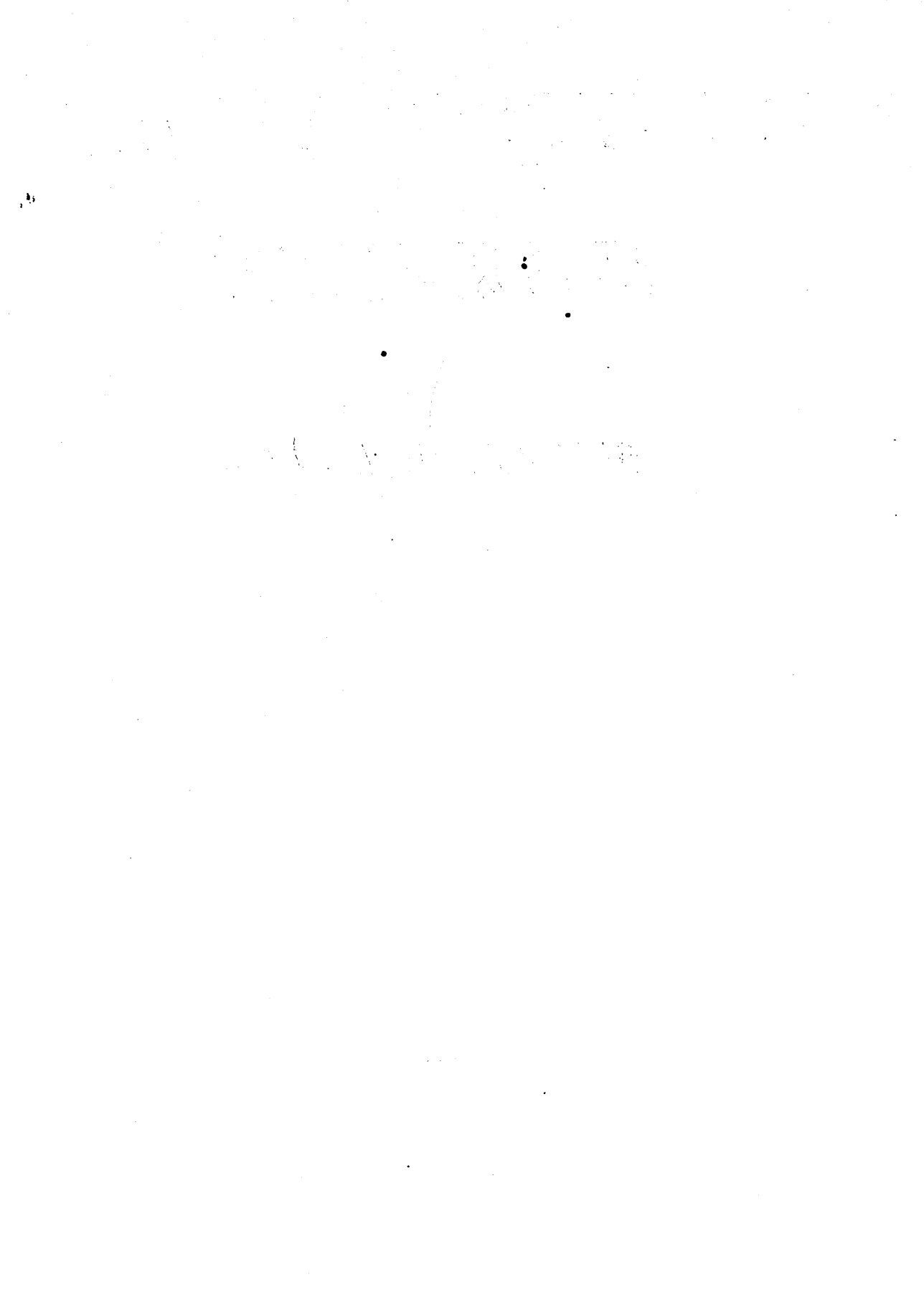


ENCYCLOPAEDIA
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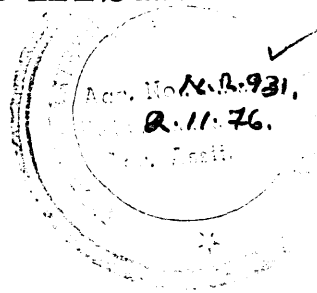
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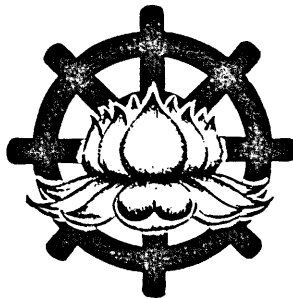
edited by

