

The Buddhist Conception of the Universe

The early Indians and Greeks speculated about the nature, origin and extent of the universe. Anaximander, a Greek thinker of the sixth century BCE, is supposed to have contemplated the possibility of “innumerable worlds” successively coming out of (and passing away) into an indefinite substance. About a century later, the Greek atomists, Leucippus and Democritus, who postulated the existence of innumerable atoms and an infinite void, conceived of worlds coming-to-be and passing away throughout the void. These speculations were the product of imagination and reason and the “worlds” they talked of were mere reproductions of the earth and the heavenly bodies such as the sun, moon and stars.

The contemporary Indian speculations prior to Buddhism were on the same lines, except for the fact that some of them were claimed to be based on extrasensory perception as well. Here there appears to have been even a wider variety of views than to be found among the Greeks.

The early Buddhist texts summarise their views according to the Buddhist logic of four alternatives: With regard to the extent of the universe, the following four types of views were current: (1) those who held that the universe was finite in all dimensions; (2) that the universe was infinite in all dimensions; (3) that the universe was finite in some dimensions and infinite in others; and (4) those who rejected all the above three views and held that the universe was neither finite nor infinite.

This last view was held by thinkers who argued that the universe or space was unreal. If so, spatial epithets like “finite” or “infinite” cannot be applied to it. So the universe is neither finite nor infinite.

Similarly, with regard to the origin of the universe, there were thinkers who put forward all four possible views, viz: (1) some held that the universe had a beginning or origin in time; (2) others that it had no beginning in time; (3) still others that the universe had in one sense a beginning and in another sense no beginning in time. This would be so if the universe had relative origins, its substance being eternal, while it came into being and passed away from time to time;

(4) finally, there were those who put forward the theory that since time was unreal it did not make sense to say that the universe was “neither eternal nor not eternal.”

It is with original Buddhism that we get for the first time in the history of thought a conception of the universe which can in any way be meaningfully compared with the modern picture as we know it in contemporary astronomy. This is all the more remarkable when we find no other such conception which foreshadowed or forestalled modern discoveries in ancient or medieval thought of the East or West.

“The Universe”

Before we describe the essential features of the Buddhist account of the universe or cosmos, it is necessary to clarify what today we mean by the term “universe,” for it did not mean this at all times.

The conception of the universe in the West until the end of the medieval period was geocentric, an idea that was mainly Aristotelian in origin. The earth was deemed to be the fixed centre of the universe and the moon, the planets, the sun and the stars were believed to move with uniform circular velocity in crystalline spheres around it. The universe was also finite in spatial extent. Apollonius and Ptolemy made some minor adjustments in an attempt to account for some of the movements of the planets but the basic conceptions remained the same.

This finite geocentric universe was later considered to be the orthodox theological view of the cosmos and attempts on the part of thinkers to change it were treated as heresy. A change came with Copernicus, who was led by observational findings by and the suggestions of early Greek thinkers, like the Pythagorean Philolaus and Aristarchus of Samos, to conceive of the sun as the centre of the universe. The universe was now the solar system (i.e. the sun with the planets going round it), encircled by the stars.

With the construction of larger telescopes since the time of Galileo, the next advance was made by John Herschel in the late eighteenth century. His observations convinced him and others that the unit of the universe was not the solar system but the galaxy or galactic system composed of clusters of stars, the blazing sun that we see being only one among such stars. On the basis of his observations of stars and the calculation of their distances, he was

the first to make a map of our galactic system or “island universe” (as he called it), known as the Milky Way.

He too placed our sun at the centre of the disc, though today we know that it is about half-way between the centre and the edge of this huge galaxy. Astronomical distances are so large that they are measured not in terms of miles but in light-years. Light travels at the rate of about 186,000 miles per second. It is held that light, travelling at this speed, would take about 100,000 years to travel across the diameter of the Milky Way. In other words, our galactic system has a diameter of 100,000 years.

It was left to modern astronomy with its more powerful telescopes, aided by radio, to delve deeper into space and to make more accurate observations of the relative locations and shapes of these galaxies.

