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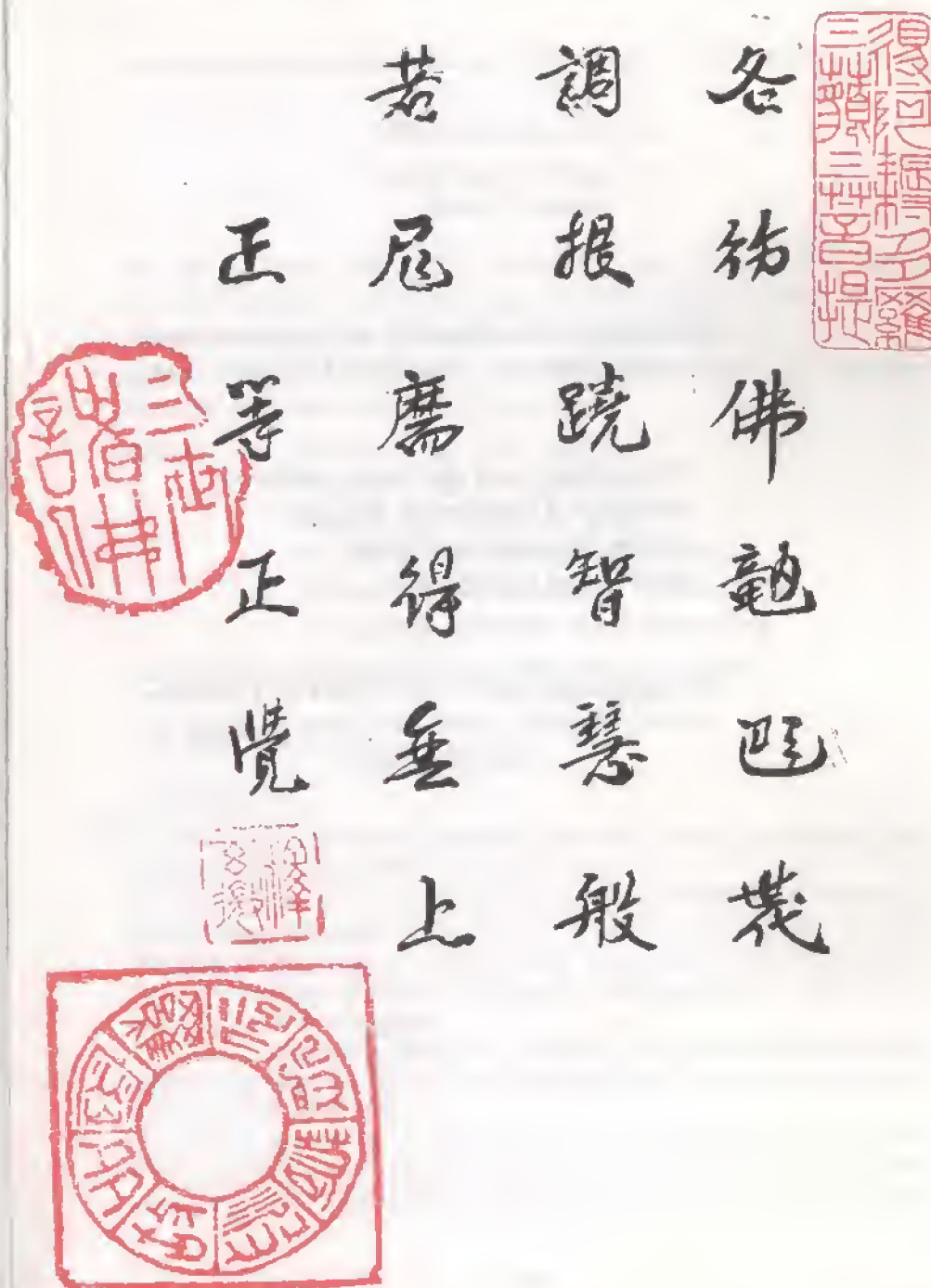
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Frontispiece: the calligraphy in Sino-Vietnamese characters (Nôm) by Ven Thích Huyền-Vi reads:

*"All present, past and future Buddhas,  
relying on Transcendent Wisdom,  
realise the Awakened State,  
perfect and unsurpassed."*

The seals, engraved by Ven. Bhikkhu Dhamma-viô of Thailand, convey the same meaning as the calligraphy.

## ANURUDDHA SUTTA<sup>1</sup>

Annotated translation by  
John D. Ireland

At one time the venerable Anuruddha was living in (the country of) Kosala in a forest grove. Then a certain devatâ named Jālinī<sup>2</sup>, belonging to a Tāvatiṃsa<sup>3</sup> company (of devas) and a former consort of Anuruddha, approached him. Upon approaching him she addressed Anuruddha in verse:

(Jālinī)        There let the mind aspire  
                  Where in the past you dwelt,  
                  Among the Tāvatiṃsa gods  
                  Whose are fulfilled all sense-desires;  
                  Where you, surrounded by your retinue  
                  Of celestial maidens<sup>4</sup>, were resplendent.

(Anuruddha) Such maidens are destined for misery<sup>5</sup>,

1 S IX 10.

2 Jālinī means 'ensnarer', 'bewitcher', 'she who enflames or ensnares (with passionate desire)'; from *jāla*<sup>1</sup>: a net; *jāla*<sup>2</sup>: a flame.

3 'The Heaven of the Thirty-three' (sometimes 'Thirty'), one of the six celestial realms (*devaloka*) of the Sensuous World (*kāmadhātu*). The origin of the name is obscure, but is said to refer to the thirty-three companies of Sakka the *devarāja*, the ruler of the devas, and comprises his assembly and leaders of the deva-companies.

4 *Devakaññā*: literally 'deva-girls', sometimes called 'deva-daughters' (*devadhītu*) or 'nymphs' (*accharā*). In the Commentaries it seems these names are regarded as interchangeable.

5 *Duggatā*: destined for the *duggatī*, the three lowest realms of the Sensuous World, i.e. hell (*niraya*), the animal realm and the realm of hungry ghosts (*peta-visaya*). The Commentary says the *devakaññās* will be reborn in hell



Fixed in (their view of) individuality<sup>6</sup>,  
Destined for misery those beings also  
Who possess those celestial maidens.

(Jālinī) They know no bliss who see not Nandana<sup>7</sup>,  
Abode of lordly beings<sup>8</sup>, the glorious Thirty(-three).

(Anuruddha) O foolish one, you do not know  
The saying of the Worthy One<sup>9</sup>:  
'Impermanent are all conditioned things,  
Their nature is to arise and pass away;  
Having arisen they then cease,  
Bliss is being relieved of them'.  
There is no dwelling again for me  
Within a celestial company's abode, O Jālinī.  
Destroyed is perpetually being born<sup>10</sup>,  
There is now no further birth for me. > page 133

when their term of life ends.

6 Individuality (*sakkāya*, literally 'own-group', 'existing-group') or the embodiment-view is the identification or association of 'self' with one or the other of the five aggregates as objects of grasping (*upādānakkhandhā*). Specifically it is not seeing the impermanence of them and imagining oneself to be permanent and stable.

7 A grove or park in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven where the devas sport and amuse themselves.

8 *Naradeva*, literally 'man-god' or 'god of men', i.e. a king. It seems the devas are regarded as the heavenly counterpart of human kings (*rāja*), each having his own seat or 'throne' (*āsana*) and surrounded by a retinue of *devaputtas* ('deva-sons'), maidens, musicians (*gandhabba*) and so forth.

9 *Arahatam*, i.e. the Buddha. The famous stanza which follows occurs a number of times in the Canon and is repeated at least three times in the first *vagga* of the *Samyutta-nikāya* alone.

10 *Jātiṣaṃsāro*. Being born in *Ṣaṃsāra*, the perpetual wandering on in conditioned existence; continually being born and dying and suffering.

## CONTEMPORARY CHARACTERISATIONS OF THE 'PHILOSOPHY' OF NIKĀYAN BUDDHISM

Peter Harvey

One aspect of contemporary Buddhism is the way that it draws on interpretations of its traditions by contemporary scholars, Buddhist and non-Buddhist. This paper will focus on interpretations of its 'philosophy'. Now while Buddhism is clearly more than a 'philosophy', it is hard to deny that it contains much material of philosophical interest. In recent decades, it has become increasingly of interest to those engaged in 'philosophy' as understood in the Western world. Not only has it been examined as part of the 'philosophy of religion', but its own philosophy has also been examined in its own right, or comparatively. In this process, scholars inevitably seek to characterise Buddhism using familiar philosophical categories. To what extent is this being adequately done, or are distortions and errors being introduced in the process? This paper will focus on this question as it relates to the Buddhism of the five Pāli Nikāyas, conventionally termed 'early Buddhism' by some. In doing so, it will concentrate on issues of the nature and foundations of truth.

### A pragmatic theory of truth?

The great Buddhologist Edward Conze was critical of the idea of Buddhism as a coherent body of truths, and claimed that 'statements of Buddhist writers are not meant to be propositions about the nature of reality, but advice on how to act' (1951, pp.16-17). While Buddhism certainly contains much by way of 'advice on how to act', this statement implies that this is all it

contains. This must, in turn, imply that any 'truths' that Buddhism teaches are simply to be seen as useful action-guides. In effect, this is to see Buddhism as having a pragmatic theory of truth: as holding that a belief is true if, and only if, it is useful. Indeed, such a view is held by two recent surveys of 'Buddhist Philosophy', A.L. Herman's *An Introduction to Buddhist Thought* (1983) and D.J. Kalupahana's *A History of Buddhist Philosophy* (1992).

Such a view may be correct as regards Mahāyāna Buddhism, with its idea of (some or all) doctrines as simply 'skilful means' towards liberation, but it seems incorrect as regards the Buddhism of the five Nikāyas. This can be seen from a careful analysis of the Discourse to Prince Abhaya (*Abhaya-rājā-kumāra Sutta*) at M I, 392-6. Here, Abhaya asks the Buddha whether he ever speaks to people in a way that they find disagreeable — such as telling Devadatta that he would be reborn in a hell — implying that, if he does, he is not compassionate. In his reply, the Buddha gets Abhaya to agree that, from compassion, he would himself help a choking baby, even if this caused it to bleed. That is, actions which cause some pain can still be done to help the person pained. The Buddha then goes on to specify what kind of speech (*vāca*) he will utter, due to his compassion for beings (p.395):

- i) What 'the Tathāgata knows (*jānāti*) to be not fact, not true, not connected with the goal (*abhūtaṃ atacchaṃ anatta-saṃhitam*)', whether others find it disagreeable or agreeable, he does not utter.
- ii) What 'the Tathāgata knows to be fact, true, but not connected with the goal', whether others find it disagreeable or agreeable, he does not utter.
- iii) What 'the Tathāgata knows to be fact, true, connected with the goal', whether others find it disagreeable or agreeable, 'a

Tathāgata is aware of the right time for explaining that speech'.

This passage is of crucial importance in assessing whether the Nikāyas may be seen to have a 'pragmatic theory of truth', i.e. as taking the truth of an utterance as **consisting in** its being useful to some end. From ii) above, though, it is clear that an utterance can be true even when it is not 'connected with the goal', i.e., not spiritually useful. This point is reinforced by a short discourse at S V, 437-8, where the Buddha, in a grove of *simsāpa* trees, says that the number of leaves in the grove are many more than those he holds in his hand:

Just so, monks, much more is what is known by my higher knowledge (*abhiññāya*), but not declared (*anakhatam*); very little is declared. And why, monks, is this not declared by me? Because it is not connected with the goal, is not of the fundamentals of the holy life, it does not conduce to turning away, to detachment, to stopping, to tranquillity, to higher knowledge, to awakening, or to Nibbāna.

He then specifies that what he **has** declared are the Four Noble Truths. The only way the above could be compatible with a pragmatic theory of truth would be if what the Buddha saw himself as knowing as true, but not **spiritually** useful might be 'true' because useful in some **other** ways: a possibility discussed below. What we can, in any case, conclude from the above is that:

- i) the Nikāyas' understanding of truth does not accord with a spiritually pragmatic theory of truth, but
- ii) they do have a spiritually pragmatic criterion of **what truths are worth teaching** to people.

Kalupahana is thus clearly wrong in seeing the Discourse to Prince Abhaya as actually **proposing** a pragmatic 'criterion for



deciding what is true and untrue' (1992, p.51). Similarly, while Jayatilleke (1963, p.358) correctly sees that the Nikāyas have no spiritually pragmatic criterion of truth, Herman (1983, p.241) clearly misunderstands him to mean that early Buddhism, while not identifying the true with the useful, 'does claim that what is true must also be useful'. That is, the useful need not be true, but the true is always useful. Jayatilleke, in fact, rightly understands the discourse to say that what is true need not be spiritually useful.

Several writers have sought to derive conclusions from the fact that the Discourse to Prince Abhaya does not even mention any speech which is (known to be) 'not true, not factual, but connected with the goal'. In doing so, they have often drawn different conclusions. Kalupahana holds that, in early Buddhism, 'truth' (*sacca*) meant 'what is available in the present context' (1992, p.47), with the untrue being either impossible or 'confusion' (*musā*), i.e. what was possible but was not so available, having not 'come to be'. He continues, 'What has not yet come to be is not useful to anyone. This is precisely why the discourse does not even mention any alternatives that are untrue and useful at the same time' (1992, pp.51-2). This is a very odd thing to say. If he means that only useful things have ever happened to humans, this is plainly false. If he means that people only ever make useful statements, or think of useful ideas, this is also false. If he means that there are no useful things that have not yet happened, this must also be false.

More straightforwardly, Jayatilleke argues that the Buddha's lack of reference to false but useful statements is because he saw false statements as a 'moral evil', such that it was 'logically or causally impossible' that they should result in what is 'morally advantageous or good (*atthasamhitam*)' (1963, p.359). Nevertheless, in considering this position of Jayatilleke's, Rupert

Gethin comments:

But surely this is to get things the wrong way round: a 'false statement' is a 'moral evil' precisely because it is not helpful for attainment of *nibbāna* — it conduces to suffering rather than its cessation (1992, p.108).

While he sees this as implying that the Nikāyas approximate to a 'pragmatist theory', the quote in fact leaves open what the **truth** or **falsity** of a statement consists in, irrespective of what its moral quality is based on.

Let us, though, consider all the possible reasons which might explain why the above discourse does not refer to statements which are false but (spiritually) useful:

- a) If a statement is false (independently of any consideration of its usefulness), it is unethical, and therefore cannot be of use in attaining a moral/spiritual goal. An unethical cause cannot contribute to an ethical result.
- b) If a statement is false, it is, by definition, also spiritually useless, by a spiritually-pragmatic theory of truth: what is spiritually useful is defined as 'true' and what is spiritually useless is defined as 'false'.
- c) If a statement is false, it is, by definition, also totally useless (in **any** way), by a pragmatic theory of truth: what is somehow useful is defined as 'true' and what is completely useless is defined as 'false'.

It can be seen by the above discussion of the discourse to Abhaya that b) does not fit the case: for spiritually useless 'truths' are referred to in the Nikāyas. Against c) is a passage at M III, 48, discussing the various forms of wrong speech. Here, lying speech (*musā-vāda*) is explained as being when a person, asked to be a witness in some forum, says that he has seen what he has **not** seen, or has **not** seen what he has actually



seen, 'Thus his speech is a knowing lie (*sampajānamusā bhasitā hoti*), either for his own sake or that of another or for the sake of some material (*āmisa-*) gain or other'. This shows that, even though a false report may be seen as useful in some way, it is still to be seen as false. Thus one can hardly say that the Nikāyas hold that 'useful' means the same as 'true'. One who avoids lying speech is said to be a 'truth-speaker (*sacca-vādī*), a bondsman to truth (*sacca-sandho*), trustworthy (*theto*), dependable (*paccayiko*), no deceiver of the world' (M I, 179), and M III, 48 shows that such a 'truth-speaker' avoids lying even though it might serve some 'useful' end. Even Kalupahana seems to recognise this, though it contradicts his pragmatic interpretation. He sees that, as 'the goal is not so far removed or distinguished from the means' . . . 'Thus deception in any form, whether intended to achieve good or bad ends, is not condoned in Buddhism' (p.117). But this is to admit that a deception, i.e. knowingly asserting that what is false is true, e.g., that what has not happened has happened — can sometimes be useful (in a non-spiritual sense). If so, 'useful' does not mean the same as 'true'.

What, then, of a) which says that a statement's being true or false is not dependent on its usefulness or otherwise, but that its ability to contribute to a morally/spiritually useful goal depends on its not being false —? At M III, 47-8, it is said that the kind of vocal conduct to avoid is that which, when followed, 'unwholesome states of mind grow much in him, wholesome states of mind decrease', with vocal conduct which is worth following having the opposite results on states of mind occurring. The instances given of these two types of vocal conduct include lying and telling the truth, when directly asked about what one has seen. Now there does not seem to be any way in which the falsity of saying one saw something when one

did **not** see it can depend on mental results of this verbal action. Such results can only be taken as a way of deciding what kind of actions it is spiritually worthwhile doing or avoiding. As anything which increases unwholesome states of mind in oneself (and others) should be avoided, and lying can be observed to have an unsettling, distorting effect on the mind, it should be avoided. In certain circumstances, even speaking truly (rather than being silent on a matter) can have an unwholesome effect, as in M III, 48's description of a 'frivolous chatterer': 'He utters speech that is not worth treasuring; owing to its being at the wrong time, it is incongruous, has no purpose, is not connected with the goal'. Thus even a truth which is, in principal, spiritually useful may be spiritually non-useful when said in the wrong circumstances<sup>1</sup>; it still remains **true**, though, as do truths which are **always** spiritually useless.

Consideration as to the effect on the wholesomeness or otherwise of the results of an action, then, is simply a criterion for which actions to select for doing or avoiding, just as it is also a criterion for which alms-food or lodgings a monk should use or avoid (M III, 60, same discourse as M III, 48). That is, there is a spiritually pragmatic criterion for selecting which action to do — just as there is a spiritually pragmatic criterion for selecting which truths to teach (as argued above). One could perhaps argue that this means that the Nikāyas have a spiritually pragmatic criterion of what is ethical/unethical (wholesome/unwholesome), if not any kind of pragmatic theory of truth.

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1 In the Discourse to Prince Abhaya, of course, the Buddha says that he teaches what he knows to be true and useful, but only when 'he is aware of the right time'.



In the case of a direct lie, MN III, 48 is clear that its nature is such that it has unwholesome results, and so is always to be avoided (by either truth telling or remaining silent on the matter, depending on circumstances). That is, a) seems to be the best explanation for the fact that the Nikāyas do not refer to statements which are known to be false by the speaker but are still spiritually useful. Deliberate lies always do have some spiritually deleterious effects. The nature of reality is such that a deliberate misconstruing of it has bad effects.

#### Trust your own experience

Any consideration of early Buddhist epistemology must take account of the well-known Kālāma Sutta (A I, 188-93). Here, the Kālāmas of Kesaputta go to listen to the Buddha when he arrives in their locality. They point out that other religious teachers have come to them, each proclaiming their own view and reviling those of others, such as that 'we have doubt and wavering (*vicikicchā*) as to which of these worthies speaks the truth (*saccam*), which falsely (*musā*)'. The Buddha declares that they are right to doubt in such circumstances, and then says:

Do not accept anything on the grounds of report, or a handed-down tradition or hearsay, or because it is in conformity with a collection (of teachings) (*piṭaka-sampadānena*), or because it is the product of (mere) reasoning (*takka-hetu*), or because of inference (*naya-hetu*), or because of reflection on appearances (*ākāra-pari-vitakkena*), or because of reflection on and approval of a view (*diṭṭhi-nijjhāna-kkhantiyā*), or because it has the appearance of what ought to be (*bhavya-rūpatāya*), or because (you think) 'this samaṇa is our revered teacher'. When you, O Kālāmas, know for yourselves: 'these dhammas are unwholesome and blameworthy, they are con-

demned by the wise (*viññugarahitā*); these dhammas, when accomplished and undertaken, conduce to harm and suffering', then indeed you should reject them (p.189).

The Buddha then gets them to agree that greed, hatred and delusion are each harmful to a person when they arise within him. Being overcome by any of them, he kills, steals, commits adultery, lies, and leads others to do likewise, such that he suffers for a long time (due to the karmic results of his actions, in this life or beyond). These dhammas are thus to be seen as unwholesome, blameworthy, condemned by the wise and 'when accomplished and undertaken, conduce to harm and suffering'. Contrastingly, the Kālāmas are then led to agree that the arising of non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion is beneficial to a person, such that he is not caused by greed etc. to kill etc.<sup>2</sup>. The Buddha then describes an ariyan disciple who, 'without covetousness, without ill-will, unbewildered (*asammūlho*), mindful and fully aware' radiates lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity in all directions, with his heart 'without enmity or oppression, untainted and purified'. Such a disciple can be reassured that:

- i) If there is another world beyond death, and actions have karmic results, he will attain a heavenly rebirth.
- ii) If there is no world beyond death, and actions have no karmic results, 'yet in this very life do I hold myself without enmity or oppression, sorrowless and happy'.

In this discourse, the Buddha advises on how to avoid a state of doubt as a result of meeting a set of conflicting views. It is clear, though, that the Buddha does not here use his criteria

2 In a parallel passage at A II, 193, restraint of greed etc. is recommended as it leads to not doing a greedy etc. deed of body, speech or mind.

to recommend specific **doctrines**, but to recommend **dhammas** in the sense of certain states of mind: non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion. Of these, the first two are clearly affective, non-cognitive states, developed to a high degree through loving-kindness etc. Here, no views or assertions are being supported or opposed. They only become cognitively relevant when claims are made as to their results, and the Buddha emphasises that such claims can be directly tested, being true whether or not views on karma and rebirth are true. The emphasis here is: **do** it, and see the effect, not **believe** it and see the effect.

