because they taught the incomplete doctrines, were included in the Hinayāna." Besides an article by Col. Olcott entitled "The Sweet Spirit of Buddhism," the magazine contained historical notes by Dharmapāla, correspondence, news of Buddhist activities in Japan and Burma, and a reproduction of a significant article from the *Indian Mirror*, which contains the statement "India dates her misfortunes since the day of the disappearance of Buddhism," and indicates the extent to which educated Indian opinion was in agreement with Dharmapāla's views. Translations from the Buddhist Scriptures, and papers on Buddhist philosophy, as well as articles on Buddhism by writers both oriental and occidental, were included in subsequent issues, and before many months had passed the Journal had attained a fairly wide circulation not only in Asia but in Europe and America as well. Progress was by no means either smooth or easy, however. Funds were often lacking, and frequently the Society's sole worker had to choose between buying stamps for posting the Journal and food for his evening meal. But the sacrifice was made

joyfully, with the reflection that since there was no self there was no sacrifice either.

In those days Dharmapāla used to spend the night with the Mookerjee family at Baniapukur Road, rising at two or three o'clock in the morning for meditation. Then he would read the Buddhist Scriptures, together with the works of Max Muller, Sir Edwin Arnold and Sir William Hunter. During the day he would attend the office which the Mahā Bodhi Society and the Theosophical Society shared at 2, Creek Row, devoting himself to the editing and managing of the Journal, and engaging in a voluminous correspondence, frequently writing twenty or thirty letters with his own hand in the course of a single day. With unflagging zeal and tireless energy he worked for the cause to which he had dedicated his life, appealing for funds to Buddhists all over the world, arranging weekly public meetings, and labouring to interest every person he met in the redemption of Mahā Bodhi Temple from the sacrilegious hands of those to whom it was nothing but a source of income. In spite of his activities in Calcutta and at Buddha Gaya Dharmapāla found time to attend the Annual Conventions at Adyar, as well as to establish relations with the Himalayan Buddhists of Darjeeling, to whom he presented some Relics of the Buddha, a few leaves from the Bodhi Tree, and a Buddhist flag.

After the Relics had been taken in a colourful procession through the crowded streets of the town to the residence of Raja Tondub Pulger, where a number of Tibetan and

Sikkimese dignitaries, both lay and ecclesiastical, had assembled, Dharmapāla gave a speech on the ancient decline and modern revival of Buddhism, and appealed to the Buddhists of Tibet to support the work of the Mahā Bodhi Society. Some months after this historic function, when Sinhala and Tibetan Buddhists met once again after centuries of separation, Col. Olcott arrived in Calcutta, and it was decided that he, Dharmapāla and Mr. Edge, a European Theosophist from Darjeeling, should visit Buddha Gaya.

On their arrival at Gaya Station on February 4th 1893 they were met by Ven. Chandajoti, who excitedly informed them that on the evening of the previous Friday the Mahānt's men had made a murderous assault on the two monks and their servants, at the Burmese Rest House, while they were peacefully engaged in reading the Vinaya and religious conversation. Bhikkhu Sumaṅgala, who is described as a particularly quiet and inoffensive monk, was so badly beaten about the head with sticks that he had to be removed to hospital, and when the horrified party visited the Rest House the bloodstains were still visible upon the floor. The news of this cowardly and unprovoked attack created a sensation, and meetings of protest were held not only in India but in several Buddhist countries as well. Col. Olcott at once interviewed the Mahānt, who stubbornly refused either to sell or lease the land on any terms, or to allow the Buddhists to erect a Rest House for pilgrims. Dharmapāla was insistent that the assailants should be detected and

punished, and the well-known Gaya pleader Nanda Kishore Lall was therefore retained as counsel for the Mahā Bodhi Society.

In these circumstances began a connection which soon transcended the usual relation of lawyer and client, and developed into a strong mutual affection which was terminated only by death. The sole redeeming feature of the whole sordid business was the exemplary behaviour of the injured monk, who had not only made no attempt to defend himself from the vicious blows of his attackers, but who actually sent to the police, while still in hospital, an application stating that neither he nor his fellow monks could be witnesses to the case under issue and thus cause their assailants to be punished. It is said that the District Superintendent of Police roared with laughter when he read this, remarking "I always thought these Indian priests made a living out of religion. These Buddhist priests from Ceylon actually practise it." The Mahānt in his palace merely chuckled.

A few weeks later Dharmapāla was informed by Nanda Kishore Lall that the Mahānt's lease on the land had expired, and that he had renewed his application for a permanent lease. With his usual optimism, Dharmapāla was confident that it would now be easy for the Mahā Bodhi Society to acquire the place, and that the Buddhists of the world would willingly combine to subscribe the lakh of rupees which, he was informed, would be required to make the purchase.

He rushed back to Calcutta, and at once wrote appeals for help to every quarter. Chandajoti was despatched to Akyab, while Col. Olcott sailed on the same mission to Rangoon, where he found the city in the throes of a business depression and was compelled to return empty-handed. After a month devoted to office work, lectures on Buddhism in the public squares, Theosophical meetings, correspondence, study and meditation, conversations on yoga with his friend Nirodanath Mookerjee and exhortations to Nirodanath's son Naranath, a boy of sixteen or seventeen of whom he had become extremely fond, Dharmapāla left for Burma on May 13th, and on the 16th reached Rangoon, where he found his old friend MOUNG HPO MHYIN and a number of other gentlemen waiting at the jetty to receive him.

Another month went by in a whirlwind round of visits to wealthy Buddhists in Rangoon, Mandalay and Moulmein, and although the required sum was not actually collected, the necessary promises were made, and Dharmapāla returned to Calcutta feeling that his mission had not been wholly unsuccessful. After extricating the Society's work from the confusion into which it had fallen during his absence, he entrained for Gaya, where he found that events were fast taking a new turn. Nanda Kishore told him that the Mahā Bodhi Temple was really situated in the village of Mahā Bodhi, and not in the village of Mastipur Taradi as the Mahānt's people claimed.

Again Dharmapāla's hopes rose high; but when they called

upon the Collector, Mr. McPherson explained the situation to him, and mentioned Sir Edwin Arnold's recent article about Buddha Gaya in the London *Daily Telegraph*, he merely remarked that everything should be done as quietly as possible and that it would be better to postpone negotiations until after Dharmapāla's return from Chicago. The circle of the young Buddhist missionary's activities was becoming wider still, embracing not only India and Ceylon, not only Asia, but the whole world, and although the fate of the Mahā Bodhi Temple remained unsettled, the course of events was compelling Dharmapāla to direct his steps elsewhere, and the time had come for him to carry the Message of his Compassionate Master across the seas to races to whom it was as yet unknown.

'The World's Parliament of Religions' in Chicago

The World's Parliament of Religions which was held in Chicago in 1893 was one of the most important and characteristic events of the late nineteenth century. Fifty years earlier the influence of Christian dogma and popular ignorance even of the existence of the great oriental religions would have rendered such a gathering an

impossibility. As it was, the organisers of the Parliament were accused by a missionary in China of “coquetting with false religions” and “planning treason against Christ.” Fifty years later, political unrest and widespread indifference to religion would either have made the venture abortive or reduced it to little more than an anthropological curiosity. In the closing decade of the 19th century however, the time was ripe for the presentation of the diverse religions of the world from a common platform, not by scholars but by men who actually followed them, and when the special Committee appointed for the purpose by the President of the Columbian Exposition circulated their plans, the idea of a World’s Parliament of Religions met with general acceptance.