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P R E F A C E

THE compilation of an Encyclopaedia of Buddhism in the English language was one of the several undertakings of the Laṅkā Bauddha Maṅḍalaya (Buddhist Council of Ceylon) which was set up by the Government of Ceylon in 1955 in connection with the celebration of Buddha Jayanti, the 2500th Anniversary of the Buddhist Era as traditionally accepted in countries of South Asia where the Theravāda (often also called Hinayāna) form of Buddhism prevails. The Maṅḍalaya appointed a Sub-Committee for the task of compiling the Encyclopaedia. This Committee appointed me its Chairman and Editor-in-Chief of the Encyclopaedia. When in 1956 the Government of Ceylon created a Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the administration of the Encyclopaedia was transferred to that Ministry while I continued to be Chairman of the Editorial Board and Editor-in-Chief.

The editorial office was at first set up in Colombo but soon afterwards was moved to Peradeniya (near Kandy) where it is now accommodated in the University Park through the courtesy of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ceylon. The transfer to Peradeniya not only keeps us in a congenial academic environment but has also given us the added advantage of being able to use the excellent University Library which is particularly favourable for our purpose. The Librarian and his staff have been most helpful to us.

There have been several changes in the personnel of our limited editorial staff, chiefly as a result of its members having left us to join the teaching staff of the two Universities recently established in Ceylon. The vacancies so created have been filled and it is hoped to have the staff further strengthened in the near future.

After the inception of the work, the first couple of years were spent in the essential but exacting duty of indexing, compiling subject-lists, &c. Most of this work has already been completed but it is a continuing and almost never-ending task, especially in view of the numerous publications dealing with Buddhism which are being increasingly issued in many parts of the world, thus contributing to our knowledge of Buddhist matters all the time.

Buddhism covers a vast expanse, both of time and space. The Encyclopaedia aims at giving a comprehensive account of the origins of this World-Religion and of the developments that have taken place during a period of more than 25 centuries. To deal with Buddhism is to deal with a whole civilization, in fact, a whole series of civilizations which have influenced the lives of myriads of human beings, in many lands. A satisfactory treatment of the subject should, thus, include information on the doctrines of Buddhism and their growth, the story of their spread and expansion, accounts of the numerous Buddhist Schools and Sects and of their origins and subsequent ramifications, descriptions of Buddhist rites and ceremonies as found in many countries, the history of the fine arts—painting and sculpture, music, dance and drama—under the influence of Buddhism in various countries, details of Buddhist shrines and places of pilgrimage and of the vast literatures connected with Buddhism which developed in many languages, both ancient and modern, in original works as well as in translations, and biographies of persons who, in the course of Buddhist history, played important rôles in their own countries and made contributions to the development of Buddhist culture. Even so, the list of topics would not be exhausted.

We have made it our aim that the Encyclopaedia should contain information both on the Mahāyāna and the Theravāda and that such information be so presented as to make it useful not only to the scholar and the expert but to the general reader as well.

It is also our endeavour to bring together in a single publication information on various aspects of Buddhism which can at present be obtained only by consulting numerous scattered sources some, at least, of which are not available except in rare or inaccessible collections.

The original plan was to publish a series of volumes, each under a different title, e.g., the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, Literature and the Fine Arts. But this was given up after consultation with experts. It was found that such a scheme would not be quite practicable in the present state of our knowledge and would involve a great deal of editorial treatment resulting in excessive delay in publication. We have, therefore, adopted the alphabetical method of treatment of topics as found, for instance, in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* which has, in many ways, served as our model. This method, too, has its difficulties and drawbacks as will be seen in dealing with a subject like art or architecture, where the information will have to be presented separately under different countries. The more satisfactory method would, of course, be to treat it as a single topic and devote a special volume for this purpose. We shall, however, endeavour to overcome such shortcomings by an elaborate scheme of cross-references and by the provision of a very comprehensive Index.