When it comes to non-delusion, it is ambiguous as to whether the Buddha is recommending this simply in the sense of a state of mindful clarity, or as a state with a specific cognitive content. In the Suttas, no specific content is given to delusion, though the Cullaniddesa, a lateish part of the fifth Nikāya, equates it with spiritual ignorance (*avijjā*), and explains it as a lack of knowledge (*aññāna*) of the Four Noble Truths (p.98, as at Vibhaṅga 362). Non-delusion would thus be **knowledge** of the Four Noble Truths. This says more than, though is a natural extension of, what is said in the Suttas: for clarity of mind can be seen to lead naturally to the arising of knowledge.

The emphasis of the Kālāma Sutta, though, is on taking up those **states of mind** which one can experientially confirm to have a beneficial effect on the morality of one's actions, and happiness of one's experiences. This can be seen as a morally pragmatic criterion of what to **do** (mentally) rather than of what is true. In a parallel passage (M I, 403-4), though, such a pragmatic criterion is extended to what it is best to **believe** (in the absence of personal **knowledge**). Here it is said that one who believes in karma and rebirth etc. (i.e. worldly 'right view') avoids wrong conduct (of body, speech and mind) and takes up right conduct, whereas those who believe the opposite avoid

right conduct and take up wrong conduct. If rebirth etc. exists:

- i) the believer can take comfort that he will be reborn in a heaven and, in this life, be praised by the wise for acting morally;
- ii) the non-believer can expect to be reborn in a hell, and to be condemned by the wise.

If, on the other hand, there is no rebirth:

- i) the believer will at least be praised by the wise,
- ii) while the non-believer can (as a sole consolation) count himself 'safe' after death.

All in all, if one does not yet know the truth, it is the 'best bet' to believe in rebirth etc.

Nevertheless, other passages show that using the Kālāma Sutta general approach can lead to actual knowledge of what is true — such truth not being dependent on 'usefulness'. At S II, 115-16, Musila says that he has personal (*paccatta*) knowledge (*ñāna*):

apart from trustful confidence (*saddhāya*), apart from inclination, apart from report, apart from reflection on appearances, apart from reflection on and approval of a view.

His knowledge is such that he can say 'I know this, I see this', as regards how each of the twelve links of Conditioned Arising are conditioned and come to cease. Here, the list of potential knowledge-routes is very similar to that which the Kālāma Sutta sees as unreliable. By implication, the Kālāma Sutta approach can lead to the attainment of such direct knowledge.

#### The correspondence theory of truth

While the Nikāyas use a pragmatic criterion in some respects, it has been seen that they do not judge truth by such a criterion. As is becoming apparent, their main criterion of truth is cor-



respondence with the facts, with the way things are. This can be seen in regard to the most central of the Nikāyas' teachings, the Four Noble Truths. Now these have sometimes been seen<sup>3</sup> as not truths to be cognitively known, but things to be done, to attain a certain end. In the Buddha's first sermon, it is said that the (subject of the) first of the four Truths is to be 'completely known' (*pariññāta*), the second to be 'given up', the third to be 'realised' (*sacchikata*) and the fourth to be 'developed' (S V, 422). The appropriate response to the first Truth is, though, a cognitive state, just as it is probably also to the third. Moreover, to make any of the four responses, ~~though~~ certain truths must be acknowledged: e.g. to give up craving, it needs to be recognised that this actually leads to *dukkha*. Of course, to recognise something as *dukkha* is partly to have an evaluation of it, but it is not purely evaluative, for there is also a descriptive, factual content in the recognition, too.

It is apparent, then, that the Nikāyas' theory of truth is that it consists in correspondence with fact, as Jayatilleke maintains (1975, p.43). He points to M I, 402 as clearly showing this:

And because there is indeed a world beyond, . . . if anyone utters the speech 'There is not a world beyond', it is a wrong speech (*miccha-vācā*) of his.

3 e.g. by Kalanāsuriya, p.288. Kalupahana is not too clear on the status of the Four Noble Truths. He sees them as 'psychological truth' (1992, p.85) which are not to be 'distinguished from untruth or falsehood primarily on the basis of cognitive validity or rational consistency, in terms of correspondence or consistency'. Nevertheless, they are 'factual truths with moral relevance'. It seems that, for him, they are 'factual truths' in terms of a pragmatic criterion of truth, for they are 'noble' because they are 'fruitful'. Such a pragmatic criterion of truth has already been seen not to apply in the Nikāyas.

Admittedly, Jayatilleke (*ibid.*) translates *micchā* as 'false' rather than 'wrong', but as the first kind of wrong speech is false speech (*musā-vāda*), this makes little difference to the implication of the passage, as to the falsity being in disaccord to the facts. Jayatilleke also rightly points out (1975, pp.44-5) that consistency or coherence is also a necessary, though not sufficient criterion for truth in the Nikāyas. He thus cites passages, M I, 232 and S IV, 298, where pointing out the inconsistency of two statements of a debating partner is used as a way of refuting them.

#### Buddhist 'empiricism'

If the Nikāyas see truth as primarily consisting in correspondence with the facts, the key way to find what these are is through experience. In accordance with this emphasis on experience — normal (as clarified by meditation), and meditation-based paranormal — it is not surprising that some scholars, such as K.N. Jayatilleke, have seen (early) Buddhism as a form of 'empiricism'. That is, as a view which takes experience as the touchstone of truth.

F. J. Hoffman, though, citing the Buddha's discouragement of 'speculative views' and non-acceptance of *taṅka* ('argument and counter-argument'), argues that the Buddhist perspective cannot be one of empiricism, which is a 'particular theory of knowledge, up for argument and counter-argument' (1987, pp.96-7). In fact, the Nikāyas have no shortage of critical arguments against non-Buddhist views (e.g. 'feeling is Self'), including views that tradition or reason alone are sound sources of knowledge. Experience, and careful induction based on it, are left uncriticised, to try in a pragmatic way.

In arguing against the 'Buddhist empiricism' thesis, Hoffman particularly focuses on Jayatilleke's claim (1963, p.466) that two



of the 'higher knowledges' (*abhiññās*) can be seen to 'verify' the doctrines of rebirth and karma. First of all, he challenges the idea of Buddhism having a 'rebirth doctrine' (p.93). He accepts that it has such a 'doctrine' if what is meant is simply a 'picture', i.e. a way of seeing, with no 'propositional' content. He denies it has such a 'doctrine', though, if what is meant is 'a theory to be defended with argument', given the Buddhist 'condemnation of *ditṭhi* as speculative view', amplifying this by saying that it does not have a 'specific philosophical theory' on rebirth-related matters such as the relation between the 'soul' (i.e. *jīva*) and body. Hoffman's view, though, here depends on a false dichotomy. It is clear that there is a definite content to many of the Buddhist statements on rebirth; nevertheless, these claims are **not** generally based on **argument** but on certain types of experience. If early Buddhism is silent on **some** theoretical issues regarding rebirth, this does not mean it has no theory at all.

Hoffman emphasises that Buddhism cannot be a strong form of 'empiricism', as this insists that, unless a statement is open to possible falsification by evidence, it does not make a meaningful factual claim (p.97). In an article, 'The Buddhist Empiricism Thesis' (1982), he develops a parable of two bhikkhus who see Buddhism as containing verifiable truths, and so both set out to meditate under the same teacher in order to carry out such verification. After five years, one of them says that he has verified the doctrine of rebirth, but the other says he has not yet verified it. After a further twenty years, the same situation pertains. When the second bhikkhu says to the teacher that the rebirth doctrine is falsified, the teacher laughs and tells him to meditate more. He therefore concludes that, 'if the teacher will not allow any of my experience to count *against* the rebirth doctrine, then I do not see how anything could count *for* it either. If you can't falsify it, then you can't

verify it either' (1982, pp.155-6). Hoffman agrees with the view of the second bhikkhu and takes the parable to show that Buddhism should not be seen as about verifiable facts: it is 'experiential', but not 'experimental', for this overlooks the role of 'unconditional devotion' in any religion (*ibid.*, p.156). Hoffman's analysis, though, is faulty on the following grounds:

- i) While devotion (not unconditional devotion) clearly has an important role in Buddhism, it is not claimed that only Buddhists (e.g. D I, 19), or even only those who are religious, can confirm the rebirth doctrine through meditative or other experience (cf. Ian Stevenson's data on children with apparent memory of past lives).
- ii) For Buddhist meditators, devotion does — as an empirical, psychological fact — enhance the meditative process, but this does not mean that experiential 'confirmation' of the rebirth doctrine is nothing more than a way-of-seeing dictated by devotion. Devotion, as expressed in *saddhā*, or 'trustful confidence', is a positive affective attitude which grows from assessing the qualities of a teacher and then facilitates other developments, culminating in actual knowledge (M III, 171-6).
- iii) It has never been claimed that many meditators do or can swiftly verify the rebirth doctrine — it is seen as an advanced achievement. Therefore it would in principle be possible to specify all the internal psychological, meditative conditions that would need to be met in order for a meditator to be able to 'remember past lives'. In the case of the second bhikkhu in the parable, it could simply be said that he had not been able to develop these conditions, and so he had been unable either to verify or falsify the doctrine.

Strictly speaking, the latter point does not itself make rebirth claims falsifiable, but makes falsifiable claims about what



experiences will be had under certain meditative conditions. A falsifiable claim about rebirth might be, for example, that after the death of certain kinds of people — those who have behaved so as to have karma for another human life — at least some people could be found that have — spontaneously as children, or under hypnosis, or through meditation — what appear to be accurate detailed memories of such a dead person's past human life. Though it would not be easy to conduct such an experiment, a Buddhist would see it as in principle possible if one wished to do so.

Hoffman claims that 'a characteristic of distinctly religious beliefs is their unfalsifiability in principle', because they have no assignable 'truth-value' (1987, p.98) that can be challenged by reference to empirical facts (p.97). As such, they can only be seen as a way of seeing and thinking which makes no empirical claims. A clear refutation of this, for Buddhism, would be, for example, its teaching that 'all beings subsist by nutriment' (Khp IV): this could be falsified if someone could point to a life-form that had no need of any kind of food.

#### Anti-foundationalist, pragmatic, radical empiricism?

If Hoffman sees early Buddhism as a faith-based view-of-the-world, rather than an 'empiricism', Kalupahana has come, in his recent *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, to see it as a pragmatic 'radical' empiricism (1992, p.87), putting forward spiritually useful teachings which are based on human experience, but not claimed to be true-for-all-time. Rather, early Buddhism 'provided a definition of truth that is non-absolutistic, thereby leaving room for its modification in the light of future possibilities' (p.91). This is partially due to Kalupahana's view that the Nikāyas deny that a completely objective, perspective-free knowledge is possible.

Does early Buddhism propose any 'timeless truths'? In several passages, certain things are each said to stand (*thita*) as 'an element, a dhamma-stability, a dhamma-orderliness' 'whether the Tathāgatas arise or whether the Tathāgatas do not arise':

- i) That all *sāṅkhāras* are impermanent and *dukkha*, and all dhammas not-Self (A I, 286).
- ii) 'Specific conditionality' (*ida-ppaccayatā*), i.e. Conditioned Arising, in terms of each of the twelve *nidānas* acting as a condition for the next (S II, 256).

For each of these it is said that the Tathāgata comes to know it and teaches it. Such passages clearly posit things which are true irrespective of particular contingent events. Kalupahana, though, comments on such passages that what is referred to '*has remained valid so far*' (1992, p.55), a limited claim, not one to a timeless truth. Of course, without the arising of Tathāgatas or others to observe carefully the nature of things, the reference to 'so far' would be meaningless. Kalupahana makes such passages say: even if no Tathāgatas had lived, insofar as they had, they would have known certain things. Hoffman, in recognising that there is a claim, here, to a timeless truth, sees this as counter-evidence to the 'Buddhist empiricism' thesis (1987, p.95). For him, it 'shows that the truth of a doctrinal "view" is never contingent on a man's realization: although checking is not irrelevant, it takes on a different form from checking a proposition or hypothesis', this being because when someone checks out a religion to find if there is anything 'in it', this is partly a matter of what the person 'brings with him' to the search. Buddhism would see this, though, as simply a matter of being sufficiently developed and sensitive to know certain things. Perhaps the most one can say here is that what is being said is:

- i) A Tathāgata's knowing of a truth does not contaminate or distort it by his 'perspective' (this against Kalupahana's



'perspectivism').

- ii) The truth was 'there' to be discovered before it was discovered — in this respect, an empirical 'seeing' of that truth is not the criterion for it **being** true, but for it being known as true.
- iii) While this is not exactly an empiricist criterion for what truth **is**, it claims that repeated empirical investigation was sufficient for the Buddha to be confident that the constitution of observable reality was such that the above truths would always be found to be so.

What of the question of whether early Buddhism believes in a timeless reality? The obvious candidate for this is Nibbāna, but Kalupahana does not see it this way. A famous passage at Udāna 80-1 states:

Monks, there exists an unborn, unbecome, unmade, unconstructed (*ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkhataṃ*). Monks, if that unborn . . . were not, there would not be apparent the leaving behind, here, of the born, become, made, constructed.

Kalupahana sees this as just about the 'possibility of freedom' (1992, p.93), not a reality beyond 'birth' and time. Such a possible state of freedom is that of an enlightened person, due to the destruction of the *āsavās* (*ibid.*, p.123). Moreover, Kalupahana regards the term *abhūtaṃ* ('not-become') as indicating a state where there is the 'negation' of certain 'events that have already occurred' and the suffering caused by them (*ibid.*, p.92-3), i.e. the negation of past 'birth . . . becoming . . . making or doing . . . and dispositions'. This is an awkward interpretation, for if 'born' and 'become' mean 'has been a (recent) event in time', as Kalupahana seems to think, then the enlightened state, if it has no timeless aspect to it, is merely another event in time and would also be 'born' and 'become'.

A key aspect of Kalupahana's view of Nibbāna is that its being *asaṅkhata* means that it is 'not dispositionally-conditioned' (*ibid.*, p.92), but not that it isn't still 'dependently arisen' (p.93). That is, he sees it as a state which is conditioned, but not conditioned by *saṅkhāras*, which he translates as 'dispositions'. In fact, an Itivuttaka passage (pp.37-8) shows that this is not so. Explaining the above Udāna passage on the 'unborn', it says that this concerns the 'leaving behind' of 'the ■born, become, co-arisen (*samuppanaṃ*), made, constructed' being itself 'unborn' **not co-arisen** (*asamuppanaṃ*). Now, if Nibbāna is not 'co-arisen', it cannot be 'dependently co-arisen' (*paṭicca-samuppana*). Indeed, D III, 275 explicitly says that 'whatever is become, constructed, arisen from conditions (*paṭicca-samuppanaṃ*), the leaving behind of that is stopping (*nirodho*)', 'stopping' being a common synonym for Nibbāna. So, early Buddhism would thus seem to claim some timeless truths and to posit a timeless reality (Nibbāna).

#### Implications for the contemporary Buddhist

From the point of view of an ordinary contemporary Buddhist, how might this whole discussion be relevant? For one thing, it has implications for how a Buddhist might assess traditional Buddhist teachings as to their truthfulness or worth. If the Buddha is seen as having taught only what he saw as true and spiritually useful, then:

- i) If one has an attitude of trustful confidence (*saddhā*) towards the Buddha, then one has one reason, at least, for expecting (but not knowing) that what he taught on any topic is true.
- ii) But over 2,000 years after the Buddha's demise, one cannot be sure that what a textual tradition claims that he said was actually said by him.



- iii) If one finds that a teaching attributed to the Buddha is also found to be spiritually useful, it increases the likelihood that this was taught by the Buddha, and thus is a likely candidate for truth.
- iv) One could not conclude that a spiritually useful statement definitely is true, only that **the Buddha** would have seen it as true.
- v) If something can be independently known to be true, and it is also found to be spiritually useful, then it is very likely that it was taught by the Buddha, or that (if it concerns something that it would be anachronistic to say the Buddha knew about) he would have approved of it.
- vi) Some things the Buddha knew may not originally have been useful but became so later, so that he did not teach them during his lifetime, or did so to a small group of disciples. This would be a way of validating later, Mahāyāna, teachings.

Much of the above depends on having a clear way of deciding/ knowing if something is spiritually useful. One is thus thrown back on the kind of criteria that the Buddha outlined. However, one may see these criteria as eminently reasonable and be happy to use them, irrespective of whether the Buddha actually taught these, or taught other things traditionally attributed to him.

What might the early Buddhist perspective say about the Mahāyāna idea of 'skilful means' in cases where this involves giving teachings which are not straightforwardly true? In most cases, this is an instance of something not being the whole or full truth. Early Buddhism certainly accepts that something can be partially true, as in the parable of the blind men and the elephant (Udāna 68), where various blind men each feel **part** of an elephant and mistakenly think its qualities pertain to the

**whole** elephant. The idea of something being **partially** true and useful, and yet worth teaching, perhaps does not put too much strain on the spirit of the Discourse to Prince Abhaya.

In any case, many Buddhist teachings are in the form of guidance as to how to **do** certain things, without any (explicit) assertions as to the truth of certain statements. In this case, a criterion of spiritual pragmatism alone can be used to assess the worth of such practices, wherever they come from. Nevertheless, practices which a Buddhist might wish to borrow from other religions might need assessing for implicit truth claims in tension with Buddhism, as well as carefully assessing in terms of their various effects.

A particular kind of practice is that of using a story as a basis for a visualisation, or moral reflection, for example. In the case of a novel, we are quite happy to see it as neither 'true' nor 'false' but simply as a story — entertaining or thought provoking. If a myth offers no cognitive truth content, then perhaps Buddhism would be right to judge it purely by the criterion of spiritual pragmatism, so as to use it if doing so has spiritually beneficial results.

The question remains, though, of whether Buddhism contains any such non-cognitive 'myths'. It would seem that the Mahāyāna does, for example the story of Avalokiteśvara's head exploding when, on seeing so many beings suffering in the hells, his vow to save all faltered. What of early Buddhism? There is much material that a modern person might see as purely mythic, though its textual context portrays it as actually having happened, perhaps in some past life. Three types of example from a broad spectrum spring to mind:

- i) the fully elaborated life story of the Buddha,
- ii) stories of past 'wheel-turning' (*cakkavatti*) emperors (e.g. D

III, 58-9),

- iii) the story of eclipses being caused by the demon Rāhu eating the sun and moon, so that they called out to the Buddha for help, and he responded by telling Rāhu to release them (S I, 50-1).

The first kind of story is elaborated on an historical core. Even where mythic elements are introduced, as in the story of Gotama seeing the 'four signs' for the first time, instead of gradually reflecting on these, as in the earliest version, one can generally see what is being said. In this case, a person's shocked, existential reflection on the actuality of death etc. is being portrayed. As regards the second type of story:

- a) A modernist might see it simply as a story which he or she finds hard to use or relate to, except in regard to the moral points it illustrates.
- b) A traditionalist might see it as either true or as a powerful story, and learn to use it as a way of enhancing both moral and meditative development, e.g. by contemplating the thirty-two characteristics that the Buddha and a *cakka-vatti* emperor are said to share, and noticing the effect in doing so.

As regards the third kind type of story, responses to it might vary:

- a) A modernist Buddhist might see it as based on falsehood, and so not really taught by the Buddha, or perhaps taught by the Buddha simply due to his picking up some culturally conditioned beliefs.
- b) A traditionalist might say that, as it seems to have been taught by the Buddha, it is likely to be — in some sense — true, and to be spiritually useful, though someone of the modern world may now find it hard or impossible to use

the story fruitfully.

- c) Either a modernist or traditionalist might see it simply as a story, with no truth content, that originated as a way of glorifying the Buddha, but which we now find hard or impossible to 'use'.

All in all, one can say that the Nikāyas offer:

- i) A correspondence theory of truth (backed up by the necessity of coherence), with truth being discovered by personal experience.
- ii) The way to attain such personal experience is initiated by placing trust in a teacher who can be seen to be free, or relatively free, of greed, hatred and delusion. From there on in, it is increasingly a matter of listening, then trying and testing.
- iii) In the case of actions and states of mind, a pragmatic criterion is recommended as to which to do or take up, or to avoid.
- iv) This is even applied to the holding of beliefs (a form of mental action): a person is recommended to believe what produces spiritually beneficial effects, though acknowledge that he does not **know** what is true unless and until he has had direct personal experience of it.
- v) Some beliefs, such as karma and rebirth, may only be confirmed by certain advanced practitioners with great mastery of meditative states.
- vi) Nevertheless, all who reach the end of the path can personally confirm the Four Noble Truths and know that *dukkha* applies to every conditioned state, for all time. They also experience Nibbāna as a timeless, unconditioned reality.
- vii) As regards what the Buddha taught — and what Buddhist



teachers should teach — he used a spiritually pragmatic criterion to select, from what he knew to be true, those things that he would, in the right circumstances, teach. He avoided teaching anything he knew to be false but, arguably, taught certain story material which was neither true nor false.

viii) In this, one can see a spiritually pragmatic criterion for the **worth** of knowledge or truth.

Overall, one can see this as giving:

- a) a *spiritually pragmatic* criterion for *actions* — physical, mental or verbal, including what truths to teach — but
- b) a *correspondence* criterion of *truth*, founded on an empirical basis which includes meditative as well as sense-experience.