The Chairman of the Committee, Dr. J. R. Burrows, who had received copies of the *Mahā Bodhi Journal*, entered into correspondence with Dharmapāla, and in the end invited him to Chicago as the representative of the Southern Buddhist Church. With his usual modesty, Dharmapāla doubted his ability to expound the Dhamma before such a distinguished gathering, but his friends were insistent that he should go, one of them declaring that far more important than any amount of scholarship was the living conviction of the truth of the Buddha’s Word. Such a conviction was the breath of Dharmapāla’s life. After much consideration he decided to accept the invitation, reflecting that it would enable him to visit Japan and China in the interests of the Society without putting any additional strain on its

resources. Only Col. Olcott was against the trip, roundly declaring that with so much work to be done in India it was a waste of time.

However, Dharmapāla was by this time accustomed to deciding things for himself, and in the end the Colonel's opposition collapsed and he promised to write to Mrs. Besant, who was also attending the Parliament, asking her to keep an eye on his young colleague. After entrusting the Journal to Sarat Chandra Das, Dharmapāla left Calcutta at the beginning of July, and on the evening of the day of his arrival in Colombo was presented with a purse by the Ceylon Theosophical Society. Sumaṅgala Nāyaka Thera invoked the blessings of the devas on his mission, and on behalf of the Buddhists of Ceylon gave him a Mandate to Dr. Burrows.

On July 20th his parents, relatives and friends, together with a number of Buddhists and Theosophists, came on board the *Britannia* to bid the young adventurer farewell. His mother kissed him on the face, and his father, who had generously provided him with new clothes and money for the trip, kissed his hand. At last the ship weighed anchor, and as the sun set in red and golden splendour over the palm-fringed shores of Ceylon Dharmapāla was left alone with his Buddha-relic and image, and the twenty thousand copies of the Five Precepts which he had had printed for free distribution. The journey to England passed quietly enough in the usual round of study, meditation and voluminous correspondence, together with occasional

sightseeing at Aden, Port Said and Brindisi, and conversation with some of the passengers on board, to whom he distributed his leaflets. At Gibraltar he saw some fine silk handkerchiefs impressed with the picture of the Rock, and felt that he would like to see the Buddhist flag and the Five Precepts printed on silk handkerchiefs in the same way.

First Visit to England

On August 11th he saw England for the first time, afterwards writing in his diary, "The first sight of English foliage made me think of England with a feeling of affection. I have seen beautiful scenery; but I was simply delighted at this first glimpse." A telegram arrived from Sir Edwin Arnold, author of *The Light of Asia* whom Dharmapāla revered as his "English Guru"; and his heart was warmed as he read the words, "Welcome to England, etc." Upon reaching Gravesend the following day Dharmapāla was delighted to find Sir Edwin himself waiting at the Albert Docks to receive him. With the poet were several Theosophists, including Leadbeater and his young favourite Jinarajadasa, whom he had kidnapped and carried off to England.

It was arranged that Dharmapāla should stay with Sir

Edwin Arnold, with whom he called on the Secretary of State for India, Lord Kimberley, who promised that the letter Sir Edwin had already written him about the Mahā Bodhi Temple should be forwarded to the Viceroy.

Leadbeater took him to see Mrs. Besant, introduced him to the leading British Theosophists, showed him the sights of London, took him out to lunch and dinner, and was in fact so unfailingly kind and lavishly hospitable that a mind less innocent of intrigue than Dharmapāla's would have immediately understood that the Theosophists, who had no doubt been warned by Col. Olcott that the young founder of the Mahā Bodhi Society had begun to be impatient of their control, were doing their best to entice him back into the fold. Leadbeater even told Dharmapāla that he had received money from the Master to be spent on his account.

Visits to the great Pali scholar Dr. Rhys Davids, the British Museum, and Theosophical groups filled the days until the time of their departure. With him on board the *City of Paris* were the Theosophists Chakravarti and Miss Muller, and of course Mrs. Besant, who had already told him in London that for the sake of the Masters and the Cause she must take care of him, and who now declared that before her death Mme. Blavatsky had actually said the same thing. Naturally, Dharmapāla was impressed by these statements, and wrote in his diary that Mrs. Besant was like a mother to him. On September 2nd the party arrived at New York, where more Theosophists were waiting to welcome them, and on the 6th they reached Chicago.

Chicago

Dharmapāla was one of the most popular speakers at the Parliament, and his addresses and lectures were considered to be important contributions to its proceedings. Apart from a sermon on “The Pure Life” which he delivered at the Unitarian Church, his first public appearance was at the close of the crowded first session of the Parliament when, surrounded by representatives of the world’s religions, many of them attired in brilliant national costumes and gorgeous ecclesiastical vestments, he brought to the four thousand people who had assembled in the Hall of Columbus to hear him “the good wishes of four hundred and seventy-five millions of Buddhists, the blessings and peace of the religious founder of that system which has prevailed so many centuries in Asia, which has made Asia mild, and which is today, in its twenty-fourth century of existence, the prevailing religion of those countries.”

The impression that he made on the assembly is preserved in a letter published at the time: “With his black, surly locks thrown back from his broad brow, his keen, clear eye fixed upon the audience, his long brown fingers emphasising the utterances of his vibrant voice, he looked the very image of a propagandist, and one trembled to know that such a figure stood at the head of the movement to consolidate all the disciples of Buddha and to spread ‘the light of Asia’

throughout the civilised world” (St. Louis Observer, September 21, 1893). During the week which followed Dharmapāla made the acquaintance of a number of the delegates, among whom were several Japanese Buddhists, spoke two or three times a day on Buddhism and Theosophy, and attended the protracted and crowded meetings of the Parliament, remarking with disgust after one long and tiring session, “All papers full of Theology and Anthropomorphism but pure life naught.”

Needless to say, his own paper on “The World’s Debt to Buddha” which he read on September 18th, with the centuries-old image of the Buddha on a table beside him, contained no trace of either Theology or Anthropomorphism, although quite a lot of it was devoted to the pure life. The paper was moreover innocent of oratorical effects, and showed none of the dazzling intellectual brilliance exhibited by other contributors, the modest young speaker doubtless feeling that after having endured for five and twenty centuries his venerable religion could make its way in the world without adventitious rhetoric. What he therefore laid before the Parliament was a plain statement of Buddhist principles supported by numerous citations from the Scriptures, without any plan or artistic arrangement, but simply classified under various sub-headings.

Dharmapāla, “the servant of the Lord Buddha” as he loved to call himself, was not eager to make a splendid speech, being content if he could function as the humble

mouthpiece of the voice of Truth. This very lack of artifice was not without its attractions, apparently, for Mr. C. T. Strauss, of New York, a life-long student of philosophy and comparative religion, was so impressed by what he heard, that he expressed his desire to become a Buddhist, and at what the newspapers described as “a simple, yet impressive” ceremony held under the auspices of the Theosophical Society of Chicago he received the Five Precepts from Dharmapāla, becoming not only the first person to be admitted to the Buddhist fold on American soil, but also the devoted friend of his preceptor, and a staunch supporter of the Mahā Bodhi Society.

The closing days of the Parliament were for Dharmapāla full of strenuous activity. So striking was the impression made by the young preacher from Ceylon, that whereas his colleague Vivekananda was compared with the noble but passionate Othello, Dharmapāla was compared with no less a person than Jesus Christ. We are not told that any of the Christian delegates were paid this handsome compliment. So popular had he become, moreover, by his amiable disposition and evident spirituality that, in the words of a contemporary newspaper report, “The mere announcement that he would lecture in the Athenaeum building on Buddhism and Theosophy was sufficient to attract an audience too large for the hall.”

By the time the final session of the Parliament had ended, and Dharmapāla had spoken his last words to the great gathering, the conviction had formed itself in his mind that

he could disseminate the Dhamma in America, and he decided that after two years he would return and establish Buddhism. The concluding words of his farewell address are an apt summary of the message which he so earnestly sought to deliver to the peoples of the West, and of which he was himself the living embodiment. "Learn to think without prejudice, love all beings for love's sake, express your convictions fearlessly, lead a life of purity, and sunlight of truth will illuminate you. If theology and dogma stand in your way in the search of truth, put them aside. Be earnest and work out your salvation with diligence and the fruits of holiness will be yours."

