

# THE END OF THE WAY

"Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become that Path itself."

Footnote: "This "Path" is mentioned in all the Mystic Works. As Krishna says in the *Dnyaneshvari*: "When this Path is beheld . . . whether one sets out to the bloom of the east, or to the chambers of the west, *without moving*, O holder of the bow, *is the travelling in this road*. In this path, to whatever place one would go, *that place one's own self* becomes." "Thou art the Path," is said to the Adept Guru, and by the latter to the disciple, after initiation. "I am the way and the Path," says another MASTER."

"Long and weary is the way before thee, O Disciple. One single thought about the past that thou hast left behind, will drag thee down and thou wilt have to start the climb anew.

"Kill in thyself all memory of past experiences. Look not behind or thou art lost."

~ "The Voice of the Silence" p. 14 & 18, translated by H.P. Blavatsky from the Book of the Golden Precepts ~



## THE TELEVISION SERIES "MONKEY"

In 1979, the BBC began broadcasting a rather unusual television series. Filmed and produced in Japan and set in the 7th century C.E., it was about a group of Buddhist pilgrims travelling from China to India (the birthplace and original home of Buddhism) in order to collect certain sacred scriptures to bring back to China for the spiritual instruction and enlightenment of the people.

On its surface, this may not sound a particularly engaging or attention grabbing subject for a weekly TV series but it proved a lasting success. Combining gems of Buddhist and general Eastern philosophy (this was a time when interest in all things Eastern had become reasonably prevalent in the UK), fantasy drama, mystical and magical themes, fight scenes, and an underlying element of humour and wit -

magnified by the English dubbing - it proved popular with young and old alike. Today, many people who grew up in the UK in the 1980s have memories, even if only vague, of seeing "Monkey" on television. The opening theme song, "Monkey Magic," has led many to refer to the series by that title.

The effect on some viewers - both then and in its many subsequent repeats and re-broadcasts on various different TV channels in the English speaking world - was quite lasting and profound. For many people, it was their first introduction to Buddhist ideas. A few viewers felt these with such profundity that they ended up becoming Buddhists and even Buddhist monks themselves!

"Monkey" is a series which students of Theosophy can readily appreciate, relate to, and understand, at perhaps a deeper and more meaningful level than the "average" viewer who may be unfamiliar and unacquainted with esoteric themes and metaphysical symbolism.

"I must tell you that during the last quarter of every hundred years an attempt is made by those "Masters," of whom I have spoken, to help on the spiritual progress of Humanity in a marked and definite way. Towards the close of each century you will invariably find that an outpouring or upheaval of spirituality – or call it mysticism if you prefer – has taken place." (HPB, "The Key to Theosophy" p. 306)

For all we know, "Monkey" - the ideas for which must have begun to be formulated around 1975 or shortly afterwards - may possibly have been beneficially inspired and guided by the influences at work in the "close-of-the-century outpouring."

## **THE ANCIENT LEGEND BEHIND IT: "JOURNEY TO THE WEST"**

Although this was the first time it had been rendered into televisual form, "Monkey" was by no means a new story. The following are excerpts from the Wikipedia page on "Journey to the West":

"*Journey to the West* is a Chinese novel published in the 16th century during the Ming dynasty and attributed to Wu Cheng'en. It is one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature. In English-speaking countries, the work is widely known as *Monkey*, the title of Arthur Waley's popular abridged translation.

"The novel is an extended account of the legendary pilgrimage of the Tang dynasty Buddhist monk Xuanzang who traveled to the "Western Regions", that is, Central Asia and India, to obtain Buddhist sacred texts (sūtras) and returned after many trials and much suffering. It retains the broad outline of Xuanzang's own account, *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions*, but the Ming dynasty novel adds elements from folk tales and the author's invention, that is, that Gautama Buddha gave this task to the monk and provided him with three protectors who agree to help him as an atonement for their sins. These disciples are Sun Wukong [Monkey], Zhu Wuneng [Piggy] and Sha Wujing [Sandy], together with a dragon prince who acts as Xuanzang's steed, a white horse.

"*Journey to the West* has strong roots in Chinese folk religion, Chinese mythology, Taoist and Buddhist philosophy, and the pantheon of Taoist immortals and Buddhist bodhisattvas are still reflective of some Chinese religious attitudes today. Enduringly popular, the tale is at once a comic adventure story, a spring of spiritual insight, and an extended allegory in which the group of pilgrims journeys towards enlightenment by the power and virtue of cooperation. . . .