In the light of these findings we know that the ten billion galaxies in space are not found in isolation but in clusters. So when we survey the universe, the units we have to deal with are the galaxies. They are now classified as regular and irregular on the grounds of shape, the regular ones being elliptical, round or spiral. The commonest of all galaxies (i.e. about three quarters of them) are spiral. The majority of them are called “dwarf galaxies” because they contain about a million stars.

The progress of astronomy has thus resulted in a gradual development of the concept of the universe. The earliest conception was the geocentric, the universe being the earth and the celestial bodies around it. Next, the heliocentric conception concentrated on the solar system. The real advance was made in the next stage when the solar system was conceived as one of many such systems in an “island universe” or galaxy. Following this there was the concept of the cluster of galaxies and the present conception of the universe as consisting of a number of such clusters.

Buddhist Conception

In the Buddhist texts, the word used to denote the world, the cosmos or the universe is *loka*. Its uses are as various as the English word “world.” It would be tedious to enumerate them here since we are concerned only with the sense in which it is used to denote “the world in space.” This is called *okāsa-loka* or the “space-world” (i.e. the world in space) in the Commentaries, which illustrate this by

reference to a relevant passage in the *Visuddhimagga* (Vism VII.37, quoting MN 49.9/M I 328): “As far as these suns and moons revolve, shining and shedding their light in space, so far extends the thousand-fold universe” (*sabassadhā-loko*)—here the word “*loka*” is used to denote “the world in space.”

In another context of this passage, the universe is described in three tiers or stages. The smallest unit is here called *sabassī cūḷanikā loka-dhātu*, i.e. the “thousand-fold minor world-system.” This is defined as follows: “As far as these suns and moons revolve, shining and shedding their light in space, so far extends the thousand-fold universe. In it are thousands of suns, thousands of moons ... thousands of *Jambudīpas*, thousands of *Aparagoyānas*, thousands of *Uttarakurus*, thousands of *Pubbarivehas* ...” (AN 3:80/A I 227; AN 10:29/A V 59). *Jambudīpa*, *Aparagoyāna*, *Uttarakuru* and *Pubbariveha* are the four inhabited regions or the continents known to the people of North India at the time. From descriptions given about them, it appears to have been believed that these people had different temperaments and ways of living.

So it is as if one were to say today that there were “thousands of Indias, thousands of Arabias, thousands of Russias and thousands of Chinas.” Its significance is that there were thousands of inhabited places or planets since the earth was associated with one sun and one moon.

This *cūḷanikā loka-dhātu* or minor world-system, which is the smallest unit in the universe though it contains thousands of suns, moons and inhabited planets, can only be compared with the modern conception of a galaxy, the majority of which have about a million suns.

Most modern astronomers believe that the chances are that there could be life of the form to be found on earth in planets of other solar systems in this as well as other galaxies. Prof. Harlow Shapley says, after making a most conservative estimate: “We would still have after all that elimination, ten billion planets suitable for organic life something like that on earth” (*The View from a Distant Star*, London, 1963, p. 64). Another well-known astronomer, Dr Ernst J. Opik, states: “Many planets may carry life on their surface. Even if there were only one inhabited system in every million, there would be 10,000 million million abodes of life in the universe. What a variety of forms and conditions this implies!” (*The Oscillating Universe*, New York, 1960, p. 114).

Clusters of Galaxies

The next unit in the universe, according to the early Buddhist texts, is described as consisting of thousands of minor-world-Systems. This is called a “twice-a-thousand middling world-system” (*divisabassī majjhimikā loka-dhātu*). It would correspond to a cluster of galaxies according to modern conceptions.

This notion of a cluster of galaxies is a fairly recent one in modern astronomy. As Prof. A.C.B. Lovell said in his *BBC Reith Lectures* in 1955:

“Some years ago we thought that these galaxies were isolated units in space, but now we believe that the galaxies exist in great groups or clusters. In the same way that the earth and planets are bound to the sun and move as a unit through space, so on an inconceivably vaster scale we think that the galaxies are contained in clusters as connected, physical systems. The local group contains the Milky Way system, the Andromeda Nebula, and perhaps two dozen others. It is not very populated, compared, for example, with the Virgo cluster of galaxies, which contains at least a thousand visible galaxies, although occupying only about twice the space of the local group” (*The Individual and the Universe*, London, 1958, pp. 6–7).

