

**THE LIGHT OF ASIA; OR, THE GREAT
RENUNCIATION
(MAHĀBHINISHKRAMANA). BEING
THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF GAUTAMA,
PRINCE OF INDIA AND FOUNDER OF
BUDDHISM**

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The Light of Asia; Or, the Great Renunciation (Mahābhiniṣkramaṇa). Being the Life and Teaching of Gautama, Prince of India and Founder of Buddhism by Sir Edwin Arnold

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SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

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THE LIGHT OF ASIA.



Edwin Arnold

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OR

THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

(MAHĀBHINISHKRAMANA)

BEING

THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF GAUTAMA

Prince of India and Founder of Buddhism

(AS TOLD IN VERSE BY AN INDIAN BUDDHIST)

By SIR EDWIN ARNOLD, M.A., F.R.G.S., F.R.A.S.



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The Most Exalted Order of the Star of India

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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P R E F A C E.



IN the following Poem I have sought, by the medium of an imaginary Buddhist votary, to depict the life and character and indicate the philosophy of that noble hero and reformer, Prince Gautama of India, the founder of Buddhism.

A generation ago little or nothing was known in Europe of this great faith of Asia, which had nevertheless existed during twenty-four centuries, and at this day surpasses, in the number of its followers and the area of its prevalence, any other form of creed. Four hundred and seventy millions of our race live and die in the tenets of Gautama; and the spiritual dominions of this ancient teacher extend, at the present time, from Nepal and Ceylon over the whole Eastern Peninsula to China, Japan, Thibet, Central Asia, Siberia, and even Swedish Lapland. India itself might fairly be included in this magnificent empire of belief, for though the profession of Buddhism has for the most part passed away from the land of its birth, the mark

of Gautama's sublime teaching is stamped ineffaceably upon modern Brahmanism, and the most characteristic habits and convictions of the Hindus are clearly due to the benign influence of Buddha's precepts. More than a third of mankind, therefore, owe their moral and religious ideas to this illustrious prince, whose personality, though imperfectly revealed in the existing sources of information, cannot but appear the highest, gentlest, holiest, and most beneficent, with one exception, in the history of Thought. Discordant in frequent particulars, and sorely overlaid by corruptions, inventions, and misconceptions, the Buddhistical books yet agree in the one point of recording nothing — no single act or word — which mars the perfect purity and tenderness of this Indian teacher, who united the truest princely qualities with the intellect of a sage and the passionate devotion of a martyr. Even M. Barthélemy St. Hilaire, totally misjudging, as he does, many points of Buddhism, is well cited by Professor Max Müller as saying of Prince Siddārtha, "Sa vie n'a point de tache. Son constant héroïsme égale sa conviction; et si la théorie qu'il préconise est fautive, les exemples personnels qu'il donne sont irréprochables. Il est le modèle achevé de toutes les vertus qu'il prêche; son abnégation, sa charité, son inaltérable douceur ne se démentent point un seul instant. . . . Il prépare silencieusement