The question of the space to be allotted to various subjects in general and to each item in particular has been difficult to decide. The principle ultimately adopted has been to leave the matter very largely to the discretion of the contributors themselves, emphasis being laid on the requirement that no vital information should be omitted and that all information should be given as concisely as possible. The avoidance of repetition and overlapping has been made the responsibility of the editors but it has to be recognised that a certain amount of repetition and overlapping is unavoidable. As at present planned, the Encyclopaedia will comprise about 15,000 pages and will include illustrations both in colour and in black and white. It is hoped to complete the first edition within ten years.

Every effort is being made to select an acknowledged authority to write on a particular topic, especially in the case of the more important topics, and a Buddhist, if available, in preference to a non-Buddhist, more particularly where matters of doctrine are involved or details of different Schools and different Sects. In the case of the more specialized subjects, contributors will sign their own articles so that theirs will be the responsibility for the views expressed. Where it is necessary to inform the reader that a different point of view or a different interpretation exists, suitable steps are being taken to indicate that fact. In some instances, more than one article will be published on the same topic from separate contributors, while in others more than one contributor will co-operate in the production of a single article. Every attempt is thus being made to make the information given as complete and as comprehensive as possible.

As will be seen from what has already been said the Encyclopaedia is a work of international collaboration, and it has been our good fortune to be able to secure for this colossal undertaking the active goodwill of scholars of repute from many lands. We have also been able to enlist as Honorary Editors some of the most eminent scholars in the field of Buddhist and allied studies. For the better co-ordination of the work several regional committees have been set up, the largest of these being the Japanese committee with its headquarters in the Tōyō University in Tokyo. This committee has as its Chairman the veteran Buddhist scholar, Dr. Makoto Nagai, with Dr. Shosōn Miyamoto and Dr. Susumu Yamaguchi as Vice-Chairmen, while Professor Shinsho Hanayama and the Rev. Riri Nakayama are responsible for the work of organising and compilation including the translation of Japanese articles into English. The committee has also agreed to depute a Japanese scholar for full-time work in the Encyclopaedia office in Ceylon to act as liaison and also help in the revision of the translations.

In China, under the aegis of the People's Republic, a very representative Committee of scholars has been set up in Peking. The Chairman of this committee is Professor

Dr. Chao Pu-chu, Vice-President of the Buddhist Association of China. Smaller committees also function in Burma, Thailand, Germany, France, Italy and the Netherlands. Some of the members of these committees and of the Board of Honorary Editors have already visited our office in Ceylon and have made useful suggestions for organising and expediting the work. It is hoped to have some of them working in our office from time to time, at least for short periods.

In May, 1957, a specimen fascicule of the Encyclopaedia was published containing a few articles representing a cross-section of the kind of information the Encyclopaedia hopes to provide and the method which it is proposed to follow. The purpose of the specimen fascicule was to obtain criticisms and suggestions for our guidance in the preparation of the main work. The specimen fascicule has more than amply proved its usefulness and we are deeply grateful to those who sent us their criticisms and suggestions. Criticisms and suggestions will be welcome at every stage of our work. In order to expedite publication, the Encyclopaedia is being issued in fascicules of about 100 pages each ; it is hoped that we shall be able to release these fascicules in quick succession.

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking most sincerely all those who have helped in their various ways to make this publication possible. It would be too big a task to give their names in detail, but I should like to record here my special appreciation of the personal interest taken by the Government Printer of Ceylon and his staff in getting this publication through the Government Press.

I also have pleasure in acknowledging with deep gratitude the financial assistance given by UNESCO under the auspices of the International Council of Philosophy and Humanities.

G. P. MALALASEKERA,
Editor-in-Chief.

Embassy of Ceylon,
Moscow,
15th April, 1961.



NOTE

THE system of transliteration used in the case of Pali and Sanskrit terms is that now generally accepted by scholars and lexicographers. In the case of Chinese and Japanese names and words, Wade's system has been followed. Where Siamese words are concerned, a system suggested by H. H. Prince Dhani Nivat has been largely adopted.

In certain cases the textual word (Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, &c.) has been retained in preference to a dubious English rendering with a connotation foreign to Buddhism. Thus, Saṅgha for the Order of Monks ; bhikkhu for priest, monk or almsman ; arahant for saint ; karma for action ; bodhisattva for aspirant for enlightenment, &c. And such term will be used in the language of the source employed, Nibbāna (Pali), Nirvāna (Sanskrit), &c. But a comprehensive system of cross-references will ensure that the reader who is not familiar with such technical terms is guided from an English term to the more precise and classical one ; thus, Apperception, see Javana ; Awareness, see Sati ; Void, see Śūnya ; &c.

