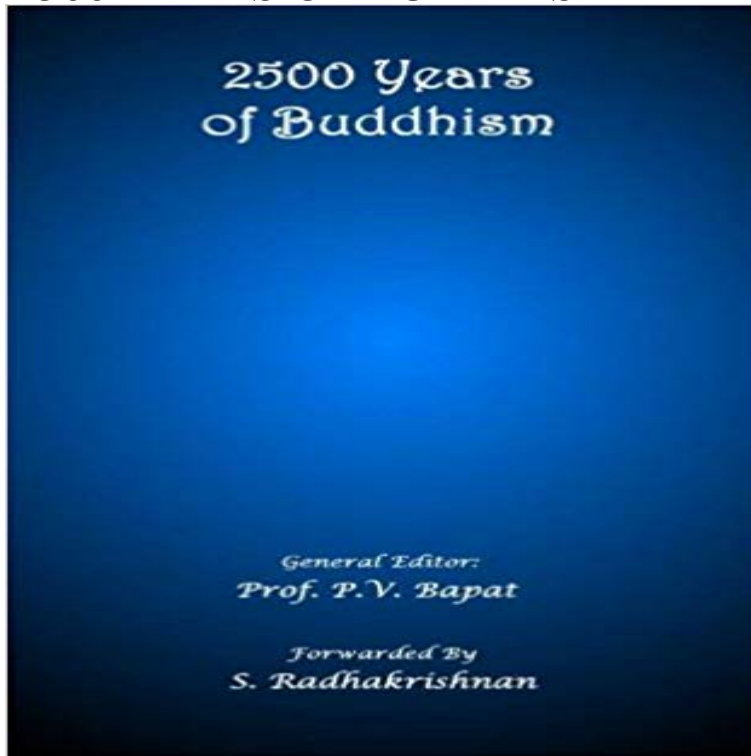


2500 YEARS OF BUDDHISM



2500 Years of Buddhism
FOREWORDSixth century B.C. was remarkable for the spiritual unrest and intellectual ferment in many countries. In China we had Lao Tzu and Confucius, in Greece Parmenides and Empedocles, in Iran Zarathustra, in India Mahavira and the Buddha. In that period many remarkable teachers worked upon their inheritance and developed new points of view. The Purnima or full-moon day of the month of Vaisakha is connected with three important events in the life of the Buddha: birth, enlightenment and parinirvana. It is the most sacred day in the Buddhist calendar. According to the Theravada Buddhism, the Buddha's parinirvana occurred in 544 B.C. Though the different schools of Buddhism have their independent systems of chronology, they have agreed to consider the full-moon day of May 1956 to be the 2,500th anniversary of the mahaparinirvana of Gautama the Buddha. This book gives a short account of the story of Buddhism in the last 2,500 years. The main events of the Buddha's life are well known. He was the son of a minor ruler of Kapilavastu, grew up in luxury, married Yasodhara, had a son, Rahula, and led a sheltered life where the world's miseries were hidden. On four occasions when he went out of his palace, so the legend tells us, he met an old man and felt that he was subject to the frailties of age, met a sick man and felt that he was liable to sickness, met a corpse and felt that he was also subject to death, and met an ascetic with a peaceful countenance who had adopted the traditional way of the seekers of religious truth. The Buddha resolved to gain

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