

**BUDDHIST POPULAR
LECTURES. DELIVERED
IN CEYLON IN 1907**

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Buddhist Popular Lectures. Delivered in Ceylon in 1907 by Annie Besant

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ANNIE BESANT

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IN CEYLON IN 1907**

Buddhist Popular

Lectures = = =



Delivered in Ceylon in 1907

BY

(W.C.A.)

ANNIE BESANT

President of the Theosophical Society

THE THEOSOPHIST OFFICE

Adyar, Madras, S. India

LONDON
and
BENARES



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FOREWORD

520-57 THESE lectures were delivered in Ceylon to Buddhist audiences. Some were to village people, and were spoken and translated sentence by sentence. Others were to boys. Some are therefore exceedingly simple, and they are published for the people to whom they were delivered, and not for the literary and cultured world. There is a small priestly party in Ceylon—happily a diminishing one—which bitterly resents any speaking on Buddhism by anyone who, like myself, is not a professed Buddhist, and submissive to their priestly authority. But the nobler types welcome all reverent speech, and hail the assistance of any who recognise the greatness of the Lord Buddha, and desire to serve His religion. To the Theosophical Society is due the revival of Buddhism in Ceylon, and its President-Founder started and guided the great educational movement which has brought back the island to Buddhism. It is therefore fitting that one of my early presidential tours should have been in Ceylon, and of that tour this little book is the outcome.

ANNIE BESANT.

CONTENTS

	PAGES.
AT THE MUSEUS GIRLS' SCHOOL	1— 9
AT THE ANANDA COLLEGE	10— 25
AT THE ANANDA COLLEGE	26— 31
AT THE PUBLIC HALL	32— 58
AT WIJAYENANDE VIHARIC	59— 67
AT GALGE	68— 97
AT THE PUBLIC HALL	98—120
AT THE DHARMA RAJAH COLLEGE	121—129

Buddhist Popular Lectures

AT THE MUSÆUS GIRLS' SCHOOL.

(Address delivered on the occasion of the prize-giving to successful pupils.)

FRIENDS: In the past the relations between the East and the West have not always been satisfactory to either one side or the other. Many centuries ago Asia overran Europe, and the Europeans did not like it. Later, Europe began to overrun Asia, and the Asiatics did not like it. Now there is hope of better relations between the East and the West, and when we have a western invader, like Mrs. Higgins, coming to an eastern land to help and not to hinder, we have in that coming a promise of a fairer future, a prophecy of what shall be in days to come. For, in the future that lies in front of us, we hope for such intercourse between the East and the West that both may profit by it, that neither may suffer; the East bringing to the West its great spiritual thought and its profound philosophy, and the West bringing to the East the results of its scientific achievements and its practical conduct of life. Here, in this school, to-day, we see how East and West may help and may co-operate; and in the help that is here being given by some western women we see the promise of the days to come, when all intercourse shall be helpful and not harmful, when all nations shall be friends instead of foes. And in this school, where we have met these pupils who have appeared before us, we see the promise of that fairer day. And at the same time, while we recognise the value which here western help has been to eastern children, it is

none the less necessary that we should all remember that the bulk of the education in any nation must be carried on by its own people, and not by any from outside the national limits. From time to time, Westerners may come to you, from time to time you may send Easterners to help in the Western education ; but while that interchange of helpful offices may go on, the real weight of the education, whether in the East or in the West, must fall on the shoulders of the nation itself. And no education in Ceylon will be thoroughly satisfactory, nor surely founded, until you have trained your own boys and girls to be teachers when they grow up to be men and women, and until you are in no sense dependent upon the help that comes from outside, although you may, from time to time, willingly accept it. For no nation is saved from without, but the evolution of a nation can only go on along its own lines. Those lines can only be traced and carried out by those who have been trained under the inspiration of the best traditions of their own race. We speak of the children here learning Sinhalese history, Sinhalese geography, and I should say Sinhalese botany and Sinhalese science along Sinhalese lines. In no other way can you lay the foundation of that self-respect without which no nation can be builded up to greatness. This island has nothing to be ashamed of in the past that lies behind, and you need to train your children in the knowledge of that past, so that with their feet planted upon the past, the noble past, they may have ambition to plod on to a yet nobler future. None should dwell upon his national history only for pride in the past, but he should dwell on it in order that he may respect himself and his people, and in order that, he upon the foundation of that respect, may build more greatly for the years to come. That is the advantage of a great past, that is a stimulus

to make a mighty future. If you have nothing behind you, you do not know whether you have in you the capacity to achieve great things; but if you know that your people in the past have been great, then you feel that in the future too they may be great again. And in order to do this, the education of women is the most important thing of all. For you may play tricks with your boys' education, and you may still grow into a nation. But you dare not be careless with your girls' education—the girls who are to be mothers of the Sinhalese people in the days to come. There lies the very heart of national life. Denationalise your boys, and their mothers may renationalise them; but denationalise your women, and who shall save the children who are born of their wombs? Boys may go far afield, but they will never go quite astray, if their heart binds them to their home, and if they not only love, but reverence mother, wife and daughter. The home holds the heart of men, if it be worth holding, and the safety of the national life lies in the training of women. What then must it be, this education of your women? It must not be, as one of your speakers rightly said, mere book-learning. And that is the danger, that a false education may be implanted among you, an education which runs on lines not your own. The conditions of English national life are not the same—economically—as are the conditions of national life in your own island. The education which is fitted, perhaps, for the English girls is not always fitted in its entirety for the Sinhalese maiden. You have to remember that she has not to enter into the rough and tumble work of the world in competition with her men relatives. That evil fate has not yet descended upon the East. She has still to be a wife and mother, and as the mother in the East has ever been the ideal of the noblest womanhood