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Proceedings of the International Symposium on Asian Studies, 1988
10th International Symposium
Vol V : Asia and Other Regions
Published by: International Symposium on Asian Studies

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**Two Great Founders of World Religions – A Cursory Analysis of
the Psychosomatic Similarities of their Character**

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In this paper we wish to discuss in brief the characters of two great founders of world religions, namely Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ, with the sole intention of tracing similarities of their psychosomatic behaviour. These similarities can be traced through the extant religious documents of the two great religions, Buddhism and Christianity, they have founded.

Such an analysis, we believe, will make people, especially the followers of both Buddhism and Christianity, feel conscious of the fact that the two religions, although considered as having more dissimilarities than otherwise, are basically meant to serve an ultimate single purpose. That is the purpose of serving mankind in promoting the message of everlasting peace, both within and outside the sphere of present existence.

Various absurdities have crept into the fold of the two religions through either the pedantic ignorance or cunning reasonings, or both, of many members of the hierarchy who claimed authority and erudition. These absurdities have put the followers in a dire state of affairs, in confusion and at times have left them not knowing what was the real essence of the path of salvation the two great founders have bequeathed to them.

An insight into the psychosomatic behaviour of the two great founders may be of much value in understanding not only what they taught but how, why and to whom they taught, thereby covering a wider gamut to glean the true perspectives of their doctrines. The following is a brief analysis, which has to be elaborated and expanded with further research before long.

Gautama Buddha, according to a traditional dating, lived approximately 620 to 540 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. He was born to the ruling

family of the north Indian Himalayan kingdom of the Sakyas. He led the life of a royal prince enjoying all comforts provided by his father, the ruler of Kapilavastu. He was married and was the heir to the throne. On the very day his wife gave birth to a baby son, prince Siddhartha, as his lay name was, left the life of a householder and went in search of Eternal Peace, the "Sublime Truth" that will bring solace to mankind. He was 29 years old when this "great renunciation" (*Mahabhiniskramana*) happened. He became religious and studied under several religious teachers with whose doctrines he could not totally agree. Therefore he made his own effort and finally after six long years of strenuous struggle (*duskarakriya*) he made a determined will to achieve final liberation from the miserable existence on the human sphere, which is a cycle of birth and death (*Samsara*), by mustering all his strength (mental and physical). With this determination he sat under the Bodhi tree (a variety known as *ficus religiosa*) and through his so-far-acquired experience in meditation gathered the psychic powers to gain Supreme Wisdom or Perfect Enlightenment (*Sambodhi/Buddhahood*). After Enlightenment he was known as the Buddha—the Enlightened One and was commonly referred to as the Buddha of the Gautama Family (Gautama Buddha), or the sage of the Sakya community (Sakya Muni). His teachings for 45 years (from his 35th to 80th birthday) led to the founding of the religion—Buddhism.

Several thousand miles away from the homeland of Buddhism (India), while Buddhism was enjoying royal patronage and was well established as a major religion in Asia, Jesus, called the Christ, was born in the Mediterranean region of Judea (present State of Israel) in the township of Bethlehem. His parents made a difficult journey to Egypt in an effort to save the life of baby Jesus from king Herod, the foolish ruler of Judea. Herod, believing certain prophecies (Matthew 2:18), feared that Jesus would usurp his rule and made a sordid bid to kill him. Through divine intervention Jesus was saved until he established his "Doctrine." He taught for 3½ years before he was crucified at a comparatively young age of 33½, after which occurred his resurrection.

1. Jesus Christ was born to poor parents; Buddha led the life of self-imposed poverty by advocating begging (*bhiksatana*) as the primary mode of existence for him and for his *bhikkhus* (brethren; etymologically, beggars).

2. Both the Buddha and Jesus were not satisfied with their early mentors and showed extra brilliance in understanding and explaining the problems posed before them, even at a comparatively young age before they embarked upon their missions.

3. The Buddha possessed appealing physical features to such an extent that young women of the day were heartbroken when their inveiglings were rejected; Jesus, though of plainer features, had a remarkable personality that attracted women to his teaching (e.g., Magandiya, Kisagotami, et al, with regard to the Buddha and Martha and Mary, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, Salome and others with regard to Jesus Christ). Their charismatic behaviour was pivotal to their success in gathering large crowds wherever they went and preached the "doctrine." It also proved at times disastrous to them as it invited the jealousies of their rivals who made every bid to frame false charges against them and even to cause physical harm to them. Divine intervention has been recorded in the career of the Buddha when he was threatened by rivals (e.g., the falling of a rock by Devadatta on Buddha's head while he was strolling at the foot of Vulture's Peak (*Gijjhakuta*, the act of Cinca the harlot)). Jesus Christ did not choose to obtain Divine help at all at the conclusion of his mission, to suffer for the sins of mankind, although angels betook themselves to protect him from his early days (Matthew 1:18, 2:13,19; 3:17; 4:11; 28:2).