"The novel *Journey to the West* was based on historical events. Xuanzang (602 - 664) was a monk at Jingtu Temple in late-Sui Dynasty and early-Tang Dynasty Chang'an. Motivated by the poor quality of Chinese translations of Buddhist scripture at the time, Xuanzang left Chang'an in 629, in defiance of Emperor Taizong of Tang's ban on travel. Helped by sympathetic Buddhists, he traveled via Gansu and Qinghai to Kumul (Hami), thence following the Tian Shan mountains to Turpan. He then crossed what are today Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan, into Gandhara, reaching India in 630. Xuanzang

traveled throughout the Indian subcontinent for the next thirteen years, visiting important Buddhist pilgrimage sites, studying at the ancient university at Nalanda, and debating the rivals of Buddhism.

"Xuanzang left India in 643 and arrived back in Chang'an in 646. Although he had defied the imperial travel ban when he left, Xuanzang received a warm welcome from Emperor Taizong upon his return. The emperor provided money and support for Xuanzang's projects. He joined Da Ci'en Monastery (Monastery of Great Maternal Grace), where he led the building of the Big Wild Goose Pagoda to store the scriptures and icons he had brought back from India. He recorded his journey in the book *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions*. With the support of the emperor, he established an institute at Yuhua Gong (Palace of the Lustre of Jade) monastery dedicated to translating the scriptures he had brought back. His translation and commentary work established him as the founder of the Dharma Character school of Buddhism [i.e. the Chinese version of Yogacharya Buddhism]. Xuanzang died on March 7, 664. The Xingjiao Monastery was established in 669 to house his ashes."

## **SYMBOLISM OF THE PILGRIM AND THE ANIMAL SPIRITS**

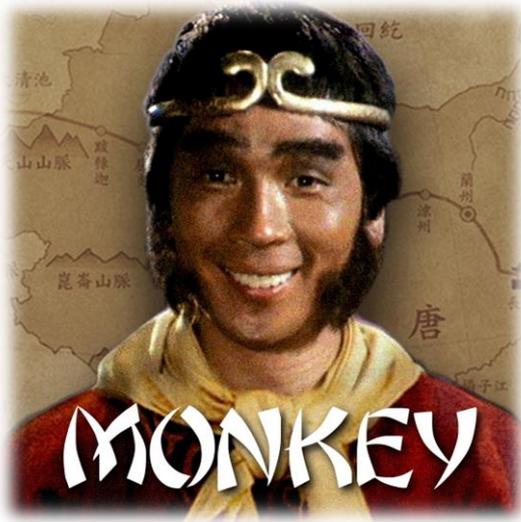
In the entry for "Tripitaka" on p. 341 of "The Theosophical Glossary" HPB explains that it literally means "the three baskets"; the name of the Buddhist canon. It is composed of three divisions: (1) the doctrine; (2) the rules and laws for the priesthood and ascetics; (3) the philosophical dissertations and metaphysics: to wit, the Abhidharma . . . The Abhidharma contains the most profoundly metaphysical and philosophical teachings, and is the store-house whence the Mahayana and Hinayana Schools got their fundamental doctrines."

In the "Monkey" TV series, as also in some English translations of "Journey to the West," the Buddhist monk Xuanzang (who, incidentally, is mentioned by HPB numerous times throughout her writings, under a variety of phonetic renderings of the name) is named Tripitaka. Although a male character, he is played in the series by a woman, yet always referred to as "he," "him," "Master," "the boy priest," etc. Interestingly, Buddha, who appears in a number of the episodes, is also played by a woman, whilst Kwan Yin - represented as a female Bodhisattva in Chinese Buddhism - is played by a man wearing a dress.



This may be intended to portray the truth that a sense of being either "male" or "female" is transcended and discarded when one reaches higher stages of spiritual development and enlightenment or perhaps represents instead (or as well) that those qualities which may more usually be associated with women - such as tenderness, gentleness, compassion, etc. - must be cultivated and find expression in the male aspirant and vice versa.

Tripitaka's three disciples - Monkey, Sandy, and Pigsy - are respectively a monkey "spirit," a fish "spirit," and a pig "spirit." Long ago they all held official positions and respectable roles in the celestial realms but due to mistakes and misconduct were expelled and sent down to Earth. Monkey was trapped for many years under a mountain; Sandy lived in the water; Pigsy lived the unclean life of a pig. In the early days of Tripitaka's journey he encounters the three, who subsequently join him, acting both as his protectors and disciples, during which process they begin to become slowly more reformed, less animalistic, and more human-like, albeit with many difficulties along the way.



