

**ARCHIVE FEVER, ANARCHIVES AND
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: INSIGHTS
FROM THE 19TH CENTURY MAHA
BODHI SOCIETY ARCHIVE IN BENGAL**

Maitrayee Mukherjee

Vernacular syncretism and cultural heterodoxy in colonial Bengal: Digitisation and survey of rare archives at Maha Bodhi Society, Kolkata (EAP1546)



View archives from this project (38)

Aims and objectives

Project details

- DOI:
<https://dx.doi.org/10.15130/EAP1546>
- Grant holder(s):
Professor Anindya Sekhar Purakayastha
- Host Institution:
Institute of Language Studies and Research (ILSR), Kolkata
- Archival partners:
Maha Bodhi Society of India, Kolkata Headquarters
- Award year:
2023
- Project duration:
12 months
- Location(s) of archival material:
India
- Award:
£12,000

Both the objectives of digitization and survey were successfully completed. We have succeeded in completing the entire targeted task of digitization at the Maha Bodhi Society Kolkata archive. The Maha Bodhi Society Kolkata archive houses rare nineteenth and early twentieth century periodicals and texts which are connected to the Buddhist Maha Bodhi movement in South Asia and its connection with global Buddhist networks. Most importantly, the digitization work of this project contains the Maha Bodhi Society journals (the first issue began in 1892) along with many other Buddhist periodicals published from India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and other parts of the world. All these periodicals have huge research value for any future research on South Asian religious history and intellectual history. We completed a total of 11,465 files of digital copies through this digitization project.

<https://eap.bl.uk/project/EAP1546>

Buddhist Chronicle

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CONTENTS.		SUBSCRIPTION RATES.	
	PAGE.	Annual Subscription (inclusive of postage) Rs. 5-00 Foreign 12 shillings. Single copy - 30 cents.	
1. Tipitakamaramaya Yekam. Prof. J. P. Mahipala	1	ADVERTISING RATES.	
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Pundit Shree Narayana	46		
11. Correspondence.	47, 52		
12. The Book of the Numerical Sayings.	48		
13. Editorial.	50		
14. Again Impressions. Hilda Kulkarni	52		
15. Nirvana. A. R. Zett	54		

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පාලි ත්‍රිපිටක ධර්මය.
Pali Tripitaka Dharmaya