In the opinion of Prof. William Bonnor, “The milky way is one of a small cluster of galaxies called the ‘local group’, which includes all galaxies within about a million light-years from the Earth, and contains about twenty members. Beyond this distance one would have to travel about ten million light years before coming across another galaxy. Other galaxies, too, show a distinct tendency to cluster. The clusters may be small, like the local group, or may contain several hundreds or even thousands of galaxies” (*The Mystery of the Expanding Universe*, New York, 1964, p. 32).

We find that here “thousands” is practically the upper limit since many of the clusters of galaxies contain fewer. On the other hand, with reference to the thousand-fold minor-world-system, “thousand” appeared to be too little. Since the Dhamma is summed up in stereotyped formulae (which recur in the Pali Canonical texts) for easy memorisation, it is possible that “thousand” was selected as a convenient common number to describe the hierarchy of units. However, elsewhere in the Canon smaller numbers of such thousand-fold minor-world-systems to be found in clusters are referred to.

In the *San̄khāruppati Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the basic unit is again the thousand-fold world-system (*sahasī-loka-dhātu*) (MN 120.12–16/M III 101). But there is a reference to two, three, four ... up to a hundred such world-systems grouped together (e.g. *sata-sahasī-loka-dhātu*) (ibid.).

Of frequent occurrence is the *dasa-sahasī-loka-dhātu*, which should be translated as “the ten thousand-fold world systems.” It is used with reference to the local group of galaxies, which consists of about twenty in all, of which about ten cluster relatively close together. One text in fact refers to “the ten nearest island universes” (Rudolf Thiel, *And There Was Light*, New York, 1957, p. 355).

Cosmos

While the middling world-systems consisted of a few, up to a hundred or even a thousand galaxies, the next unit is the whole cluster of middling world-systems. For it is said that thousands of middling world-systems (i.e. clusters of galaxies) go to form the vast universe or the major world-system (*mahā-loka-dhātu*), which some texts on astronomy refer to as the metagalaxy.

Although some astronomers wonder whether there is a hierarchy of clusters of galaxies within the universe, the general opinion is against this. As Prof. Bonnor points out, “One may ask whether clusters of galaxies are the last in the hierarchy. As stars aggregate into galaxies, and galaxies into clusters, do clusters aggregate into superclusters, and so on? Although astronomers are not quite unanimous, it seems that the clusters are the largest individual entities, and we should not be justified in speaking of clusters of clusters. Thus we have at last reached the unit of cosmology, the cluster of galaxies. In practise the galaxy is usually taken as the unit because galaxies can be recognised more easily than clusters” (Bonnor, op. cit., p. 32).

The modern astronomical descriptions of the universe as well as those of the early Buddhist texts stop here. The modern accounts stop because there is a limit to observability on the part of the telescopes. If, as is inferred to be the case, the galaxies further and further away are receding at greater and greater speeds from us, then as they approach the speed of light, they would pass beyond the range of theoretical observability. So the theoretically observable universe is also limited and what happens beyond this would have to be pure speculation, even according to science.

The early Buddhist texts, too, do not state that the major world-system is all there is in the universe, for the question as to whether the world is finite or infinite (*ananto*) in extent is left unanswered (*avyākata*).

The later commentarial tradition, however, goes a step further. One of the synonyms for a world-system or *loka-dhātu* is *cakkaṇvāla*, a word of uncertain etymology meaning a “wheel,” “circle” or “sphere.” The *Pali Text Society Dictionary* commenting on *loka-dhātu* (s.v.) says that it means “constituent or unit of the universe, a world, sphere”; and adds that *loka-dhātu* is another name for *cakkaṇvāla*.

Calling a galaxy a “sphere” or a “wheel” is certainly appropriate, for as we know from modern astronomy a galaxy is like a huge catherine wheel revolving round a centre or hub. But the commentary states that these galaxies or spheres (*cakkaṇvāla*) are infinite in number (*anantāni cakkaṇvālāni*) (A-a II 342). This is certainly going beyond the standpoint of the early Buddhist texts, which is uncommitted on the question of the origin or extent of the universe. While the later traditions of the Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda suggest that the number of galaxies or world-systems is infinite in extent, the Mahāyāna texts hold that the universe is infinite in time, stating that “the universe is without beginning or end” (*anavarāgra*).