Honolulu: Meeting with Mrs. Mary E. Foster

The Parliament of Religions closed on September 27th, and after delivering a number of lectures at Oakland and San Francisco, on October 10th Dharmapāla left the shores of America for India by way of Japan and China. At Honolulu Dr. Marques and two lady Theosophists came on board to see him, bringing with them gifts of brilliant South Sea flowers and fruits, all of which he distributed among the passengers. One of the visitors, a stout, middle-aged woman

of about fifty, confessed that she suffered from violent outbursts of temper which were a source of misery to herself and her relations, and asked Dharmapāla how they could be controlled.

As a student of Buddhist yoga, Dharmapāla was able to give her the help for which she had sought in vain elsewhere, and by following his few simple words of advice she was eventually able to overcome her failing altogether. The name of the hot-tempered lady was Mrs. Mary E. Foster, a descendent on her mother's side of King Kamehameha the Great of Hawaii, and although their meeting lasted for only a few minutes so deep was the impression made by Dharmapāla's words upon her mind that she became in later years the most munificent of his supporters, her donations totalling in the end almost one million rupees. Temples, monasteries, schools, hospitals and numerous other institutions were through her generosity established in India and Ceylon, so that today her name is ranked with the names of Anathapindika and Visakha as one of the greatest benefactors of Buddhism that have ever lived, and will be remembered by millions of grateful Buddhists as long as that of Dharmapāla himself.

Japan, Siam, India

On the morning of the last day of October Dharmapāla disembarked at Yokohama, and by evening he was in Tokyo, where Noguchi, Horiuchi and about one hundred young priests had assembled at the station to receive him. During the four years which had passed since his first visit to Japan Dharmapāla had not only increased enormously in spiritual and intellectual stature, but he had also discovered the work he had been born to do, and it was of this great work, the deliverance of the Buddha Gaya Temple from the bondage of sacrilegious hands, that he spoke to the Japanese people, endeavouring through public lecture and private conversation to inflame their hearts with the burning enthusiasm of his own.

That they were capable of enthusiasm, devotion, and supreme self-sacrifice, he knew. Had not the old pilgrim-priest, who had visited Buddha Gaya on foot, out of excess of devotion fallen down senseless before the Buddha-image of the Gupta period which he had brought with him from Ceylon via Chicago? Yet in spite of the interest shown by high priests of various sects and the Japanese nobility his endeavours met with no tangible success, and when a meeting of priests at the Seishoji Temple informed him that after two years it might be possible to raise twenty thousand yen, which was a ridiculously small sum for such a huge country, Dharmapāla realised that he was wasting his time in Japan. Disputes between the priests over the custody of the Gupta image, and intrigues to monopolise the manufacture and sale of clay models of the sacred object

had moreover embittered his stay, so feeling that his presence was more urgently required in India he left Japan on December 15th, having spent six weeks there, and at once began to think of calling on the Buddhist Kingdom of Siam for assistance.

At Shanghai Dharmapāla wrote a message to the Chinese Buddhists, and with the help of Dr. Timothy Richards, a Christian missionary who afterwards published an English translation of Aśvaghosha's *Awakening of Faith*, he addressed the priests of the temple at Mount Omei, and presented them with a Bodhi-tree leaf and some other relics. In Siam he was able to achieve no more concrete success than in Japan. Despite the interest and enthusiasm shown by several members of the Royal Family, and the sympathy of the Foreign Minister, Prince Devavongse, most people seemed apathetic in religious matters and indifferent to the propagation of the Dhamma, and he noted in his diary, "The true spirit of Buddhism has fled and only a lifeless corpse is to be seen in Buddhist countries of the Southern School."

After three busy weeks in Siam he left Bangkok for Singapore, arriving two weeks later in Colombo, having been not only the first native of Ceylon to travel round the world but, what was infinitely more important, the first Buddhist missionary of modern times to girdle the globe with the Message of the Master. A royal reception awaited him. The crowds that had assembled at the jetty rent the air with thunderous shouts of "Sadhu!" as the long-absent hero

again set foot on his native soil, and he was taken in a magnificent procession, with elephants, drummers, and yellow-robed monks, to the Vidyodaya Pirivena, Maligakanda, where his venerable preceptor, Sumaṅgala Nāyaka Mahā Thera, received him with blessing. But the time which he could spend in Ceylon was short, for the work in India called him, and after lecturing in Colombo, Kandy, Kalutara and other places on his Chicago experiences and the Buddha Gaya restoration scheme he left for Madras. At Adyar he met Col. Olcott, who told him that W. Q. Judge, the leader of the American Theosophists, was to be impeached by a committee for fabricating messages alleged to have come from the Masters.

Dharmapāla's hopes that harmony would prevail were doomed to disappointment, for the secession of Judge and his followers was the first of schisms which eventually broke up the Theosophical movement into a number of warring groups, and reduced the Adyar headquarters to a platform for the antics of Mrs. Besant and her followers. The last day of March saw the wanderer in the arms of his friends in Calcutta, where the Bengalis flocked to him for news of Swami Vivekananda, and his diary tersely records, "I told them of his heroic work and the great sensation he is creating in America." Unlike certain other religious leaders, Dharmapāla was free from petty feelings of competition and rivalry, and was ever ready not only to recognise but even to direct attention to the merits of other workers in the same field. On April 11th he arrived at Gaya, bringing with him

for installation in the upper chamber of the Mahā Bodhi Temple a beautiful seven hundred-year-old Japanese image which was to be for many years the storm-centre of the battle for Buddha Gaya.

After Mr. McPherson, the Collector of Gaya, had advised him to win over Hindu opinion to his side, Dharmapāla visited Benares, the citadel of orthodoxy, and consulted the brahmin pandits there. But implacable as ever in their hatred of Buddhism, they were emphatic that since the Buddha was an incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu the Buddha Gaya Temple was a Hindu shrine and that the Buddhists therefore had no right to it. The Mahānt was of course of the same opinion and objected to the installation of the Japanese image on the grounds that its presence would be a desecration. He moreover threatened that if Dharmapāla attempted to bring the image to Buddha Gaya five thousand men would be lying in wait to kill him and that he was prepared to spend one hundred thousand rupees for the purpose. It was not until a year later, however, after Dharmapāla had spent some months in Ceylon for the collection of funds, that the great clash between spiritual right and legal wrong finally came. Dharmapāla writes in his diary for February 25th, 1895:

“At 2 in the morning I woke up and sat in meditation for a little time and then my mind suggested, as it did yesterday, under the Bodhi Tree, to take the Japanese image to the Mahā Bodhi Temple. I woke up the priests and then asked them to sit in contemplation

for a time. Then it was decided that we should take the image early morning from Gaya to Buddha Gaya. In silence I vowed 7 times giving up my life for the Buddha's sake. Before dawn we packed the image and by 7 were off to Buddha Gaya. On our way we met two Mohammedan gentlemen driving towards Buddha Gaya. Soon after our arrival at Buddha Gaya the boxes containing the image were taken upstairs to the Mahā Bodhi Temple and by a strange coincidence these two gentlemen were present and were witnessing the placing of the image. My friend Bepin Babu was also present and when we were going to light candles the Mahānt's gosains and the Mohammedan Muktiar came up and threatening me asked me to remove the image. Oh, it was painful indeed. Buddhists are not allowed to worship in their own temple. Great excitement. The Mahānt rushes off to Gaya and in the evening the Collector, Mr. D. J. McPherson, came to investigate the case. Several witnesses were examined and when he was leaving the place the Collector said a great desecration had been committed in the Temple. He ordered the Inspector to take care of our party. We stayed in the Burmese Rest House by the Temple."