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Part I

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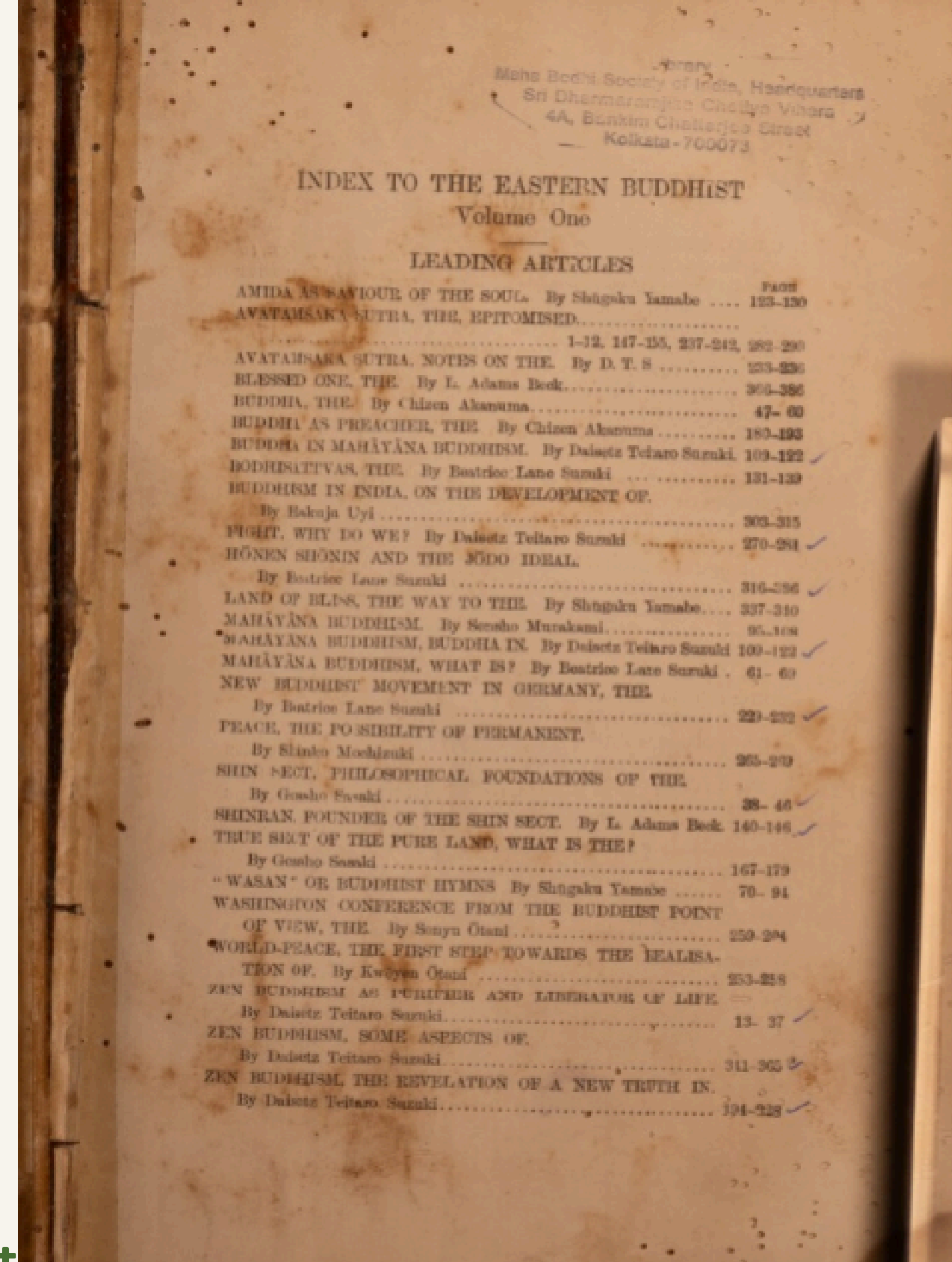