4. Buddha preached an eternal doctrine—*Sanatano Dhammo* (the word "Sanatana" can be taken as "that of the Eternal Father"), which he divined through his perfect wisdom gained on attaining Buddhahood. Jesus Christ declared that his doctrine is eternal. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but

my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35, *Authorized Version*).

5. Both the Buddha and Jesus Christ began their religious mission at a comparatively young age (in early thirties). Jesus led the life of complete chastity up to his last; the Buddha advocated complete celibacy for his disciples, both men and women, although he was married before he renounced the life of a householder.

6. Both had a large gathering of followers wherever they preached. Men among these large numbers of followers were prepared to defend their beloved Teacher at the cost of their own lives. (*Ananda*, when an intoxicated elephant was set upon the Buddha; Peter, a follower of Jesus, when he was surrounded by the mob--see Matthew 26:51.) Buddha and Jesus Christ advocated restraint (*daya* and *damyata* in Buddhism) and non-aggression (*ahimsa*, *khanti*). Buddha said: "Sabbe tassanti dandassa--Sabbe bhāyanti macchuno--attānam upamam katvā--na haneyya naghātaṇṇe" ("all fear assault, all fear death, comparing others with one's own self one should refrain from assault and killing).

Jesus Christ said: "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52).

7. Jesus preached the doctrine of the Divine Father, the God Almighty. The presence of a Creator God executing the will of God Almighty (Colossians 1:12-17) is the substratum of the New Testament of the Bible. Primitive Buddhism (or early Theravada Buddhism) is a denial of an Eternal Soul, hence the "Annatta doctrine." But what is baffling many a scholar is the intervention of the Chief of Gods, the Creator God "Brahma" (of pre-Buddhist Indian cosmologies) on many crucial moments of the Buddha's career. It was God Brahma who appeared before the Buddha immediately before the Buddha was to begin his mission. When the Buddha was hesitant to preach the doctrine to worldlings, it was the Great Brahma who requested the Buddha to

preach the "Dhamma". An early text in Sinhalese prosody, the *Ehusandaslakuna* of mediaeval centuries, has thus:

"Bambā yādungena hisage sitin pilipan--Diyata setata Sāhāsī Mahabā tatadiya dene."

Translation of this stanza is as follows: "May the Lion of the Sakya race who having accepted the request of Brahma has arrived by thought on the summit of the mountain for the sake of happiness of the world, may he (the Buddha) grant victory to thee (of the strong arm)." (*Ehusandaslakuna*, ed. Velivita Sri Nivasathera, Colombo, 1921, p. 6)

When the Buddha, immediately after his birth, looked around and took his steps northward, it was this Brahma (Mahabrahma) who seized the babe by his finger and assured him that none was greater than he (*The Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, ed. G.P. Malalasekera, P.T.S. London, Vol. 2, p. 337, 338, note 2). In early Buddhist texts the Mahabrahma is spoken of as the highest denizen of the whole cosmos--Sabassalokadhadu (*Anguttara Nikaya*, v. 59f). When the Buddha wishes to have someone as his teacher, the Brahma appears again and suggests to him that the "Doctrine" be considered his teacher (*Anguttara Nikaya*, II,21; *Samyutta Nikaya*, I,138f).

According to Mahayana Buddhism Gautama Buddha is only an apparition of the Eternal Buddha Amitabha, like Jesus Christ who is a member of the God kingdom or family, yet took upon himself human form to save mankind. This is well explained in the "Trikāya" doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism.

8. The birth of the two great Teachers were marked by miracles. Various prophesies were made before and after their births. Jesus's mother was a virgin at his conception. The Buddha's mother conceived the baby while she was observing a vow of celibacy (*pehevas*) and the texts mention that the angelic being, the *Bodhisatva* (Buddha-aspirant), entered the mother's womb from the right side of the mother. He was also born not in a normal fashion but from the right side of the mother's belly (a cesarean birth as it were).