Dharmapāla does not mention that the gosains (Hindu 'monks'), who were heavily armed with clubs and sticks, numbered forty or fifty, that he himself was grossly

insulted, and that the ancient Japanese image was flung head foremost into the courtyard below. News of the outrage immediately flashed round the Buddhist world, and on all sides expressions of indignation were heard. Proceedings were instituted on the advice of Mr. McPherson, who in his capacity of Magistrate of Gaya, found the miscreants guilty and sentenced them to one month's simple imprisonment and a fine of one hundred rupees apiece, finding in his judgment that the temple had been continuously used by the Buddhists as a place of worship, whereas no Hindu, including the Mahānt and his disciples, ever worshipped there, and that there was nothing to show that the Mahānt was ever the Proprietor of the Temple.

This judgment was upheld by the District Court, to which the Mahānt's minions appealed, but set aside by the judges of the High Court, both of whom were distinctly hostile to Dharmapāla. They patronisingly conceded that although in the possession of the Mahānt the place had never been converted from a Buddhist into a Hindu Temple, and observed that there was no previous instance of any disturbance between the Buddhist worshippers and the Hindu Mahānts or their subordinates in regard to their respective rights. As though to add insult to injury, the Government of India ordered Dharmapāla to remove the Japanese image from the Burmese Rest house, but in view of the popular resentment roused in Burma and Ceylon by this high-handed action the order was eventually rescinded. In

1897 the Mahānt returned to the attack, making representations through the British Indian Association, a powerful organisation of big landowners, for the removal of the image on the grounds that its presence “near the Buddha Gaya Temple which had been held, it was stated to be a Hindu Temple by the High Court, was deemed objectionable by the Hindus.” The government did not accede to this request, however, stating that it could not admit any claim to treat the temple as a purely Hindu shrine, while at the same time it had no desire to interfere with the Mahānt’s position. For the next few years the image remained in the Burmese Rest House, worshipped and cared for by the gentle Sumaṅgala, while Dharmapāla was scattering and broadcasting the seed of the Dhamma in foreign fields.

Second Visit to America (1896/97)

With the advent of Dharmapāla in 1891, the founding of the Mahā Bodhi Journal in 1892, and the Buddha Gaya Temple Case of 1895-96, the cultured Bengali public was becoming more and more sympathetic towards Buddhism, with the result that on May 26th 1896 the Buddha’s birthday was celebrated in Calcutta under the presidency of Narendra Nath Sen. It was the first organised celebration of its kind to

be held in India for hundreds of years, and when, a few weeks later, Dharmapāla left for America at the invitation of Dr. Paul Carus, founder of the American Mahā Bodhi Society, he must have felt that although the Mahā Bodhi Temple was still in alien hands his work had not been wholly without fruit. In London he dined with Sir Edwin Arnold, renewed acquaintance with Prof. Rhys Davids, visited the venerable orientalist Max Muller at Oxford University, and lectured in the Theosophical Society and at Hyde Park.

During the year he spent in America he was no less busy, visiting among other places New York, Chicago, San Francisco, the Grand Rapids, Manistee, Freeport, Guelph in Canada, Cincinnati, Duluth, St. Cloud, Fargo, Minneapolis, Genesis, Davenport, Iowa City and Des Moines. Everywhere he went he proclaimed the unadulterated Dhamma of the Lord Buddha, popularised the Scriptures of Buddhism, expounded the subtleties of Buddhist psychology and yoga, and exposed the commercialised pseudo-Oriental mysticisms by which America was then deluged. Above all, he exhorted his listeners to lead “the life of holiness, perfect and pure.” “Slaves of passion,” he wrote in his diary, “controlled by the lower senses, wallowing in sensuality, these so-called Christians live in killing each other, hating each other, swindling each other, introducing liquor and vice where they hadn’t existed. Themselves slaves of passion they enslave others to themselves and their vices”.

For Dharmapāla himself the trip to America was by no means without temptations. Several American women attempted to seduce the handsome young ascetic, but all their efforts to soil the radiant purity of his character failed, and instead of the words of endearment for which they had hoped they heard from his unsullied lips only the Word of the Buddha. The American Theosophists were at this time divided into two camps, one maintaining that, on the death of Mme. Blavatsky, W. Q. Judge had become the agent of the Masters, the other holding that Annie Besant had been chosen, and both parties added to his vexations by trying to use him for their own ends. But shortly before his departure from India, Col. Olcott had resigned the office of Director and Chief Adviser of the Mahā Bodhi Society, so that Dharmapāla's link with official Theosophy was now weaker than it had ever been, and although for him "H. P. B." had no successor he refused to be drawn into the controversy.

He concentrated his energies instead on Buddhist work, and in May 1897 had the satisfaction of conducting the first Vaisakha celebration ever to be held in the United States. About four hundred people attended the service, which was held in a room that had been temporarily transformed into a Buddhist shrine. As thirty-seven candles, symbolising the thirty-seven principles of wisdom, blazed on the steps of the altar before the Buddha image, the Anāgārika gave an address on Buddhism and chanted the Mangala Sutta from an old palm-leaf book. In spite of his multifarious religious

activities in America he did not forget the suffering masses of Bengal, and found time to collect funds for the Mahā Bodhi Famine Relief Work. His energy was in fact inexhaustible, and even after a year of strenuous missionary labours in America he could write:

“I hope to leave the U. S. in November for London and via Paris, Berlin, Rome I shall go to Ceylon. Meet my dear mother and father, travel all round the island proclaiming the holy life and call upon all priests to practise *samādhi*, and then go to Darjeeling via Calcutta and Kapilavastu and then find the way to Tibet in search of the Holy Masters. There make my way to Peking if possible, there to Japan and return to America. Death is nothing. I have died a million times and will die a million times. I will do this great work and save the world from the evils of ignorance, selfishness and passion.”

Paris – London –Rome (1897) – Back in Ceylon (1898) –Touring India

In Paris, Dharmapāla attended the Congress of Orientalists, and on September 14th 1897 held a Buddhist Peace

Celebration at the Musée Guimet. After a short sojourn in London where the Theosophists, finding that he was now completely free from their leading-strings, were unanimous in their opinion that he was “conceited,” he proceeded via Zurich and Florence to Rome, “The centre of Roman Catholic superstition. Immense wealth,” he remarks about St. Peter’s in his diary. A cardinal who lived “in gorgeous and princely style” promised him an audience with the Pope, but when Dharmapāla, who could no more conceal his intentions than the sun its light, let it be known that he intended to speak to the Holy Father about the drunkenness which European civilisation had introduced into Ceylon, and that he wanted a letter asking the Catholics to live in peace and amity with the Buddhists, the horrified ecclesiastic not only cancelled the audience but refused to see Dharmapāla again.

Back in Ceylon, the solitary fighter found that a clique in the Theosophical Society was against the Mahā Bodhi Society, and feeling that Buddhism and Annie Besant’s neo-Brahminism were incompatible he suggested to Col. Olcott that the word “Theosophical” should be dropped from the name of the Ceylon Buddhist Theosophical Society. Enraged at what he considered an impertinence, the Colonel did his best to check Dharmapāla’s activities in Ceylon, and his erstwhile pupil regretfully came to the conclusion that the older man was jealous of his success, and that in his anxiety to remain in power at Adyar he was willing to allow Annie Besant and followers to drive the Buddha and His Dhamma

from the place. Not until several years later, however, did he resign from the Society, and when, after Olcott's death, Annie Besant became President he was unsparing in his condemnation of the vagaries into which she and Leadbeater led the movement.

The whole of 1898 was spent working in Ceylon. Once again the Anāgārika, now a popular hero in the eyes of his countrymen, travelled by bullock cart from village to village until he had covered the whole island. Once again his ardent championship of the national religion and culture produced a wave of enthusiasm which swept from one end of the country to the other.