Here again the standpoint of original Buddhism was merely to state that the universe was “without a knowable beginning” (*anamataḅga*). The Buddha, it is said, could see worlds without limit “as far as he liked” (*yāvata ākaṅkheyya*) (Nidd II 356). He could also probe into the past without limit, for the further back that he looked into the past, there was the possibility of going back still further. But to say that the world or universe is infinite in time and space is to go beyond the stand of early Buddhism and give an answer to an unanswered question (*avyākata*).

While all schools of Buddhism retained the general picture of the universe as given in the early Buddhist texts, their detailed accounts and elaborations are not always to be trusted. The Sarvāstivāda accounts given in the *Abhidharmaśośa* differ from those of the Theravādins. The reason for this is that the simple but stupendous conceptions of the early Buddhist view of the universe got mixed up with popular mythological geography and cosmology in the commentarial traditions of the schools.

The Mahayana texts, for the most part, retain the early view of the galactic systems spread out through space. We only notice that “thousand” is replaced by “million.” The *Vajracchedikā*, for example, refers to the universe as “this sphere of a million millions of world-systems” (XIX, XXIV, XXX).

Myth and Fact

While the early Buddhist texts are, therefore, more reliable, we must not forget that the account given of the extent of the material universe exhausts the early Buddhist conception of the cosmos. The passage quoted above from the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* goes on to speak of the subtle-material worlds (*rūpa-loka*) or the worlds of higher spirits or gods (*deva*) as being associated with the material worlds or galaxies. They cannot, however, be observed by human vision.

Are we going to dismiss this aspect of the universe as belonging to the realm of mythology? Did the Buddha have grounds for belief in the existence of devas or was this only a popular belief at the time, to which he did not subscribe? We can see the real attitude of the Buddha by the answers he gives to the Brahmin youth Saṅgārava, who questions him on this subject:

Saṅgārava: “Tell me, Gotama, are there gods (*deva*)?”

Buddha: “I know on good grounds (*thānaṣo*) that there are gods.”

Saṅgārava: “Why do you say when asked ‘whether there are gods’ that you know on good grounds that there are gods. Does this not imply that your statement is utterly false?”

Buddha: “When one is questioned as to whether there are gods, whether one replies that ‘there are gods’ or that ‘one knows on good grounds that there are gods,’ then surely the deduction to be made by an intelligent person is indubitable, namely that there are gods.”

Saṅgārava: “Then, why did not the venerable Gotama plainly say so from the very start?”

Buddha: “Because it is commonly taken for granted in the world that there are gods.”

The significance of this reply is that the Buddha holds that there are devas not because of a popular or traditional belief, which he

took for granted, but because he was personally convinced of their existence on good grounds.

On the other hand, the Buddha had to make use of some of the traditional terms and coin others to describe the different types of worlds of these devas. There is other evidence to suggest that the Buddha did not take popular conceptions for granted. In one place he says that ignorant people believe that there is a hell (*pātāla*, also “abyss”) but asserts that this belief was false. “Hell” (*pātāla*), the Buddha says, “is a term for painful bodily sensations” (SN 36:4/S IV 206). Heavens are better than human forms of existence, where everything one experiences is pleasant (AN 3:23/A I 122), while hells are subhuman forms of existence where everything one experiences is unpleasant. The Buddha claims to see both these kinds of worlds. The danger of being born in these subhuman states of downfall (*vinipāta*) is that it is difficult to emerge to the human level after that. The reason is given: “Because there prevails no practice of the good life, no righteous living, no doing of good works, but just cannibalism, the stronger preying on weaker creatures” (SN 56:61–131/S V 466–78).