Therefore the mode of being conceived by the mother and the birth of the two Great Beings were peculiar. Sages of renown attended on them after their births (the wise men from the East in the case of Jesus Christ). These sages predicted that the "Child will be a saviour of mankind." (Buddha had an eponym "Siddhartha" given by the wise men; the name Jesus has also been explained as "Saviour, Leader".)

9. Both the Buddha and Jesus Christ have emphasized in their philosophy that "craving" (*Tanha* in Pali) is the biggest fetter that binds people to worldly possessions, thereby making them forgetful of the Bliss of Emancipation. To be free and to become a true disciple of them, one should completely eradicate craving (*tanhakaya* in Buddhism). In a lively discussion with a young man, Jesus Christ had made this point quite clear. He declared that one who has deep-rooted material attachments has to give up everything—that is absolute non-attachment—to become a true follower, seeking after eternal release—forgiveness—from sin (Matthew 19:21).

10. Those who did inimical acts to both the Buddha and Jesus Christ felt deep sorrow afterwards. Among them were their own pupils who attempted at the lives of the Buddha and Jesus Christ and even betrayed their masters (Devadatta the disciple and brother-in-law of the Buddha and Judas Iscariot the disciple of Jesus Christ).

11. The social outcasts, untouchables, the most miserable were taken special care of by the Buddha and were among the followers of Jesus. Robbers, highwaymen, criminals, lepers, prostitutes, scavengers, etc. were all looked upon with compassion for corrective measures and never discriminated against. (Angulimala the criminal, Ambapali the harlot, Sunita the scavenger in the life of the Buddha and Mary Magdalene and others in regard to Jesus.)

12. *Dāna* (liberality, giving one's possessions), *Sīla* (morality, and *Bhāvanā* (meditation/prayer in seclusion) were the most sublime virtues upheld

by the Buddha and Jesus Christ. The Scriptures (both Buddhist and Christian) provide enough evidence for this aspect of the philosophy of their lives. Other virtues like compassion, loving kindness (*mettā, karuṇā*), tolerance and softheartedness (*muditā*), forgiving, equanimity (*upekkhā*), refraining from killing, stealing, adultery, etc., and honouring one's parents, truthfulness, were upheld in their teachings by both the Great Men (see *supra*, 6, 9 and *infra*, 18; see also Matthew 19:18-21).

13. Both the Buddha and Jesus Christ had no discrimination or attachment even to their closest relatives, the mother, the father, wife and children, etc. When the mother and brothers of Jesus went to meet him, he did not consider meeting them so very essential (Matthew 12:48-50). When the Buddha's father, the king of Kapilavastu, remonstrated with the Buddha for begging on the streets of his kingdom, the Buddha told his father that it was the ancient custom of the Buddhas (and that he has nothing to do with the traditions of royalty).

14. Another important factor emphasizing the psychosomatic behaviour of the two great teachers is their confrontation on various occasions with the Spirit Being the Evil One (*Namuci, Pāpi, Māra*, in Buddhist texts; the Devil, Lucifer, Satan, in Biblical explanations).

The Evil One had on more than one occasion tried to entice the Buddha and Jesus but without any success. Buddhist texts call him a mighty ruler who binds all beings (who are not alert) with his shackles. He has the power over sinners. The only escape from the Evil One is found in *Nirvāna*, where there is no decay or death (*Ajarāmarā*), according to Buddhism. He promised the Buddha the rulership of the whole world if he were to give up his struggle to achieve Buddhahood. He challenged the Buddha's right to sit on the very "Adamantine Seat" on which he (the Buddha) sat for his final struggle towards emancipation. He made several attempts to disturb and distract the practicing of meditation of Buddhist monks and nuns, sometimes entering into their bellies as a spirit being and causing much pain to them. On many occasions

he had been rebuked by the Buddha (see *Mārasamyutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, P.T.S., London). He is an angel of devilish disposition and has the power to rule over the lives of all beings on earth. The Satan in the Bible is of identical character and has on more than one occasion tried to lead Jesus Christ astray, and promised him the overlordship of the whole Earth if Jesus would worship him (see Matthew 4:1-11, 26:41; see also "Who and what is Satan?" *The Good News*, Vol. XXXIV, no. 7, Sept./Oct. 1987, pp. 28 f).