Feeling that in spite of all its advantages the Western university system of education was without ethical value, and that it failed to develop the mind's infinite potentialities, he persuaded his father to buy a plot of land near Colombo, and planned to start there the Ceylon Ethico-Psychological College. Worship, meditation, and study of comparative religion were to be included in the curriculum. Another institution known as the Sanghamitta Convent, for training Buddhist sisters in social work, was also started, and the Countess Canavarro, an American convert to Buddhism who had accompanied the Anāgārika to Ceylon, was placed in charge of the Convent and of the orphanages and schools attached to it.

Touring India

With so much to be done in his native land, Dharmapāla did not return to India until the beginning of 1899, and after spending two months in Calcutta he went on an extended tour of North India. Bankipore, Buddha Gaya, Gaya, Benares, Cawnpore, Meerut, Aligarh, Delhi, Agra, Saharanpur, Amritsar, Lubhiana, Amballa City, Amballa, Muttra, Brindavan, Thanesar, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Nowshera, Abbotabad, Hassan Abdul, Mardan and the Yusufsai Valley were the places included in his itinerary. A contemporary account of the tour, which lasted for four months, and in the course of which he travelled more than fifteen hundred miles, says:

“He travelled as a pilgrim, not caring at all for comforts, mixing with the sanyasins, ascetics, Hindu pilgrims, and with passengers of the third and intermediate classes, eating at times the poorest food, sleeping at times in places where the poor sleep and gaining an insight into the characteristics of the poor classes, who are suffering from intense ignorance, superstition and poverty.”

How keenly his compassionate heart felt the suffering of the masses with whom he mixed may be judged by the following extract from an open letter which he wrote from

Saharanpur:

“Open your eyes and see, listen to the cries of distress of the 141 millions of people, and let their tears cool your dry hearts. Don’t imagine that ‘Providence’ will take care of you; for the ‘Almighty’ does not calculate time by your watches. ‘A thousand years is *one hour*’ for him, and it is foolish for you to wait with folded hands. Wake up, my brothers, for life in this world is short. Give up your dreamy philosophies and sensualising ceremonies. Millions are daily suffering the pangs of hunger; drinking the water that animals in the forest would not drink, sleeping and living in houses, inhaling poison day after day. There is wealth in India enough to feed all. But the abominations of caste, creed and sect are making the millions suffer.”

His missionary labours for the year were by no means ended, however, for on his return to Calcutta from the Punjab he received an invitation to South India, where he not only lectured on Buddhism but also emphasised the need of educating the masses and removing the disabilities of the untouchable community. With the founding of a branch of the Mahā Bodhi Society in Madras, the Banner of the Dhamma was firmly planted in the South, where differences of caste and sect were perhaps more strongly felt than in any other part of the country. The early months of 1900 saw the indefatigable missionary in Siam and Ceylon,

after which he again visited Burma, this time to raise funds for the erection of a Rest House at Buddha Gaya, the District Board having undertaken to do the work provided the Buddhists would meet the cost.

Third Visit to America (1902–1904)

From 1902 till early 1904 he was again in the United States, where the campaign inaugurated during his second visit to that country was continued with unabated vigour. As before, he was eager not only to teach but also to learn, and visits to laboratories and technical institutes alternated with lectures on the Dhamma and exhortations to lead a life of purity. In Boston he wished to attend one of the classes which Prof. William James, the celebrated psychologist, was holding at Harvard University. The yellow dress that he had adopted after his return from the Parliament of Religions made him a conspicuous figure in the hall, and as soon as Prof. James saw him he motioned him to the front. "Take my chair," he said, "and I shall sit with my students. You are better equipped to lecture on psychology than I am." After Dharmapāla had given a short account of Buddhist doctrines the great psychologist turned to his pupils and

remarked, “This is the psychology everybody will be studying twenty-five years from now.” Time may not have fulfilled the Professor’s prediction to the letter, but it is beyond dispute that to Anāgārika Dharmapāla belongs much of the credit for making the existence of Buddhist psychology more widely known in Western countries.

Mrs. Foster’s Help – England – Industrial School in Sarnath

Numerous visits to leading educational institutions had convinced him that the East needed the technology of the West no less than the West needed the psychology of the East, and he therefore wrote to Mrs. Foster asking her to help in the establishment of an Industrial School at Sarnath. She promptly sent him a cheque for five hundred dollars, following it up a year later with another for three thousand. Thanks to these generous contributions he was able to engage the services of an American expert, and to despatch, before his departure from the country, the necessary agricultural implements from Chicago to Calcutta.

Arriving in Liverpool after a rough passage across the Atlantic, this preacher who took the world for his parish proceeded to London, where he met not only old friends

like Sir Edwin Arnold, now totally blind, but also made new ones like Prince Peter Kropotkin, the famous anarchist, by whom he was introduced to Lady Welby, Mr. Thyndman, Mrs. Cobden Unwin, Professor Patrick Geddes, and a number of other socialist and radical intellectuals. As though his energy and curiosity were still unexhausted, he took boat from Harwich to Holland, where he visited elementary schools and industries in Bussum, Copenhagen, Askov Vigin, and Amsterdam, thence returning to London. Another excursion took him to Genoa via Paris and Turin, after which he at last boarded the steamer for Colombo.

Once again his native land saw him for a few weeks only. Hurrying back to India, he at once began to put into operation his long-cherished plans for industrial, agricultural and manual education, The Industrial School at Saranath was opened, and Mr. Veggars, the American expert, installed as director. But the Theosophists of Benares displayed open hostility to the scheme, and upon the Commissioner desiring the removal of Mr. Veggars the project upon which the Anāgārika had lavished so much time and energy, and which would have been a source of manifold blessings to the local people, had to be abandoned. Arrangements for instruction in the vernacular were continued, however, and some years later took shape first as a High School and then as a College.

Back in Ceylon 'Sinhala Bauddhaya'

In November 1904 the Anāgārika went to Ceylon at the request of the Lanka Mahā Bodhi Society to conduct a campaign in the general interest of the Buddhists of the island. Once again he travelled by bullock cart from village to village, lecturing, this time not only on religion but on the various projects for technical education which then engrossed his attention as well. Impressed by the astonishingly rapid industrial progress made by the Japanese, he persuaded his father to organise a fund of sixty thousand rupees for sending Sinhala students to Japan in order to learn weaving and other arts and crafts. The first Weaving School was established in Ceylon in 1906 and soon developed into a large and flourishing institution.

In the same year the Anāgārika sustained a heavy blow in the loss of his father, the good Mudaliyar, who since 1891 had given unstinted financial support to his son's efforts to resuscitate the Dharma. When the sad news was communicated to Mrs. Foster the warm-hearted lady wrote to Dharmapāla asking him to regard her as his 'foster-mother,' and at once embarked upon that series of benefactions without which the Anāgārika's work could hardly have achieved such ample proportions. For six years she sent an annual donation of three thousand rupees, most

of which was spent by Dharmapāla on the establishment of Buddhist Schools, a printing press, and a vernacular weekly called the *Sinhala Baudhdhaya* which he started to counteract the unBuddhistic tendencies of the Theosophical Society.

Loss of Buddha Gaya Law Case (1906)

In 1905 the great legal battle between the Anāgārika Dharmapāla and the Mahānt entered its final phase, and for four years the whole Buddhist world watched the sordid proceedings drag on to a conclusion as shameful to the Government of India and orthodox Hinduism as it was bitter, humiliating and outrageous to the feelings of the Buddhists. The offensive was of course taken by the Mahānt, who at the instigation of the Commissioner of Patna filed a suit against Sumaṅgala Thera, who all these years had been taking care of the image, and Dharmapāla, for a declaration that he was the sole owner of the Burmese Rest House, and for the ejection of the defendants and the removal of the image. The Government of India was also made a party to the suit inasmuch as it had refused to order the removal of the image in 1896.