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< page 108      Comment on Anuruddha Sutta (J. Ireland)

The question might well arise as to whether these visitations, such as that of Jālinī, of devas in general and, in either instances, those of Māra, should be regarded literally. Or are they merely symbolic, literary, poetic or teaching devices? It is difficult for us living in another age and another culture to appreciate the thought-processes of those persons living two and a half millennia ago. It is probable that they did not have the sharp distinctions we have between the symbolic and the actual, between subjective and objective experience. It is likely that these distinctions did not apply and the two tended to coalesce. Another problem is that what is being described is the experience of an arahant whose thought-processes are beyond the range of unenlightened beings even in their own culture.

## UK BUDDHIST STUDIES ASSOCIATION

We would like to announce the formation of the above association, which aims to act as a focus for Buddhist Studies in the UK. It is open to academics, post-graduates, unaffiliated Buddhist scholars or interested Buddhist practitioners. Currently, the scholarly study of Buddhism in the UK is carried out by lone individuals or very small groups of people in any one location. Moreover, scholars may be located in a range of university Departments: Religious Studies, Theology and Religious Studies, Comparative Religion, Philosophy, Psychology, Anthropology, Asian Studies, Law, etc. The Association will inform people of the ongoing work of others, and any relevant conferences, visiting scholars, seminar series, etc., through a newsletter and/or Internet bulletin board. It seeks to foster communication between those working in the various fields of Buddhism, historical, contemporary, theoretical and practical aspects, and methodological issues.

The first meeting of the Association will be on Monday, 8 July 1996, at the School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1. At this, there will be papers by Profs R. Gombrich and D. Seyfort Rugg, as well as a discussion of the nature of the Association, and planning of further activities. It is also intended to produce a list of scholars and their research interests, along with contact addresses (including E-mail addresses).

If you are interested, please contact Dr Peter Harvey, at School of Social and International Studies, University of Sunderland, Forster Building, Chester Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear (E-mail: peter.harvey@sunderland.ac.uk), giving name, postal address and telephone number at your institution (or, if this is not relevant, home) and E-mail number, if you have one (but please indicate if you do NOT want this information to be made public). Please also include brief information on your area of work and research interests.

## THE RĪGĀTHĀ : ON FEMINISM, AESTHETICISM AND RELIGIOSITY IN AN EARLY BUDDHIST VERSE ANTHOLOGY (Part II)

Vijitha Rajapakse

### IV

Aestheticism in its most basic sense entails a sensitivity to and an appreciation of beauty<sup>42</sup>. The degree to which these attitudes manifest themselves in Buddhism is not a matter that seems to have come under much sustained scrutiny<sup>43</sup>. In any event,

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42 Though 'beauty' itself has been given a range of meanings in different aesthetic theories, following classical philosophic insights, it is here taken to stand for symmetry and proportion of form that typically occasion pleasing sentiments in the beholder.

43 It is interesting to note that in commenting on Indian art and aesthetics, A.K. Coomaraswamy (cf. *Traditional Art and Symbolism*, ed. R. Lipsey, Princeton 1977) tends to deliver some strikingly positive judgements on Buddhism's sensitivities to beauty, both natural and artistic. The 'stimulus' to soteriological reflection provided by lovely things, especially in their evanescence, he notes, is very much in evidence in certain Pāli sources (cf. *ibid.*, pp.179 ff. 'Samvega: Aesthetics of Shock'). Unfortunately, this maturity of judgement is not seen in other assessments of Buddhist attitudes to sensuous beauty. G. Van Der Leeuw (*Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, Princeton 1986, p.631), for instance, has this to say on the subject: 'In Buddhism the way of the infinite leads to nothingness. For the older Buddhism most faithfully preserved in the "little vehicle" (of salvation), Hinayana, is hostile to all sensuous representation: Buddhist art lived in Mahayana; nor is this to be wondered at, since in the former every presentation of the divine is proscribed: Form disappears, and Will must be annihilated. Buddhism, then, is in the first instance the insight that this vanishing and annihilation are real; it is therefore the religion of the negative'. Even very recent probings in this area reflect scant empathetic knowledge, and finally deliver little that is really instructive, cf. A.J. Martin,



discerning readers, I think, should be able to recognise many evidences of aestheticism in Thig. At what levels in the anthology are these evidences most notably seen? And how exactly should they be examined? While identifying aesthetic objects (aesthetics), aesthetic experiences (aesthesia) and aesthetic making (poesis) as three pivotal conditions that are necessary for 'aesthetics of any sort to be an intelligible enterprise', Brown, in a recent study, has indicated that in 'specifically religious aesthetics' these conditions must be religiously grounded or have religious import<sup>44</sup>. This overview indeed seems to offer a useful interpretative frame for anyone interested in exploring the aesthetic dimensions of Thig. Some especially striking textual evidences of aestheticism manifested here are perhaps best recognised if the 'conditions' referred to by Brown are considered in reverse order. Thus, given its character as a verse anthology, Thig can fairly be taken as an exemplification of 'aesthetic making' associated with Buddhist religiosity: and in viewing things from this angle, the technical merits of the verses of many individual therīs need to be especially borne in mind. Since what is offered here is not a literary study of Thig, it is unnecessary to dwell on this aspect of the matter<sup>45</sup>. But the particular ways in which the anthology tends to encompass

*Beauty and Holiness, The Dialogue Between Aesthetics and Religion*, Princeton 1990, pp.148 ff., 'Buddhist Tradition'.

44 Frank Burch Brown, *Religious Aesthetics*, Princeton 1989, p.6.

45 It is nevertheless well to observe that Western translators of this work have not been unmindful of these merits. Mrs Rhys Davids, for instance, has set down some instructive comments on the metre and rhythm in some of the verses, cf. PsS, pp. xxxix ff. In his more general observations, Winternitz (*op. cit.* II, sec. III) has referred to their 'power and beauty' and has gone so far as to say that the *gāthās* of the therīs and theras can 'stand with dignity' beside the best products of Sanskrit lyric poetry.

'aesthetic objects' and 'aesthetic experience' certainly deserve clarification.

Since they were primarily concerned with and moved by things spiritual, the ascetic authors of Thig cannot of course be credited with inclinations to 'celebrate' beauty for its own sake<sup>46</sup>. Yet the versified compositions in this work do frequently project cultured sensitivities to beauty in both the above senses<sup>47</sup>. And it is not difficult to identify evidences of such sensitivities (within which 'aesthetic objects' as well as 'aesthetic experience' can actually be discerned) in some of the contexts already cited. Thus, in Ambapālī's *gāthās*, the youthful female body is clearly perceived as an object of beauty, albeit transient or non-abiding, and the imagery invoked to highlight that often reflects an unmistakable parallel sensitivity to the beauty manifested in the wider world<sup>48</sup>. Delicate perceptions of beauty, both human and

46 On the contrary, given the prominent articulation of feelings of global distaste towards 'sense desires' on the part of several therīs (cf. n.34 above), it is in fact possible for critics to ask whether their general outlook was conducive to aesthetic perception at all.

47 If one takes a cue from the recent reflections of Serge-Christophe Kolm (*Le bonheur-liberté. Bouddhisme profond et modernité*, Paris 1982, pp.154-5), it is possible to ascribe a deeper aesthetic dimension to the nuns' contemplative living focused on self-perfection. For in noting that beauty has a place in the inner pursuit of the Buddha's Way, Kolm insists: 'Faire de sa vie une œuvre d'art a déjà été le slogan d'esthètes occidentaux. Faire de soi une œuvre d'art est la fin bouddhique. Le *bhikkhou* est un culturiste du for intérieur'. But I do not propose to delve into this aspect of the subject just now, though the insightful point Kolm makes has great relevance here; inner culture is a matter I prefer to treat in relation to religiosity in the next section of this enquiry.

48 The equally evocative imagery through which the hideousness of decay is apt to be driven home in these *gāthās* must not, of course, be overlooked

natural, are woven into Thig in other ways as well. The aestheticism that finds expression in the proto-dialogic setting of Subhā's verses, for instance, is in some respects more striking than that recognisable in Ambapālī's verses. Indeed, though she prefers not to be influenced by them, Subhā nevertheless tends to articulate through her would-be male seducer some fine sensitivities to the loveliness of the female form and the attractive charms of nature. In her verses the latter finds her maiden body 'like a gold-wrought statue' (PsS, p.151) and is above all captivated by her eyes:

Eyes hast thou like the gazelle's, like an elf's in  
the heart of the mountains —  
'Tis those eyes of thee, sight of which feedeth the  
depth of my passion.  
Shrined in thy dazzling, immaculate face as in  
calyx of lotus,  
'Tis those eyes of thee, sight of which feedeth the  
strength of my passion.  
Though thou be far from me, how could I ever  
forget thee, O maiden,

either; the use of poetic craftsmanship to inculcate Buddhist values indeed becomes specially evident at this level. It would be well to observe that once detached from its Buddhist soteriological moorings, Ambapālī's delicate grasp of the decay to which physical beauty is subject might be interestingly set beside the variously articulated 'ruminations' on 'ruin' found in many of Shakespeare's sonnets. Viewed poetically, Ambapālī's basic recognition in regard to physical beauty, for instance, tends to be strongly echoed in one context here:

'Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,  
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,  
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,  
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?' (Sonnets, 65)

Thee of the long-drawn eyelashes, thee of the eyes  
so miraculous?

Dearer to me than those orbs is naught, O thou  
witching-eyed fairy! (PsS, p.152)<sup>49</sup>

And the world of nature where Subhā sought seclusion for her spiritual exercises is likewise perceived by her would-be seducer as an arena offering delights of its own, hence his call was:

Young art thou, maiden, and faultless — what  
seekest *thou* in the holy life?  
Cast off that yellow-hued raiment and come! In  
the blossoming woodland  
Seek we our pleasure. Filled with the incense of  
blossoms the trees waft  
Sweetness. See, the spring's at the prime, the  
season of happiness!  
Come with me then to the flowering woodland, and  
seek we our pleasure.  
Sweet overhead is the sough of the blossoming  
crests of the forest  
Swayed by the Wind-gods. But thou an goest  
alone in the jungle.  
Lost in its depths, how wilt thou find aught to  
delight or content thee? (PsS, p.150)<sup>50</sup>

- 49 *akkhīni ca tiriya-riva kinnariyā-riva pabbatantare  
tava me nayanāni dakkhiya bhiiyo kāmarati pavaḍḍhati.  
uppalasikharopamānite vimale hāṭakasannibhe mukhe  
tava me nayanāni dakkhiyabhiiyo kāmaguṇo pavaḍḍhati  
api dūrgatā saremhase āyatapamhe visuddhadassane  
na hi m'atthi tayā piyatarā nayanā kinnarimandalocane* (Thig 381-3)
- 50 *daharā ca apāpikā c'asi kiṃ te pabbajjā karissati  
nikkhiṇṇa kāsāyacivaraṃ ehi ramāmasa pupphite vane.*



It must be remarked that beauty observable in nature is not always linked in Thig with sensuality, as is the case in the above verses. On the contrary, the serenely sailing moon in clear skies, for instance, is actually depicted in a few terse *gāthās* as a symbol of emancipation won<sup>51</sup>. On the other hand it is worth noting that this anthology — quite unlike the complementary Thag — does not bear witness to any striking attempt to connect the perceived beauty of the natural world with the vital concerns of spiritual growth and fulfilment<sup>52</sup>. In appreciating beauty, Thig typically tends to project a concomitant awareness of its necessary ephemerality; and if one adopts Coomaraswamy's perspective<sup>53</sup>, it is possible to say that what is thus articulated is a veritable defining feature in the way Buddhist religiosity relates to aestheticism and aesthetics. In any event, it would be opportune now to leave these latter themes aside and attempt to take stock of the religiosity manifested in our text.

*madhurañ ca pavanti sabbaso kusumarajena samuddhatā dumā  
paṭhamvasanto sukho utu ehi ramāmase pupphite vane.  
kusumitasikharā ca pādapā abhigajjanti va māluteritā  
kā tuyham rati bhavissati yadi ekā vanam ogāhissasi (Thig 370-2)*

The clash and contest between spiritual commitment and worldly urgings that figures prominently in the above setting, it is instructive to remark, is a much worked theme in the tradition of English metaphysical poetry in particular. Projected within Christian theological frames, it is, for example, basic to Andrew Marvell's 'A Dialogue Between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure'; cf. G.M. Hopkins, 'Golden Echo and Leaden Echo'.

51 Cf. PsS, pp.10, 12.

52 For some pertinent Thag affirmations on this score, see PsB, pp. 99-108, 154.

53 Cf. n.43 above.

## V

Though it is widely recognised that what lies at the heart of Thig is a distinct religiosity, few matters relating to it seem to have been sorted out or scrutinised so far<sup>54</sup>. Now a comprehensive enquiry into the present subject will no doubt have to raise and answer many questions. However, a grasp of its basic orientation and emphases such as is sought here might be fairly served if attention is narrowed to just a few: What are the dominant traits of the religiosity that finds expression in Thig? How is it typically nurtured, and what are its characteristic results? The sequel, accordingly, proposes to address briefly these particular questions.

An early Buddhist text of the Theravāda tradition, Thig highlights the religiosity inculcated within this tradition in almost paradigmatic terms. Certain modern analysts of religion have turned out harshly negative assessments of Theravāda goals<sup>55</sup>, but their actual pursuit as reflected here bears witness to

54 This religiosity itself is apt to be characterised generally as a quest for an 'insight' which is both 'satisfying' and 'saving', cf. Susan Elbaum Jootla, *Inspiration from Enlightened Nuns*, Kandy 1988. The normal doctrinal teachings that enter into the pursuit of the arahant ideal as pursued by the theris of our text is of course brilliantly expounded in I.B. Horner, *The Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected*, *op. cit.*, 1936.

55 It should be noted that Van Der Leeuw (*op. cit.*, p.631) actually saw the Theravāda as a 'religion of nothingness'. The conclusions of E.O. James (*Comparative Religion*, London 1961, pp.175-6) in this regard are in the same vein: 'if *nirvāṇa* is not a nullity', he insists, it is nevertheless 'a negative goal, since "becoming cool" virtually ends in "blowing out" . . . The quest for perfection (*arahanship*) inspires ennobling qualities of self-discipline and almost super-human effort, but . . . the conception of existence involved throughout is as negative and pessimistic as the state when the cessation of desire has been

a spirituality which is vibrant and has echoes in the wider practice of esoteric religion<sup>56</sup>. In any event, the dominant traits of the religiosity that finds expression in Thig can be easily identified. Though its verses frequently invoke the Three Jewels (*tisarana*) as refuges, this religiosity in the final analysis is not grounded on faith in the typical Western sense, but rather is an inwardly propelled striving for personal liberation modelled on Theravāda doctrinal teachings<sup>57</sup>. An invariable starting point of such striving was renunciation — a total severing of mundane ties. The manner in which it was effected is indeed a

theme upon which several therīs dwell, sometimes in revealing terms. What Subhā records in this regard is striking and serves to bring to the fore an essential implication of renunciation:

So I forsook my world -- my kinsfolk all,  
My slaves, my hirelings, and my villages,  
And the rich fields and meadows spread around,  
Things fair and making for the joy of life —  
All these I left, and sought the Sisterhood,  
Turning my back upon no mean estate (PsS, p.143)<sup>58</sup>.

Of course, renunciation in Thig is not an end in itself. Rather, it is projected here as having its final *raison d'être* in the committed pursuit of the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhan-*

achieved'.

56 Following the insights of E. Conze (*Buddhism. Its Essence and Development*, Oxford 1957, p.11), it is possible to link this spirituality with 'the common heritage of wisdom, by which men have succeeded in overcoming this world, and in gaining immortality or a deathless life'. Though one must be wary of global characterisations, Buddhism as practised by the nuns of Thig emerges very much as the 'religion of annulment of suffering' (cf. G. Mensching, *Structures and Patterns of Religion*, Delhi 1976, p.35).

57 The idea of taking refuge in the Three Jewels tends to be incorporated into the verses of Puṇṇā and Rohiṇī, for instance, in identical terms (cf. Thig 249, 289: *upehi buddham saraṇam dhammam sanghaṃ ca tādinam* . . .). It is instructive to observe that in its Christian interpretation, faith (*pistis* in Greek, *fides* in Latin) entails a trust in God's redemptive action. Though in a recent publication, P.O. Ingram (*The Modern Buddhist-Christian Dialogue*, Lewiston, N.Y. 1988, p.131) considers taking refuge to constitute faith in the Theravāda tradition, their equation can be misleading when applied to actual spiritual practice. For the sentiment of trust that is basic to taking refuge such as is conveyed in the Pāli term *saddhā* is not focused on a hope or belief in external redemptive action. (This point can be more concretely appreciated by perusing a work of Christian esoteric spirituality such as Thomas à Kempis' *Imitatio Christi*: the soteriological vision articulated here has many parallels in Thig, but it is crucially rooted in a trust in external redemptive action such as is not seen in the Theravāda context).

58 *hitvān' aham nātigaṇam dāsakammakarāni ca  
gāmakhetāni phītāni ramanīye pamodite  
pahāy' aham pabbajitā sāpateyyam anappakam* (Thig 340).

An analogous confession is woven into the verses of Sukulā (PsS, p.61); see also those of Sanghā, Uppalavaṇṇā, Sundarī and Sumedhā (PsS, pp.21, 113, 139, 167) for still other articulations on renunciation. Typically, the religious renunciants of Thig lead homeless lives in secluded places in ways that conform to the famous injunction set forth in the Mahāvagga (I, 30). Though some (like Mittakālī and Patācārā, PsS, pp.59, 73) refer to their particular dwelling places in general terms, quite a few live in the open air, choosing their 'seat and abode' (*senāsana*) in classic fashion under the 'foot of a tree' (*rukkhamūla*), a striking case being Vimalā (PsS, p.53). Cf. Patrick Olivelle, *The Origin and Early Development of Buddhist Monachism*, Colombo 1974, p.13. It is well to add that the nuns of Thig do not merely embrace eremitical asceticism focused on inner culture, but actually come forward on occasion to defend it against the cavils of sceptical critics. The verses of Rohiṇī (PsS, pp. 126 ff.), for instance, exemplify this: she marshals here an array of religiously impressive arguments to establish why 'recluses are dear to me' (*me samanā piyā*). Significantly, some of these arguments are reminiscent of the points made in a notable Dīgha Nikāya context which focuses on the fruits of Buddhist renunciant religiosity, namely, the Sāmaññaphala Sutta.



*gika magga*), the Buddha's way to peace and liberation from the sufferings of Samsāra<sup>59</sup>. Now it would be useful to point out that the factors that constitute the Path<sup>60</sup> are in turn commonly held to 'aim at promoting and perfecting the three essentials of Buddhist training and discipline' (which are identified in a broader classification as ethical training, mental culture and wisdom, *sīla, samādhi, paññā*)<sup>61</sup>. In any event, in reviewing Thig from a religious angle, what stands out most strikingly are attestations of the cultivation of these latter two essentials (*samādhi* and *paññā*), and the actual acquisition of 'saving knowledge' and the consequent attainment of liberation in the arahant state<sup>62</sup>. Accordingly, I propose to confine the remainder of this discussion to an elucidation of some pertinent details on this score. It would be well to emphasise that what are en-

59 This perception is an evident underpinning in, for instance, Cālā's verses (PsS, pp.97–8), cf. v.186: *ariyaṅgaṃ maggaṃ dukkhūpasamaḡāminam*. Not surprisingly, references to the Path (denoted in different settings as *magga, ariyamagga, maggaṅgaṅga*) occur very frequently in the text, cf. verses of Sakulā, Puṇṇā, Subhā and Kisā–Gotamī.

60 Eight in number, the factors of the Path are specified as rightness (*sammā*) in respect of view, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration (*diṭṭhi, sankappa, vācā, kammanta, ājīva, vāyāma, sati, samādhi*). These find classic enunciation within elaborations of the Four Noble Truths (*cattari ariyasaccāni*), cf. Mahāsatipaṅṅhāna Sutta (D II, 312–13).

61 Cf. Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, Bedford 1959, p.46.

62 If one takes into account the Path of ten factors detailed in certain Nikāya sources (see, for instance, Saṅgīti Sutta, D III, 271) and also recent interpretative reflections on the subject (cf. R. Bucknell, 'The Buddhist path of Liberation: Analysis of the Listing of Stages', *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 7, 1984), one may perhaps regard what is referred to here as two further stages (the ninth and tenth) in the Path such as are not distinguished conventionally, namely, right knowledge (*sammā ñāṅa*) and right liberation (*sammā vimutti*).

countered at this level are some of the most notable shared features found in verses of our anthology: the attainment of liberation as an arahant through spiritual self-culture is a feat that every therī celebrates here, sometimes amidst uniquely personal amplifications on the nature or implications of that liberation.

While ethical living is its veritable bedrock, Buddhist spirituality in the Theravāda tradition, especially in its higher reaches, is actualised through specialised forms of meditational practice — most notably *samatha bhāvanā* (which is considered to lead to the development of mental tranquillity), and *vipassanā bhāvanā* (which is held to result in the acquisition of higher religious insight)<sup>63</sup>. In keeping with its position as a Pāli canonical work, the influence or the application of these particular approaches to self-culture is not very much in evidence in Thig. In terse remarks several therīs here draw attention to their firm adherence to the moral norms (*sīla*) as stressed in

63 Much has been written regarding the above two forms of meditation practice which are of course canonically identified, cf. D III, 273; M I, 404. For some pertinent modern elucidations see discussions in P. Vajirañāna, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice* (Colombo 1962) and Nyanaponika, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (London 1962). It would be well to observe that though academic enquirers are apt to recognise problems in relating *samatha* and *vipassanā* (cf. P. Griffiths, 'Concentration or Insight: The Problematic of Theravāda Meditational Theory', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 1981), meditators themselves do not appear to encounter them. Jane Hamilton–Merritt (*A Meditator's Diary*, London 1979), for instance, projects concentrative exercises as virtually graduating into those focused on the development of insight. A similar connection, to be sure, is observable in Thig, as will be seen shortly.