Clairvoyance

It is stated that the Buddha’s ability to see these world-systems and the beings in them is due to his clairvoyance. It is said: “The Blessed One with his clairvoyant paranormal vision can see one world-system, two, three ... fifty world-systems—the thousand-fold minor world-system, the twice-a-thousand middling world-system and the thrice-a-thousand major world system. He could see as far out into space as he liked. So clear is the clairvoyant vision of the Blessed One. In this way is the Blessed One with his clairvoyant vision one who has his eyes open” (*vivaṭṭacakkhu*) (Nidd II 355).

The clairvoyant powers of the disciples both according to the texts and commentaries are not unlimited like those of the Buddha. Anuruddha, who was considered the foremost of those who had attained the faculty of clairvoyant vision, could see only as far as the “thousand-fold world-system”: “It is by the fact of cultivating and developing these four arisings of mindfulness that I have acquired the ability to see the thousand-fold world-system” (SN 52:11/S V 303).

Cosmic Phenomena

Some of the casual statements made by the Buddha appear to come from one who has in fact observed aspects of cosmic space. In one place, the Buddha says: “Monks, there is a darkness of intergalactic space [Woodward has ‘interstellar space’], an impenetrable gloom, such a murk of darkness as cannot enjoy the splendour of this sun and moon” (SN 56:46/S V 455). Modern astronomy would agree with this verdict. We see so much light because we are fortunate enough to be close to a sun.

The uncertainty of life in some of these worlds is sometimes stressed with graphic descriptions of cosmic phenomena. The Buddha says that there comes a time, after a lapse of hundreds of thousands of years, when it would cease to rain and vegetable and animal life in the planet would be destroyed (AN 10:55/A V 102). He also speaks of times when seven suns would appear and the earth, including the biggest of mountains which appears so stable, would go up in smoke without leaving any ashes at all. He speaks as though he has witnessed some of these phenomena. He says: “Who would think or believe that this earth or Sineru, the highest of mountains, would burn up and be destroyed except on the evidence of sight?” (Ibid.). Today we know that suns or stars could become cosmic hydrogen bombs, flare up and explode, burning up their planets, if any, and even affecting neighbouring solar systems. A student of astronomy commenting on this possibility says: “Humanity would at any rate enjoy a solemn and dramatic doom as the entire planet went up in a puff of smoke” (Rudolf Thiel, *op.cit.*, p. 329). These phenomena are called novae and supernovae, which are observed from time to time in galaxies including our own.

Colliding galaxies, of which there is some evidence, also spell such disasters.

Time and Relativity

The destruction of the worlds, however, which will cause such phenomena to be manifested in all the world-systems, comes only at the end of an epoch or aeon, called a *kappa*. Several similes are given to illustrate what an immensely long period an aeon is. One such passage reads as follows: “Suppose there were a city of iron walls one *yojana* in length, one in width and one high filled up with

mustard seed, from which a man were to take out at the end of every hundred years a mustard seed. That pile of mustard seed would in this way be sooner done away with and ended than an aeon, so very long is an aeon. And of aeons thus long more than one has passed, more than a hundred, more than a thousand, more than a hundred thousand” (SN 12:16/S II 182).

The cosmos undergoes two major periods of change in time called the aeons of expansion and contraction. The aeon of expansion is the period in which the universe unfolds itself or opens out (*vivatta-kappa*). The other is the one in which the universe closes in and is destroyed (*samvatta-kappa*). Elsewhere they are described as the four stages of the universe: (1) the period of expansion; (2) the period in which the universe remains in a state of expansion; (3) the period of contraction; and (4) the period in which the universe stays contracted.

There are several models according to which astronomers try to explain the movement within the universe in time. One of them is the cycloidal oscillating model, according to which the universe expands and contracts until, as Prof. Bonnor says, “the contraction slows down, ceases and changes to expansion again.” The theory is currently favoured by many astronomers in the light of recent findings.

There is also a reference to the relativity of time in different parts of the universe. But this is a comparison of time on earth with time in the heavenly worlds. One day in one of these different worlds is equated with 50 years, 100 years, 200 years, 400 years and 1,600 years respectively on earth. Such in brief outline is the early Buddhist conception of the universe.