“The sub-judge who decided the suit,” says a Mahā Bodhi

publication, “in the first instance held that the Rest House had been built by the Mahānt for convenience of the Burmese Buddhists who had been allowed to stop in it, that the defendants were not entitled to make it their permanent abode and to place the image in it and ordered their ejection with the Image.” Dharmapāla not unnaturally appealed against this infamous decision to the High Court, which varied the decree of the sub-judge, holding that inasmuch as the building had been intended for the use of Buddhists in general, the defendants were not entitled to make it their permanent abode or to install any image there. They found that the Rest House had been erected with money at least part of which had been donated by the Burmese. The Mahānt’s position was found to be that he held possession of the building and had the control and superintendence of it subject to the right to use it in the customary manner, if any such right be shown to have existed; but no decision was given on this question of right as in this suit it did not arise.

Two decades of struggle to regain the lost rights of the Buddhists thus ended in total failure, and the sinister collaboration between political and religious imperialism at last succeeded in depriving the followers of the Buddha of any foothold in their own most sacred shrine. One stands aghast at the enormity of the wrong done by a powerful Government to the largest religious community on earth; one beholds with amazement the brazen impudence with which a mercenary Hindu Mahānt is permitted to pollute

and desecrate the holy of holies of the Buddhist world. Nor is the position at present very much better, even though nearly fifty years have passed since Dharmapāla was ejected from the Rest House, and even though an independent government has meanwhile arisen bearing on its enfranchised brow the symbols of Buddhist India. Buddha Gaya languishes in the hands of a predominantly Hindu Managing Committee, and the Buddhists continue to be deprived of all effective control over their own most sacred shrine.

Work for National Revival in Ceylon

With the Mahā Bodhi Rest House as the sole concrete result of twenty years of selfless labour for the holy spot, Dharmapāla left Buddha Gaya for Ceylon, where he spent the greater part of 1911 and 1912 striving to infuse some of his own boundless vitality into the sluggish veins of his countrymen. He was now at the height of his powers, and as though unable to exhaust himself by incessant travel and lecturing, he poured out his ideas for the regeneration of the nation in a series of articles entitled “Things That Should Be Known” which he contributed to the *Sinhala Bauddhaya*. Of

these articles it has been said, "They became the basis of a propaganda which was confined to no single question. They scintillated with wit and wisdom and called men and women to a more truthful and courageous life. These articles led to a reawakening of the national spirit among the Sinhalese."

With characteristic bluntness he attacked the shortcomings of the clergy, the majority of whom were corrupt and indolent, and soon the fires of controversy were ablaze. The class of unworthy Bhikkhus found a champion in a member of the Buddhist Theosophical Society, who criticised the Anāgārika personally in the *Sandaresa*, the journal for whose improvement the great Buddhist missionary had as a young man done so much. Religion was in Dharmapāla's eyes not separate from life but most intimately connected with every part of it. To his comprehensive vision, religious revival, moral uplift and economic development were aspects of one great progressive movement which should include in its scope every department of individual and social life. He therefore inveighed against the Sinhala people not only for surrendering their religious and cultural individuality to the Christians, but also for giving up their economic independence to the Hambayas, a class of immigrant Indian Muslim traders who had practically monopolised the retail business of the coast and the interior. The revival which he inaugurated therefore had not only religious, but also political and economic, consequences, for the Muslims, dismayed by the reawakened commercial spirit of the

Buddhists, began resorting to methods of intimidation and coercion which eventually led to disaster.

Visit to Mrs. Foster (1913) – World War 1914 and Ceylon Riots (1915)

Having once again galvanised his fellow-countrymen into activity, in 1913 Anāgārika Dharmapāla left Ceylon for Honolulu in order to thank Mrs. Foster personally for the magnificent support which for so many years she had given the Mahā Bodhi Society, due to which it had been possible to purchase a building in Calcutta and to increase the usefulness of the Society in numerous other ways. The good lady, now well stricken with years, was so pleased to see the Anāgārika that before his departure she gave him sixty thousand rupees with which to found in Colombo a charitable hospital in memory of her father. The Foster Robinson Hospital, open to all in need of medical treatment, was started immediately after Dharmapāla's return in a large house which he had inherited from his father. At public request the treatment given in the hospital was in accordance with indigenous Sinhala medical science.

On the way back to Ceylon the Anāgārika called at Japan, and, although shadowed by two detectives, boldly criticised the shortcomings of British administration in India at a number of meetings. In Seoul, the capital of Korea, he addressed a distinguished gathering which included the ex-Empress, and presented to the Korean Sangha a Relic of the Buddha. After travelling in Manchuria and China, the Anāgārika visited Shanghai and Singapore, and having seen the ruins of Borobodur in Java returned to Ceylon at the end of the year. In 1914 war broke out in Europe, and in the middle of the following year the increasing arrogance of the Hambayas, whose aggressions culminated in an attack on a Buddhist procession in Gampola near Kandy, and the murder of a Sinhala youth under the indifferent eyes of the police, precipitated the Muslim-Buddhist riots. Excited crowds streamed from the surrounding villages into Kandy to protect the Temple of the Sacred Tooth from violence, and immediately the disturbances spread to other parts of the island.

Alarmed by what they interpreted as a revolt against British rule, the authorities proclaimed Martial Law on June 2nd, and for three months the innocent Sinhala Buddhists were ground beneath an iron heel as ruthless as any which marched to the battlefields of distant Europe. Influential persons were arrested without a scrap of evidence against them, public servants were dismissed, and civilians tried by Courts Martial after the cessation of the riots, while the ordinary Courts of Justice were sitting uninterruptedly. Had

Dharmapāla not had the good fortune to be in India at the time he would certainly have been arrested and shot, as his frequent visits to Japan and his efforts to regain the Buddha Gaya Temple had already made him an object of suspicion. Determined to wreak vengeance on the Hewavitarne family, the authorities arrested the Anāgārika's younger brother Edmund, tried him by Court Martial for treason, found him guilty and sentenced him to penal servitude for life. He contracted enteric fever owing to the unsanitary condition of the jail in which he was confined, and before the end of the year he was dead.

Internment in Calcutta – Dharmarajika Vihāra (1920)

Dharmapāla himself was not allowed to escape punishment altogether, being interned for five years in Calcutta at the request of the Government of Ceylon. This long period of confinement within the limits of a city was naturally irksome to one who all his life had been accustomed to the freedom of three continents, and the volcanic energy which continued to explode in the pages of the *Mahā Bodhi Journal* must have found such a narrowing of its activities almost unendurable. These years were by no means devoid of solid

achievement, however, and with the erection of the Sri Dharmarajika Chaitya Vihāra, which had been made possible chiefly by donations from Mrs. Foster and the Anāgārika himself, his long-cherished ambition of building a Vihāra in Calcutta was at last fulfilled.

At an impressive and colourful ceremony at Government House towards the end of 1920, Lord Ronaldshay presented a Sacred Body-Relic of the Buddha, which had been discovered in a rock crystal casket during excavations at Bhattiprolu Stupa in Madras Presidency, for enshrinement in the Vihāra, and it was with deep emotion that the now ageing Anāgārika descended the carpeted grand staircase bearing in his hands the golden casket which contained the sacred object, and bore it through the reverential crowds to the open phaeton in which it was to be drawn in procession by six horses through the streets of Calcutta. Lord Ronaldshay also presided over the consecration ceremony of the Vihāra, which was witnessed by a large and distinguished gathering, and in the course of an eloquent speech paid splendid tribute to the Buddha and His Teaching concluding with the hope that “this ceremony in which we have taken part today may prove symbolical symbolic? of a return once more to that peace which is the most treasured offspring of the gentle and lofty teaching which Gautama Buddha bequeathed to men two thousand five hundred years ago.”.