Monkey is tacitly accepted as the chief of the disciples and has the most magical powers. His main faults are violence, aggression, pride, and arrogance. Buddha fitted him with a golden headband, which serves as a means of Tripitaka keeping him under control when he becomes too unruly. Tripitaka uses the "headache sutra" - which, it transpires, is the famous mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* - and this causes Monkey's headband to increasingly tighten until he relents.

". . . in esoteric philosophy Avaloki, the "on-looker", is the Higher Self, while Padmapani is the Higher Ego or Manas. The mystic formula "Om mani padme hum" is specially used to invoke their joint help." (HPB, "The Theosophical Glossary" p. 44, entry for "Avalokiteswara")

"The ancient mystic formula of the King Srong-ch-Tsans-Gampo, the "Aum mani padme houm," effects its wonders now as well as in the seventh century. . . . *Aum* (mystic Sanscrit term of the Trinity), *mani* (holy jewel), *padme* (in the lotus, padma being the name for lotus), *houm* (be it so). The six syllables in the sentence correspond to the six chief powers of nature emanating from Buddha (the abstract deity, not Gautama), who is the *seventh*, and the Alpha and Omega of being." (HPB, "Isis Unveiled" Vol. 2, p. 616)

Sandy's main faults are quite different: a proneness to lugubriousness, a somewhat cowardly character, and a tendency to philosophise and desire to be looked upon as philosopher when he is far from being one.

Pigsy is indeed a swine; greed, lust, and laziness, are his main faults but, like each of his co-disciples, he has his good and helpful qualities and is learning and growing.

Familiarity with Eastern esotericism and symbolism may enable us to look upon the pilgrim-monk, his disciples, and their pilgrimage, as an allegorical representation of the journey undertaken by every soul who makes the serious determination and commitment to live and work solely for the benefit and spiritual elevation of humanity and for the Great Cause of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas - the Masters and Awakened Ones - who guide and watch over the spiritual evolution and advancement of humanity.



The monkey, the fish, and the pig, are within the skandhas, Kama-Manas, and lower Principles, of each pilgrim-soul, and must tenderly yet firmly be mastered, brought under control, and used wisely to help rather than hinder in the long and arduous journey. Starting out on the Path, the pilgrim's *inner* "animal-elements" begin to awaken and take on a life of their own. They are bound to cling to him and accompany him on his journey for quite some time to come, since in actuality they are his own creations and he cannot sever them from himself so quickly. There is much learning to be done by all.

Or, to quote from the blog site [deniswright.blogspot.co.uk](http://deniswright.blogspot.co.uk): "At the most fundamental level, Tripitaka represents the self [i.e. the *individual* self, or Reincarnating Ego]. He is not immune from error, and admits to serious mistakes at times. But he stands for all that is good and noble in the individual. As such, he is latent in every human soul – indeed, in all life, since everything has consciousness even if it is at a very low level . . . Monkey, Pigsy and Sandy are the latent strengths and weaknesses within that same self; pride, greed, wantonness, and yearning to be something other than what it is. The voyage is the journey through life, its danger as real as ignorance of the true nature of things allows them to be. It will be a long and difficult pilgrimage, with experience doing most of the teaching, and the wise words

of the better self contributing the remainder. Viewed this way, *Monkey* gives its admirers no more and no less than they are capable of comprehending, but from the youngest to the oldest, they must surely learn some of the essential truths of this very sophisticated religion."

## QUOTES WORTH REMEMBERING FROM THE EPISODE "THE END OF THE WAY"

**Narrator, at start of episode:** "There is One. It is infinite. Yet what is called Buddha fills it. The One takes myriad forms, since everything is a form of the Whole. Forms change; the One does not change. Its total is always the same."

**Narrator, at end of episode:** "There is One. It is eternal. Yet what is called Buddha outlasts us. The One is like a wheel and the wheel we are on turns endlessly. Life, death, the wheel, is One Way. Even Buddhas are born again.\* If the One, the Way, and the Wheel, are Buddha, how can there be an *end* of the Way?"

\* "The closer the union between the mortal reflection MAN and his celestial PROTOTYPE, the less dangerous the external conditions and subsequent reincarnations - which neither Buddhas nor Christs can escape." (HPB, "The Secret Doctrine" Vol. 1, p. 639)

**Buddha:** "You will not enter into Buddhahood while you are still preoccupied with life and death."

"If you cling to life, you may fail. You will have to choose."

