

## A BUDDHIST GENESIS.<sup>1</sup>

THIS document is translated from the twenty-seventh Dialogue of the Long Collection (*Dīgha-Nikāyo*). It occurs in a discussion on the caste question; but that it is a book in itself is clear from the fact that a rival recension of the Scriptures has transmitted it in a different connection, and with a different title. This rival recension is that of the Sublime Story (*Mahāvastu*), an expanded portion of the Book of Discipline belonging to the sect called the Transcendentalists or Docetists (*Lokottaravādino*), which is a branch of the Great Council School (*Mahāsaṃghiko*). Now the Great Council was the rival sect of the School of the Elders (*Theravādo*) who have preserved the Scriptures in Pāli. The Great Council preserved them in some kind of Prākṛit, which has since been partially Sanskritised. We have therefore this old Buddhist Genesis in two different Indian languages (to say nothing of a fifth-century translation into Chinese); transmitted by two different sects which parted company in the pre-Christian period of Buddhism; and in two different portions of the Canon: viz., the Book of Dialogues (*Sutta-Piṭakam*) and the Book of Discipline (*Vinaya-Piṭakam*). In the former (in Pāli) it is entitled the Dialogue Primeval (*Aggañña-suttam*) and in the latter, The History of Kings. These two ancient recensions agree in the main, but are verbally different. When an old document has such a transmission, its antiquity is well established.

The Buddhist Genesis was epitomised by Robert Spence Hardy in his *Manual of Buddhism (sic)* published at London in 1853. But

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from the Pāli by Albert J. Edmunds, Philadelphia.

Hardy translated not from the Pâli texts, but from mediæval Singhalese commentaries, which in turn are based upon Pâli texts and commentaries combined. Therefore we can never be sure, when reading Spence Hardy, how much of a narrative is from the primitive text and how much has been expanded or exaggerated from commentaries in Pâli and Singhalese.

An account of the Great Council version has been given in French by Émile Senart, in the Introduction to Vol. I. of his splendid edition of the Mahâvastu (Paris, 1882). So corrupt and difficult is the text that even this learned Prâkrit scholar shrank from giving a verbal translation, but contented himself with an epitome.

A brief account in English, based upon the Pâli recension, has been given by Rhys Davids, in his *Dialogues of the Buddha* (London, 1899, p. 105). Samuel Beal translates two versions from the Chinese, the second one being from the Long Collection. (*Four Lectures*: London, 1882, pp. 151-155.)

The present is the first translation of the text itself, and is made from the King-of-Siam's edition, printed in Siamese characters, in Vol. XI. of his thirty-nine volumes of the Pâli Canon, which was published at his capital in 1894, and in 1895 distributed throughout the world to universities and libraries. There are two copies in Philadelphia: viz., at the University of Pennsylvania and the Mercantile Library. In 1905 it is expected that the Pâli Text Society of London will print our present Genesis text in Roman letters, when it will be much easier to read.

We cannot here discuss the many questions raised by this ancient book. Suffice it to say that the idea of Genesis as a fall is ancient, and the interpretation of Paradise as a spiritual state instead of a material one is now regarded by a high authority to be the original conception of Eden in the Babylonian mythology.<sup>1</sup> The Christian student will be aware that such an interpretation was given to the Hebrew Genesis by Philo the Jew of Alexandria, at the time of Christ; by Origen of Alexandria, in the third cen-

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<sup>1</sup> *Babylonian and Hebrew Genesis*. By Heinrich Zimmern. London, 1901, p. 33.

ture; by Jacob Boehme of Görlitz in the sixteenth, and by Emanuel Swedenborg of Stockholm, in the eighteenth.

The exact date of our document cannot be fixed, but after years of research I am satisfied that the Pâli Canon existed, in its main constituents, if not in its present form, at the Council of Vaṭṭagâmini, about B. C. 40,<sup>1</sup> in the ancient capital of Ceylon. At this Council the sacred lore, which had hitherto been oral, was committed to writing, say the Ceylon Chronicles; and a number of facts, which cannot be detailed here, give probability to the statement. Even if only the older parts of the Canon existed then, the Genesis document was certainly among them, because transmitted by a branch of the rival sect which had split off from the sect of Ceylon (the School of the Elders) some centuries before. The Buddhist tradition maintains that this document, together with most of the Dialogues and Discipline, was fixed in its present form by the Council of Râjagaha, upon Buddha's decease in the fifth century before Christ. But while criticism allows that something was settled then, it cannot admit so early a redaction for a literature bearing all the marks of long development. We may safely say, then, that the Buddhist Genesis was composed between the fifth and the first centuries before Christ.

How far the main idea of our document can be regarded as compatible with the underlying philosophy of the teachings of Buddha himself, does not fall within the scope of our investigation.

ALBERT J. EDMUNDS.

EASTER, 1902.

#### THE DIALOGUE PRIMEVAL (AGGAÑÑA-SUTTAM).<sup>2</sup>

O Vâsetṭhâ,<sup>3</sup> there is a season, at vast intervals in the lapse of time, when this world is dissolved; and upon the world's dissolution, the inhabitants are mostly brought together in the heaven of

<sup>1</sup> Kern's corrected date.