In Ceylon the dates of events up to the 16th century have been taken from the Chronological List in the University of Ceylon, *History of Ceylon*, Vol. I, Part II.

Instead of A. D. the abbreviation A. C. has been used throughout.

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With the Compliments of

The Director of Cultural Affairs, Government of Ceylon
(135, Dharmapala Mavata, Colombo 7)

and of

The Editor-in-Chief, Encyclopaedia of Buddhism
(University Park, Peradeniya).

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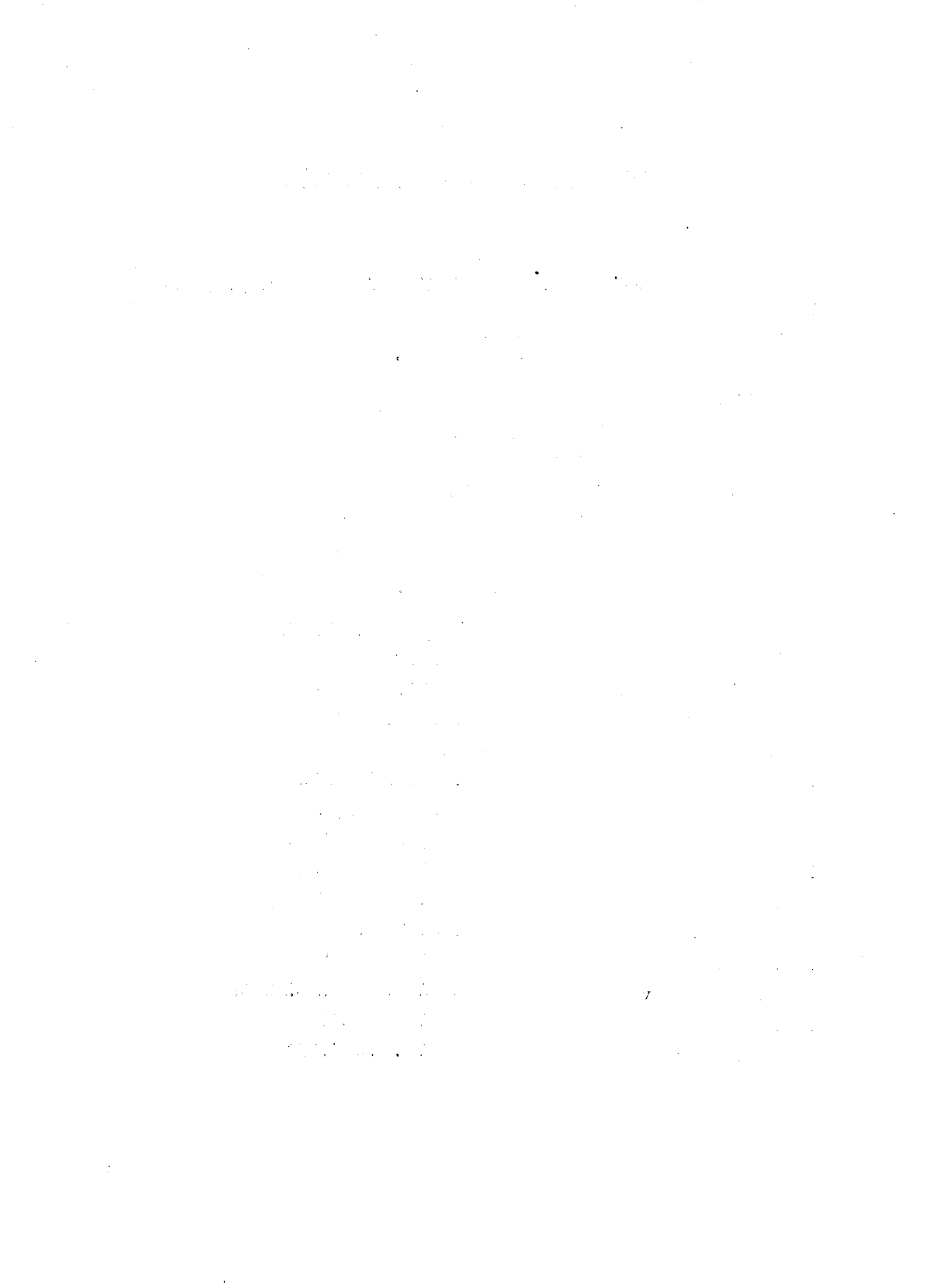
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ABBREVIATIONS