Buddhism<sup>64</sup>. Efforts directed towards disciplining their minds and attaining higher insight, however, are focused upon in greater detail as the deepest concerns of their religiosity. Indeed the pursuit of inner mastery and control is the most salient emphasis in some of the initial short articulations carried in the text<sup>65</sup>. But such mastery and control were not easily achieved. As the verses of Samā and Uttamā (PsS, pp.34-5, 36) indicate, many, to acquire the peace of mind (*cetaso santim*) which they sought, had to engage in arduous struggles which, on occasion, were of long duration. Those of Samā and another anonymous therī, it appears, stretched for twenty-five years; the confession the latter makes in this regard is revealingly poignant:

For five-and-twenty years since I came forth  
 Not for one moment could my heart attain  
 The blessedness of calm serenity.  
 No peace of mind I found. My every thought  
 Was soaked in the fell drug of sense-desire.  
 With outstretched arms and shedding futile tears  
 I gat me, wretched woman, to my cell (PsS, pp.50-1)<sup>66</sup>.

64 Thus Sisupacālā (PsS, p.100) identifies herself at the outset as 'a sister in the precepts sure' (*bhikkhuṇī sīlasampaṇṇā*). Puṇṇā (*ibid.*, p.119) refers likewise to her observance of the norms of moral conduct, her resolution to 'keep the precepts' (*samādiyāmi sīlāni*). In an identical utterance Rohiṇī (Thig 289) gives expression to a similar commitment.

65 Cf. PsS, pp.12, 13, 14. Tissā's self admonition to 'train in the training' (*sikkhassa sikkhāya*) is particularly noteworthy in this connection. In a no less striking, longer articulation Dantikā (*ibid.*, p.38) is instructed by the sight of a taming of a wild elephant, and turns to train her own mind.

66 *paṇṇavisāti vassāni yato pabbajitā ahaṃ  
 accharāsamghātamattam pi citass' upasam' ajjhagam.  
 aladdhā cetaso santim kāmāgen' avassutā  
 bhā paggayha kandantī viharām pavisiṃ ahaṃ* (Thig 67-8).

To be sure, against the uncollected psychological comportment which Buddhism recognised in common situations of mundane living, what it characteristically demanded of the serious religious aspirant was 'systematic attention' (*yoniso manasikārā*)<sup>67</sup>. Accorded definite soteriological implications in Nikāya settings<sup>68</sup>, this attentive attitudinal stance is basically meditative in orientation and plays a pivotal informing role in the spirituality articulated in our text at many levels. Though they do not use the phrase, the liberating penetration into the nature of things which Ambapālī as well as others, such as Abhirūpa-Nandā and Sundarī-Nandā<sup>69</sup>, finally proclaim indeed appears to be predicated on 'systematic attention'. And insofar as it is shown to have furthered the development of insight in their cases as well as others, there is reason enough to view its basis and function in relation to *vipassanā-bhāvanā*.

In any event, since what the discipline and training adumbrated above aimed at was of course spiritual liberation as an arahant, it would be instructive next to focus on our text's more prominent articulations on this important subject. Much like other Pāli canonical works, Thig, to be sure, allows no room to conclude that Nibbāna attained and experienced as an arahant is

67 The verses of Sīhā (PsS, p.54; Thig 77; cf. n.32 above) cited previously tend to bear this out notably: *ayonisomanasikārā* (In other words, the absence of 'systematic attention') is the phrase used here to describe the state of her psyche prior to her spiritual conversion and illuminative experience as an arahant.

68 Cf. A I, 3. It is worth noting that in an interesting study, Mirko Frýba (*The Art of Happiness. The Teachings of Buddhist Psychology*, Boston 1989, pp.74 ff., 165) interprets *yoniso manasikārā* as 'wise apprehension', and sees it functioning as a means of opening 'awareness of freedom'.

69 Cf. PsS, pp.23, 56.



amenable to definition or description within the frames of ordinary discourse. Still, its verses sometimes encompass noteworthy statements on the implications of the liberation the arahant wins and these, it is possible to say, convey certain instructive clues about the crowning achievement of Buddhist religiosity. Let me elaborate.

Though Buddhism's quintessential religiosity has been identified loosely and uninformatively as 'mystical' in certain modern interpretations<sup>70</sup>, a careful reading of Thig indicates that accession to spiritual perfection is depicted in its articulations as entailing an acquisition of 'gnosis' (*aññā*)<sup>71</sup>, replete with higher epistemological capacities. Given specific scope, the more striking elements in these capacities are often collectively referred to as the 'triple lore' (*tisso vijja, tevijjā*)<sup>72</sup>. And, as often happens, when a therī proclaims, 'the threefold wisdom have I gotten now'<sup>73</sup>, what exactly was meant? Significantly, these higher capacities are traditionally taken to be: i) knowledge of

70 Cf. Conze, *op. cit.*, p.11.

71 A defining attribute necessarily associated with the arahant state, *aññā* can be regarded as the shared essence of the articulations of the different therīs gathered in Thig. Indeed, viewed from the angle of Buddhist religiosity, these articulations, as often indicated in Dhammapāla's Commentary, are but different proclamations of *aññā*.

72 These phrases occur frequently in our text. The verses of Aḍḍhakāsi, Mettikā, Cālā, Uttarā and Puṇṇā offer notable evidences of their use, see Thig 26, 30, 187, 180, 251; cf. PsS, pp.26, 28, 98, 95, 119. Interestingly, *tevijjā* seems to be the product of a 'conceptual revision' instituted by the Buddha, for it is derived from the Sanskrit *trayi vidyā* where the focus was on the three branches of Vedic learning. As indicated below, in its distinctive Buddhist usage, *tevijjā* stands for higher spiritual knowing of three kinds. There are, it must be noted, detailed elaborations on this theme, cf. A I, 163-6.

73 *tisso vijjā anupattā*, Thig 187, 194, 202; cf. PsS, pp.98, 99, 102.

one's previous existence in Samsāra (*pubbenivāsā-nussati-nāṇa*); ii) knowledge of the death and rebirth of beings under the influence of their kamma (*sattānam cutūpapāta-nāṇa*) and iii) knowledge of the destruction of the cankers of attachment, or 'influxes' (*asavakkhaya-nāṇa*)<sup>74</sup>. But a particular knowing was not the only consequence of becoming an arahant. Many therīs here seem to refer pointedly to a distinct state of *being* as well. Indeed, when they joyfully proclaim that they are 'free', or that their minds are 'liberated'<sup>75</sup>, what is implied, there is reason to

74 'Divine eye' or 'Heavenly Eye' (*dibba-cakkhu*) referred to in many Thig contexts cited immediately above (Thig 179) is usually taken to mean clairvoyant power basic to the second of the 'knowledges' clarified in the preceding. Like classic Nikāya discussions (cf. Samaññaphala Sutta), Thig too considers the higher knowing entailed in 'gnosis' (*aññā*) to encompass in all a total of six supernormal capacities (it is well to remark that *tevijjā* represents three characteristic factors within them). Some of Uppalavaṇṇā's verses (PsS, p.113) tersely highlight this matter:

How erst I lived I know; the Heavenly Eye,  
Purview celestial, have I clarified;  
Clear too the inward life that others lead;  
Clear too I hear the sounds ineffable;  
Powers supernormal have I made mine own;  
And won immunity from deadly Drugs.  
These, the six higher knowledges are mine.  
Accomplished is the bidding of the Lord.

— *pubbenivāsaṃ jānāmi dibbacakkhum visodhitam  
ceto paricca nāṇaṃ ca sotadhātu visodhitā.  
iddhi pi me sacchikatā patto me āsavakkhaya  
cha me abhiññā sacchikatā kataṃ buddhassa sāsaṇam* (Thig 227-8).

For useful background information on this issue here treated, see D.J. Kalupahana, *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology*, Albany, N.Y., 1967, Ch. 10, 'Analytic Yoga'.

75 Some characteristic contexts in which these ideas are brought to the fore have already been identified in the course of the concluding part of our

infer, is an accession to a realm of being that transcends the one experienced in ordinary life. Escape from the repeated cycle of birth and death (*punabhavo*) was of course one admitted attribute of the 'new being' of the Buddhist saint<sup>76</sup> (who was projected as having rooted out all lust, *sabbo rāgo samūhato*, Thig 34). Recognised as ineffable, its essential transcendence, however, is frequently conveyed by a set of terms which appear in the first analysis to carry a larger content of symbolic rather than referential meaning: thus, Thig again and again depicts the arahant as one who has reached a condition which is 'cool' (*sitabhuta*) or 'calm and serene' (*upasanta*)<sup>77</sup>.

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discussions on feminism, Section II above. In this connection Mettikā's and Sīhā's references to *cittam vimucci me* (Thig 30, 81) and Mittakālī's *vimuttacittā uṭṭhāsim* (*ibid.* 96) are especially pertinent.

76 This position is clearly stressed, for instance, in the verses of Jentī and Soṇā (PsS, pp.24, 63); those of the latter also suggest that, unlike the flux of Saṃsāra, the liberated in Nibbāna are stable or 'immovable'.

77 Cf. PsS, pp.19, 20, 21, 23, 30, 61. It is perhaps noteworthy that overpowering inner feelings experienced in solitude tend to be tersely captured in this latter phraseology in other traditions too. For example, in *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (Paris 1973, p.49) Rousseau employs 'le calme ravissant' to describe a particular subjective feeling that affected him greatly. And 'cool' in turn seems to have been put to use to project a philosophically valued attitude of detachment in Hume, cf. *The Natural History of Religion*, London 1956, p.76; Wittgenstein (*Culture and Value*, Oxford 1984, p.2c) identifies a 'certain coolness' as an ideal. In any event, 'cool' is a figure of speech which can be given specific meaning in relation to Buddhism's penchant to regard passion as fire, and Nibbāna as the state where it is finally extinguished. Cf. Lily de Silva, 'Nibbāna as Experience' *Sri Lanka Journal of Buddhist Studies* 1, 1987. Others like 'void' (*suññā*, cf. PsS, pp.37, 153), as Mrs Rhys Davids herself has suggested, are short and neat characterisations of aspects of the Buddhist perceptions of reality. It is well to remark here that recent investigators have drawn attention to the existence of a non-literalist, symbolic 'twilight language'

What has been brought to the fore in the paragraphs immediately preceding strikes me as some of the more outstanding features in the religiosity projected in Thig. Obviously, there are many other things worth noting in this connection. In any event, to conclude the present segment of this enquiry, I would like to draw attention to a few additional considerations which anyone probing the religiosity manifested in this text should take into account.

Clearly, highly motivated individual application is the main driving force behind the religiosity encountered here. Still, it is noteworthy that quite a few therīs acknowledge the assistance of preceptors, sometimes going so far as to ascribe crucial guiding roles to them<sup>78</sup>. Then again, one must not overlook the apparent suddenness with which the liberating insight dawns on many therīs. This, to be sure, comes to the fore rather strikingly in the following verses:

One day, bathing my feet, I sit and watch  
The water as it trickles down the slope.  
Thereby I set my heart in steadfastness,  
As one doth train a horse of noble breed.  
Then going to my cell, I take my lamp,  
And seated on my couch I watch the flame.  
Grasping the pin, I pull the wick right down  
Into the oil . . .

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to be conveyed, cf. R. Bucknell and M. Stuart Fox, *The Twilight Language, Explorations in Buddhist Meditation and Symbolism*, London 1986. This is something that might usefully be borne in mind when probing the meaning of the phraseology in which the condition of the arahant is finally projected in our text.

78 Uttamā (PsS, p.36) is a striking case in point. A parallel experience is again recorded in the verses of an anonymous therī, cf. *ibid.*, p.51.



Lo! the Nibbāna of the little lamp!  
Emancipation dawns! My heart is free! (PsS, p.73)<sup>79</sup>

Lastly, though I myself do not propose to delve into the matter as it would be necessary to go far afield to do so, it is nevertheless well to point out that the existence of certain discernible variations in the ways different therīs of the anthology reach the final liberating vision poses a challenge of no small significance to all who seek to come to terms with the religiosity of Thig: there is room to ask whether these variations are directly relatable to the famous distinctions early Buddhist literature encompasses as regards modes of attaining liberation. (Nikāya sources, it should be observed, distinguish between *cetovimutti*, *paññāvimutti* and *ubhatovimutti*<sup>80</sup>.)

79 *pāde pakkhālayitvānaudake su karom'ahaṃ*  
*pādodakaṃ ca disvāna thalato ninnam āgataṃ*  
*tato cittaṃ samādhemi assaṃ bhadraṃ va jāniyaṃ.*  
*tato dipaṃ gahetvāna vihāraṃ pāvisiṃ ahaṃ*  
*seyyaṃ olokayitvāna mañcakamhi upavisīṃ*  
*tato sūciṃ gahetvāna vaṭṭiṃ okassayāmaṃ ahaṃ*  
*padīpasseva nibbānaṃ vimokkha ahu cetaso* (Thig 114–16).

Given the noted role which the idea of 'sudden enlightenment' plays in Mahāyānist traditions (notably Zen, cf. D.T. Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism*, New York 1956; see also S. Park, *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment*, Albany, N.Y. 1984), the above evidences that point to its anticipation in Thig merit particular notice. Though it has not been viewed from this angle, contemporary esoteric religiosity associated with the Theravāda tradition itself seems to have generated patterns of illuminative understanding which dawns in a sudden fashion, cf. *Buddhism Transformed, Religious Change in Sri Lanka*, Princeton 1988, pp.353 ff., and also the present writer's review of this book in *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 13, 1990, pp.149–50.

80 See A I, 173; M I, 477. Cf. Lily de Silva, 'Cetovimutti, Paññāvimutti, Ubhatovimutti', *Pali Buddhist Review* 3, 1978.

## VI

To sum up, I think that the brief analytical and evaluative considerations relating to Thig presented in the foregoing discussion establish an important point: this ancient anthology of Pāli verse is a unique Buddhist composition which admits of examination from an interesting variety of angles. The main conclusions of our examination are significant. Authored by individual women members of the Buddhist Order, Thig bears a feminine stamp which comes to the fore impressively at certain levels. But the work also encompasses a notable philosophic dimension. And here, what can be detected are not only the classic emphases of Buddhist thinking, but also a striking delineation of the experienced transitions in the consciousness as it evolves from an ordinary state into a spiritually attuned one, such as is focused on the attainment of its higher potentialities. Moreover, as a versified composition, Thig bears witness to a many-sided aestheticism: there are identifiable sensitivities to beauty (poetic, human and natural) in many of its verses, though considered overall these sensitivities are mediated through an overarching Buddhist perspective which underscores the evanescence of things temporal. There remains, finally, the religiosity. Though treated last, this is clearly the most important and consistently encountered feature in the utterances of varying length and content gathered in Thig. For the women who authored them were without exception committed Buddhist renunciants engaged in a shared soteriological quest. And the goal they aimed at and attained — liberation as an arahant — was again not only the same, but was also depicted in their verses in broadly similar terms.

Though this enquiry has focused on feminism, philosophy, aestheticism and religiosity in Thig, it would be well to mention

that its verses are not without insights on other concerns. For example, the anthology at several levels might be regarded as an important canonical setting which clarifies some crucial, finer points in early Buddhism's approaches to knowledge. Indeed, the uniquely personal terms in which access to supernormal knowledge and the character and scope of this knowledge tend to be detailed here might have few exact parallels elsewhere, save of course in the complimentary Thag. Then again, in one context in particular, this work merits notice from anyone probing early Buddhism's gerontological perspectives. The context in question is Ambapāli's verses where they receive striking articulation, along with what amounts to a veritable semiotic of aging rooted in Buddhist soteriological reflection. Yet the anthology's relevance or value as a textual resource for the study of these subjects seems to have been lost on those who have investigated them recently<sup>81</sup>. Perhaps one general constraint that

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81 In this connection I would like to draw attention to K.N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (London 1963, Delhi 1989) and S. Tilak, *Religion and Aging in the Indian Tradition* (Albany, N.Y. 1988). I find the non-use of Thig (and Thag) a definite desideratum in Jayatilleke's discussion of supernormal knowledge as admitted with early Buddhist frames. However, given his apparent lack of interest in probing the practical basis of the quintessential Buddhist claim that meditational self-culture generates supernormal knowledge, the neglect of this text — where such culture plays a major informing role — is of course not surprising. Tilak's disregarding of the latter, while equally striking, is perhaps even more blameworthy. For it is possible to argue that had he paid some attention to the drift of Ambapāli's reflections, it would have been difficult to support his thesis that early Buddhism's attitude to old age is one of fear and that the Buddha's message generally sustains a 'gerentophobia'. A consideration of this same context in Thig also provides grounds for challenging Tilak's tendency to see interest in the 'semiotics of aging' purely within Hindu texts.

has operated against the wider use of Thig in latter-day discussions is its origins and character: what it offers are not discourses or disquisitions on Buddhism, but rather insights into Buddhism as practised through subjective appropriation by the committed religious. For this very reason, Thig, one might say, is a work for whose fuller appreciation an empathetic understanding of Buddhist spirituality in its deepest sense is very much demanded<sup>82</sup>. That Buddhist studies sustained by narrow interests in ideas or linguistic details have often tended to ignore it, therefore, is not altogether surprising. Yet there is good reason to invite serious students of Buddhism to read and revalue the Therīgāthā text. For as our enquiry has sought to adumbrate, this text of short compass traceable to women contains many interesting strands of meaning, all underwritten by a practised religiosity which displays paradigmatic early Buddhist features.

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82 In taking account of this feature, which of course relates to its essential religiosity, I am tempted to say that what Wittgenstein held about his famous *Tractatus* is perhaps applicable to Thig as well: his book, Wittgenstein insisted, is one that 'will be understood only by someone who has himself already had thoughts that are expressed in it — or at least similar thoughts' (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, tr. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness, London 1961, p.3).

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EĀ is based, while *āda* (also deriving from *dā*).

p. 54, l. 3: for 'forebearance' read 'forbearance'.

p. 55, l. 3: for *sthāpana* read *sthāpanā*.

p. 56, l. 8, 19: for 'should also abide' read 'should abide'.

p. 57, l. 4: for *āhrikyā* read *āhrīkyā*.



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## EKOTTARĀGAMA (XIX)

Translated from the Chinese Version by  
Thich Huyên-Vi and Bhikkhu Pāsādika  
in collaboration with Sara Boin-Webb

Ninth Fascicle  
Part 18  
(Shame and Remorse)

4. <sup>1</sup>Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying, together with a large [number of] bhikkhus, viz. five hundred persons altogether, in Rājagrha, at Karaṇḍa's Bamboo Grove. Then, in time, the Exalted One put on his [outer] robes, took up his alms-bowl and entered Rājagrha to beg for his alms-food in a bazaar lane. Now in that lane there was a brahmin lady who was about [to prepare] a meal. At that very time a brahmin passed through a gate. Seeing the Exalted One some distance away, he went to the latter's whereabouts. – Do you ever see a [real] brāhmaṇa? he asked the Exalted One. As Venerable Mahā-Kāśyapa was just leaving that lane, the Exalted One raised his hand and, pointing to [Mahā-Kāśyapa], said: That is a brāhmaṇa. – Meanwhile the brahmin lady [had approached] the Tathāgata and gazed on his face without saying a single word while the Exalted One uttered the following verses:

He who is free from desire and hatred,  
Who has overcome ignorance and delusion,  
The Arhat who has put an end to malign influences –  
He is called a brāhmaṇa.  
He who is free from desire and hatred,  
Who has overcome ignorance and delusion,  
Since he has disentangled himself from all  
Fetters (*samyojana*) – he is called a brāhmaṇa.  
He who is free from desire and hatred,  
Who has overcome ignorance and delusion,

<sup>1</sup> See T2, 589a9 ff.; Hayashi, p. 147 ff.