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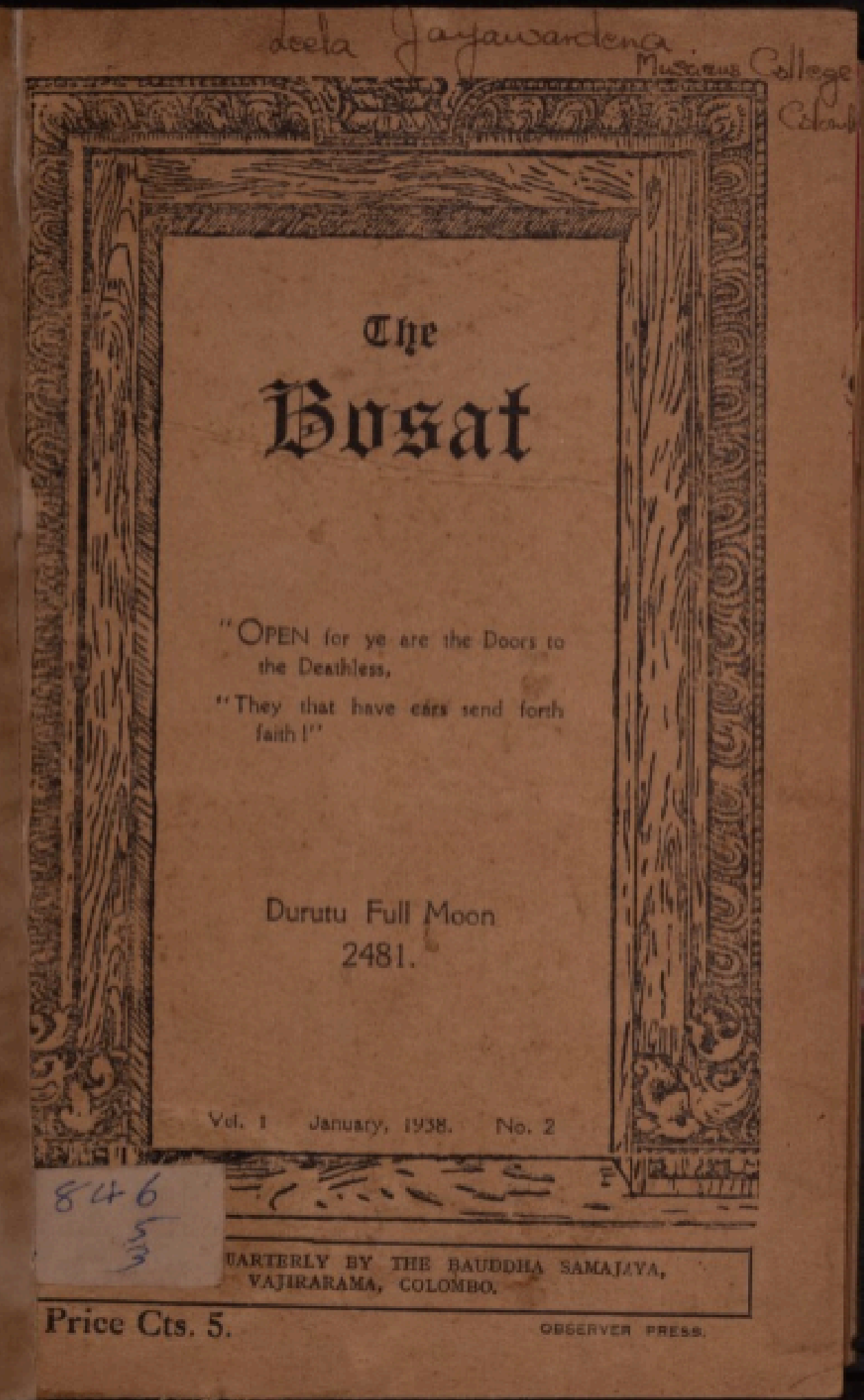
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