Illness

In spite of these triumphs, Anāgārika Dharmapāla was not permitted to return to Ceylon until 1922, by which time his health had completely broken down, the combined effects of the privations he had endured as a young man and the lack of sufficient exercise from which he had recently suffered being responsible for attacks of sciatica, beriberi, palpitation of the heart and anaemia which troubled him for the rest of his life. Physical suffering was not able, however, to prevent him from reviving the *Sinhala Bauddhaya*, which had been suppressed during the riots of 1915, nor from attempting to increase the usefulness of the various institutions which he had organised some years before. In 1919 and 1923 Mrs. Foster had continued her apparently inexhaustible benefactions with donations of fifty thousand and one hundred thousand dollars respectively, the major portion of which was carefully invested by the Anāgārika so as to ensure a regular income out of which to maintain in perpetuity the various institutions and activities of the Mahā Bodhi Society.

By 1925 the condition of his health had become a matter for serious concern, and at the beginning of the year he had to go for treatment to a sanatorium near Zurich in Switzerland, where an operation for sciatica in both legs was successfully performed. Even while his body was lying on the sick-bed

his mind was busy formulating plans for what was to be his last great missionary venture—the founding of the British Mahā Bodhi Society and the establishment of a Vihāra in London. Though he had suffered much at the hands of the British Government in Ceylon and India, he had no hatred for the English people. Knowing that hatred ceases not by hatred but only by love, and that force could be overcome only by patience, in return for the injuries which he had received at their hands he wished to give the people of England the most precious gift he had, the Gift of the Dharma. Such a gesture is typical of Dharmapāla.

Frequently deceived and swindled by those whom he had trusted, betrayed by those whom he had helped, he entertained no desire for retaliation, but like the great broad earth patiently endured and suffered all.

Mission Work in London

Arriving in London in August 1925, the Anāgārika commenced activities by giving lectures and talks under the auspices of the Buddhist Lodge of the Theosophical Society (now the Buddhist Society, London), the first of these meetings being attended by the three existing English Buddhist organisations, as well as by members of the United Lodge of Theosophists and the Blavatsky

Association. Convinced that the association he planned to start should function in its own premises, he sailed for San Francisco to appeal for help to Mrs. Foster, who agreed to give not only a substantial initial contribution but also a regular monthly grant.

Returning to England at the beginning of 1926 after a severe illness, he took up residence at 52, Lancaster Gate, where he was interviewed by Francis Yeats-Brown, well known as the author of *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, who a few weeks before had heard him lecture in the New York Town Hall on "The Message of Buddha". Yeats-Brown incorporated his impressions of the transatlantic lecture and a report on the proposed Buddhist Mission in London into an article which he published in the *Spectator* of January 30th entitled "A Buddhist in Bayswater". This article gives a good picture of the Anāgārika at this period of his life, when he was more than sixty years of age. "Certainly he looked delicate", wrote the *Bengal Lancer*, "but he seemed to hold an inner light within him, a latent fire of purpose".

After summarising the New York lecture he describes its effect upon those who heard it:

"Not a move or cough from the audience. Not a tremble in those lips that thundered the denunciations of Isaiah against our spiritual sloth nor any hint of exhaustion in that frail frame. Here was a man with a message. He delivered it erect, composed, master of himself and his hearers, with

the art of an orator and the dignity of a priest to whom the world is nothing. When he sat down there was a dead silence, followed by a burst of applause.”

A report of his interview with the Anāgārika follows, after which Yeats-Brown concludes:

“The Anāgārika Dharmapāla will create few eddies in the spiritual life of this country for his teaching is too alien to our mental habits. But he should be heard by those interested in Eastern faiths for as a teacher he is as authentic as he is eloquent.”

In May the Anāgārika spoke at the Vaisakha Meeting held by the London Buddhist organisations at the Holborn Town Hall, and in July he purchased a house in Ealing which he called Foster House, in honour of his patroness. Meetings were held on Sunday afternoons and evenings, and a number of distinguished speakers were always ready to address the audience.

At the end of the year Dharmapāla left England to raise funds in Ceylon for the London Mission, and to visit India in connection with the great temple, afterwards known as the Mulagandhakuti Vihāra, that he was building in Sarnath for the enshrinement of a Sacred Relic of the Lord Buddha which had been offered by the Government of India. Before leaving England he had started a monthly journal, *The British Buddhist*, the first number of which was written

entirely by himself. His expectations of aid from Ceylon and Burma were as usual disappointed, but he returned to London before the middle of 1927 with funds sufficient for the purchase of a house in Gloucester Road, Regent's Park, which was to be used for the mission work prior to the construction of the stately Vihāra of his dreams.

In November of the same year he succumbed to an attack of bronchitis, and years of overwork began to take their final toll of his frail body. Leaving the London Mission in the hands of his nephew, Dayananda Hewavitarne, he returned to Ceylon with his health irreparably broken. The physical suffering which he now had to endure did not cause him to forget the work for which he could no longer labour personally, and in June he despatched three Sinhala Bhikkhus, Pandits Parawahera Vajiranana, Hegoda Nandasara and Dehigaspe Pannasara to keep burning in England the Lamp of the Sublime Law,

They were accompanied by the Anāgārika's personal disciple Devapriya Valisinha, a young student from Ceylon who since 1917 had been gradually taking over from his master the heavy responsibility of maintaining the Society's institutions and activities in India. During the two years in which the party propagated the Dhamma in England Mr. Valisinha attended to the management of the mission, helped the Bhikkhus to form classes for the study of Pali, Buddhism and meditation, and by his amiable disposition endeared himself to all with whom he came in contact. On his return to India in 1930 he resumed his secretarial duties,

after the ordination of the Anāgārika succeeding him as General Secretary of the Society, and becoming, on his death, the inheritor of his unfulfilled ambitions and the chief instrument for the perpetuation of the work and ideals to which he had dedicated his life.

Back in Ceylon 1927

After his return to Ceylon Anāgārika Dharmapāla began the painful entry upon the last stages of his heroic career. For three years he was confined to bed with stomach trouble and heart disease, and his sufferings were acute. In June and August 1929, and in February 1930, his life was despaired of, and when the heart disease finally left him, Dr. Frank Gunasekera, his physician, was astonished at the seeming miracle and declared that it was not so much the effect of medical treatment as of the Anāgārika's will power, of his strong determination to see the consummation of the last of his prodigious labours, the opening of the Mulagandhakuti Vihāra at Sarnath. But life had still a few more blows in store for the aged warrior before she would permit him to quit the field.

In 1929 his only surviving brother, Dr. C. A. Hewavitarne, who had for many years been of inestimable help to him in all his undertakings, met a tragic death in a railway

accident, and Dharmapāla felt as though his right hand had been cut off. Then in January 1931 he received belated news of Mrs. Foster's death in Honolulu on December 22nd 1930 at the advanced age of eighty-six years and three months, and although he must have known that her days would soon be numbered, so sudden was the shock that it almost brought about a relapse of his heart disease. In great agony of spirit he recalled her unparalleled benefactions to the Buddhist cause, and wondered who would support the London mission now that she was gone. The future seemed dark. There was still so much to be done, and those who would carry on his life-work were still few in number, and young in years and experience.

Even while he had been lying on his sick-bed, when more than once it had seemed that the messengers of death had drawn near and warned him to make ready for the journey, certain of his fellow countrymen had not suffered him to lie in peace, but had launched shafts of spiteful criticism against the stricken giant whom they had never before dared to face, finding fault with the life which they were too selfish to follow, and picking holes in the work with which they had never lifted a finger to help. Only the sympathy of the poor and oppressed, who when he was nigh to death prayed in their thousands that the devas might restore him to health, comforted him in the midst of his afflictions. The teachers, friends and colleagues of his youth and maturity had all departed, and he knew that he must soon follow whither they had gone. Of all he had loved only his aged

mother now remained, having outlived three sons and two daughters, and having now to behold her first-born, who had so wonderfully fulfilled the pious dreams of her youth, stricken down by mortal sickness in the midst of his gigantic labours.