Because of his having eradicated egotism and  
Self-conceit (*asmimāna*) – he is called a brāhmaṇa.  
If one wishes to know the Dharma,  
The Teachings of the Perfectly Enlightened One,  
One should with entire sincerity take refuge  
In them being foremost and unsurpassed. –

Thereafter the Exalted One suggested to Mahā-Kāśyapa: Please go [for alms] for the sake of that brahmin lady so that in this very life (*tatraiva janmani*) she may atone for previous wrongdoing (*pūrvapāpa*). –

According to the Buddha's suggestion, Kāśyapa went to the brahmin lady's home and sat down on a prepared seat. She cooked many kinds of rich and delicious food in order to offer it respectfully to Kāśyapa. He accepted the food and, with a view to saving sentient beings and for the sake of that lady<sup>2</sup>, he referred to the blessings resulting from works of merit<sup>3</sup>; [then he uttered the following verses]:

The fire in which oblations (*huta*) are offered is the best,  
Of all that is written down (*lipi*) verses are foremost;  
A king is the person of exalted rank amidst his subjects.  
Among all bodies of water the ocean is unsurpassed,  
Among all heavenly bodies the moon is chief, and  
All sources of light outshines the sun.  
At the intermediate points of the compass<sup>4</sup>,  
At the zenith and nadir, in all regions of the cardinal points,  
In the heavens and in this world of mankind, the  
Buddha is supreme. Whoever wishes to make merit may  
Take refuge in this Perfectly Enlightened One (*sambuddha*). –

When the brahmin lady heard those words, she was so elated

2 Lit.: 'human being'.

3 Cf. BHSD 260 f., under *dakṣiṇādeśanā*.

4 After Hayashi, p. 148, n. 10.

that she could not help jumping for joy. In front of Mahā-Kāśyapa she said: [I] will earnestly devote myself (*adhi-muc*) solely to [becoming] a [real] brāhmaṇa. Kindly accept my invitation always to collect alms-food in this house. – Mahā-Kāśyapa readily consented. [After some time,] seeing that Kāśyapa had finished his meal, the brahmin lady fetched a humble seat and sat down in front of him. Now, by means of gradual instruction (*anupūrvikā kathā*)<sup>5</sup> Kāśyapa set forth the Dharma with its subtleties (*sūkṣma*), namely by expatiating on liberality, morality, on being born in a heavenly world, on desire causing impurity (*samala*), on the destruction of the malign influences as being the best, and on the desirability of going forth into homelessness. When Venerable Mahā-Kāśyapa knew that her mind had become receptive and unhindered, exalted and serene, he taught the Dharma [to her], as is all Buddhas' wont, [that is to say] unsatisfactoriness, its origin<sup>6</sup>, final cessation and the way [leading to the final cessation of unsatisfactoriness]. While Venerable Mahā-Kāśyapa was winding up his discourse on behalf of the brahmin lady, just there on her seat the immaculate Dharma-eye opened to her, ridding her of all impurities<sup>7</sup>. The immaculate Dharma-eye opened to her then and there, just as a new, clean and spotless [piece of] felt<sup>8</sup> dyes well without difficulties. As she had reached the Dharma, seen the Dharma, realised the Dharma, she was freed from doubts and won fearlessness<sup>9</sup>. Of her own accord, she

5 Cf. Divy(V) 221, 13; BHSD 30. As for Pāli loci, see e.g. Vin I, 15 f.: *ekamantaṃ nisinnassa... anupubbikathaṃ kathesi, seyyathīdam – dānakathaṃ sīlakathaṃ saggakathaṃ, kāmānaṃ ādinavaṃ okāraṃ saṅkilesaṃ, nekkhamme āni-samsaṃ pakāsesi...*

6 See BSR 10, 2, p. 220, n. 16.

7 See BSR 11, 2, p. 166, n. 16. See also the entry on *Dhammacakkhu* at Enc-Buddh IV, 3, pp. 478-81.

8 The Indic original surely had 'piece of cloth', *vastra*, Pāli *vattha*; cf. Vin, *ibid.*: *seyyathāpi nāma suddhaṃ vatthaṃ apagatakāḷakaṃ sammadeva rajanaṃ paṭigganheyya...*

9 For a Pāli parallel see, e.g., M I, 380: *Atha kho... diṭṭhadhammo pattadhammo viditadhammo pariyoḡāḷhadhammo tiṇṇavicikiccho vigatakathaṃkatho vesārajappatto...* A Sanskrit parallel occurs at NidSa 20.16: *dṣṭadharmā prāptadharmā viditadharmā paryavagāḍhadharmā tīrṇakāṅkṣas tīrṇavicikitsa...vaiśāradya-*



took refuge in the Three Most Important (*agrya*) Things, that is in the Buddha, Dharma and in the Community of the Noble Ones, and undertook to observe the Five Precepts. Venerable Mahā-Kāśyapa went on imparting to the brahmin lady the Dharma with its subtleties, and after that he rose from his seat and left.

Hardly had Kāśyapa gone when that lady's husband returned home. The brahmin noticed that his wife's complexion was unusually bright and out of the ordinary. So he asked her about this, and she gave the reasons for it, explaining everything to her husband. After listening to her words, the brahmin and his wife went to the monastery (*vihāra, ārāma*)<sup>10</sup> where the Exalted One was staying. The brahmin and the Exalted One exchanged greetings (lit. *praśna*), and thereafter [the former] sat down at one side. The brahmin lady bowed down her head at the Exalted One's feet and [also] sat down at one side. – The brāhmaṇa has been to my house, said the brahmin to the Exalted One<sup>11</sup>, now [he must] be here. – Venerable Mahā-Kāśyapa had gone [to a place] not far from the Exalted One's and was sitting there cross-legged, straightening body and mind and wisely reflecting upon the subtle Teaching. Pointing towards Mahā-Kāśyapa, the Exalted One said: This Venerable is the brāhmaṇa *par excellence*. – In what respect, Gautama, asked the brahmin, is an ascetic a brāhmaṇa? Is an ascetic not different from a brāhmaṇa? – If one wishes to speak of an ascetic, replied the Exalted One, take myself [, for example]. Since I have been conscientiously following all the rules of moral conduct (*śīla*) pertaining to ascetic discipline (*vinaya*) which ascetics respectfully [have to] observe, I am an ascetic. If we now want to speak of a brāhmaṇa, take again myself, for example. As I have fully mastered in [theory and] practice the Dharma followed by all brāhmaṇas of the past, I am a brāhmaṇa. Take,

*prāpto*... Cf. also CPS II, p. 182 (16.15) and *ibid.*, n. 3 in which Waldschmidt quotes another parallel, with reference to a bhikṣuṇī, from Divy.

<sup>10</sup> After Hackmann, p. 127; lit. 'essence-hut', Soothill, p. 427: 'pure abode, ... a monastery or nunnery'.

<sup>11</sup> From this remark it can be inferred that the brahmin lady's husband is identical to the above brahmin who asks the Buddha about the existence of a 'real brāhmaṇa'.

for instance, Mahā-Kāśyapa. Bhikṣu Kāśyapa is an ascetic, because he makes the most of ascetic discipline in its entirety. Take again, for instance, Bhikṣu Kāśyapa. He is a brāhmaṇa, for he is a past master of all pious acts of austerity (*vrata*) and rules of moral conduct which brāhmaṇas respectfully observe. – After these [words] the Exalted One uttered the following verses:

Him I do not call a brāhmaṇa who is an  
Expert in sacrificial formulae (*mantra*);  
His recitals [may] earn him a Brahmā heaven,  
But such status does not free him from his fetters.  
[Only] he who is fetter-free, not bound for a [new] form  
Of existence, does realise ultimate emancipation (*mokṣa*).  
He who does no more cling even to heavenly bliss  
Is a [true] ascetic, a [true] brāhmaṇa. –

Then the brahmin asked the Exalted One: Fetters being spoken of, what are these so-called fetters? – Sensuous greed, replied the Exalted One, is a fetter. Aversion or hatred is a fetter, and ignorance or delusion is a fetter. As for the Tathāgata, he is completely rid of sensuous greed, once and for all; and the same holds good of aversion, hatred, ignorance and delusion. – If only the Exalted One would teach me his profound and subtle Dharma, requested the brahmin, so as to be no more in the grip of these fetters. – Accordingly, the Exalted One gradually imparted to the brahmin his subtle Teaching, expatiating on liberality... on the desirability of going forth into homelessness. When the Exalted One knew that the brahmin's mind had become receptive..., he taught him the Dharma as all Buddhas of the past were wont to do, that is to say unsatisfactoriness... While the Exalted One was winding up his discourse on behalf of the brahmin, just (T2, 590a) there on his seat the immaculate Dharma-eye opened to him... As the brahmin had reached the Dharma, seen the Dharma, realised the Dharma, he was freed from doubts and won fearlessness. Of his own accord, he took refuge in the Three Most Important Things... and undertook to observe the Five Precepts. He had irreversibly become [one of] the Tathāgata's true



sons<sup>12</sup>. Having heard the Buddha's words, the brahmin [lady's] husband was pleased and applied himself to practice.'

5. 'Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying, together with a large [number of] bhikṣus, viz. five hundred persons altogether, in Rājagrha, at Karaṇḍa's Bamboo Grove. At that time, King Ajātaśatru had an elephant named Nālāgiri<sup>13</sup> that was extremely wicked and violent, impetuous and strong, but also capable of calming down immediately [after having become] enraged. Due to the strength of this elephant, Magadha was the only country that did not suffer the humiliation [of a defeat]. Now Devadatta approached King Ajātaśatru in whose presence he said: I should like to bring to His Majesty's notice that these days that wicked elephant is capable, however, of calming down immediately [after having become] enraged. It would be advisable to [give] that animal strong wine to drink so as to [get it] drunk. In the quiet of dawn the śramaṇa Gautama will surely enter the city to beg for alms-food. [At that time] this intoxicated elephant should be released in order to [let it] trample the śramaṇa<sup>14</sup> to death. – No sooner had King Ajātaśatru heard what Devadatta had to say than he issued the order in the country that on the following morning at dawn, [since] an intoxicated elephant had to be released, the public were prohibited from being on the move in the streets. Devadatta further said to King Ajātaśatru: Should the śramaṇa Gautama be omniscient, he ought to

12 Cf. *Bhagavato putto oraso* at M III, 29, S II, 221, III, 83. In these places the 'legitimate sons' of the bhagavat respectively are Sāriputta, Mahā-Kassapa and, generally speaking, the arhats. It seems quite remarkable that here in EĀ a layman who has become a streamwinner is referred to as 'true son' (*zhēn zǐ*) of the Tathāgata.

13 As for the following, cf. Vin II, 194-6 (Cullavagga VII.3.2); see I.B. Horner, *The Book of the Discipline* V (PTS 1952), pp. 272-4. The Chinese clearly transliterates 'Nālāgiri' whereas in Buddhist Sanskrit literature 'Naḍāgāra' as the elephant's name has come down to us (see Divy(V), 186, 2). Cf. also Avadānaśataka (Dharmapāla) (ed. P.L. Vaidya, Darbhanga 1958), p. 82 f.; here the elephant is named Dhanapālaka; Avadāna-Kalpalatā I (ed. Vaidya, Darbhanga 1959), pp. 200-4 (Dhanapālavadāna).

14 Lit. 'him'.

foresee what is going to happen, and tomorrow he would certainly not enter the city to beg for alms-food. – Just according to Your Reverence's bidding, said King Ajātaśatru; should he be an omniscient one, tomorrow at dawn he will not enter the city to beg for alms-food. –

When the faithful laymen and laywomen of Rājagrha, the Buddha's major and minor devotees, heard that King Ajātaśatru had ordered an intoxicated elephant to be released at dawn to attack the Tathāgata, everybody was extremely sad and concerned. They went to the Exalted One's whereabouts, bowed down their heads at his feet and, standing at one side, entreated him: We beseech the Exalted One not to enter the city tomorrow at dawn because King Ajātaśatru has just issued the order prohibiting the citizens from [all] walks of life tomorrow from being on the move in the streets. [The king] has said: We desire an intoxicated elephant to be released in order to harm the śramaṇa Gautama. Should the śramaṇa be omniscient, tomorrow at dawn he will not... beg for alms-food. – If only the Exalted One would not enter the city. Were the Tathāgata to be attacked and [lethally] wounded, mankind would lose its 'Eye', it would be bereft of its refuge (*paritrāṇa*). –

In response, the Exalted One said: Please calm down, devotees. Do not worry, do not be sad. Since the Tathāgata's body is not reckoned an ordinary body, it is not subject to other people's violence; and not only that, O devotees. One should know that Jambudvīpa, from the east to the west, is seven thousand *yojanas*<sup>15</sup> in width, and from the south to the north twenty-one thousand *yojanas* in length. Aparagodāniya, being shaped like a half moon, is eight thousand *yojanas* in length. Pūrvavideha is a continent that has the shape of a square and is nine thousand *yojanas* in length. Uttarakuru, ten thousand *yojanas* in length, is a round continent resembling the full moon. If these four continents were teeming with intoxicated elephants – as numerous as grains of rice [in rice-fields or] jute from thickets of [tropical] plants – this would not even cause horripilation (*romaharṣaṇa*) with the Tathāgata, let alone [fear of] violence

15 According to Monier-Williams, a measure of a distance of about nine miles.



against him. But not only that. Leave the four continents out of account. Likewise, there are a thousand continents, a thousand suns and moons, a thousand Mount Sumerus, a thousand fourfold oceans<sup>16</sup>, a thousand Jambudvīpas, Aparagodānīyas, Pūrvavidehas and Uttarakurus, a thousand [heavens inhabited by the retinues of] the four world-guardians (*cāturmahārājika*), a thousand heavens of the Trāyastriṃśa [gods], of the Tuṣita [gods], Yāma [gods], Nirmānarati [gods]<sup>17</sup> and of the Paranirmitavaśavartin [gods]. [Finally, there is] the so-called world-system (*lokadhātu*) [consisting of] a thousand [worlds], then that of two thousand worlds, the [world-system] called Sāhasra-madhyama-lokadhātu<sup>18</sup>, the world-system [consisting of] three thousand [worlds] and, lastly, the [world-system] called Trisāhasra-mahāsāhasra-lokadhātu<sup>19</sup>. Even if [this whole universe were] teeming with royal elephants like Airāvāṇa<sup>20</sup>, this would not indeed cause horripilation with the Tathāgata, let alone [fear of] those elephants' inclination to harm the Tathāgata. But not only that. As the Tathāgata's supernormal powers (*rddhi*) are inconceivable (*acintya*), the Tathāgata's appearance in the world does not come to an end because of any violence or harm caused to him by anybody. All of you please return home. It behoves the Tathāgata to know by himself when to go the way of all flesh (*pariṇāma*). –

Then, at length, the Exalted One taught the subtle Teaching to the four assemblies (*pariṣā, parṣad*)<sup>21</sup>. After listening to the instruction, all upāsakas and upāsikās rose, bowed down their heads at [the Exalted One's] feet and went back home.

[The next morning] in the quiet of dawn, the Exalted One put on his [outer] robes and took up his alms-bowl. When he was about to enter Rājagṛha to beg for alms-food, the world-guardian Dhṛtarāṣ-

16 See Soothill, p. 178: 'The four oceans around Mount Sumeru'.

17 See BHSD, 302 (under *nirmita* (3)).

18 See Mahāvīyut. 3043.

19 'The world-system consisting of a triple thousand great thousand [worlds]' – after BHSD, 259.

20 I.e. Indra's elephant; see Soothill, p.201.

21 I.e. monks, nuns, male and female devotees; see BHSD, 331.

tra, heading his retinue of *gandharvas*<sup>22</sup>, came from the east to accompany the Exalted One. At the same time, the world-guardian Virūdhaka, heading his *kumbhāṇḍas*<sup>23</sup>, [came from the south] to accompany the Exalted One. [The world-guardian] of the west, Virūpākṣa, heading [his retinue of] *nāgas*, [also came] to accompany the Exalted One, and likewise the world-guardian of the north, Kubera (Vaiśravaṇa), heading many demons (*rākṣasa*) and ogres (*piśāca*). Simultaneously Śakra, the chief of gods, leading ten million *devas*, disappeared from the Trāyastriṃśa heaven<sup>24</sup> and went to the Exalted One's whereabouts. So also did Brahmā, leading ten million *brahmakāyika* gods, [after leaving] the celestial palaces. Śakra, Brahmā, the four world-guardians, [all inhabitants of] the twenty-eight heavens<sup>25</sup> and the terrifying ogre-kings – all of them said to each other: Today we must see two supernormal beings, the Nāga<sup>26</sup> and the elephant, who are going to compete with each other. Which will win, which will lose<sup>27</sup>? –

22 See Soothill, p. 341 f.

23 I.e. a class of demons; see Soothill, p. 419.

24 After T2, 590, n. 30; the text actually has 'Tuṣita', but Śakra, according to tradition, rules over the Trāyastriṃśa heaven, whilst the Tuṣita heaven is ruled by King Santuṣita (cf. DPPN I, 1034, II, 958).

25 I.e. six heavens of the world of desire, eighteen of the world of form and four pertaining to the formless heavens. See Soothill, p. 22.

26 Nāga, here meaning 'elephant', is a well-known epithet of the Buddha; for references see PTSD, 349. For the elephant that is supposed to trample the Nāga to death, the Chinese has the equivalent of *hastin* or *karin*. The Pāli parallel has a play on words: *nāgo nāgena saṅgāmessatīti*.

27 It seems strange that here Śakra is one of those who asks such a question. In the Pāli parallel, remarks in a similar vein are made by 'people who were of little faith, not believing, who were of poor intelligence' (Horner, *op. cit.*, p. 273). According to both Pāli and Buddhist Sanskrit literature, Sakka / Śakra is a most zealous devotee of the Buddha (cf. DPPN II, 960; E. Waldschmidt (ed.), *Bruchstücke buddhistischer Sūtras aus dem zentralasiatischen Sanskritkanon* (Leipzig 1932), pp. 58-113 (Śakrapraśnasūtra)). The EĀ passage in question and the preceding cosmological interpolation (not found in the Pāli version), corroborate the conclusion reached by É. Lamotte in his examination of a composite sūtra from EĀ (see BSR 12, 1, p. 46). On the other hand, EĀ contains a flood of details not found in other canonical writings, no matter whether in each case



When the four assemblies of Rājagrha saw the Exalted One some distance away enter the city to beg for alms-food and being followed by many bhikṣus, [they and] all [other] citizens raised their voices and shouted [their concern]. On hearing the shouting, King Ajātaśatru asked [the attendants to his] left and right: What is all this penetrating din about? – That is the Tathāgata entering the city to beg for alms-food, replied his attendants, seeing him, the people are making this noise. – The śramaṇa Gautama, said Ajātaśatru, is not [a man] of the Noble Path (*āryamārga*), [for] he does not know that people's minds prove fickle. – At once King Ajātaśatru gave his chief mahout the following order: Quickly see to it that the elephant drinks strong wine and fasten a sharp, double-edged sword to its trunk; then let it loose. –

After reaching the city gate, while the Exalted One, followed by many bhikṣus, was just stepping into the gate, there occurred a big earthquake felt all over the world, and so many celestial beings [together with] the foremost gods were hovering in the air, scattering many kinds of flowers. When the bhikṣus, five hundred in number, saw the intoxicated elephant rush [towards them], each of them took to his heels without really knowing where to run. On seeing the Tathāgata some distance away, that violent elephant hastened in his direction. Standing close by the Exalted One and seeing the intoxicated elephant head [towards them], Ānanda was so scared out of his wits that he stepped behind [the Tathāgata]. – That elephant, he warned the Exalted One, is wicked and violent, impetuous and given to creating havoc. It must by all means be avoided. – Do not be afraid, Ānanda, said the Exalted One, I am going to tame that elephant through the Tathāgata's supernormal power. – At a distance neither [too] short nor [too] long, the Tathāgata fixed his eyes on the violent elephant and magically created to the elephant's left and right majestic lions, and behind it a gigantic sea of fire. When the violent elephant saw those majestic lions to its left and right and the sea of

due to later editorial 'embellishment' or not, so that a full-scale study of this vast collection remains a desideratum, not to mention the considerable amount of lexicographical data contained in EĀ that have yet to be covered by lexicographers dealing with Chinese Buddhism.

fire, it could not help urinating and defecating and, all of a sudden, it stood still. Then, while it stepped forward, moving closer to the Tathāgata, the Exalted One uttered the following verses:

Do not hurt the Nāga, [for] it is extremely  
Difficult to meet a Nāga [who rarely] appears [in the world].  
By refraining from hurting the Nāga  
A good form of rebirth will be obtained. –

After hearing these verses uttered by the Exalted One, the violent elephant itself undid the double-edged sword [fastened to its trunk], just as though it was burnt by [it being like] fire. It knelt down in front of the Tathāgata, took with its trunk the dust off the Tathāgata's feet and caressed<sup>28</sup> them. The Exalted One stretched out his right [arm] and stroked the elephant's forehead with his hand, addressing [it] with these [verses]:

Anger and hatred will bring about one's hell  
And also the shape of a snake-like creature<sup>29</sup>.  
Therefore one should give up hatred lest  
One should end up in such a body [like that of a snake]<sup>30</sup>. –

(T2, 591a) Now so many celestial beings [together with] the foremost gods, hovering in the air, showered several hundred thousand kinds of flowers upon the Tathāgata who then set forth the subtle Teaching for the sake of the four assemblies, of those hosts of gods, *nāgas* and ogres. On seeing the elephant having become tame, to

28 Lit. 'licked'.

29 Tentatively for a combination of two characters the first of which means 'snake', while the second, 𪛗, could neither be found in Chinese nor in Japanese dictionaries. No explanation in Hayashi.

30 See Divy(V), 185, 29-30 (Sahasodgatāvadāna): *madhye rāgadveṣamohāḥ kartavyāḥ*,... *dveṣo bhujāṅgākāreṇa* ... According to this text, it is the Buddha himself who gives iconographic instructions how to represent the Wheel of Saṃsāra at whose centre allegorical animals should symbolise greed, hatred and delusion, among which a snake should stand for hatred or aversion. The reference to this Divy passage, together with acknowledgements, already occurs in A. Waddell, *Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet* (London 1895), p. 108, n. 2.



more than sixty thousand men and women and to eighty thousand gods the immaculate Dharma-eye opened, ridding them of all impurities. At that time, in the intoxicated elephant's body there arose winds [cutting like] a knife [which brought about] its death<sup>31</sup>; it was reborn in the palace of the four world-guardians. Having heard the Exalted One's words, the bhikṣus, bhikṣuṇīs, all upāsakas and upāsikās, gods, nāgas and ogres were pleased and applied themselves to practice.'

31 See A III, 101, 19-20 (not A I. 101 as given in PTSD, 674, under *satthaka*): *satthakā vā me vātā kuppeyyum, tena me assa kālakiriya*; cf. also J III, 445, 26-8: *satthakavāta... jīvītapariyantikaṃ katvā ...* The translation at BSR 11, 2, p.166, 5, 'there arose a windy humour' should be corrected to 'there arose winds'.

#### Additional Abbreviations

- EncBuddh = G.P. Malalasekera et al. (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, vol. 1 ff., Colombo 1961 ff.  
 NidSa = C. Tripāthī (ed.), *Fünfundzwanzig Sūtras des Nidānasamyukta* (based on Turfan MSS), Berlin 1962.  
 PTSD = T.W. Rhys Davids, W. Stede, *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary*, London 1921-5.