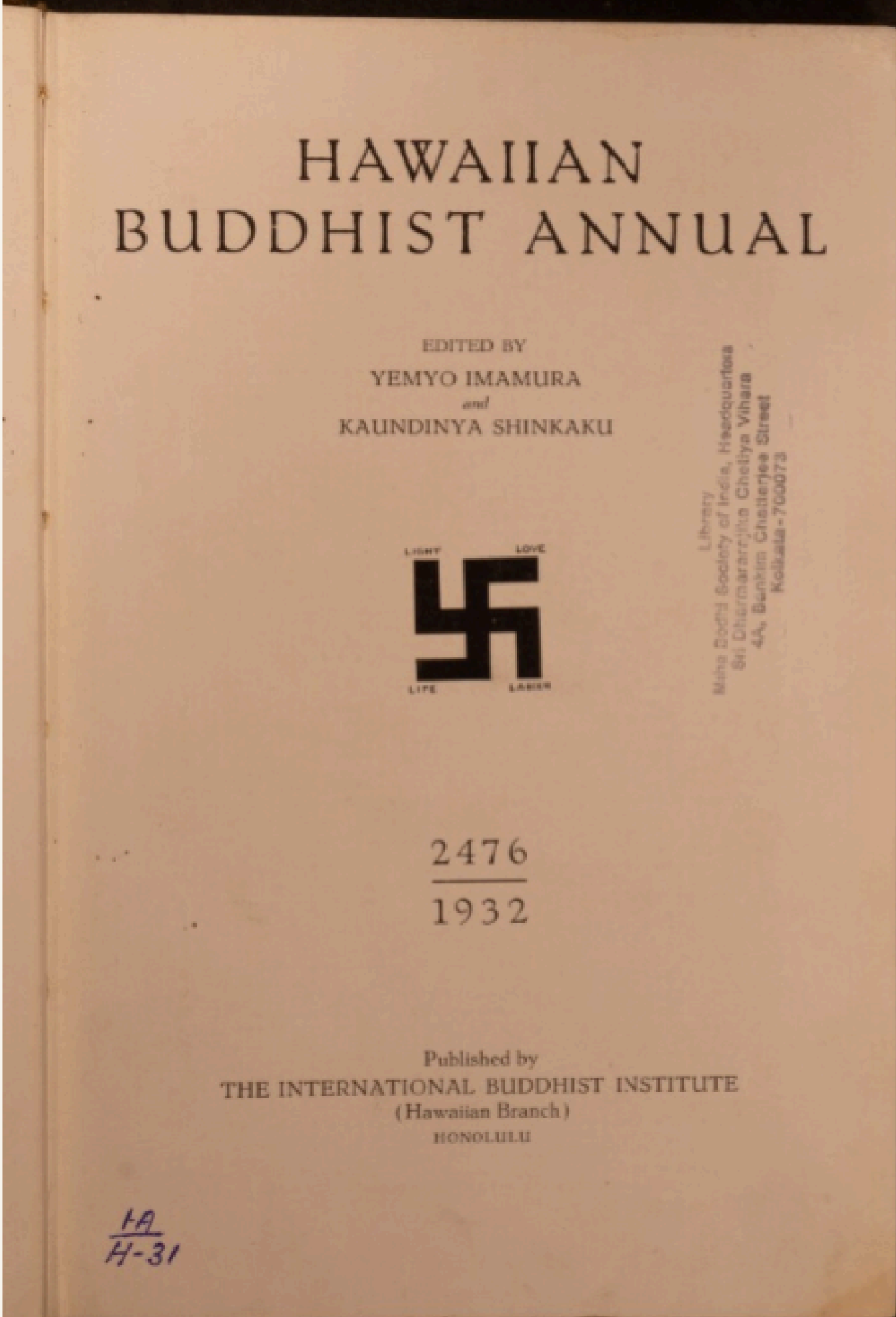
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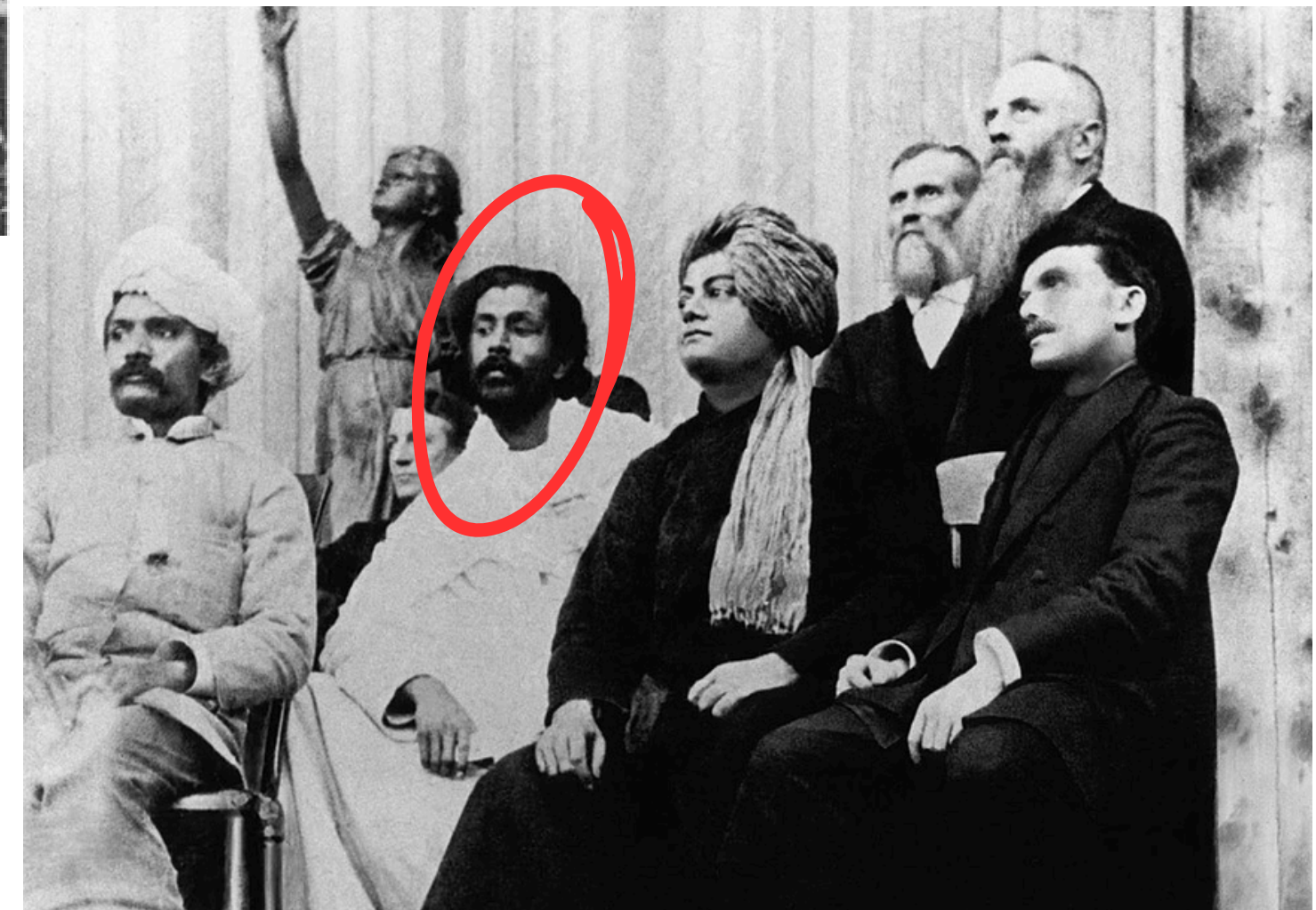
Hawaiian Buddhist Annual