A.	..	Āṅguttara Nikāya, PTS.	ASCAR.	..	Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Annual Report
AA.	..	Āṅguttaranikāya Aṭṭhakathā (Manorathapūraṇi), PTS.	ASCI.	..	Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Inscription
AAWG.	..	Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen	ASCMem.	..	Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Memoir
AbhK.	..	Abhidharmakośa, ed. R. Sankritayayana, Benares	ASIAR.	..	Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report
AbhKbh.	..	Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, BB. XX	ASIMem.	..	Archaeological Survey of India, Memoir
AbhKk.	..	Abhidharmakośakārikā, ed. L. de la Vallée Poussin, Paris	AṣP.	..	Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, ed. R. Mitra, Calcutta
AbhKvy.	..	Abhidharmakośavyākhyā, ed. U. Wogihara, Tokyo	Āṭā.	..	Āṭānāṭikasūtra (Bruchstücke des Āṭānāṭikasūtra), Kl. Turf. V
Abhs.	..	Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, JPTS. 1884	Avk.	..	Avadānakalpalatā, BI. 1888-1896
Abhsy.	..	Abhidharmasamuccaya, VBS.12	Avś.	..	Avadānaśataka, BST. 19
Abhvt.	..	Abhidhammāvatāra, BM. I	BASR.	..	Bulletin de l'Académie des Sciences de Russie
ABIA.	..	Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology	BB.	..	Bibliotheca Buddhica
ABORI.	..	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute	Bbh.	..	Bodhisattvabhūmi, ed. U. Wogihara, Tokyo
AbsPuś.	..	Abhisamayālamkāraprajñāpāramitāupadeśaśāstra, BB. XXIII	Bc.	..	Bodhicaryāvatāra, ed. L. de la Vallée Poussin, Calcutta, 1914
AbsPvy.	..	Abhisamayālamkārarōlokaprajñāpāramitāvyaḥkyā, ed. U. Wogihara, Tokyo	Bcp.	..	Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā, ed. L. de la Vallée Poussin, 1902
AdśP.	..	Adhyardhaśatikāprajñāpāramitā, ed. H. Leumann, Strassburg	BD.	..	Buddhist Dictionary, by Nyānatiloka (revised edition 1956), Colombo
Akanuma 1	..	Akanuma, C. : Indo-Bukkyō Koyūmeishi-Jiten (Dictionary of Buddhist Indian Proper Names), Nagoya	Beal	..	Beal, S. : The Buddhist Tripiṭaka, 1876
Akanuma 2	..	Akanuma, C. : Kam-pa Shibu Agon Goshōroku (The Comparative Catalogue of Chinese Āgas and Pali Nikāyas), Nagoya	BEFEO.	..	Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient
AKM.	..	Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, herausg. von der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft	Bendall	..	Bendall, C. : Catalogue of Buddhist Sanskrit Manuscripts, Cambridge
AM.	..	Asia Maior	Bhkāv.	..	Bhadrakalpāvadāna, ed. S. d'Oldenburg, 1884
AMG.	..	Annales du Musée Guimet	BHS.	..	Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, Grammar and Dictionary, ed. F. Edgerton, Yale
Anāgv.	..	Anāgatavaṃsa, JPTS. 1886	Bhsk.	..	Bhavasamkrāntisūtra (and commentary), ed. N. Aiyaswami Sastri, Adyar
Anesaki	..	Anesaki, M. : The Four Buddhist Āgas in Chinese, 1908	BI.	..	Bibliotheca Indica
AO.	..	Archiv Orientální : Journal of the Czechoslovak Oriental Institute	BibB.	..	Bibliographie Bouddhique
Ap.	..	Apadāna, PTS.	BIIMEO.	..	Bolletino dell' Istituto Indiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente
ApA.	..	Apadāna Aṭṭhakathā (Visudhajanavilāsini), PTS.	BM.	..	Buddhadatta's Manuals, PTS.
ArtA.	..	Artibus Asiae	BMFJ.	..	Bulletin de la Maison Franco-Japonaise
Arvś.	..	Arthavinīścaya, ed. A. Ferrari, Rome	BṇiPrāt.	..	Bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa (Bruchstücke des Bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa), Kl. Turf. III
AS.	..	Aluvihara Series	BOH.	..	Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica

BPrät.	..	Bodhisattvaprätimokṣasūtra, IHQ. 7	Dhp.	..	Dhammapada, PTS.
BS.	..	Buddhistic Studies, ed. B. C. Law, Calcutta	DhpA.	..	Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā, PTS.
BSOAS.	..	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies	Dhpr.	..	Dharmapradīpikā(va), ed. Dharmakīrti Sri Dharmarāma (sixth edition 1951), Ceylon
BSS.	..	Bombay Sanskrit Series	Dhs.	..	Dhammasaṅgaṇi, PTS.
BST.	..	Buddhist Sanskrit Texts	DhsA.	..	Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā (Athasālinī), PTS.
Buc.	..	Buddhacarita, ed. E. H. Johnston, Calcutta	Dhscy.	..	Dharmasamuccaya, ed. Lin Li-Kouang, Paris
Bup.	..	Buddhaghosuppatti, ed. J. Gray, London	Dhsmg.	..	Dharmasaṅgraha, Edd. F. Max Müller and H. Wenzel, Oxford
Buv.	..	Buddhavaṃsa, PTS.	Divy.	..	Divyāvādāna, Edd. E. B. Cowell and R. A. Neil, Cambridge
BuvA.	..	Buddhavaṃsa Aṭṭhakathā (Madhuratthavilāsini), PTS.	DPPN.	..	Dictionary of Pali Proper Names
Cabaton	..	Cabaton, A. : Catalogue Sommaire des Manuscrits Sanskrits et Pālis, Paris	Dpv.	..	Dīpavaṃsa, ed. H. Oldenberg, London
Catuś.	..	Catuṣṭaka, ed. V. Bhattacharyya, Calcutta	Dukap.	..	Dukapaṭṭhāna, PTS.
CHJ.	..	The Ceylon Historical Journal	EB.	..	The Eastern Buddhist
CII.	..	Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum	EI.	..	Epigraphia Indica
CJHSS.	..	The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies	ERE.	..	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. J. Hastings
CJSc.	..	Ceylon Journal of Science — Section G	EW.	..	East and West
Ckv.	..	Chakesadhātuvavaṃsa, JPTS. 1885	EZ.	..	Epigraphia Zeylanica
Cordier	..	Cordier, P. : Catalogue du Fond Tibétain, 1909-1915	Gg.	..	Gaṇḍistotragāthā, BB. XV
Cp.	..	Cariyāpīṭaka, PTS.	GM.	..	Gilgit Manuscripts, ed. Nalinaksha Dutt and others
CpA.	..	Cariyāpīṭaka Aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpani), PTS.	GOS.	..	Gaekwad's Oriental Series
CPD.	..	A Critical Pāli Dictionary	Gst.	..	Guhyasamājatantra, ed. B. Bhattacharyya, Baroda
Cviśp.	..	Cittaviśuddhiprakaraṇa, VBS. 8	Gv.	..	Gandhavaṃsa, JPTS. 1886
D.	..	Dīgha Nikāya, PTS.	Gvyū.	..	Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra, Edd. D. T. Suzuki and H. Idzumi (2nd edn. 1949), Kyoto
DA.	..	Dīghanikāya Aṭṭhakathā (Sumanagalavilāsini), PTS.	Hatthv.	..	Hatthavanagallavihāravavaṃsa, PTS.
Dāṭhv.	..	Dāṭhavaṃsa, PSS. 7	Hbg.	..	Hōbōgin, Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Bouddhisme
Dbhg.	..	Dasabhūmikagāthā, EB. V	Hetub.	..	Hetubinduṭṭikā (with sub-commentary), GOS. 113
Dbhīś.	..	Dasabhūmiśvara, ed. R. Kondo, Tokyo	HJAS.	..	Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies
DCBT.	..	Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms	HOS.	..	Harvard Oriental Series
De S.	..	de Silva, W. A. : Catalogue of Palm leaf Manuscripts, MCM. series A, No. 4	Hvp.	..	Hastavālaprakaraṇa, JRAS. 1918
De Z.	..	de Zoysa, Louis : A Catalogue of Pali, Sinhalese and Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Temple Libraries of Ceylon, Colombo	IA.	..	Indian Antiquary
Dhk.	..	Dhātukathā (with commentary), PTS.	IAL.	..	Indian Art and Letters
Dhmpr.	..	Dharmottarapradīpa, ed. D. Malvania, Patna	IBK.	..	Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū (Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies)
			IC.	..	Indian Culture
			IHQ.	..	The Indian Historical Quarterly
			It.	..	Itivuttaka, PTS.
			ItA.	..	Itivuttaka Aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpani), PTS.