#### CORRECTIONS — EKOTTARĀGAMA XVIII (BSR 12, 1 (1995))

- p. 47, l. 15: for 'just a though' read 'just as though'.  
 p. 47, n. 1: for *otappa* read *ottappa*.  
 p. 48, n. 3: for *ottapañ* read *ottappañ*.  
 p. 49, l. 20: for 'good and chattels; read 'goods. . .'.  
 p. 50, l. 9: for *hareyyaṃ* read *hareyyum*, for *udkaṃ* read *udakaṃ*.  
 p. 50, l. 15: for *miyamāno* read *mīyamāno*.  
 p. 50, l. 18: for *Middle Length Sayings* ( read . . . *Sayings I*.  
 p. 51, l. 23: for 'Dhammadāyāsutta' read 'Dhammadāyādasutta'.  
 p. 51, l. 31: after 'to give' insert 'on which latter *fā shī, shī shī* of

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## OBITUARIES

Yehan Numata (12 April 1897 - 5 May 1994)

One of the most generous Buddhist philanthropists of this century has recently died at a ripe old age. In many ways a humble and devout follower of Jōdō Shinshū, he possessed a breadth of vision that impelled him 'to enable more people to understand the wonders of Buddhism'.

He was born the third son of a Shin temple family living in the mountains of Hiroshima Prefecture and was recommended to become a priest. However, following his school education he was given the opportunity to study in the USA. He sailed to California and lodged with a family in Hollywood, but two years of menial domestic chores combined with his studies took their toll and he contracted tuberculosis. Thanks, as he said, to daily recitation of the Nembutsu and adoption of a positive state of mind, he recovered his health, worked his way through college and graduated in economics and business studies from the University of California in 1928.

His mother had instilled into him that it was a natural duty to thank and serve the Buddha. To repay what he considered a debt of gratitude to the American people, he was instrumental in launching *The Pacific World* three years earlier. This bi-monthly periodical fostered an appreciation of Oriental culture in general and Buddhism in particular, and was sent to the major universities and libraries in the USA. After two years, financial constraints obliged Mr Numata to seek assistance in Japan where, with the support of Junjiro Takakusu, the former's periodical combined with the latter's magazine, *The Young East*, and appeared for a further two years.

In 1930, Mr Numata returned to Japan and pioneered the production of micrometers (which had hitherto been imported at

great cost). Four years later he established a factory in his native Japan specialising in the manufacture of precision instruments. The company name, Mitutoyo, meant 'Source of Abundance' and, indeed, made its owner sufficient profits to realise his dream of promoting Buddhism worldwide. 'My greatest desire is to share with others the limitless benefits found in the teachings of the Buddha' (*My Path*, Tokyo 1975, p.2). However, it was not until 1965 that this Aśokan ideal could be implemented. In that year he founded the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai ('Society for the Promotion of Buddhism') at 3-14, Shiba 4-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 108. The headquarters building serves as the venue for lectures, seminars and cultural arts, 'creating a world-community center uniting people through Buddhism'. Branches of BDK are often located as adjuncts of Mitutoyo, notably in the UK (Joule Road, West Point Business Park, Andover, Hants SP10 3UT), mainland Europe (EKÖ-Center e.V. im Haus der Japanischen Kultur, Brüggener Weg 6, D-40547 Düsseldorf, Germany), USA. (16925 East Gale Ave., City of Industry, CA 91745) and South America (Av. João Carlos da Silva Borges 1240, CEP 04726, Cx Postal 4255, Santo Amaro, São Paulo, Brazil). The prime objective is not to espouse any particular denomination or sectarian doctrine but to encourage and propagate a contemporary understanding of the spirit of Buddhism.

The most tangible effect of the BDK has been the publication of an anthology of texts in translation from both Theravāda and Mahāyāna sources. *The Teaching of Buddha* is available in 35 languages and 4.5 million copies have been distributed throughout the world. 'This is just one of the many ways to introduce Buddhism to others'. However, echoing an Aśokan inscription, Numata continues: 'Nevertheless, I fear that I have not done enough. From now on I must make greater

efforts, as there are still various things I wish to do' (*My Path*, p.3). Undoubtedly, one of these 'things' was the ambitious translation of the entire Chinese Canon. The Preparatory and Editorial Committees were established in 1982 and 1983 respectively and set themselves the target of publishing 100 volumes, comprising 139 texts, by the end of 2000. An *Introduction to the Buddhist Canon* (Tokyo 1984, 1986), prepared by the Chairman of the Editorial Committee, Shōyū Hanayama, provided a synopsis of the chosen texts and to date seven volumes have appeared (details may be obtained from the Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2620 Warring Street, Berkeley, CA 94704, USA)

The third project, and one especially dear to Mr Numata's heart, was the establishment of 'Visitorships' of Buddhist Studies at various universities. This entails a rotation of visiting professors on a 3-5 month tenure at the following institutions: The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; Balliol College, Oxford; Centre for Japanese and Korean Studies, Leiden; Universities of Toronto and Calgary, Canada; and, in the USA — University of California, Berkeley (Mr Numata's *alma mater*), Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley; The Divinity Schools at Chicago and Harvard; Department of Religious and Biblical Literature, Smith College, Northampton, Mass; and the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

It is salutary to reflect that the foregoing achievements stemmed from the efforts of a single, self-effacing and hard-working individual who, throughout his long life, devoutly chanted sūtras before a family altar, followed by this aspiration: 'Thanks to the protection of the Lord Buddha and the support of my fellow human beings, I am blessed to be awake from a peaceful sleep, which has given me renewed strength to devote myself wholeheartedly to my chosen work, promising to make



up for the Four Gratuities the Buddha has shown me'.  
May he attain the Pure Land of Realisation!

#### Master Hsüan Hua (1908-1995)

The Tripiṭaka or Dhyāna Master Hsüan Hua was one of the very few Chinese Buddhist personalities in this century to become well-known in the West.

Born in Shuang-Ch'eng district in north-east China, a traumatic childhood impelled him to undertake the śramaṇera precepts at the age of nineteen. During the turbulent period between the end of the Second World War and the establishment of the Communist régime in 1949, he travelled 3,000 miles to Canton to visit Ch'an Master Hsü Yün at Nan Hua Monastery, receiving the bhikṣu ordination on Mount P'u T'o. He received the Dharma transmission from his illustrious teacher and, at the latter's request, became Director of the Nan Hua Institute for the Study of Vinaya. In 1950, however, he resigned and went to Ta Chiao Monastery where Hsü Yün had become Head. Undoubtedly due to unsympathetic political pressures, he made his way to Hong Kong where he remained for twelve years.

The decisive point in his vocation occurred in 1962 when he decided to undertake Dharmadūta work in the USA, a field which had hitherto been dominated by Japanese teachers and practices. He settled in San Francisco and, six years later (having mastered English) began intensive Dharma activities which led to the first ordinations (both bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī) in the West according to the Chinese Vinaya (Dharmaguptaka) tradition. In 1971 he established Gold Mountain Monastery, which is administered by the Sino-American Buddhist Association (1731 15th St, San Francisco, CA 94103) and has since 1970 published the monthly *Vajra Bodhi Sea*, featuring the

transcriptions of Dharmadeśanā by the Master and his American-ordained disciples together with translations from Chinese Buddhist texts. Also based in San Francisco, the Buddhist Text Translation Society published the Master's running commentaries to (incorporating translations of) *The Dharma Flower [Lotus] Sutra*, *the Flower Garland [Avatamsaka] Sutra*, *The Shurangama / Vajra / Amitabha / Dharani / Heart / Sixth Patriarch's Sutras*, *The Sutra in Forty-two Sections*, *The Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store [Kṣitigarbha] Bodhisattva* and *The Shramanera Vinaya*. Also, biographical (*Records of the Life of the Venerable Master Hsüan Hua*) and inspirational treatises.

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, described as 'a discrete Buddhist village adjunct with the town of Talmage and a few minutes drive from the city of Ukiah', is located on a 237-acre site designed 'to become a religious, educational and social center for world Buddhism in America'. Its main component is Dharma Realm University, the first Buddhist university in the West, which commenced activities in 1977. Quality education in theory and practice is offered in various fields of study, although degree courses are centred on the Hsü Yün College of Buddhist Studies, College of Translation, College of Letters and Science, and Chinwan College of Fine Arts. Throughout, the Chinese cultural connection is emphasised.

Master Hsüan Hua is to be remembered as both inspiring and guiding the multifaceted activities embodied in the foregoing institutions. Like a true bodhisattva, may he return to ensure a successful fulfilment of Dharma implementation for the benefit of the many!

T.O. Ling (17 February 1920 - 24 March 1995)

A good friend of 'Greater India' and sympathetic student of Buddhism, Trevor Ling finally succumbed to the effects of Alzheimer's Disease.

Born and bred in London, he was deeply influenced by his Baptist mother, but during his army service in India he was persuaded to adopt a more open approach towards religion. In 1946 he read History and Theology at Oxford where he met and married his wife. He taught Theology briefly in Nottingham before undertaking parish work in London and then acted as a pastor for the American Baptist Missionary Society at the University of Rangoon. Disillusioned, he embraced Anglicanism and was ordained at Canterbury Cathedral in 1963, and thereafter was invited to occupy the new Chair of Theology at Leeds University. Whilst there, he was stimulated by Chinese Buddhism via the university's Centre of Chinese Studies directed by the American Sinophile, Owen Lattimore (1900-89).

Ling had already commenced a serious lifelong study of Buddhism with his learning Pāli and submission of a doctoral dissertation to the School of Oriental Studies (London University), published under the title, *Buddhism and the Mythology of Evil* (1968). Even in Rangoon he had taken his children weekly to lay offerings to the principal Buddhārūpa at the Shwedagon Pagoda. Although he rarely discussed personal preferences, he did admit to being more empathetic towards Buddhism than any other philosophy of life. (Later, he resigned his Church of England orders.) Following the death (in 1971) of S.G.F. Brandon — whose *Dictionary of Comparative Religion* (1970) includes Ling's substantial section on Buddhism (offprinted New York 1972 and Calcutta 1981) — he occupied the Chair of Comparative Religion at Manchester University which terminated with his early retirement in 1984.

His literary perspective ranged from comparative studies, *A History of Religion East and West* (1968), to sociological analyses which were usually, but not always, connected to Buddhism, for example, *Buddha, Marx and God* (1966), *Religious Chance in the Secular World* (1978), *Karl Marx and Religion* (1980) and *Buddhist Revival in India* (1980). A purely historical monograph, *Buddhism, Imperialism and War* (1979), concentrated on 'Burma and Thailand in modern history'. Ling also translated Dīgha Nikāya 2, 4, 5, 9, 12, 16, 22, 26, 27 and 31 and arranged them in order as *The Buddha's Philosophy of Man* (Everyman's Library, 1981).

Possibly his most influential work was mistitled *The Buddha* (1973, 1985). The obscured subheading, 'Buddhist civilization in India and Ceylon', reveals a highly readable and stimulating historical survey of the outgoing, humanist ideals propagated by Gotama the man, and their adoption and adaptation by the twin states of south Asia. Very much a timely study that warrants attention by those concerned with the trans-cultural germination of ideas.

In both his personal and academic lives, Ling endeavoured to adhere to the highest ideals embodied by the personality of his chosen subject.

Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf (27 July 1909 - 11 June 1995)

This foremost specialist in Indian and Himalayan anthropology was born in Vienna and read Anthropology at the capital's university, where he obtained his doctorate in 1931. For eighteen years he conducted fieldwork in Assam and central India, ending this phase of his career as Professor of Anthropology at Osmania University, Hyderabad (where he had been interned during the Second World War).



In 1949 he emigrated to England where he held first the Readership and then, between 1951 and his retirement in 1976, the Chair of Asian Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, and built up the largest department in this field in the UK. He visited Nepal in 1953 and subsequently contributed his first major (and best known) study, *The Sherpas of Nepal. Buddhist Highlanders* (London 1964, 1979). This was updated in *Sherpas Transformed. Social Change in a Buddhist Society of Nepal* (New Delhi 1984).

In similar vein he wrote on *Morals and Merit* (London 1967), reprinted as *South Asian Societies. A Study of Values and Social Controls* (New Delhi 1979), *Himalayan Traders* (1974), 'Trans-Himalayan Traders in Transition' (*Himalayan Anthropology*, ed. James F. Fisher, The Hague 1978), *A Himalayan Tribe from Cattle to Cash* (New Delhi 1980), *Asian Highland Societies* (*ib.*, 1981), *Exploratory Travels in Highland Nepal* (*ib.*, 1989), *Tribal populations and cultures of the Indian sub-continent* (Leiden 1985) and *The Renaissance of Tibetan Civilization* (— on the Tibetan refugees in India — Delhi 1990). He also described 'A Nunnery in Nepal' (*Kailash IV*, Kathmandu 1976) and 'Himalayan Religions' (*The Encyclopaedia of Religions*, ed. M. Eliade, New York and London 1987). With André Bareau and Walter Schubring he produced the third volume of *Die Religionen Indiens* (Stuttgart 1964) and edited *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon. Anthropological Studies in Hindu-Buddhist Contact Zones* (London 1979). 'Essays in honour of Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf' were edited by A.C. Major under the title *Culture and Morality* (Delhi 1981), whilst his 'Autobiography of an Anthropologist' appeared as *Life among Indian Tribals* (*ib.* 1990).

## A CONTEMPORARY BUDDHIST DEBATE

A Review of Sangharakshita's booklets *Forty-Three Years Ago* (Windhorse 1993) and *Was the Buddha a bhikkhu?* (Windhorse 1994), together with Brahmavamso's shortened review of the former, 'On the Validity of Bhikkhu Ordination in Theravada' (Forest Hermitage Newsletter, April 1994), reprinted in the Buddhist Publication Society's *Newsletter*, No.27, 1994).

Laurence C.R. Mills

These days one does not associate the idea of debates much with Buddhists but there is no doubt that in the past when many Buddhist traditions mingled in India, debate was a mark of the living and developing Dharma. In the Pāli tradition, pale reflections of this are found in the singular Abhidhamma work Kathāvatthu and perhaps in 'The Questions of King Menander' (Milindapañha). The tradition of debate was transmitted into Tibet where the earliest example of its practice is to be found in the various (and conflicting) accounts of the Council of Lhasa which determined that Indian rather than Chinese forms of the Dharma should predominate there. Tibetan Buddhism has of course maintained a tradition of debating, especially amongst Gelugpas, but this has not generally been used against opponents and has become an exercise in sharpening the mind. Modern Theravādins generally have lost the art of debating (with whom could one do it in a country such as Thailand where Theravāda is the state religion?) though occasionally a monk has shown his ability as with Mohottiwatte Gunananda in nineteenth century Ceylon.

In all these cases opponents faced each other, though unfortunately this has not been the case so far in the debate upon which I comment here. The opponents are Sangharakshita, who is the founder of the Western Buddhist Order and based in



Britain, and Brahmavamso, who is the acting abbot of a Theravāda monastery in Australia. Their views are just about as far apart as their bodies! It is true that both are Buddhists and both regard themselves as monks, moreover both are learned, the former in the Dharma, specially its Mahāyāna manifestations, the latter in the Vinaya of the Theravādins. Perhaps similarities end at this point for Sangharakshita, after a long sojourn as a monk in India, returned to Britain and gradually evolved a form of Dharma practice suited to Western conditions, while Brahmavamso, as a disciple of the Forest meditative tradition in North East Thailand, has endeavoured to preserve it unaltered (except in quite minor matters) in the Western world. Again, Sangharakshita's emphasis is on the spirit of the Dharma in keeping with the Triyāna (three vehicles) approach while Brahmavamso has specialised in the Pāli Vinaya, an immense, intricate and somewhat contradictory corpus of books covering things and actions allowed or forbidden Theravādin Buddhist monks and nuns.

This debate has now spread to the Buddhist Publication Society's *Newsletter* where, surprisingly, Brahmavamso has reviewed *Forty-Three Years Ago* thus guaranteeing, I suspect, that it will be more widely read. In this review article I shall try to draw together all the various strands of this debate.

Sangharakshita's *Forty-Three Years* is subtitled 'Reflections on my Bhikkhu Ordination' and probes his own ordination (*upasampadā*) as a monk in India. He found sooner and later, that several of the bhikkhus comprising the Sangha which ordained him had had sexual relations and so were technically no longer bhikkhus. It seems that there was not a quorum of 'pure' monks and so he was not really ordained at all. Yet he can look back at the monks who sat in that Sangha with friendliness and compassion. Perhaps technically they were bad

monks but actually they were good Buddhists engaged in very difficult work: the reintroduction of Buddhism to India. Sangharakshita goes on to criticise in depth the formalism of Vinaya-style monasticism in the light of Western life and ideas. If it should ever be published, my own longer study on the Vinaya, 'Moss on the Stones, Monastic Discipline for Buddhist Monks and Nuns' from a similar viewpoint, would reveal many inadequacies in the body of Buddhist monastic law.

Brahmavamso writes that *Forty-Three Years* is only 'a misinformed and malicious attack on the Bhikkhu Sangha and the millions of lay people who follow Theravada Buddhism'. It is a pity that his criticism is tainted by anger in this way. Certainly neither of Sangharakshita's booklets are misinformed or malicious, though they are critical of a number of aspects of Theravāda monasticism. As regards lay people, surely Sangharakshita is quite right when he says that Theravāda 'two-tier' Buddhism raises monks' status very high with the result that lay people are second-class Buddhists. Acquaintance with life in any Theravādin Buddhist country will confirm this, as do even the ancient Pāli Suttas.

One point to make here is reliance on Buddhist texts. Now the Buddha in the Pāli Suttas is recorded as saying that one should not base religious belief and practice on sacred texts (*ma piṭaka-sampadāyo* — Kālāma Sutta, A III 56), but this is exactly what Brahmavamso does. Really he is a fundamentalist who has some such notion as 'the Buddha is the author of the Pāli Vinaya and Sutta'. Scholarly research shows that the texts as we have them cannot literally be the Buddha's words as he spoke them. This is true of scholastic elaborations of particular points whether found in the Suttas (*Saṃyutta* and *Ānguttara Nikāyas* have some good examples) or in the Vinaya (such as portions of the text enumerating every possible combination and permu-



tation). But who is to say exactly what the Buddha did or did not lay down? The present set of rules, the Pātimokkha, though undoubtedly ancient and with different sects' versions largely in agreement, have narratives in the Mahā and Bhikkhuṇī Khanda, supposed to be the occasions when the Buddha himself established the rules, which vary widely in the surviving Vinaya recensions. Brahmavamso's view does not consider any of this and basically he is unwilling to concede that the Buddha himself did not lay down all the monks' rules together with the method of ordination now in use.

The preservation of the Pāli (together with other recensions of the Tipiṭaka), everyone agrees, has been accomplished by assembled monks in Councils, the first one immediately after the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa.

According to the Pāli tradition in the Vinaya, all the monks in the First Council were arahants, though we need not take this too literally. The claim that they were all arahants is made to boost the authenticity of the material that they gathered and transmitted. The argument goes: arahants are enlightened therefore they cannot make mistakes (a contested point!) therefore their transmitted teachings are exactly what the Buddha laid down. But we can see that these perfect arahants have transmitted a very one-sided version of the Buddha's teachings. How can this assertion be substantiated? Their transmitted teaching is mostly the Buddha addressing monks or various monks teaching the Dhamma. Rarely indeed do we find discourses by the Buddha (or monks) addressed to the laity, more rarely still are found the Buddha's teaching to bhikkhuṇīs or their teachings, while almost completely absent is any suggestion that lay disciples, male or female, actually taught the Dhamma themselves, though we know of one or two names, Uḡga for instance, of lay teachers who did so. Then if we examine the

Vinaya, the bias in its against women is so strong that we are faced with a choice: the Buddha as a biased teacher (surely a biased Buddha is a contradiction in terms!), or with accepting that the Vinaya as we have it is a compilation drawn up not by arahants but by very human disciples who still had many prejudices. I feel that these are important points to raise when faced with fundamentalist attitudes.

Sangharakshita in *Forty-Three Years* states that, after discovering the flaw in his own ordination, he became doubtful whether any of the ordinations conferred these days are valid due to the probability of similar flaws in unknown past generations of monks. Brahmavamso is very concerned to rebut this charge, offering the not very convincing argument that statistically in Buddhist countries (as contrasted with India) the majority of monks assembled in Sanghas would be 'pure' and ordinations therefore valid. I have no doubt that the *upasampadā* that was conferred on me in Wat Bovoranives Vihāra, Bangkok, was completely valid. At least one of the teachers present was known to have the knowledge of others' minds (*paracittañāṇa*) and would not have sat in an impure Sangha. However, one day when I discussed the validity of bhikkhus' ordination with my *upajjahāya*, Ven. Chao Khun Sāsana Sobhana (as he was then, now Somdet Phra Sangharāja of Thailand), he told me that he was sure that his own *upasampadā* was valid but went on to question whether this could be said of past unknown generations of monks. Particularly, he noted that when civil order in society had broken down, there was no authority to control the Sangha, as during and after the Burmese invasion of Thailand in the 1770s. I remember hearing that at that time monks in the northern Thai state of Chiangmai set up their own principality around the town of Nan and wore swords under their robes! Later, in the middle of the next



century, the founder of the Dhammayuttika sect in Thailand, Prince Mongkut, was so dissatisfied with the practice of what is now called Mahānikāya (and to which Brahmavamso belongs through his teacher, Acharn Chah), that he doubted the validity of their ordination and practice and was reordained by Mon (Ramanna) monks.