1893 Chicago Parliament of World Religions



From left to right: Virchand Gandhi, **Anagarika Dharmapala**, Swami Vivekananda, and G. Bonet Maury.



THE CHICAGO RELIGIOUS PARLIAMENT EXTENSION.

REPORT OF THE NEW YEAR'S REUNION.

THE Committee of the World's Congress Extension decided to celebrate in a New Year's reunion the work of the World's Fair Auxilary, which found its crowning success in the World's Parliament of Religions. This plan was decided upon a few days before Christmas, but in spite of the short notice, the meeting held in the large theatre of the Auditorium was successful almost beyond expectation. The house was well filled, and the public was very attentive from the beginning to the end for more than two hours. The audience apparently did not consist of people who had come from sheer curiosity, but were earnest, and showed great enthusiasm for the cause which had induced them to come.

Reports of the Chicago RELIGIOUS PARLIAMENT were printed in MBJs

loosophical and ethical teachings of the Buddha, translations of the Pali and Sanskrit Pitakas into English, Bengalee and Hindi have to be made. For the interchange of news between the Buddhist countries and Buddha Gaya this JOURNAL will serve as a vehicle. It is hoped that the Buddhist Societies of China, Japan, Siam, Barmah, Ceylon and other countries will send for publication a monthly budget of news interesting to Buddhists. This would help to unite the Buddhists together in one common cause. The JOURNAL will, for the present, be issued monthly. Besides having a Head Quarters at Buddha Gaya, the Society hopes to have a permanent office at Calcutta to carry on its executive work. This want which is keenly felt, will, it is hoped, be immediately supplied by the Buddhists. A few lacs of rupees will put the movement on a sure basis, and the Society therefore solicits the cordial co-operation of every Buddhist all the world over.

✉ *All communications to be addressed to,*

MR. H. DHARMAPALA

GENERAL SECRETARY,

Maha Bodhi Society,

29, BANIAPPOKER ROAD, ENTALLY,
CALCUTTA, INDIA.

THE BUDDHA-GAYA MAHA-BODHI SOCIETY.

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WHO DESTROYED BUDDHISM IN INDIA ?

Sir Edwin Arnold in the introduction to his epic the "Light of Asia" writes these beautiful lines : "A generation ago little or nothing was known in Europe of this great faith of Asia, which had nevertheless existed during twenty-four centuries, and at this day surpasses, in the number of its followers and the area of its prevalence, any other form of creed. Four hundred and seventy millions of our race live and die in the tenets of Gautama ; and the spiritual dominions of this ancient teacher extend, at the present time, from Nepaul and Ceylon, over the whole Eastern Peninsula, to China, Japan, Tibet, Central Asia, Siberia, and even Swedish Lapland. India itself might fairly be included in this magnificent Empire of Belief : for though the profession of Buddhism has for the most part passed away from the land of its birth, the mark of Gautama's sublime teaching is stamped ineffaceably upon modern Brahmanism, and the most characteristic habits and convictions of the Hindus are clearly due to the benign influence of Buddha's precepts. More than a third of mankind, therefore, owe their moral and religious

ideas to this illustrious Prince.

The causes of the total obliteration of this "religion of love" from the land of its birth, wherein it had flourished for seventeen centuries have not yet been properly investigated by the Orientalists. The historian as well as the archaeologist and antiquarian has only conjectured that the extirpation of Buddhists was accomplished by the "malignant Brahmans," as General Cunningham calls them, during the time of Kumarila Bhatta and Sankara charya whose Tertullian orations aroused the fiery spirit of the vedic Aryans to utterly destroy every vestige of Buddhism ! Professor Barth one of the most cautious and far seeing orientalist in his splendid work "The Religions of India" writes : "How are we to account for this total extinction of Buddhism in the country that witnessed its birth, and in which it flourished so long. Although it is in general more difficult to account for the decay of religions than their rise and growth, the disap-

The argument revolving Bodhgaya,
'Malignant Brahmins as the
exterminator of Buddhism
in India

THE HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

A CONVENIENT bungalow, standing in four acres of ground, has been rented by the Countess Wachtmeister, Mrs. Annie Besant and Mr. Bertram Keightley, for the Headquarters of the Indian Section. It stands within the Municipal boundary of Benares and is under the city, not the cantonment, jurisdiction, while its central position makes it easily accessible from all sides.