Sarnath – Lower Ordination (1931)

By March 1931 the Anāgārika had recovered sufficiently to be borne in a chair onto the steamer which would take him to Calcutta. With a last great gesture of renunciation he had disencumbered himself of worldly goods, creating from the Mary Foster Fund and his own handsome patrimony the Anāgārika Dharmapāla Trust, which was to be administered by five Trustees for the furtherance of the objects to which he had dedicated his life. As a free man, therefore, he watched for the last time the palm-fringed shores of his native land disappear over the horizon, and steadfastly set his face towards the holy land wherein for so many years he had laboured, and the sacred site at which was to be enacted the closing scene of his career.

He arrived in Holy Isipatana, Sarnath, from Calcutta at the end of the month, and although his doctors had ordered

him to take a complete rest he at once began to take an active interest in the Society's affairs. His body was infirm, but his thought flashed out with all its old brilliance and grandeur, and his voice could still thunder denunciation or ring out in reproof. He paid special attention to the training of the ten young samaneras whom he had sent from the Foster Seminary in Kandy to Santiniketan, Rabindranath Tagore's beautiful rural academy, and who were now completing their studies in Sarnath. Knowing that the future of Buddhism in India depended to a great extent on their endeavours, he was continually exhorting them to lead lives of purity and self-sacrifice. One of the samaneras was particularly attentive to the Anāgārika's needs, and with unflagging devotion was ready to serve him at any hour of the day or night.

This zealous attendant is now known as Ven. M. Sangharatna Thera, who has for many years occupied the responsible position of Secretary at Sarnath. Himself unwearied in his efforts to diffuse the Light of the Dhamma among the Indian masses, he is never tired of talking about the Anāgārika's wonderful energy and exhorting people to follow his glorious example. Another project which occupied Dharmapāla's thoughts at this time was the creation of an International Buddhist Institute, whereto he saw in his mind's eye students flocking in their thousands from every corner of the Buddhist world. Busy as he was with mundane schemes of this kind, his eagle mind soared often upon the trackless paths of higher spiritual experience,

and on July 13th he took the Pabbajjā or lower ordination from Ven. Boruggamuwe Revata Thera, receiving the monastic name of Sri Devamitta Dhammapāla.

In August he was strong enough to spend a month in Calcutta and deliver there a public lecture, and at the end of the year he had the satisfaction of seeing the opening ceremony of the Mulagandhakuti Vihāra set as it were as a crown upon his labours. The celebrations lasted for three days, during which there were accommodated in Sarnath nearly one thousand visitors, more than half of whom had arrived from overseas. In the afternoon of November 11th, when the sun shone from a clear blue winter sky on the yellow robes of the Bhikkhus and the brilliant silks of the assembled devotees, a golden casket containing Sacred Relics of the Lord Buddha was presented by the Director General of Archaeology to the Mahā Bodhi Society on behalf of the Government of India.

Amidst great jubilation the Sacred Relics were placed on the back of an elephant, and taken in a colourful procession which circumambulated the Vihāra thrice. In his address at the opening ceremony of the Vihāra Ven. Dharmapāla recalled his first visit to Sarnath in January 1891 when, he said, it was “in the occupation of low-class hog breeders.” The vast audience was silent as he recounted some of the difficulties he had faced, and it was with a thrill of triumph in his voice that the old warrior, who had been wheeled to the pandal in an invalid-chair, declared, “After an exile of eight hundred years the Buddhists have returned to their

own dear Holy Isipatana. It is the wish of the Mahā Bodhi Society," he said in conclusion, "to give to the people of India without distinction of caste and creed the compassionate doctrine of the Samma Sambuddha. I trust that you would come forward to disseminate the Arya Dhamma of the Tathāgata throughout India."

Higher Ordination (1933)

He knew that his days were numbered, and that the work which he had so nobly begun would have to be continued by younger and stronger hands. In April and December of 1932 he was again seriously ill, and wishing to die as a full member of the Holy Order he received the Upasampada or higher ordination on January 16th 1933. More than a dozen leading monks arrived from Ceylon to perform the historic ceremony, which took place in a Sima specially consecrated for the occasion. Though he had been suffering from a variety of complaints, particularly from heart disease, he appeared so active and energetic, so radiantly happy, that none could have suspected that he was in reality a chronic invalid. After his initiation he spoke as though he had shed for ever all worries, cares and anxieties, writing in his diary that he felt like one of the Abhassara gods, that live only on joy. His spiritual happiness seemed to inspire him with

fresh energy for the sacred cause which he had for so many years espoused, and he not only published the first number of the *Sarnath Bulletin* but even spoke of setting up his headquarters at Gaya and conducting a final campaign for the recovery of the Mahā Bodhi Temple.

Last Illness and Death

It was the last flaring up of the candle of his life before its extinction. In the middle of April he caught a chill, and fever developed. As his condition became more and more serious his disciple Devapriya Valisinha was summoned from Calcutta, and his physician Dr. Nandy arrived soon after. A few days later his nephew Raja Hewavitarne came from Ceylon, and the six samaneras who had been despatched to Buddha Gaya returned to the bedside of their beloved leader. Ven. Dharmapāla, now in the grip of excruciating pain, had no wish to live any longer. Many times he refused to take medicine, saying that it was a useless expenditure on his decrepit body. "Leave the money for Buddhist work", he would tell Mr. Valisinha, pouring the mixture into the spittoon.

As his sufferings increased he again and again repeated, "Let me die soon; let me be born again: I can no longer prolong my agony. I would like to be reborn twenty-five

times to spread Lord Buddha's Dharma." This was not the cry of a coward, but of a warrior whose weapons have been broken in battle and who calls for a new suit of armour so that he may carry on the fight. Towards the end of his life, when the vigorous mind felt keenly the body's decrepitude he made a solemn asseveration that he would take birth in a brahmin family of Benares and in a new body continue the battle for Buddha Gaya. With all the strength at his command he willed that it should so come to pass, and today his intimate followers believe that before long he will return to direct the movement to which he had vowed to dedicate himself life after life.

Even while he was lying on his death-bed, however, his enemies did not scruple to direct a blow at his defenceless head. The leader of a certain Buddhist group in Ceylon eager for notoriety, concluded a secret agreement with the Mahānt which would have ruined Ven. Dharmapāla's labours. Subsequent protests from the Ceylon Buddhist public prevented this agreement from being put into operation, but when he heard of the treachery his grief and indignation were terrible to behold. "It was the greatest shock of his life," writes Devapriya Valisinha, "and I can vividly recollect his pain and anguish ... Alas! He never recovered from the shock. How could he forget such treachery even on his sick bed?" He exhorted those about him to carry on the great work of his life, and never rest until Buddha Gaya was restored to Buddhist hands.

Thereafter, he showed no desire for food, which had to be

injected into him against his will. On the 27th he suddenly demanded pen and paper, and despite his semi-conscious condition with great difficulty scribbled something. One line was illegible, but the others read, "Doctor Nandy, I am tired of injections: I may pass away." His eyes were now closed.

The following morning he was almost unconscious, and made no sound except to mutter "Devapriya" once. At twelve o'clock his temperature began to rise, and in spite of the physician's efforts by two o'clock it had risen to 104.6. With anguish in their hearts, those who stood round his bedside realised that the hour which was to release him from his sufferings had come. The Bhikkhus and sāmaṇeras were summoned and requested to chant *paritta*, and as they recited the age-old verses of the sacred texts, the Great Being's consciousness, radiant with a lifetime of wisdom, energy and love, relaxed its hold on the worn-out body and flashed into new realms of service, leaving upon the face of the corpse it had forsaken a serene smile of happiness and contentment.

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