<sup>2</sup> The discussion on caste, which precedes, is omitted, being no part of the Genesis document.

<sup>3</sup> The plural name of two Brahmin disciples, to whom Gotamo addresses the account. Hereafter we omit it: it occurs in every paragraph.

the Radiant, and there they dwell for a long, long period, mind-made, feeders on joy, self-resplendent, traversing the sky, and abiding in goodness.

Again, there is a season, at vast intervals in the lapse of time, when this world is re-evolved; and upon the world's evolution, people disappear from the host of the Radiant and come down hither.<sup>1</sup> And they are mind-made, feeders on joy, self-resplendent, traversing the sky, and abiding in goodness. [And so] do they dwell for a long, long period.

Now at that season there is gloom and darkness universally: moon and sun are known not; stars and constellations are not known; nor night and day, nor month and fortnight, nor seasons of the year. Women and men are known not, but people say: "Sentient beings only are considered."<sup>2</sup>

Now for those beings there arises, after a vast interval in the lapse of time, a savory earth everywhere upon the water. Even as the tree of paradise on high is to a self-restrained one who is reaching Nirvâna, such does it appear. It was endowed with color, scent, and savor like unto ghee and butter: such was its color. And even as a little honey undefiled, such was its taste.

Then some luxurious person saying, "Oh! What can this be?" tasted with his finger the savory earth, and as soon as he had done so, craving<sup>3</sup> therefor became clothed and entered in. Others also, following the example of that being, tasted the savory earth with a finger. When they had done so, craving became clothed and entered in.

Then people approached the luxurious savory earth, to partake of it with their hands, and forthwith their self-radiance disappeared. When their self-radiance was gone, the moon and sun were mani-

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<sup>1</sup> A corrupt change in the Prâkrit, of the Pâli words *itthattâm âgacchanti* into *iccha-svam-âgacchanti*, has given rise to the idea, in the Mahâvastu, that they go whither they please. Then a gloss adds that this is always the rule: they always go whither they desire.

<sup>2</sup> The word rendered "inhabitants," "people," and "sentient beings" is the same in the Pâli.

<sup>3</sup> Craving, literally thirst. It is a technical term in Buddhist metaphysics for the will to live, which necessitates personal existence.

fested, and with them the stars and constellations. With these again came night and day, and with night and day the months and the fortnights, and with the last the seasons of the year. Thus was this world again evolved.

Now people remained a long, long time enjoying the savory earth for their food and support ; and so long as they did thus, mere coarseness entered into their bodies and differences of caste arose.<sup>1</sup> Some people were beautiful and others were ugly. Then those who were beautiful despised the ugly ones and said : "We are handsomer than these ; they are uglier than we." And by reason of their conceit of color the savory earth disappeared among those born with pride and conceit. When the savory earth had vanished, they met together and lamented, saying : "Oh, the savor ! oh, the savor !" Even now, when men have taken some surpassing<sup>2</sup> dainty they say the same : "Oh, the savor ! Oh, the savor !" In this they imitate exactly the ancient primeval men, but know not the meaning thereof.

After the savory earth had disappeared, there sprang up for those people a fine kind of moss. It was somewhat like a mushroom, and in color, scent, and savor was like unto ghee or butter. And even as a little honey undefiled, such was its taste.

<sup>3</sup>Then, as before, they ate the fine moss and lived a long time thereon, while coarseness entered still more into their bodies, and differences of caste arose. Also, as before, the beautiful despised the ugly, whereupon the fine moss disappeared. When it was gone a sweet creeper sprang up, which was somewhat like the cadamba, and in color, scent, savor, and taste, as the other foods before. The same experience was repeated, and the sweet creeper vanished away. Then they met together and lamented, saying : "Alas for us ! Alas ! the sweet creeper has failed us !" Even now, when

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<sup>1</sup>The word caste is simply color or complexion.

<sup>2</sup>The word "surpassing" is literally *divine* or *angelic*. As in the Old Testament, this word is used to mean great or fine.

<sup>3</sup>Here and in following paragraphs the exact phraseology of the preceding narrative is tediously repeated in the Pāli, but it is no part of a translator's business to perpetuate these mannerisms. Their use is to preserve the text from corruption.

men are touched by some divine catastrophe, they say the same : "Alas for us ! Alas, it has failed us !" They recall the very letter of the ancient primeval men, but know not the meaning thereof.

Now, when the sweet creeper had gone from those people, a delicate rice appeared, without coating or husk, pure, sweet-scented, and with the fruit already winnowed. They fetched food at evening for supper, and in the morning it was ripe and grown again. They fetched food in the morning for breakfast, and at evening it was ripe and grown again. It was not known to fail. Then the people lived a long, long time, enjoying the delicate rice for their food and support ; and so long as they did thus, mere coarseness entered more and more into their bodies and differences of caste arose.