The household is organised not on European but on Indian lines; the bungalow is furnished as an Indian house, and the food supplied to inmates and guests is purely vegetable; the arrangements are all in hands of a most respectable Brâhman, who is responsible for the proper conduct of the household.

By knocking two rooms into one, a large reading-room has been made, which will serve also for the reception of visitors, and for the meetings of the Benares T. S. Lodge. For larger meetings a big hall is available in the garden-house of the family of the Benares Lodge President, Babu Upendranath Bâu, and this is merely across the road.

It is proposed to hold a Convention for Northern India during the Durga Pûjâ holidays, when it is hoped that the Lodges in Bengal, Behar, the Punjab and neighbouring Indian States, and the North-Western Provinces, will send delegates to Benares for consultation on matters concerning the work.

ANNIE BESANT.

Lahore, Feb. 25.

Annie Besant on the head-quarters of THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

near comparing the idealism of Buddha with that of Bishop Blakeley, says, "It is a remarkable indication of the subtlety of Indian speculation that Gotama could have seen deeper than the greatest of modern idealists." Schopenhauer says: "If I am to take the results of my philosophy as the standard of truth, I should be obliged to concede to Buddhism the pre-eminence over the rest. In any case, it must be a satisfaction to me to find my teaching in such close agreement with a religion professed by the majority of men. This agreement must be all the more satisfactory, because in my philosophizing I have certainly not been under its influence."

Contemporaries of the great teacher were the prophets Jeremiah and Daniel, who prophesied the dawn of a new era of peace to the Jewish people. Looze and Confucius in China and Pythagoras in Greece were great lights who appeared at the same time. Simultaneous with the appearance of Buddha, the God Jehovah gives a new covenant to the Jews abrogating the old covenant given to them through Moses, and his new covenant formulates the doctrine of Karma, which is a fundamental doctrine of the Buddha. Read the thirty-first Chapter of Jeremiah.

Pre-Buddhistic philosophers based their systems on making for granted that the world with all living beings was created by a Supreme Lord; that the souls are permanent entities, that man's destiny is preordained. There were others who held to the materialistic theory that man's life began here and that at death he ceases to exist. Those who believed that the souls were eternal, believed in an eternal objective heaven. So long as his soul was imprisoned in this tabernacle of flesh, so long it was suffering, and happiness consisted in liberating this soul from the body. To save the soul these philosophers found out the path of asceticism. They led miserable, painful lives and killed themselves by starvation. There were other religious thinkers in ancient India who held the theory that the ego is eternal and unchanging, and that happiness consisted in identifying the ego with the eternal Brahma. The philosophy which they taught is to be found in the Vedanta of the Upanishad. The way to identify the ego with Brahma is by leading the life of the Sanyasin, renunciation of all worldly ties, retiring into solitude and contemplating that "I am Brahma."

The prince Siddhartha spent nearly seven years in the study and asceticism of the Indian thinkers, and he found that there was no permanent peace to the mind by these ways of religious life. The religious student yearns for peace of mind, but that peace was not to be found in the old religion. The theories about the soul and the world, etc., were examined and found unsatisfactory.

The new religion that the Buddha taught was simple. He discarded all theories relating to soul, eternity and the world, the permanency of the ego, a Creator-being as useless, and not tending to the edification of the mind. He discarded the ascetic life of the Brahmins, which ended in pessimism, selfishness and despair. He discarded also the materialistic conception of the Universe. Instead of these animistic, erroneous beliefs he promulgated the law of a continued causation—that of cause and effect and effect and cause, *ad infinitum*; instead of a Creator-being he taught the doctrine of evolution, and in place of a permanent ego entity he enunciated a psychology declaring that the mind is the

chief factor in the formation of character, and that the formation of character consisted in the sum total of one's doings, which is called Karma. The growth and decline of the individual was made to depend upon his own exertion. In the deeds that one does he lives life after life. The present individual is the inheritor of his past deeds in a former life, and the present deeds that he is doing become the womb of his next incarnation. The individual travels life after life in a circle. To be born again and again is suffering, and the cause of all suffering is selfishness, produced by ignorance of Nature's truths. Emancipation from this *becoming* is called Nirvana, and the only way to attain Nirvana is by leading the noble, unselfish life of charity, mercy, truth and purity, without expectation of reward, and without fear of punishment. Truth for truth's sake, duty for duty's sake, love for love's sake—this is the religion of the Buddha.