"You will still need to find your way there. It does not grow closer to *you*. *You* grow closer to *it*."

"You can only be free after you *choose* freedom."

"Freedom is an empty word without duty."

"There is no plan except this: We are all Buddha. After thousands of lives, the illumined will be born and know that they are Buddha."

"Only the illumined can see clearly, because all is illusion."

"Where *you* are going is a state of mind. What matters is *how* you travel. I tell you, go calmly, without quarrelling."

**Tripitaka:** "You saw yourself as a human being. Not as Monkey; as you're going to be, in some future incarnation. . . . The evolution of each spirit is upwards, until Buddhahood is achieved."

• **Tripitaka:** "You know I am on a mission for the Buddha."

**King of all Geological Ages:** "A mission which I shall never allow to succeed. It would put all of us monsters out of business."

• **Tripitaka:** "We are all everybody. I was but a wave on an infinite ocean."

**Monkey:** "It's drowning you though!"

**Tripitaka:** "Buddha showed me there can be no freedom without responsibilities."

## YOGACHARYA BUDDHISM

Whilst in India, Xuanzang - i.e. the real "Tripitaka" - was taught the Yogacharya philosophy and metaphysical system by Shilabhadra, the head of the Nalanda Mahavihara, who was then over 100 years old. Important Yogacharya texts, including some by Aryasangha himself, were brought back to China by Xuanzang and translated. This was the introduction of Yogacharya Buddhism into China, where its form and expression was somewhat modified from the Indian. Xuanzang wrote several Yogacharya treatises himself, including the Cheng Weishi Lun, "Discourse on the Establishment of Consciousness Only."

The form of Buddhist philosophy presented in the "Monkey" series, primarily through Tripitaka, Buddha, and the sagely narrator, is distinctly Yogacharya-esque.

Unlike all other forms of Buddhism, the lesser known Yogacharya School teaches that there *is* an Absolute Divine Principle and that it is Adi-Buddhi, the One Element of Primordial Wisdom, which is likened to an absolute, infinite, undefiled, undecaying "Expanse" like Abstract Space, and which is the innermost essence and true Self of each and all. It is the Tathagatagarbha – "Buddha Nature," "Buddha Element," "Buddha Self" – within us, which has become obscured and hidden through the mental poisons and passions and desires which we have allowed to grow up within our soul. But it can be realised and we can re-become it in consciousness. "There IS an Atman," assert the Yogacharya scriptures and the Tathagatagarbha sutras, and the Absolute is empty only of everything other than Itself.

It's essentially the Atman-Brahman doctrine of Advaita Vedanta Hinduism but expressed in Buddhist terminology, with the addition of the Bodhisattva Ideal, the Paramitas and so forth, and central emphasis on Gautama Buddha as the great Teacher and the Supreme Nirmanakaya.

Many people think and say that the whole of Buddhism teaches "anatta" (no self, no soul, and no Atman) but this is usually because they've never heard of Yogacharya Buddhism.

Scholars and academics trace the Yogacharya philosophical worldview back to Aryasangha, an Indian Mahayana Buddhist Master who they say lived around 1,500 years ago. In "The Theosophical Glossary," however, HPB says that there were two Aryasanghas; the one who lived 1,500 years ago she calls "the pseudo-Aryasangha," who tried to pass himself off as being the original one, who had lived 1,000 years before and who had been an Arhat and a direct disciple of Gautama Buddha.

She says that there are thus two Yogacharya schools. The real Yogacharya School has always been entirely secret and esoteric and was founded by the original Aryasangha to perpetuate the actual esoteric teachings and secret philosophy of Buddha himself, which he had taught solely to a select group of his Arhats. Owing to persecution from the Hindu Brahmins, this school eventually moved its base to the *Trans-Himalayan* region. The later Yogacharya School of approx. 5th century C.E. is the only one which is known of by the world at large.

Whether Xuanzang had any connections or encounters with the *Esoteric* Yogacharya School or only with the exoteric version, which in his time was still active and contemporary, we do not know.

But one thing we do know: for the Yogacharya Buddhist, as for the Theosophist, the Buddha is more than Gautama, although Gautama was one who fully *realised* the Buddha. The Buddha is, in reality, the One Self of each and all. As the narrator tells us in another "Monkey" episode:

"Gods and devils are not the point of Buddhism. An enlightened man is greater than any god or demon. There is no reward or punishment except what we call forth ourselves. All suffering is caused by selfish desires. Enlightened, one becomes a Buddha. The Buddha himself said so, and the Buddha fills all the universe."