FACETS OF BUDDHIST THOUGHT

**Collected Essays
of
K. N. Jayatilleke**

**Buddhist Publication Society
Kandy • Sri Lanka**

Buddhist Publication Society
P.O. Box 61
54, Sangharaja Mawatha
Kandy, Sri Lanka

This collection contains all the essays found in *The Message of the Buddha: A posthumous work edited by Ninian Smart* (ISBN 955-24-0204-2), first published in 1975 by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. BPS edition published in 2000 with the permission of the editor, Prof. Ninian Smart, and the author's widow, Mrs. Patricia Jayatilleke. It also contains other essays published earlier by the BPS in the Wheel Publications series as well as the essay "The Principles of International Law in Buddhist Doctrine," included here with the permission of Mrs. Jayatilleke.

Copyright © 2010 by Buddhist Publication Society

National Library of Sri Lanka-Cataloguing in Publication Data

Jayatilleke, K.N.

Facets of Buddhist thought / K.N. Jayatilleke; ed. by Ninian Smart & Bhikkhu Nyanatusita.- Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society Inc., 2009.- 506p; 22cm.

ISBN 978-955-24-0335-4

Price:

i. 181.043 DDC 21

ii. Title

iii. Smart, Ninian - ed.

iv. Bhikkhu Nyanatusita-ed

01. Buddhist Philosophy

Printed by

Contents

Sources	vi
Foreword	viii
Preface	xi
Publisher's Preface	xii
1. Buddhism and the Scientific Revolution	I
2. The Historical Context of the Rise of Buddhism	9
3. The Buddhist Conception of Truth	21
4. The Buddhist Attitude to Revelation	33
5. The Buddhist Conception of Matter and the Material World	43
6. The Buddhist Analysis of Mind	53
7. The Buddhist Conception of the Universe	65
8. The Buddhist Attitude to God	77
9. Nibbāna	89
10. The Buddhist View of Survival	99
11. The Buddhist Doctrine of Kamma	109
12. The Case for the Buddhist Theory of Karma and Survival	119
13. The Conditioned Genesis of the Individual	157
14. The Buddhist Ethical Ideal of the Ultimate Good	185
15. The Basis of Buddhist Ethics	195
16. The Buddhist Conception of Evil	205
17. The Criteria of Right and Wrong	215
18. The Ethical Theory of Buddhism	227
19. Some Aspects of the Bhagavad Gīta and Buddhist Ethics	237
20. Toynbee's Criticism of Buddhism	255
21. The Buddhist Attitude to Other Religions	273
22. Buddhism and Peace	299
23. The Significance of Vesākha	317
24. Buddhism and the Race Question	331
25. The Principles of International Law in Buddhist Doctrine	371
Bibliography to Pali Texts and Translations.....	483
Abbreviations	484
Bibliography to Chapter 25	485
Kulatissa Nanda Jayatilleke	491

Sources

- Ch. 1: “Buddhism and the Scientific Revolution” in *Buddhism and Science*, Wheel Publication No. 3, BPS, 1958, 1959, 1967, 1980.
- Ch. 2: “The Historical Context of the Rise of Buddhism” in *The Message of the Buddha*, BPS, 2000.
- Chs. 3–8: “The Buddhist Conception of Truth,” “The Buddhist Attitude to Revelation,” “The Buddhist Conception of Matter and the Material World,” “The Buddhist Analysis of Mind,” “The Buddhist Conception of the Universe,” and “The Buddhist Attitude to God” in *Facets of Buddhist Thought*, Wheel Publication No. 162/164, BPS, 1971, 1984.
- Ch. 9: “Nibbāna” in *The Message of the Buddha*.
- Ch. 10–12: “The Buddhist View of Survival,” “The Buddhist Doctrine of Karma,” and “The Case for the Buddhist Theory of Karma and Survival” in *Survival and Karma in Buddhist Perspective*, Wheel Publication No. 141/143, BPS, 1969, 1970, 1980.
- Ch. 13: “The Conditioned Genesis of the Individual” in *The Message of the Buddha*.
- Chs. 14–18: “The Buddhist Ethical Ideal of the Ultimate Good,” “The Basis of Buddhist Ethics,” “The Buddhist Conception of Evil,” “The Criteria of Right and Wrong,” and “The Ethical Theory of Buddhism” in *Ethics in Buddhist Perspective*, Wheel Publication No. 175/176, BPS, 1972, 1984.
- Ch. 19: “Some Aspects of the *Bhagavad Gīta* and Buddhist Ethics” in *Aspects of Buddhist Social Philosophy*, Wheel Publication 128/129, BPS, 1969, 1984. Reprinted with permission from *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. XIII, 2/3 (1955).
- Ch. 20: “Toynbee’s Criticism of Buddhism” originally published as “A Recent Criticism of Buddhism” in *Aspects of Buddhist Social Philosophy*, Wheel Publication 128/129, BPS, 1969, 1984. Reprinted with permission from *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. XV, 3/4 (1957).
- Ch. 21: “The Buddhist Attitude to Other Religions” in *The Buddhist Attitude to Other Religions*, Wheel Publication No. 216, BPS, 1975, 1991.