Correspondence.

MAHA-BODHI FAMINE RELIEF FUND.

THE following letter which bears on the Maha-Bodhi Famine Relief Fund was received by N. Saddhanand Bhikkhu, the Resident priest, from Mr. H. Dharmapala, by the last mail:—

"18th February, 1897.

"Yesterday I received your letter soon after my arrival in this city, which is the capital of the State of Iowa. I read out your letter to Mr. Leon Harvey, the Unitarian Minister, at whose invitation I came here, and he took immediate steps to have the subjects brought before the Senate. He took me to His Excellency the Governor of the State, and we had a short interview with him. I then went to the speaker of the House of Representatives, and it was then arranged that I should address the Representatives. This morning I had the pleasure of addressing the House, and there were present too Representatives, who were very cordial in their sympathetic response. I have addressed a letter to all the Governors and Senators of the United States, asking them to help the starving thousands. I hope good will come out of it. I have distributed printed copies of your letter among the Representatives. Mr. Leon Harvey has gone to see the Governor again, and he will endorse the appeal. Your letter will, I hope, be published in all the papers in the United States. I am glad that the Maha-Bodhi Society is doing this work. I have sent your letter to the Prime Ministers of Japan and of Siam, and I hope to write to the Chinese Minister at Washington. Your circular will spread among 100 millions of people or more, and I sincerely believe it will do good.

"Yours ever sincerely,
"(Sd.) H. DHARMAPALA."

The following letter has also been received from America:—

"10th February, 1897.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I am very glad to announce to you that the efforts made by Mr. Dharmapala have been more successful than I ever anticipated. A Unitarian clergyman of Des Moines, Mr. Harvey, encouraged Mr. Dharmapala to see Governor Drake personally, and the Governor promised at once to take steps towards sending a ship-load of corn to India. The question is only to cover the cost of transportation. In Chicago, a relief fund has been founded by Mr. Bonney and Judge Waterman. They are assisted in their work by Mr. Gandhi, the Jain. It may be hoped that at least some relief will be given, although even that will be very little in comparison with the greatness of the distress.

The correspondence section carried imprints of Dharmapala and/or members of the Maha Bodhi Society with religious and political leaders, not exclusively of the Buddhist world.

"The Place of Women in the Buddhist Church."

In 1892 the Buddhist Text Society of India was started with the object of giving to the world the unpublished texts of the Buddhist Canon, both Northern and Southern, that is to say the Pali texts as found in Ceylon, Burma and Siam and the Sanskrit texts that are found in the libraries of Nepal and Tibet. I took a share in the organization of the society at the request of the originator Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Das, the Tibetan explorer, who with the help of Lama Ugyen Gyatso, succeeded in the garb of a Buddhist monk from India in getting admission to the Buddhist Temples at Lassa, and the lamas believing him to be a true Buddhist treated him as a Brother lama and opened the doors of the temple libraries, and taught him Tibetan. When I met him in March 1891 rather unexpectedly at the Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal he was very cordial in his demeanour and when I asked him how he would account for the total extirpation of Buddhism from the land of its birth, he advanced the rather startling theory that it was destroyed by the Moslem invaders. Buddhism existed in the Gangetic Valley in the 13th Century and the last of the ruling dynasties of Bengal were faithful supporters of the religion of the TATHAGATA. With the extinction of the Pala line of Bengal Kings and with the advent of the Sena

Creation of the centre-periphery within the Mahabodhi Society

Who writes? What gets published?

1. The Women
2. The Muslims
3. Of nationalism
4. Of solidarity/opposition to other religious
5. Of Hinduism
6. Of education
7. On the World Religion Parliament
8. On the Bodhgaya Case

banner of Islam came to India. In Khotan, Bamian, Balkh, Chitral, Turkestan, Turfan, and Candahar and Afghanistan the Muslim invaders had seen grand temples dedicated to Buddha, and after having successfully destroyed them they continued their vandalism in Kashmir, Punjab, and in the Gangetic Valley. The word used by these vandals to designate the native of India was "Hindu" and the word that they adopted to show that he was an idolator was "buthfaras" which connotes a worshipper of Buth, the Persianised form of Buddha.