J.	.. Jātaka (with commentary), ed. V. Fausböll, London, 1896	Kvbh.	.. (Karmavibhaṅga) : Mahākarmavibhaṅga (La grande Classification des Actes) et Karmavibhaṅgopadeśa (Discussion sur le Mahākarmavibhaṅga), ed. S. Lévi, Paris
JAOS.	.. Journal of the American Oriental Society	Kvit.	.. Kaṅkhāvitaraṇi, PTS.
JAs.	.. Journal Asiatique	Kvu.	.. Kathāvatthu, PTS.
JASB.	.. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal	KvuA.	.. Kathāvatthupparakaraṇa Aṭṭhakathā, JPTS. 1889
JBHU.	.. Journal of the Benares Hindu University	Kvyū.	.. (Avalokiteśvaragūṇa) Kāraṇḍavyūha, ed. S. Samasrami, Calcutta
JBORS.	.. Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society	Lal.	.. Lalitavistara, BST. I
JBRAS.	.. Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society	Laṅk.	.. Laṅkāvatārasūtra, ed. B. Nanjio, Kyoto
JBRs.	.. Journal of the Burma Research Society	Ligeti	.. Ligeti, Louis : Catalogue du Kanjur Mongol, BOH. III
JBTS.	.. Journal of the Buddhist Text Society	Lś.	.. Lokeśvaraśataka, JAs. 1919
JCBRAS.	.. Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society	M.	.. Majjhima Nikāya, PTS.
JDLC.	.. Journal of the Department of Letters, University of Calcutta	MA.	.. Majjhimanikāya Aṭṭhakathā (Papañcasūdanī), PTS.
JGIS.	.. Journal of the Greater India Society	MBT.	.. Minor Buddhist Texts, SOR. IX
JIH.	.. Journal of Indian History	MCM.	.. Memoir of the Colombo Museum
Jinac.	.. Jinacarita, JPTS. 1904-1905	Mdhvr.	.. Mādhyamakavṛtti, BB. IV
Jinak.	.. Jinakālamālī (in Sinhalese characters), ed. A. P. Buddhadatta Thera	Mdhvt.	.. Mādhyamakāvatāra, BB. IX
Jināl.	.. Jinālaṅkāra, ed. J. Gray, London	Mgh.	.. Meghasūtra, JRAS. 1880
Jm.	.. Jātakamālā, HOS. 1	Mhbv.	.. Mahābodhivaṃsa, PTS.
JOR.	.. Journal of Oriental Research	MhM.	.. Mahāmāyūri, ed. by Oldenburg in Zapiski Vostochnago Otdelenija Imp. Russk. Archeol. Obschestva, XI (1899)
JPTS.	.. Journal of the Pali Text Society	Mhps.	.. Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra, ed. E. Waldschmidt (Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra), Abhandlungen der deutschen Akademie, Berlin
JRAS.	.. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland	Mhs.	.. Mahāsamājasūtra (Bruchstücke Buddhistischer Sūtras, I), Kl. Turf. IV
JSS.	.. Journal of the Siam Society	Mhsmg.	.. Mahāyānasamgraha, ed. E. Lamotte (La Somme du Grand Véhicule d'Asaṅga), Louvain
Keith	.. Keith, A. B. : Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford	Mhv.	.. Mahāvāṃsa and Cūlavāṃsa, PTS.
Khp.	.. Khuddakapāṭha, PTS.	MhvA.	.. Mahāvāṃsaṭṭhikā (Vāṃsatthappakāsini = Mahāvāṃsa Aṭṭhakathā), PTS.
KhpA.	.. Khuddakapāṭha Aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthajotikā I), PTS.	MhvE.	.. Extended Mahāvāṃsa, AS. III
Khs.	.. Khuddasikkhā, JPTS. 1883	Mhvu.	.. Mahāvastu, ed. E. Senart, Paris
KhT.	.. Khotanese Texts, ed. H. W. Bailey, Cambridge	Mhvyut.	.. Mahāvyyutpatti, ed. R. Sakaki, Kyoto
Klpm.	.. Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā (Bruchstücke der Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā), Kl. Turf. II	Miln.	.. Milindapaṇḥa, ed. V. Trenckner, London
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ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF BUDDHISM



First letter of the Devanāgarī alphabet in Lantśha script used by Buddhists in India and Tibet in the 8th century A. C. (Csoma Körösi).