Who then can say about the validity of ordinations? It is in fact common, especially in Burma, for monks to reordain, as Sangharakshita points out, when they feel unsure of their ordination's validity. Sangharakshita could also have done this but he doubted whether any ordinations now given are truly valid, in the sense of an unbroken line of purity extending all the way back to the Buddha himself. It is surely unlikely, if one looks at all the worldly turbulence through which the Sangha has lived, that a pure lineage of ordination has survived. Two or three times in Sri Lanka it was lost, the most recent being during the time of Saraṇāṅkara, the last Sangharāja of that island. In his days, no validly ordained monks could be found in the whole of the land and it was with Dutch help that the bhikkhu lineage was re-imported from Siam.

If one's *brahmacāriya* is based on fundamental statements, the Buddha said this, allowed that, forbade this . . . and on belief that one's lineage of ordination goes back unbroken to the Buddha himself then, as Sangharakshita points out, it must be very insecure. This would seem to account for the harshness apparent in Brahmavamso's writings and his insistent defence of the *upasampadā's* validity.

As I tasted the mango of a bhikkhu's life for more than thirty years, both in its cenobitical and eremitic varieties, I feel that I am able to comment on this debate and add some material to it. I know very well the flavour of the mango, its joys and insufficiencies, but I would never attribute to the

Buddha himself all the teaching in the Suttas, still less the regulations in the Vinaya.

Brahmavamso mentions that 'the Buddha was a bhikkhu', while Sangharakshita quite rightly questions in his second booklet, *Was the Buddha a bhikkhu?*. A large part of this book is taken up with the author's rejoinders to Brahmavamso's criticisms. I shall not repeat that matter here as interested readers may buy this work for themselves, but I think that the title calls for comment as well as that part of it which deals directly with this subject. It would be uncommon in the Theravādin world to find anyone who could even think this question. Yet it is a very proper question to ask and deserves a careful answer. Brahmavamso's statement that the Buddha was a bhikkhu completely ignores the marvellous aspect of a Buddha — his numerous abilities unrivalled by his disciples —, concentrates on the Buddha as law-giver in the Vinaya (where, however, he is shown not altogether devoid of the mysterious and wonderful) and ultimately demeans him. A bhikkhu in the later Vinaya sense is one bound by rules, not one freed by the Dhamma. There is even a Sutta (S XVI 13) where the question is asked as to why, when the number of rules is increasing, the number of enlightened disciples is lessening. A Buddha is one who has gone beyond the rules. Even in his Going-forth from palace to forest he did that, no longer accepting the 'dharma' for the warrior-noble (Kṣatriya) as his destiny, but instead taking over the brahmin's 'dharma' — according to brahminical ideas. He did not want followers — blind devotees or sheep — but rather those who saw the Dhamma for themselves.

To do this, they would also have to go beyond rules. Rules do of course support institutions and governments tend to regard religious rule-keeping bodies with favour. There is no doubt that the monastic Sangha has lasted so long largely



because some of the rules have been kept by a good number of its members. On the other hand, rules tend to deaden and ossify those who keep them while their keeping often involves ridiculous anomalies. Rules made 2,500 years ago in India are unlikely to fit conditions found in, say, Western countries today. Many of them cannot even be broken in the present Theravādin countries due to changed conditions. And in general, rules do not produce saints — extraordinary and wonderful people — they produce conformists. This is true not only of the majority of Theravādin monks but also of other Buddhist monastics. The Buddha certainly was not a conformist, though he was extraordinary and wonderful.

Sangharakshita's rejoinders to six of Brahmavamso's assertions on pages 47-53 of *Was the Buddha a bhikkhu?* may be amplified in the light of my own experience. Brahmavamso's assertions are:

- i) Bhikkhu ordination is regarded with awed inspiration by most Buddhists.
- ii) Bhikkhu ordination was established by the Buddha.
- iii) The Buddha was a bhikkhu.
- iv) The bhikkhu ordination has survived unchanged for over 2,500 years.
- v) What has survived so long is deserving of respect.
- vi) Bhikkhu ordination was and is praised by the Arahants.

We shall consider these six matters briefly here:

1) Though it may have been truer in Thailand some decades ago that most Buddhists there regarded bhikkhus with awe, this is far from the case now. Every year sees more scandals and corruptions which the Mahāthera Samagon, the Sangha's ruling body, has little power to control. Most ordinary

monks in Thailand are viewed by people who do not know them as just monks, certainly not with 'awed inspiration'. And the phrase 'Buat Phra', the Thai words for bhikkhu ordination, do not at all signify such exalted praise. One may 'Buat Phra' for the rainy season — to gain merit and share merit with families — this is the common motivation for ordination. 'Awed inspiration' is altogether over the top as a description of this sort of ordination and only applied to great monk teachers — and even they are not so regarded by everyone in the country.

ii) There is no doubt that the present legalistic ordination ceremony (the result of long and complicated genesis in Mahāvagga I) is the work of Buddhist Councils and not the Buddha. A reading of my 'Moss on the Stones' would substantiate this.

iii) Some thought has already been given to the Buddha as a bhikkhu. If he appears sometimes to act as one, he did so because that was the skilful way to teach in the India of those days. But surely he would fail to recognise the legalism of the Vinaya as his own creation. Nor would he recognise most things that pass for Buddhism these days as anything to do with himself. Even strict Sanghas of bhikkhus might receive some fairly 'shocking' teaching just to wake them up. He would certainly smile at being regarded as a bhikkhu.

iv) Stating that bhikkhu ordination remained unchanged for 2,500 years in whatever country it has gone to shows ignorance of monastic ordinations beyond the confines of Thailand. Considerable differences are found even next door in Burma. If then we include ordinations in China and Tibet, rather large variations may be seen. In fact the tradition of bhikkhu ordination has changed according to time and place to fit in with changing cultures. No doubt in the earliest times ordination as a monk was a most fluid affair, as some surviving fragments in the Suttas hint.

v) Suttee is a custom that has survived for thousands of years. Women still burn themselves (or are encouraged to do so) on their husbands' pyres. Is this ancient custom therefore deserving of our respect? Mere veneration of what is ancient can hardly be called a Buddhist attitude. It was an ancient custom of the Church to persecute Jews — and went on for centuries . . . But examples are too numerous to list here.

vi) It is doubtful whether arahants praise the present version of bhikkhu ordination. Surely they would be more interested in why men wanted to be ordained rather than praising ordination itself. Monks tend to praise ordination, but then that is to be expected and very few monks are arahants.

The Buddha's attitude seems to me well expressed in that well-known Sanskrit verse from the *Tattvasaṅgraha*. v.3588 (*Tapāc chedāc ca nikaṣāt . . .*):

As one who's wise with gold  
smelts, cuts, on touchstone rubs,  
so, monks, accept my words  
by wisdom, not belief.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Buddhismus: Stifter, Schulen und Systeme. Hans Wolfgang Schumann. Diederichs Gelbe Reihe 99, 2nd expanded edition. Munich 1993. 259 pp.

This is the second edition of a work which first appeared in 1976 — and seventeen years are indeed a long time in the history of Buddhist studies: a field in which books pour from the presses in quite astonishing quantities, and many of them astonishingly good, too. Schumann, veteran writer on Buddhist themes, presents here a thoroughly revised but very concise overall picture of a subject so vast that nobody can claim to have mastered it all.

After an introductory chapter on the Buddha as a man of his times (pp.13-54), the three main parts follow, reflecting the obvious subdivisions of the historical material: 'Hīnayāna, the Buddhism of Self-Liberation' (in which a feeble footnote seeks to justify the use of the term *Hīnayāna* — of course, 'without derogatory implications' — as if no better term could be found for the earliest phase of Buddhism) (pp.55-123), then 'Mahāyāna, the Buddhism of Liberation with External Help' (pp.133-218), and finally 'Tantrayāna and' — wait for it! — 'The Buddhism of East Asia', all of which is compressed into pp.218-30. It will be seen at a glance that this third part is, to say the least, a trifle sketchy, and in fact the strength of the book does lie in the first two parts, where the reader is gently taken by the hand and introduced to the main facts and problems, e.g. on p.13f the tricky question of the 'new chronology' of the Buddha's life is briefly referred to, the author then stating that he is for practical reasons falling back on the dating 563-483 BCE which in 1976 still seemed so well established (and is surely even now defensible!). The bibliography lists on p.247 four works on the



matter by Bechert to which the enquirer can turn for further information. Well, after all, if one is writing a book of this sort, that is probably the best one can do, the more so as the arguments in this case are somewhat confusing and inconclusive.

Not having the 1976 edition to hand, I cannot say what detailed changes have been made to other parts. It seems unclear why Uddaka Rāmaputta (p.19) should have been an Upaniṣadic teacher, and incidentally the idea that certain Upaniṣads are pre-Buddhistic, though widely held, has not gone altogether unchallenged. The story of the Buddha, and the main principles of Theravāda, occupy the bulk of this chapter; the remaining 'Hīnayāna' schools being treated in what one can almost call 'thumb-nail sketches': just over a page devoted to the Sarvāstivādins, while the Sautrāntikas, Mahāsāṅghikas and Lokottaravādins get half a page each, with their principal characteristics clearly brought out (though the Sarvāstivādins recognised two, not three kinds of Nirvāṇa, the remaining unconditioned dharma being space). The transition to the Mahāyāna schools is quite skilfully effected with reference to the Lokottaravādins, and the gap is visibly filled with nine photographs of holy places, with appropriate captions.

A transitional chapter (pp.133-7) neatly summarises the differences between 'Hīnayāna' and Mahāyāna thought, and their similarities, which are more important: the conclusion (p.137) that the six points they have in common serve to link the Buddhist schools and to distinguish them from Hinduism and other religions should be obvious, but perhaps needed saying — in any case it is here clearly and simply put.

The basic teachings of Mahāyāna are similarly treated in the form of skilful summaries, which seem to go as far as could be expected towards clarifying complex issues. On p.140 Schumann describes the view of R.F. Gombrich that the Mahā-

yāna owed its origin to the increased use of writing as convincing (*überzeugend*). A more cautious formulation might have been to suggest that this was an important factor (*nissaya-paccaya*) in the situation, and just possibly even the 'decisive-support factor' (*upanissayapaccaya*) rather than the sole cause (if ever there is such a thing). Maybe that is not quite what he meant, but that is how it seems to read.

By far the largest single section under 'Mahāyāna' is rightly devoted to Nāgārjuna: a masterly exposition in brief, supported by a generous selection of quotations from the *Madhyamakārikās*, concerning which he notes that there are four translations into English and two into German, of which 'none can be regarded as perfect or even entirely intelligible — least of all the German ones!' And indeed his renderings of some of the ninety stanzas quoted do seem to make more sense than some other versions. The stress is on emptiness (*Leerheit*) which, as Schumann has rightly insisted earlier (p.145), is the correct translation for *śūnyatā*, not 'the void' (*das Leere*).

Perhaps with a feeling (which may well be correct) that with Nāgārjuna Buddhist philosophy had reached its peak, Schumann treats the Yogācāra system more briefly, and the final section of the book, *Das Tantrayāna und der Buddhismus Ostasiens* (which after all contains two main divisions, each of which could be subdivided several times), is sketchy in the extreme, as if the author had grown tired of his work though, short as it is, this part does contrive to convey some essentials briefly but clearly; but the whole of 'East Asian Buddhism' is practically taken up with a potted account of Zen. The book ends with some useful tables and a basic bibliography. All in all, a very useful and quite stimulating introductory work covering about two-thirds of the subject. A pity, really, about the rest.

Maurice Walshe



The Pāli Aṭṭhakathā Correspondence Table. Sodo Mori, Y. Karunadasa, Toshiichi Endo. Pali Text Society, Oxford 1994. xxvii, 213 pp. £12.50.

This book (abbreviated title *PACT*) is intended for the serious scholars of Pāli, or of Buddhism based upon Pāli sources, who not only consult commentaries, but actually wish to compare different editions of the commentaries. Such scholars sometimes have problems when trying to find their way about in publications in a variety of scripts which they can read (otherwise why should they consult them?) but only very slowly, and certainly not fluently enough to be able to find the word or passage they are seeking without a great deal of difficulty. As is stated in the Preface, 'It is indeed most frustrating and time-consuming from the point of view of serious research that Pali texts preserved and published in many countries are in their own vernacular scripts, such as Sinhalese, Burmese, Thai, Cambodian, Devanagari, Roman, etc. Moreover we often find that tables of contents in different editions of the identical texts are not the same, though their passages are totally in accord with each other'. *PACT* will enable anyone searching for a particular word or phrase to limit the amount of text he must read through to a single page at most.

It contains a set of tables listing the correspondence between the page numbers of the Pali Text Society, Burmese Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana, Sinhalese Simon Heweitarne Bequest, Thai Royal, and Indian Nālandā or other (where they exist) editions of the commentaries on all the canonical texts of the Theravādin canon in Pāli, and also the Kaṅkhāvitariṇī, the commentary on the Pātimokkha which, although it is not given the status of a separate text in the editions of the canon, being embedded in the Vinaya, was nevertheless commented upon in a separate aṭṭhakathā by Buddhaghosa. A similar table of

correspondence is given of the editions of the Visuddhimagga, including the Harvard Oriental Series edition, although the Visuddhimagga is not strictly speaking an aṭṭhakathā.

The number of scholars of Pāli and Buddhism who at present make comparative studies of the aṭṭhakathās is probably very small, since most of those who actually consult commentaries are usually content to consult the edition published in the script with which they are most familiar, whether Roman, Burmese, Sinhalese, Thai or Devanāgarī. Nevertheless, now that an aid like this is available, it is to be hoped that some of those who have never consulted alternative editions may be encouraged to do so, and the contribution to scholarship which *PACT* will make is therefore likely to be greater than at first appears. As one who has spent many hours searching for elusive lemmata in Oriental editions, the present writer can confirm that he personally will find it very helpful.

*K.R. Norman*

Wege zur Todlosigkeit. Tod und Transzendenz in der Lehre des Buddha. Alfred Weil. Universität Konstanz, Forschungsprojekt 'Buddhistischer Modernismus', Forschungsberichte 8, Konstanz 1993. 202pp. No price given.

This is another publication from the series of 'research reports' of this admirable project of the University of Konstanz on 'Buddhist Modernism'. By its inclusion in the series an opportunity has been given to an author, who himself appears to be committed to Buddhism as a world view, to express his understanding of Buddhism in the context of life in our modern Western civilisation, but who nevertheless is writing without imposing any personal views or 'modern' interpretations on the original sources. His concern is clearly to explain the early



Buddhist teachings and to back his explanations by quotations from early Pāli texts as they are accessible to the German reader in translations, most of which are still in print. They range from those of K.E. Neumann, who started publishing them a century ago, to those of Nyanaponika Thera. Use has also been made of the excellent works of Paul Debes, who is virtually unknown in the English-speaking world but who for nearly half a century has been writing and giving seminars on Buddhism and the way it can be practised in our day.

The author is well aware of the general Western scepticism concerning the afterlife and moral retribution as an integral part of the fabric of existence, as expressed in the Indian karma doctrine, and therefore of the difficulty of getting the Buddha's message across. The shadow of death, however, hangs over everybody's life and, despite the current tendency in the West to keep it out of sight and mind, it does eventually present a challenge for everybody, hence the title and subtitle of the book. Death (and, of course, how to escape it) is also the starting-point of the Buddhist outlook and endeavour: while being oneself fragile 'as every clay vessel' and thus subject to impermanence and death, one is urged by it to seek what is not so conditioned.

The author therefore covers thoroughly the topic of the afterlife and of other worlds or planes of existence and the problem of why it is that the average person cannot readily transcend the limitations of our senses and acquire a glimpse of those other worlds, pointing to the Buddha's own acquisition of clairvoyant sight only after a protracted practice of concentration with the aim of gaining this perception. There is a stage when the meditator begins to see that in fact he lives simultaneously in both worlds, the gross-material one and a subtler world beyond, and that his mental faculties already function here in the latter. It is, of course, true that the vast majority of

those who find in themselves the resolution and courage to follow the Buddha's teachings do so on trust and/or as a result of grasping what we may call the logical probability, if not necessity, that individual life continues after death and is governed by some kind of law, as everything else in nature, and is not a fleeting chance phenomenon. Without accepting or rationally grasping the validity of this basic tenet of Buddhism, its further teachings would not make sense. However, within this understanding, further chapters of the book make excellent sense as well as good reading. They deal with karmic laws ('one is the heir of one's own actions') and Saṃsāra, the beginningless and, for the unenlightened, also endless wandering through five main spheres of existence, in the course of which one is subjected to the iron law of impermanence or constant change, never reaching a state of fulfilment, because such a state belongs to a different sphere altogether, namely to a higher state of transcendence.

This, of course, is Nibbāna, 'the unborn, the unformed' etc., the state of absence of birth and death, the true deathlessness and the end of suffering in any form. This is again well illustrated by quotations in the course of the next chapter. The usual problem of mistaking Nibbāna for 'immortality' or 'eternity' is equally well dealt with, also with respect to religious belief in the eternity of heavenly worlds.

The practical solution is, of course, to tread the Path, but the problem is motivation and perseverance. Only one who feels the urgency to leave his present precarious situation behind, experiencing it in the same way 'like one whose clothes or hairs are on fire', will develop the determination to take the right steps and will not rest content with consolations of ritual and other mild religious practices. Fear of death which, in a way, everybody has, even if one keeps suppressing it, can (like



the medieval *memento mori*) become a real help for one's motivation, particularly in the form of meditational awareness of it.

Death and dying are the themes also of the last two chapters. First it is the fallacy of the belief that by voluntary death can one escape a hopeless situation, be it physical suffering or mental frustration. An equal fallacy is voluntary death in order to enhance one's spiritual progress, as practised in some non-Buddhist sects. In either case it can lead to subhuman rebirths for long periods of time. Suicide, however, is allowed and was in several cases approved of by the Buddha himself, if the body of one who has reached liberation becomes a burden through illness, also to others who would have to care for it. The author also discusses the rare case of Raṭṭhapāla, who extracted his parents' consent to his becoming a monk only by going on hunger strike to death. The author regards the Buddha's silence about this case as an implied approval. Various forms of dying are the subject of the last chapter. Although death, together with birth and ageing, always appears in the Buddhist definitions of suffering, there can be instances of dying at least without worry, especially when helped and consoled by one's nearest, as illustrated by the case of Nakulapitā and Nakulamātā. The best way, however, is to die mindfully, which becomes easier when one is assisted by an advanced and experienced monk, as in the case of Anāthapiṇḍika who received his last admonition from Sāriputta. (Perhaps this is the origin of later developments culminating in the creation and use of the 'Tibetan book of the dead'.)

The book closes with a short reminder of the two ways of striving, the noble and the ignoble (as expounded in M 26) and so it has come a full circle. It certainly is an excellent introduction to Buddhism for newcomers as well as a good read for

more advanced students to refresh their knowledge of the basic tenets of early Buddhism, in addition to being a valuable source of reference and quotations. One drawback is the method of spelling Pāli and Sanskrit words and names, which does not respect accepted standards. One wonders why the editor of a University series did not see fit to entrust an expert with correcting the author's transliteration. This would greatly help those newcomers who later graduate to advanced reading. The average reader is quite capable of taking in the fact that Indian alphabets have more letters than the Roman one and can quickly learn the few diacritical marks used to transliterate them.

*Karel Werner*

Transforming the Mind, Healing the World. Joseph Goldstein. Paulist Press, New York and Mahwah, N.J., 1994. 51 pp. No price given.

This booklet comprises the texts of two essays originally delivered by Joseph Goldstein as the Wit Lectures at Harvard Divinity School in 1992. These lectures are an annual event, established in 1988 for the purpose of bringing to the university, in the words of Harold Wit, the Harvard graduate who endowed the lectureship, 'unusual individuals who radiate in their thought, word, and being those spiritual qualities and values that have been so inspiring and encouraging to me along the path'. The Introduction to the essays by the Dean of the Divinity School rightly claims that 'Joseph Goldstein fits this description admirably, for his life and work exemplify a lived spirituality' (p.3) and proceeds to give a brief account of his career as a practitioner and teacher of Vipassanā meditation.

The original public of the lectures could not be presumed to be particularly knowledgeable about, or perhaps even interested



in, specifically Buddhist teachings, but simply concerned, in a general way, about 'spiritual qualities and values' as addressed by the founder of the lectures. Consequently, Goldstein took care to present his message in general, non-technical terms of love, wisdom, compassion and freedom, within the context of the Western lay culture of today. This he does admirably while preserving — as the informed reader quickly realises — the underlying specificity of the Buddhadharmā. Anyone familiar with his other writings (notably *The Experience of Insight*, 1976, and *Insight Meditation*, 1993, as well as the chapters he contributed to the joint volume with Jack Kornfield, *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom*, 1987), will be glad to enjoy once again Goldstein's characteristically straightforward conversational style, enlivened by often humorous, but always highly exemplary, anecdotes, and will recognise some of the material from those other works. This is also to say that the present booklet will not bring anything essentially new to the reader of the author's earlier writings.

The more general public to whom the essays are addressed, however, will certainly find in these few pages salutary food for thought, presented in a manner which manages to be truly inspiring while avoiding all trace of pomposity.

The first essay, 'Transforming the Mind, Healing the World' (which gives the volume its title) deals with lovingkindness (including a very brief example of *mettā* meditation practice), compassion and wisdom and explains, always in an entirely non-specialised language, that wisdom grows through non-attachment, i.e. through the realisation that 'happiness does not depend on pleasant feelings' (p.25).