Then the organ of womanhood appeared in the woman and the organ of manhood in the man. And the woman offered to the man strong drink in excess, and the man unto the woman. And as they did so, passion arose, and suffering entered into their bodies. By reason of the suffering they indulged in the act of sex. Then, when people saw them in those days, indulging thus, some threw dust and others ashes, and others cow-dung, saying : "Perish, vile wench ! Perish, vile wench !" And again : "How can one being do such a thing unto another ?" Even now, in some country places, when a murderess is being executed, some people throw dust, others ashes, and others cow-dung.<sup>1</sup> They recall the very letter of the ancient primeval men, but know not the meaning thereof.

O Vâsetṭhâ ! that was an impious practice in those days, but now it is a pious one. People who, in those days, indulged in the act of sex, were not allowed to return to town or village for two months and three. When those people had fallen into exceeding mischief in that impiety, they began to make houses, in order to hide the impiety. Then it occurred to some idle person : "Why should I be troubled to bring rice at evening for supper and at morning for breakfast ? Suppose I now bring it only once every

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<sup>1</sup> The Sanskrit here reads : "Monks, just as now, when a maiden is being married, they throw a stick or a clod," etc. This is doubtless the true sense, and the Pâli is probably corrupt.

evening for breakfast." He accordingly did so, and then some one approached him and said :

"Come, fellow-being ! let us go and bring some rice."

"Enough, O fellow-being ! I only fetch rice once every evening for breakfast."

Thereupon that other, following his example, said : "It would be good indeed to bring the rice only once in two days." Just then some one else approached that person and asked him likewise to go for rice, and he gave the same answer as the first, whereupon the other, following his example, said : "It would be good indeed to bring the rice only once in four days." When another person invited the last one to bring some, he was told about the four-day plan, and forthwith suggested once in eight days as enough. So soon as those people began to eat stored-up rice, then was the grain enveloped by the red coating and the husk ; no harvest was reaped ; failure ensued, and there were groves on groves of standing rice.

Then the people met together and lamented, saying : "Alas ! Evil things have appeared among beings ; for of yore we were mind-made, feeders on joy, self-radiant, traversing the sky and abiding in goodness, and so did we long remain. Then, after a vast period, arose the savory earth upon the water, and we ate thereof and lost our splendor, till moon and sun came forth, and stars and starry forms. So night and day, month and half-month and seasons yearly rolled, and we enjoyed the savory earth for long, until by the appearance among us of things wicked and demeritorious the savory earth did fail. Then the fine moss came round, and we lost it likewise ; and the sweet creeper and the huskless rice. The rice we gathered morn and even for our meals, a daily harvest ; failure was unknown ; and so we stayed for long, till for wicked and demeritorious things a coating and a husk did wrap the grain ; no harvest was there reaped ; failure ensued, and groves on groves are standing. Let us now divide the rice and set a boundary."

So they divided the rice and a boundary did they set.

Now a certain greedy person, while keeping his own share, took a share not given him, and enjoyed it. They arrested him

and said: "Alas! O being, thou hast done a wicked thing, in that thou hast, while keeping thine own share, taken and enjoyed a share ungiven. O being, thou shouldest not do thus."

"Be it so," replied that being to the others. But a second time he stole likewise, and a third; whereupon, after the same reproof, some struck him with their hands, some with clods, and others with staves. And so theft came first to be known, and upbraiding, and lying, and violence.

Then the best people met together, and lamented, saying: "Alas! Evil things have appeared among beings, in that theft has come to be known, and upbraiding, and lying, and violence. Suppose we now elect one being and tell him: 'Do thou rebuke whomsoever is rightly deserving of rebuke, and upbraid or expel whomsoever is rightly deserving thereof; but we will provide for thy share of the rice.'"

Thereupon the people approached a person who was finer, handsomer, pleasanter, and more commanding than the rest, and said: "Come, fellow-being! Rebuke whomsoever is rightly deserving of rebuke, and upbraid or expel whomsoever is rightly deserving thereof; but we will provide for your share of the rice."

"Be it so," replied that person to the rest; and so he rebuked, upbraided, or expelled those rightly deserving thereof, while they provided for his share of the rice.

Now because he was the great man elected by the race, there arose the first title<sup>1</sup> of "Great Elect." And because he was lord of the fields,<sup>2</sup> there arose the second title of "Nobleman." And because he reconciles others by justice, there arose the third title of "King." Such was the origin of this circle of Nobles by an ancient primeval title; yea, and of those very people who, though different, are alike and not dissimilar, by virtue of justice, not by injustice. Justice, O Vâsethâ! is best for the human race in this world and the next.<sup>3</sup>

[End of the Genesis document common to the Pâli Aggañña-suttam and the Prâkrit Mahāvastu.]

<sup>1</sup> "Title" is *akkharam*, the regular word for a letter of the alphabet. Its literal meaning is "imperishable."

<sup>2</sup> There is here, and also in the words "reconcile" and "king," a punning etymology: "field" is *khettam*, and "nobleman" is *Khattiyo*.

<sup>3</sup> The closing passage about justice (or religion) is not in the Mahāvastu, being part of the discussion about caste which is now resumed in the Pâli dialogue. In like manner there is frequent divergence of words and sentences between the two recensions, but agreement in the main story.