

**THE GOSPEL OF
BUDDHA: ACCORDING
TO OLD RECORDS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649595747

The Gospel of Buddha: According to Old Records by Paul Carus

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

PAUL CARUS

**THE GOSPEL OF
BUDDHA: ACCORDING
TO OLD RECORDS**

THE GOSPEL OF BUDDHA.

THE
GOSPEL OF BUDDHA

ACCORDING TO OLD RECORDS

TOLD BY

PAUL CARUS

*Buddham saranam gacchāmi,
Dhammam saranam gacchāmi,
Sangham saranam gacchāmi.*

CHICAGO
THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING COMPANY
1894

BL.
1451
C3
1894

COPYRIGHT BY
THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING CO.
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, 1894.

(All rights reserved.)

144333

PREFACE.

THIS booklet needs no preface for him who is familiar with the sacred books of Buddhism, which have been made accessible to the Western world by the indefatigable zeal and industry of scholars like Burnouf, Hodgson, Bigandet, Bühler, Foucaux, Senart, Weber, Fausböll, Alexander Croma, Wassiljew, Rhys Davids, F. Max Müller, Childers, Oldenberg, Schiefner, Eitel, Beal, and Spence Hardy. To those not familiar with the subject it may be stated that the bulk of its contents is derived from the old Buddhist canon. Many passages, and indeed the most important ones, are literally copied from the translations of the original texts. Some are rendered rather freely in order to make them intelligible to the present generation. Others have been rearranged; still others are abbreviated. Besides the three introductory and the three concluding chapters there are only a few purely original additions, which, however, are neither mere literary embellishments nor deviations from Buddhist doctrines. They contain nothing but ideas for which prototypes can be found somewhere among the traditions of Buddhism, and have been added as elucidations of its main principles. For those who want to trace the Buddhism of this book to its fountain-head a table of reference has been added, which indicates as briefly as possible the main sources of the various chapters and points out the parallelisms with Western thought, especially in the Christian Gospels.

Buddhism, like Christianity, is split up into innumerable sects, distinguished mainly by peculiar superstitions or ceremonial rites; and these sects not unfrequently cling to their sectarian tenets as being the main and most indispensable features of their religion. The present book follows none of the sectarian doctrines, but takes an ideal position upon which all true Buddhists may stand as upon common ground. Thus the arrangement into harmonious and systematic form of this Gospel of Buddha, as a whole, is the main original feature of the book. Considering the bulk of its various details, however, it must be regarded as a mere compilation, and the aim of the compiler has been to treat his material about in the same way as he thinks that the author of the Fourth Gospel of the New Testament used the accounts of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. He has ventured to present the data of Buddha's life in the light of their religio-philosophical importance; he has cut out most of their apocryphal adornments, especially those in which the Northern traditions abound, yet he did not deem it wise to shrink from preserving the marvellous that appears in the old records, whenever its moral seemed to justify its mention; he only pruned the exuberance of wonder which delights in relating the most incredible things, apparently put on to impress, while in fact they can only tire. Miracles have ceased to be a religious test; yet the belief in the miraculous powers of the Master still bears witness to the holy awe of the first disciples and reflects their religious enthusiasm.

Lest the fundamental idea of Buddha's doctrines be misunderstood, the reader is warned to take the term "self" in the sense in which Buddha uses it. The "self" of man can be and has been understood in a sense to which Buddha would never have made any objection. Buddha denies the existence of "self" as it was commonly understood in his time; he does not deny man's mentality, his spiritual constitution, the importance of his personality, in a word, his soul. But he does deny the mysterious ego-entity, the *âtman*, in the sense of a kind of soul-monad which by some schools was supposed to reside behind or within man's bodily and

psychical activity as a distinct being, a kind of thing-in-itself, and a metaphysical agent assumed to be the soul.* This philosophical superstition, so common not only in India but all over the world, corresponds to man's habitual egotism in practical life; both are illusions growing out of the same root, which is the vanity fair of worldliness, inducing man to believe that the purpose of his life lies in his self. Buddha proposes to cut off entirely all thought of self, so that it will no longer bear fruit. Thus Buddha's Nirvāna is an ideal state, in which man's soul, after being cleansed from all selfishness and sin, has become a habitation of the truth, teaching him to distrust the allurements of pleasure and to confine all his energies to attending to the duties of life.

Buddha's doctrine is no negativism. An investigation into the nature of man's soul shows that while there is no *ātman* or ego-entity, the very being of man consists in his karma, and his karma remains untouched by death and continues to live. Thus, by denying the existence of that which appears to be our soul and for the destruction of which in death we tremble, Buddha actually opens (as he expresses it himself) the door of immortality to mankind; and here lies the corner-stone of his ethics and also of the comfort as well as the enthusiasm which his religion imparts. Any one who does not see the positive aspect of Buddhism, will be unable to understand how it could exercise such a powerful influence upon millions and millions of people.

The present volume is not designed to contribute to the solution of historical problems. The compiler has studied his subject as well as he could under given circumstances, but he does not intend here to offer a scientific production. Nor is this book an attempt at popularising the Buddhist religious writings, nor at presenting them in a poetic shape. If this "Gospel of Buddha" helps people to comprehend Buddhism better, and if in its simple style it impresses the reader with the poetic grandeur of Buddha's personal-

*The translation of "*ātman*" by "soul," which implies that Buddha denied the existence of the soul, is extremely misleading.

ity, these effects must be counted as incidental; its main purpose lies deeper still. The present book has been written to set the reader a-thinking on the religious problems of to-day. It presents a picture of a religious leader of the remote past with the view of making it bear upon the living present and become a factor in the formation of the future.

All the essential moral truths of Christianity are, in our opinion, deeply rooted in the nature of things, and do not, as is often assumed, stand in contradiction to the cosmic order of the world. They have been formulated by the Church in certain symbols, and since these symbols contain contradictions and come in conflict with science, the educated classes are estranged from religion. Now, Buddhism is a religion which knows of no supernatural revelation, and proclaims doctrines that require no other argument than the "come and see." Buddha bases his religion solely upon man's knowledge of the nature of things, upon provable truth. A comparison of Christianity with Buddhism will be a great help to distinguish in both the essential from the accidental, the eternal from the transient, the truth from the allegory in which it has found its symbolic expression. We are anxious to press the necessity of distinguishing between the symbol and its meaning, between dogma and religion, between man-made formulas and eternal truth. This is the spirit in which we offer this book to the public, cherishing the hope that it will help to develop in Christianity not less than in Buddhism the cosmic religion of truth.

It is a remarkable fact that these two greatest religions of the world, Christianity and Buddhism, present so many striking coincidences in their philosophical basis as well as in the ethical applications of their faith, while their modes of systematising them in dogmas are radically different. The strength as well as the weakness of original Buddhism lies in its philosophical character, which enabled a thinker, but not the masses, to understand the dispensation of the moral law that pervades the world. As such the original Buddhism has been called by Buddhists the little vessel of