- Ch. 22: “Buddhism and Peace” in *Buddhism and Peace*, Wheel Publication No. 41, BPS, 1962, 1969, 1983.
- Ch. 23: “The Significance of Vesākha” originally published as “The Significance of Vesak” in *The Significance of Vesak*, Wheel Publication No. 178, BPS, 1972, 1984.
- Ch. 24: “Buddhism and the Race Question” (co-authored with G. P. Malalasekera) in *Buddhism and the Race Question*, Wheel Publication No. 200/201, BPS, 1974. Reprinted with permission from *Buddhism and the Race Question* (UNESCO 1958), pp. 32–73.
- Ch. 25: “The Principles of International Law in Buddhist Doctrine” in *Recueil des Cours*, Tome 12, pp. 300–426, p. 356. The Hague Academy of International Law, The Hague, Netherlands, 1967. Privately reprinted as an offprint. Reprinted as *Dhamma, Man and Law*, Singapore, 1988.

Kulatissa Nanda Jayatilleke

Born: 1st November 1920—Died: 23rd July 1970.

Education:

Royal College, Colombo 1930–38.

University College and University of Ceylon 1939–43. B.A. First Class Honours in Indo-Aryan 1943.

Christ College, Cambridge University, 1945–48. Moral Science Tripos, Parts I and II, Second Class Honours.

B.A. Honours in Western Philosophy, University of London, 1948.

M.A.: 1951; Ph.D.: 1961.

Academic Positions, etc. (selected):

Professor of Philosophy & Head, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Ceylon, 1963–70

Editor, *University of Ceylon Review*, 1952–60

Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1960

Visiting Professor of Philosophy, University of North Carolina, U.S.A., 1965

Advisory Editor, *Philosophy East & West*, University of Hawaii, U.S.A., 1967

Other Publications

Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1963, pp. 520.

FACETS OF BUDDHIST THOUGHT

Collected Essays



K. N. JAYATILLEKE

FACETS OF BUDDHIST THOUGHT

K.N. Jayatilleke was one of the best-known Buddhist scholars in Asia. This book presents a brilliant account of of Theravāda Buddhism and embraces a wide variety of themes ranging from the birth of Buddhism to the Buddha's prophetic teachings regarding the future of mankind.

Topics covered include, among many others, the background of early Buddhism; the significance of the Buddha's birthday; the Buddhist doctrines of karma and reincarnation; the Buddhist conception of truth, good and evil, Nirvana, the individual, the universe and the material world; the Buddhist view of nature and destiny; Buddhism and the caste system; Buddhism and international law; and the contemporary relevance of the Buddha's teachings to the modern world.

Professor Jayatilleke always writes with both the scholar and the lay reader in mind. As a result, this is a highly readable and extremely penetrating book—and one that explores the roots and nature of the Buddha's teachings and examines them in the light of contemporary knowledge.

The present collection contains the essays earlier published by the BPS in *The Message of the Buddha* as well as essays that were published the Wheel Publication series. A long essay on the principles of international law in Buddhism is also included.

ISBN: 978-955-24-0335-4

BPS

Buddhist Publication Society Inc.

P.O. Box 61, 54, Sangharaja Mawatha, Kandy, Sri Lanka

Tel: +94 81 2237283 Fax: +94 81 2223679

E-mail: bps@sitnet.lk Website: <http://www.bps.lk>