In the Theravada Buddhist tradition, when Mara unleashed his fury on the Buddha, all the divine beings fled excepting a sole angel known as "Dādimunda." The other who witnessed the terrific attack of the Evil One was the Earth Goddess Mahikantā (the divine mother), who appeared to bear witness to Buddha's fulfilling the ten great virtues (*dasapārami*) during his previous births. According to the tradition of Mahayana Buddhism the angel who stood by the Buddha was Avalokitesvara, who was later absorbed into Chinese Buddhism as Kuan Yin. This angel who helps beings against the Evil One has similarities with the Biblical archangel Michael who along with angel Gabriel appears to guide people on the Good Norm of the Eternal Father the God Almighty. Michael and Gabriel stand in comparison with Avalokitesvara and Mahastamaprapta of Mahayana Buddhism, who are the archangels eternally attending the Cosmic Buddha Amitabha, the Cosmocrator.

15. Jesus Christ was known as the "Prince of Peace"; the Buddha was called "Sāntināyaka" (Ruler of Peace). Their doctrine was basically meant to establish peace, both inner peace here (in this life) and peace hereafter.

16. Jesus suffered on the wooden cross to obtain, ultimately, union of mankind with the Supreme Eternal God. Buddha struggled under the Sacred Bo Tree to gain Supreme Enlightenment. Jesus was tormented by the hordes of Pharisees, scribes and other enemies. Buddha was tormented by Māra and his myrmidons. Both the events were marked with great earthquakes, as explained in the Buddhist and Christian scriptures.

17. Physical discomfort: In achieving their primary objective, the mental peace and tranquility that is essential for final liberation, physical comforts were secondary for both the Buddha and Jesus Christ. They both traversed far and wide on bare feet; teaching and establishing the Spiritual Order through their disciples.

18. Truthfulness, liberality, nonviolence, abhorring vice, meditation/meditative prayer, guarding one's sense faculties against the great tempter (Māra/Satan), sacrificing one's comforts for the benefit of others, humility, non-attachment to worldly gains and pleasures, etc., were upheld by both the Great Teachers in addition to many other virtues (see *supra*, 6, 9, 12).

19. In the final act Jesus Christ was given a crown of thorns and utter humiliation and retained no more than a loin cloth. Buddha admonished the wearing of shrouds (*pāmsukālas*—dust-ridden cloth discarded at cemeteries after wrapping corpses), a shaven-headed crown, and tolerated humiliation at the hands of his own kinsmen and others (see, s.v. Suprabuddha, his father-in-law).

20. Both performed miracles to save the misery-stricken and also to convince the stubborn and the proud. The plague-ridden Visālā town was saved by the Buddha's miraculous powers. His stubborn kinsmen the Sākyas were convinced through the twin miracles; Jesus Christ performed miracles to relieve many from their miseries, sicknesses and death. These miracles had brought awe to his disciples. The psychic or spiritual powers of both the great men were used always to bring good to mankind.

21. In their teachings they both brought in examples, parables from nature and the environment. Flora and fauna were much involved in their teachings. Both preferred seclusion in forests, or among olive trees, for meditation (and prayer in the case of Jesus Christ especially) and admonished

their disciples too on the value of such. Their love for nature is unique. The sermon on the mount of Jesus Christ and many episodes in the life of Buddha explain this. One *ārāma* (resort of the Buddha and his monks) is particularly famous for treating squirrels (*kalandaka-nivāpa*). In his parables he often quoted animals especially in regard to their innocence and helplessness before human cruelty. Conserving nature was approved by the Buddha as a must for human survival. For the ordained monks, even breaking a branch of a tree (without a purpose) is not encouraged.

22. The innocence of the "child" was of paramount concern to the Buddha and Jesus Christ. Jesus has made a specific reference to this when he said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matthew 11:25). The incident of child Sopaka who was saved from the cruelty of his uncle is noteworthy in the Buddha's career. Buddha's own son Rahula was six years old when ordained.

23. The attitude towards women is also noteworthy in the careers of the two great founders. Jesus Christ was solicitous of the weakness of women. There were innumerable women who followed the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Buddha had on many occasions regarded womanhood (especially motherhood) as worthy of respect by society. Both the founders, however, did not wish to ordain women as their disciples. The disciples of Jesus Christ who were ordained to the ministry were all men. The ordaining of nuns was not at first granted by the Buddha. Women as *religiuses* were allowed in the Buddhist order after several implorations. However, monks were placed above the nuns in regard to ecclesiastical matters by the Buddha.