The second essay, entitled 'The Practice of Freedom' is concerned with the three main sections of the Eightfold Path, morality, concentration and wisdom, introduced simply as the

'three very simple trainings' that the Buddha spoke of, and as being 'the three arenas of our life that are what the spiritual life is about' (p.29). The major part is devoted to training in morality in the context of today's lay culture, though there is also some very generally worded advice on practising concentration in daily life, and the point is clearly made that 'wisdom comes from a deep understanding of impermanence' and that 'it also develops through a greater and greater experience of selflessness' (p.50).

The conclusion, very much in the Buddha's spirit, is that 'these teachings and practices present themselves to us in the spirit of an invitation to come and see, to take a look at our lives and to see for ourselves' (p.51). It is certainly to be hoped that these unpretentious essays will motivate readers new to the subject to follow up the invitation.

*Amadeo Solé-Leris*

Images of Eternity. Concepts of God in Five Religious Traditions. Keith Ward. Oneworld Publications Ltd., Oxford and New York 1993. viii, 197 pp. £8.95.

This book, originally published in 1987, is a welcome addition to the burgeoning literature of interfaith dialogue and the problems of religious pluralism in the modern world. It provides a fine example of the sympathetic interest taken in other traditions by Christian theologians in both Europe and the United States in the past decade. Coming from the pen of such a distinguished authority as Keith Ward, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, it certainly merits serious attention, and readers of the religious persuasions addressed will find it stimulating and thought-provoking.

The five traditions referred to in the title are Hinduism,



Buddhism, Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The strategy is to approach each of these through the thought of leading classical authorities, for example Śāṅkara, Maimonides, Al-Ghazzali and Aquinas. It seems to be coincidental that the figures in each case are drawn from what might be roughly described as the 'high medieval' phase of the traditions. Buddhism is something of an exception insofar as two authors are allowed to speak for it, Buddhaghosa and Aśvaghōṣa. In what follows I shall confine my remarks to the discussion of Buddhism, which occupies some twenty-two pages in the book.

Since Buddhism does not believe in a supreme being, the underlying concern in the first half of the chapter is Nirvāṇa. A selection of early scriptural passages provides the framework in which the topic is addressed and the problems it raises are posed. These might be paraphrased as follows. If Nirvāṇa is 'Unbecome', it cannot just be a state of mind, since states of mind always arise (become) in time. Nirvāṇa must therefore be something beyond the individual mind, something which is more than nothingness or extinction. But then how does an individual attain it? In some manner or other, 'It must then be that the finite self comes to participate in the Changeless; to enter into a new state, in which the Changeless is reflected fully in the individual self, to such an extent that it seems wholly to fill its being' (p.61).

Such an account might be adequate were it not for the doctrine of no-self, and it is in attempting to reconcile the attainment of Nirvāṇa with this doctrine that 'one comes to the central paradox of Buddhist philosophy — that the permanent is to be attained by that which cannot endure beyond the impermanent' (p.62). The more positive characteristics of Nirvāṇa seem to allow a more constructive interpretation such as that 'nirvana cannot be seen as a diminishing of personhood. It is,

rather, its expansion to an indescribable degree, in the direction of knowledge and joy' (p.63).

Mahāyāna sources are much more congenial to a reading along the above lines, and the problematic Theravāda material quickly gives way to the more positive depiction of Nirvāṇa in the *Awakening of Faith* and *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. These sources seem to encourage a third opinion, an understanding of Nirvāṇa as a middle way between negation and permanence. 'Perhaps, then,' Ward suggests, 'the best way to think of it is not as self-negation nor yet as self-fulfilment as this is ordinarily understood, but as self-transcendence — finding one's true reality in being fully attentive to the unconditioned, which brings bliss and knowledge' (p.63). This is certainly an interesting idea and one which seems to provide suggestive connections with an understanding of the religious life in other traditions, namely as a mode of continual self-transcendence.

Other topics of interest include a discussion of the logical and epistemological problems in describing Nirvāṇa, and the structural similarities between Buddhism and other faiths. Ward is alive to the need for sensitive interpretation and well aware that religious traditions are not monolithic structures but embrace a continuum of views and perspectives. There are hard and 'pure' interpretations and figurative or 'deep' ones. Simple labels will no longer do. Generalisations about Buddhism as 'world denying' and Christianity as 'world affirming' can be seen as simplistic when world-saving Bodhisattvas are contrasted with the Christian desert Fathers of the fourth century (p.73). What the author finds beneath the stock depictions are people in very different traditions engaged in a similar sort of enterprise.

The commonalities between the different forms of the religious life are analysed in terms of three basic concepts. The first is the 'iconic vision', which is defined as 'a vision of the



temporal in the light of eternity' (p.165). The second is the response of self-transcendence to that vision through the distinctive 'matrix of revelation' established by each tradition. Finally, it is claimed that there is in all religions a 'dual-aspect doctrine', which embodies a common core of belief about ultimate reality. The essence of this belief is that there is a transcendent reality which gives rise to all finite things without itself changing, being added to or diminished (p.156). This is a paradox which cannot be grasped in any doctrinal formulation, and hence doctrines about the nature of God (or Nirvāṇa) will continually undergo shifts and changes as new perceptions and insights arise.

From the Buddhist perspective there is much of interest in this book, and one could wish for a longer and more sustained exploration. There are a number of obvious limitations in the treatment adopted, and I will mention just three. First the treatment of Theravāda views is cursory; regrettably, the views of this school always seem to play a minimal part in Christian-Buddhist dialogue, for reasons which are not difficult to see. Second, in any discussion of Nirvāṇa it is crucial to distinguish between Nirvāṇa-in-this-life and Nirvāṇa as a post-mortem state, yet this distinction is never consciously made. Finally, the choice of Buddhaghosa and Aśvaghōṣa as exemplars seems arbitrary, and a choice of different authors (Nāgārjuna?) or texts (*Lotus Sūtra*?) could have led to very different conclusions. Despite these reservations, however, Prof. Ward has made a useful contribution to a dialogue which continues to provide new insights for all concerned.

Damien Keown

*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. Pope John Paul II. Jonathan Cape, London 1994. ix, 244 pp. £9.99.

In his latest book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul II singles out Buddhism for special attack as an alternative or New Age complement to Christianity and says its spread in the West is not to be welcomed. He believes that the history and metaphysics of 'salvation' are '... the most integral form of theology ... (p.59), and that '... the doctrine of salvation in Buddhism and Christianity are opposed' (p.85). He asserts 'Christ is unique! Unlike Mohammad, ... not simply a wise man as was Socrates ... less still is He similar to Buddha, with his denial of all that is created'.

The book is largely irrelevant today since it is an unashamed polemic on intellect and reason. The Pope blames decline in faith in Christianity on Europe's Age of Reason.

'... about 150 years after Descartes, all that was fundamentally Christian in the tradition of European thought had already been pushed aside. This was the time of the Enlightenment in France, when pure rationalism held sway. ... The rationalism of the Enlightenment strikes at the heart of Christian soteriology, that is, theological reflection on salvation and redemption' (p.54).

Reading someone as erudite as Pope John Paul II railing against reason may strike the reader as somewhat incongruous. He seems to mean that one should listen to the voice of his ghost god, the Holy Spirit, which apparently conveys contrary directions to those of reason. The Pope articulates the necessity to restore the spiritual and moral patrimony of pre-rationalism. It is not surprising that he has created as many divisions amongst his followers today as there once were popes claiming to be pontiff simultaneously!

The Pope does not know enough about Buddhism to make



any worthwhile contribution himself, although his main points do need notice since he utters widely held public misconceptions. He has ignored the first sentence of Abhidhamma on which, one might say, the whole of the Buddha's teaching stands: *kusalā dhammā akusalā dhammā avyākatā dhammā*. Failing to appreciate this basic analysis of psychological states he cannot distinguish the ethical state of ordinary people from the Great Functional (*avyākata mahā kiriya*) unpolluted thoughts of arahants who have attained 'salvation'. One cannot deal with 'salvation' in Buddhism without acknowledging *mahā kiriya* states since salvic states, i.e. Nibbāna, in this life function merely as the (essential) 'gateway' to the Great Functional states following thereafter. It is these latter ones, rather than Nibbānic ones, which are the end purpose of the holy life. The Pope sees annihilation as the end purpose of transcendental states. Only in one situation can he be said to be (partially) correct: on the death of an arahant (*anupādisesaparinibbāna*). But more importantly, the Pope fails to distinguish this situation from Nibbāna attained during this life (*sapādisesaparinibbāna*).

Failing to distinguish two cases of Nibbāna, in this life and at death, the Pope attacks Buddhism principally on the grounds of its 'negative soteriology' and the 'annihilation' in the death process of an arahant is transferred without any justification to the situation *during* life. This renders Nibbāna in this life senseless when taken as 'annihilation'. This paradox was recognised long ago by even St-Hilaire. It is surprising the Pope has not enquired of Buddhists an explanation of his (self-imposed) riddle. After all, Buddhists are on the rational side! But the Pope's reasoning shifts to defining negative as *any* salvation that does not unite Man with God. Hence Buddhism cannot *by virtue of this definition* be anything but 'negative'. Import of the premise of a creator God, an unacceptable premise to Buddhists, ensures

that the door is firmly closed to dialogue. He notes Buddhism as atheistic — which may seem a joke when Buddhists still have to defend themselves from 'idolatry' attacks by Protestant Christians — but in his sense of an almighty God Father, maker of heaven and earth, the Pope is correct in his observation of Buddhist non-compliance with his God premise. This axiom underlies everything he says about everything. Thus his high profile ecumenism, sparked by the Second Vatican Council, is applicable *only* to absolute theists, thereby excluding Buddhists. He makes this clear and your reviewer believes his analysis is correct so long as he maintains a basic premise of a creator God. But even given this, any reader with a sense of history will be amazed to read: '. . . believers in Allah are particularly close to us' (p.91).

To the Pope the world, the very nature of existence, is seen in a fundamentally different way from Buddhists who view the world as in perpetual re-creation by way of the dynamism of symbiotic relationships alone (*Paṭṭhāna*). Hence the book is irritating to read for any lacking the Pope's faith in his all-pervading almighty God premise. But worse, the Pope and his advisers — since there appear to be inconsistent interjections to the flow of the more direct papal bull — appear to be informed on Buddhism primarily from J. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire's *Le Bouddha et sa Religion* (Paris 1860). The damage to scholarship from this ill-intentioned book lives on and a reread of it is recommended since attacks against Buddhism today still seem to find their origin in the sentiments most clearly expressed in St-Hilaire. Its opening paragraph reads: 'In publishing this work on Buddhism, I have but one purpose in view: that of bringing out in striking contrast the beneficial truths and the greatness of our spiritualistic beliefs . . . I believe that the study of Buddhism . . . will show how a religion . . . has contributed so little to the



happiness of mankind; and we shall find in the strange and deplorable doctrines which it professes, the explanation of its powerlessness for good'.

The subsequent charge of negative soteriology by St-Hilaire, and repeated by the Pope, is, however, worthy of Buddhists' consideration even now in order to render minds clear on a matter that has not gone away despite incontrovertible evidence to the contrary produced in answer to St-Hilaire from the 1870's on. The Pope does not say much else than everything being negative when it excludes God. That is of no account to any who fail to accept the initial premise of an almighty God Father. But the Pope does *colour* his argument to repudiate the Buddhist practice of 'turning away' from an 'evil' world. Transcendental experience in Buddhism is dismissed as indifference to the world (pp.85-6). Actually, even arahants do not turn away from the world in one sense. So long as they have Aggregates, they cannot be anything other than of the world. Does the Pope imagine their minds, having achieved 'indifference', are in a vacuum?

'The Buddhist doctrine of salvation constitutes the . . . only point of this system. Nevertheless . . . the Buddhist tradition (has) an almost exclusively negative soteriology . . . Enlightenment (reduces) to the conviction that the world is bad . . . To save oneself means . . . to free oneself from evil by becoming indifferent to the world, which is the source of evil. This is the culmination of the spiritual process' (pp.85-6).

The Pope does not miss this similarity with the 'holy indifference' of Christian mystics but deals with them *on the presumption of a personal God with whom they unite in achieving salvation*. The Pope sees everything as negative when it is 'unilateral', i.e., when man leaves God out. Buddhist prac-

tice . . . 'born of an awareness of the evil which exists in man's attachment to the world through the senses . . .' is seen by the Pope as negative enlightenment, whereas Christian mystics unite with God through love and a 'positive approach to the world . . . and creation (which) provides a constant impetus to strive for its transformation and perfection' (pp.87-8). One may wonder whether by 'positive' a more accurate expression of the Christian approach might be of aggressive domination of nature and the artefacts of (other) men, which has been the history of Western civilisation which the Pope extols in this passage.

Although asserting that Buddhists see the world as evil, the Pope does not mention that only twelve *cittas* and fourteen *cetasikas*, i.e. twenty-six dhammas out of a total of 170 ultimate realities of the Buddhist world are 'evil' ones alone. The 'good' states far outnumber the 'evil' ones in Buddhist analysis.

Soteriology means salvation. Salvation suggests Nibbāna in Buddhism. If not dubious or misleading terminology it is, at best, incomplete. The Pope recognises that Buddhism is a religion of salvation 'from a certain point of view'. This qualification should be enough to put Buddhists on their guard against using such terms as salvation and soteriology! The Christian and thus generally accepted Western meaning of salvation/soteriology imports the sense of God, redemption and the Kingdom. This is why the Pope qualifies Buddhism as a religion of salvation, despite then taking salvation as the basis for his essential attack on it which makes him appear rather opportunist.

Rhys Davids did not help by translating the Buddha's last words as 'Work out your salvation with diligence' (*Dial.* II, 173). Nor do Theravādins help today by concluding their services with 'May we all attain Nibbāna'. To the uninitiated this gives the impression that Nibbāna is some salvic goal in which

arahants walk around in a haze of Nibbāna! The goal (salvation) is more accurately put as varying degrees of Knowledge or Wisdom which transpire subsequent to the correlative degrees of prior Nibbānic experience.

The Buddha's Middle Way is so radical that it can only be understood in terms of itself alone — i.e. with its own axioms of reality — and cannot be interpreted through the terminology of another culture, especially an Eternalist one. Buddhists see the nature of existence as merely symbiotic; any reference point only has meaning, only has *existence*, in relation to everything else about it. It is axiomatic in Buddhism that everything appears only momentarily; the world unfolds before us in patterns of constant re-creation. Ultimately nothing 'is' (nor 'is-not') unlike Eternalists who have positive things created in perpetuity, only their forms changing, but essences remaining as created by an inexplicable source of god of some kind. Worldlings' thoughts fluctuate between tendencies to positive and negative but the attainment of the end point of the Middle Way has neither of the tendencies of one extreme or the other. After transcendental experience in its fullest form (arahantship), normal states (*mahā kiriya* — Great Functional) also pertain to neither positive/negative tendencies for they are fully 'Middle-Wayed'. They are the continuity of perfection in the Noble Path after experience of Nibbāna-with-Aggregates. This is Buddhist 'salvation'.

The Pope has noticed that the premises on which the two religions are based are quite different. He can rightly say: 'Salvation in Buddhism and Christianity are opposed' (p.85). Yet he proceeds to evaluate Buddhist soteriology in terms of Christian soteriology. In defining soteriology in his Eternalist way Christian soteriology can but alone be 'positive', i.e. redemption of Man through the God Father's son and the wish for

His Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. '... everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life' (p.184).

Now in the realm of pure fiction along this Eternalist path, your reviewer recommends you to the more practical philosophy of Woody Allen: If I am to have eternal life, I simply do not wish to die!

A. Haviland-Nye

*Ed.* The major Italian national daily, *La Repubblica*, devoted a whole page on 24 December 1994 to an article headlined 'The Pope is Wrong about Buddha' and included an interview with Prof. Raniero Gnoli on what Buddhism is really about. Nevertheless, the Pope held an audience with representatives of the Unione Buddhisti Italiana, led by its President, the Italian bhikkhu Ajahn Thanavāro, on 8 February 1995. A copy of Walpola Rahula's classic work in translation, *L'insegnamento del Buddha*, was presented to John Paul II.

The Discipline of Freedom. A Kantian View of the Role of Moral Precepts in Zen Practice. Phillip Olson. State University of New York Press, Albany 1993. XX, 217 pp. \$14.94.

A reader of this book unfamiliar with European philosophy of the eighteenth century might think that Kant was the founder of a religion, laying down principles to guide our lives, like Moses returning from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments. A reader ignorant of Buddhism might equally well be convinced that the Buddha correctly explained the nature of thought and how the true self was submerged in its illusory nature. The fact that Kant lays down no laws of conduct, but tries to show that no such laws in empirical experience of science appear, but are the domain of 'pure' reason, and the



teaching of Buddhism that proper and controlled meditation can, and only can, release our true nature from the illusion of ordinary, sensuous, selfish life, would seem to make any comparison quite useless, as having no common basis to start from. Actually Phillip Olson is not concerned simply to write an interesting, philosophical academic comparison between these two systems, which indeed he does, but something much more practical.

The introduction of Japanese Zen Buddhism to North America, unfamiliar with the long development of Buddhist thought and the practice of *zazen* as a necessary and rigid discipline, led many to find in it a release from naive moral restraints, particularly sexual ones. This book shows — and I wouldn't dare to impugn Olson's scholarly and carefully constructed argument by writing 'tries to show' — that Buddhism has as moral a basis as Christianity in Europe, and the method he uses is a comparison between Shunryu Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* and Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, the former a collection of influential lectures delivered in America by the Japanese Zen master in the 1960's, the latter a penetratingly thought out enquiry into the psychological origin of moral principles, the one a claim to the universal appeal of Japanese Zen as a world religion, and the other a study of human thought, necessarily involving Christian charity without its theology.

The two lines of thought appear to converge in the concept of freedom, carefully — and unusually in philosophical writing — defined by the lack of restraint referred to. For Kant, we find in experience inescapable laws that deny freedom even to the choices we make when balancing one inclination against another: the relative strength of each inclination determining the action we 'choose'. It is only moral principles that present us

with the freedom to obey them or not, thereby altering the course of events without breaking any natural law, and laying a measure of responsibility on us for the result. His argument even leads him to deny any moral value to actions we perform from inclination rather than obedience to moral principles as such. Suzuki's freedom consists in the observance of rules of behaviour, however trivial, laid down in the practice of *zazen*, which release us from the illusion of sensual, selfish satisfaction.

Both saw the 'higher' good of, for Kant, all mankind, for the Buddhist, all sentient beings, though whether they would agree on the meaning of 'higher' is debatable. Kant as a Western philosopher would define the aim as the reduction as far as possible of human suffering, while Buddhism teaches the possibility of, and the means to achieve, equanimity in the face of suffering and its eventual elimination.

There is another difference, subtle but crucial: are the physical objects out of which we construct our worlds things independent of our thinking, or are they artificial concepts of the mind that help us to classify our thoughts and react usefully? The application of this puzzle to morality is involved in the quotation from *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* on p.147, where Suzuki draws attention to the impermanence of the self, different at every moment, just as even a solid thing like a chair is never identical with its last presentation. Kant, on the other hand, needs the permanence of the self to bear responsibility for its actions, which is what morality is all about.

I hope I have not given the impression that Olson has written a difficult philosophical treatise in the obscure style of Kant. It is, on the contrary, clearly and carefully constructed, moving easily from quotation to quotation as it carries out his intention as set forth in the preface.

*Alban Cooke*

A Pāli Grammar. William Geiger. Translated into English by Batakrishna Ghosh, revised and edited by K.R. Norman. Pali Text Society, Oxford 1994. xxix, 220 pp. Hardback £12.95, paperback £6.75.

The Pali Text Society has for many years wished to include a Grammar of Pāli in its List of Issues, but has been unable to persuade anyone to write one of suitable length and depth. Nor did any of the existing grammars seem to satisfy the needs of both beginners and those engaged in the academic study of Pāli. Among these Geiger's *Pāli Literatur und Sprache* (in its English translation entitled *Pāli Literature and Language*) seemed best to satisfy academics, but beginners find its wealth of quotations and tightly packed pages daunting. It was finally decided to attempt to produce a version of Geiger which would, as far as possible, suit the needs of both classes of users.

To do this, paragraphs have been separated out into sub-paragraphs to make their contents more transparent. This would have increased the size of the book enormously if the number of text references included had not been reduced. It seems likely that, because of the absence of dictionaries and concordances at the time, Geiger included whatever references for the forms he quoted were known to him from his own wide range of reading. Although the number of references given seems to imply completeness or to define precisely the type of texts in which the form is found, this is usually very far from being the case and, now that there are concordances and other ways of checking references, there seems no virtue in including more than one example or (very occasionally, in special circumstances) two examples of each usage, to confirm that it is a genuine form and not a grammarian's invention. Geiger's first example has usually been retained, but this practice has not been

followed if he had by chance put a non-canonical reference first. In such cases the canonical reference has been retained.

Since other histories of Pāli literature have appeared since 1916, the Council of the PTS thought that there was no necessity to reproduce the portion of Geiger's work which deals with Pāli literature. Geiger's Introduction has been replaced by a new Introduction written by Prof. Richard Gombrich, asking and answering the question 'What is Pāli?', since this is a question which newcomers to the field of Pāli studies frequently ask.

In the Foreword, the PTS expresses its gratitude to the University of Calcutta, the owners of the copyright in Ghosh's translation, for giving permission to make use of it in the production of this grammar. Since the desire to change the format meant it was not possible to reprint it photographically, it became necessary to reset the work. This gave the opportunity of making certain corrections and additions, e.g. descriptions of reduplicated aorist formations, aorist forms in *-e* which are identical in appearance to optative formations, and future active participles in *-esin*, and of bringing the bibliography up to date by adding some of the many articles and other publications dealing with Pāli grammar which have appeared since the German edition of Geiger's grammar was published.

*K.R. Norman*



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