After a thousand years of Islamic activity what do we see in countries where Islam is the state religion? It is unsuited to civilized peoples. The American people assembled at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 hissed at the Mohammedan Delegate when he attempted to speak on the merits of polygamy as enunciated by Mohammad, and he had to sit down. Despotism is the form of government that a monotheistic polity enunciates, and we see the countries today where the religion of Islam is all powerful, Persia, Turkey, Egypt, tottering under despotic rule, and sixty millions of Hindu Moslems in India under the beneficent rule of England.

What we should like to see is that thousands of scientifically trained young Japanese going out to teach the gospel of sanitation, common ethics and the principles of evolution to the illiterate peoples of Moslem lands, and to teach the Moslem residents of Japan the degenerating influence of Islamism. Islam is a sensual monotheism and absolutely unfit to a nation that cherishes the desire to develop.

Christianity and Islam are two sister religions with a Semitic basis. Both are crude, unscientific, blood thirsty, iconoclastic, intolerant, dogmatic. Both propagated teachings of their respective founders by persecution, bloodshed, and vandalism. Wherever the propagandists went they destroyed older civilizations, massacred the professors of other religions, burnt libraries, and left no vestige of ancient monuments. In Java the beautiful temples of the Buddhists noted for their architectural symmetry were demolished by the vandals of Islam. In India the early invaders bearing the banner of Allah left nothing for the future historian to investigate in the field of architecture and religious literature. Now that they have neither the power to wield the sword nor burn innocent people they have adopted other tactics. They might now as well try to paint the sky in the propagation of their respective faiths in civilized lands. What has Islam to offer to the scientific world? Look at the countries near about Mecca, and what do

THE MAHA-BODHI AND THE UNITED BUDDHIST WORLD.

"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."—*Mahavagga, Vinaya Pitaka.*

EDITED BY ANAGARIKA H DHARMAPALA.

Vol. XIX.

FEBRUARY, 2454 B. E.
1911 A. C.

No. 2.

The Religion for the Depressed Classes.

India is the land of differentiations. There are in the Indian pantheon about three hundred thirty three millions of he-gods and she-gods. The principal gods are Brahma, Vishnu, Iswara, Ganapati, Kartika, Indra, Prajapati, Varuna, Soma, &c. The she-gods are Kali, Durga, Parvati, Jagadatri, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Annapurna, &c. The Gangetic Valley was the home of the Aryan Dwijas. South of the Vindhya hills was the home of the Andhras, and the Dravidas. Of the twice born castes the two chief castes are the Kshatriyas and the Brahmanas. The third caste is the Vaishya caste, and the non-dwija caste is the Sudra. The Sudra is supposed to have been produced from the feet of Brahma. And he was appointed by the Brahmans to serve the other three castes. It is evident that by this classification the priestly law-givers intended to show that the Creator himself was the party responsible for this unjust classification. It is also an indication that certain limbs of the Creator himself were not equally pure.

Outside the four castes there are what are called the Depressed Classes. They are outside the pale of Aryanism. The Brahmans have no concern with them. They are not expected to read the Vedas, and the Brahmana rituals are not for them. And to the class of Sudras and the depressed Class practically there is no religion, except to make sacrifices of slaughtered animals. Pigs, buffaloes, goats &c., are the animals slaughtered to appease the he-gods and she-gods. No wonder that the millions of the illiterate people of India find no hope for their salvation, either here or

In a bid to position Buddhism as the superior religion, the *Journal* often failed to distance itself from the polarized atmosphere of the times. The book review for *Islamic Fraternity* mentions, "Christianity and Islam...are two sister religion with semitic basis. Both are crude, unscientific, blood-thirsty...". At the same time, the notes and news section of the same *Journal* carried news of "Sonthal converts" to Christianity, as well as advocates abolition of caste system, without differentiation of the same with class.

The Society representing Buddhism in general, not any single aspect of it, shall preserve absolute neutrality with respect to the doctrines and dogmas taught by sections and sects among Buddhists. It is not lawful for anybody, whether a member or not, to attempt to make it responsible, as a body, for his own views. Membership being open to all, whether professed Buddhists or not, the Society is bound to guarantee them their rights as neutrals. It will be equally ready to publish expositions of all Buddhistic sects, but without committing itself to any one.

—:0:—

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—:0:—

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