Very carefully and charitably the author examines cases of unconscious fraud, giving the extraordinary story of a pious lady in hospital, believed to live only on Holy Communion, 'in conditions that seemed to make any fraud absolutely impossible'. After a year it was discovered by accident that, having possessed herself of the keys to kitchen and larder, she went every night into the hospital kitchen and fed herself. The book also deals in masterly fashion with subjects like telepathy, divination and clairvoyance and would certainly merit being translated into English.

The author of the Faith and Fact book is the well-known French neurologist Jean Lhermitte. His very delicate subject, which is only touched upon in the work of P. Omez, is treated with telling examples. Only a few pages deal with cases of real possession, which is extremely rare; the main part of the book is concerned with abnormal states caused by nervous disorders. It gives a number of interesting case histories, some of them well-known, like those of the nuns of Loudun and the convulsionaries of the cemetery of Saint-Médard. He gives convincing psychological explanations of the extraordinary feats so-called possessed people are able to perform, and of the phenomena of split personality they exhibit. Like P. Omez, Lhermitte, too, considers that such phenomena, present for example in the Jesuit Pére Surin, can co-exist with the highest virtue, because the deceit involved in these manifestations is frequently either completely unconscious or due to diminished moral responsibility.

It is to be welcomed that books on these subjects written by experts are now available to the general public at a reasonable price, as they will serve, it is hoped, to lead to a more objective appreciation of extraordinary phenomena. The devil certainly exists, but he generally uses means more profitable to achieve his nefarious ends than just annoying pious men and women by making odd noises, uttering blasphemies or even striking them. The science of parapsychology is of recent origin and frequently despised by those still accustomed to attribute strange phenomena either to God or the devil. It has, however, made considerable progress in the last thirty years. It can now give irrefutable psychological explanations of a number of cases which Father Thurston, for example, was still content merely to record without attempting to explain.

HILDA GRAEF

BUDDHIST MONKS AND MONASTERIES OF INDIA, by Sukumar Dutt; Allen and Unwin; 50s.

The *saṅgha* or community of Buddhist monks originated in a curious way. It was the custom of the wandering religious of ancient India to seek a rain retreat during the three months of the summer monsoon: these religious were known as *Bikkhus* which means literally 'almsmen.' A *Bikkhu* was distinguished from the common beggar by the sacramental character of his begging which was an outward sign that he had renounced the world. The earliest followers of Prince

Siddhartha were such men as these who lived on charity and came together every June for the rainy season.

From these beginnings Dr Dutt describes how the Buddhist version of a rain retreat developed into a congregation of monks. He maintains that between Buddhist monastic communities and their counterparts in the western world there was an ideological and functional difference: in the former a 'monk and layman intercourse' was a distinctive feature from the start; in the latter, isolation from society was the idea with which the Christian monastic system began. This theory I think no one could disagree with but in the later development of western religious life, especially with the rise of the preaching orders, the intercourse between laymen and friars became as usual as it was in Buddhist communities. Even in such a strictly contemplative order as the Carmelites one can read in Crisogone de Jesus' life of St John of the Cross what a profound influence the order had in the life of a town where a priory or convent was established, and what frequent intercourse there was between local laymen and religious.

Dr Dutt, in this work of extraordinary scholarship and absorbing interest, gives a detailed description based largely on original research of the early monastic settlements and of the development of the *Saṅgha* through the lesser to the greater vehicle (*Hinayana* to *Mahayana*). He tells us that a monastery was called a *lena* and that originally there were five distinctive types of which only two are traceable to-day: the *viharas* north of the Vindhyas (most of them reduced to ground plans) and the *guhās* or excavated cave-temples to the south of the dividing range. Of these by far the most famous throughout the world are the Ajanta caves with their great fresco cycles of the late Gupta period (sixth century A.D.). The author most interestingly traces the influence of these paintings in some little known murals of the famous Savaite temple of Tanjore built by the Chola King Rajā Rajā at the end of the tenth century. Not only the style but the pigments used are very similar. Then in the early years of the present century the style was again revived in Bengal when Abanindranath Tagore founded the neo-Ajanta School.

One of the most fascinating and mysterious problems of ancient Indian culture is the rapid decline of Buddhism which set in soon after the end of the Gupta era. This great religion which grew and flourished for a thousand years and has left behind such an enormous number of ruined monastic sites in the northern plains and a still greater number of magnificent *guhas* (many of which are treasure houses of Gupta painting and sculpture) in the Vindhyan hills, suddenly virtually disappeared from the Indian peninsular, apart from a few communities in eastern Bengal which survived into the thirteenth century when they were permanently disrupted by the Muslim conquerors.

Thirty years ago when I motored direct from Ajanta to Ellora I thought I had found the answer. The calm of the great Bhodisattva had been broken by the wild graveyard dance of the *tandava*. There he dances, Bhairava, the most destructive form of Siva, in the vast eighth century Brahmanical cave temples: and as your eyes gradually become accustomed to the dim light, he looms out

of the shadows in a series of frenzied figures larger than life. The iconocolastic troops of Ala-ud-din Khilji have done their best to maim him, hacking off here a leg and there two or three of his eight arms. But still he dances wildly on and the intoxicating rhythm of the *tandava* is undisturbed by the destruction of his limbs. This sinister conception of Deity, so un-Upanishadic, so un-Buddhistic—an ancient spirit of a pre-Aryan past—has evidently triumphed over the gentle contemplative faith of Sakhya Muni and is here celebrating his conquest in the graveyard.

But my rather romantic theory has been exploded by Dr Dutt. While asserting that the causes of the decline are complex and obscure and still awaiting exploration, he tells us (p. 196) that 'The hypothesis is not groundless that it was towards the end of the Gupta age (round the middle of the sixth century A.D.) that the psychological background was set for the emergence of that arresting phenomenon in India's religious history, the acceptance of the Buddha as a deity of the Hindu pantheon.'

Hinduism has conquered not by force of arms nor by the destructive element in its Saivite theology but purely by its absorbent genius. It has often been said that were it not for the fact that we insist that our Lord is the *only* son of God, the Brahmins might well have pronounced him to be yet another *avatar* of Vishnu. From the imageless meditation of early *Hinayana* Buddhism, the mahayanist rites of worship had, by the eighth century A.D., become practically identical with those performed in Brahmanical image-worship. I well remember for example being shown a beautiful statue in Katmandu which I was told was venerated by the local Buddhists as a Bhodisattva and by the Hindus as Siva.

Dr Dutt's great book is well illustrated by plans and photographs provided by the archaeological survey of India and I only wish I could convey some idea of the wonderfully comprehensive treatment he has given to his subject, even to the extent of tracing the careers of some of the Indian monk scholars who went to China. Perhaps he is a little optimistic when he states in the preface that it was not the scholar and the specialist he had exclusively in view, but also the hundreds of visitors to the monastic remains all over India. I cannot quite see the average English or American tourist, rushed from sight to sight in his chartered plane, avidly reading this book. But for the real lover of the country and her marvellous culture, who is prepared to sit down and do some serious reading, then I can guarantee that he will find it impossible to lay aside this book for several weeks.

PENELOPE CHETWODE