THE sound represented by the first letter of many alphabets, Sanskrit, Roman, Greek, as well as of most modern languages of East and West, has served as a mystic symbol for the ultimate beginning or creation, as well as for the Absolute, e.g., I am Alpha and Omega.

It is the first of all sounds and, hence, the beginning of all knowledge which used to be communicated only by word of mouth. It is the first sound of the sacred syllable AUM (OM), which is said to be the essence of all the Vedas. It is from this that Indian mysticism has developed a cult, attributing to this initial sound a privileged position and function. This tradition was taken up by Buddhism, whereby it spread throughout east Asia.

It is the most elementary sound, produced by the mere opening of the mouth, and forms in most Oriental languages an essential part of the fundamental syllables: ka, ga, ta, da, pa, ba, ma, &c. These syllables are not built up from pure consonants plus a vowel (k + a), but form a concrete unit in which the vowel is inherent in the letter-symbol. The pure consonants, k, g, &c., would then be abstractions (ka minus a), making the sound incomplete. The vowel sound is, therefore, an essential constituent, and the vowel A is the beginning of such essence.

Moreover, A is in Sanskrit and Pali, as it is in Greek, a negating particle (*alpha privans*), whereby is symbolised the original non-entity of existence (*an-ātmya, an-atta*) and its non-permanent nature (*a-nitya, a-nicca*). In this denial of permanence it becomes a symbol of permanence itself, for "Whether a Tathāgata arises or not, all component things are impermanent". Thus, the letter A symbolises, at the same time, the origination of the very essence of things, as well as the negation of the foundation thereof. This apparent contradiction is in fact an identity, for it is in the negation of the absolute nature of things that their origination and cessation is postulated.

Thus, the letter A is considered to be the most perfect letter, which is imperishable (*akṣara*), even though in its combination with other letters, e.g., in AUM (q.v.), the evolution, continuation and involution of this world of events is symbolised.

Further developments which were carried to far-away lands by Buddhist missionaries had their origin in India, where even to this day their equivalents are found with hardly any difference in the Tāntric schools of Hinduism, which flourished particularly in Bengal and south India. Tibetan Buddhism has given much room to the development of such types of speculation.

According to the *Mani bKah:bum* (fol. 31 b.) the sacred syllable symbolises the noumenal source, the absolute; and around this symbol is evolved the idea of creative sound in the theory of vibration. Well-known and far spread as this concept is in the mystic East, it was not unknown in the West either. Pythagoras, who himself was an initiate of eastern wisdom, and who was the founder of one of the most influential schools of mystic philosophy in the West, spoke of the harmony of the spheres, according to which each celestial body and each and every atom, produced a particular sound on account of its movement, rhythm and vibration. All these sounds formed a universal harmony in which each element, while having its own function and character, contributed to the unity of the whole. This idea of creative sound was continued in the doctrine of the Logos (the Word), partly absorbed by early Christianity, which thereby linked itself with the philosophy of the Gnostics and the traditions of the East, even though the link was not maintained by the later Church: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (*John, I, 1, ff.*).

The word, however sacred, being a repetition of a mere sound and an expression of a concept will not produce the desired effect, unless accompanied by perfect knowledge, pure attitude of mind and complete responsiveness on the part of the person using the *mantra*. Its power is truly sacramental, i.e., bestowing internal grace through an outward sign on the initiated, the spiritually cultured one. Such words, although self-evident (*sandiḥhika*), yet can be comprehended only by the wise (*paccattam vedītabbo viññūhi*). This is admitted by all schools of Buddhism, not excluding the Theravāda, who do not differentiate otherwise between exoteric and esoteric teachings of the Buddha, who is said not to have the closed fist of some teachers who retain certain teachings for select pupils only.

The sound-letter A signified, therefore, the void, creative existence and the permanent,¹ i.e., non-entity, becoming and being, all of which are descriptive terms of the actual and real nature of everything, impermanence itself being permanent.

¹ *Taiśhō*, 1796, vii.

