

## BOOK REVIEWS

then, in his Vkn based mainly on the Tibetan version, has tried to replant the sutra back in its original Indian soil. Although his translation of the Sgs, the first into any modern language, is based not on the Tibetan version but on Kumārajīva's, the original form, and hence the strict original meaning, of terms, phrases, or passages in the text is always retraced in minute consideration of the Tibetan rendering.

Finally, it must be said that neither work is intended, or suitable, for the general reader, who, though willing to be informed, would naturally balk at the prospect of being stopped at each line by an avalanche of footnotes, parentheses, brackets, or to be heavily burdened by technical terms and foreign words. At the same time, it must be emphasized that such readers are really not the aim of the present works. Still, it is to be hoped that such valuable research is not to be confined to specialists satisfied only by an abundant *apparatus criticus*. I only hope they will be read with profit by those sincere students desirous of increasing their knowledge of Buddhism, who will perhaps be guided into further study by books of this kind.

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*TOWARD THE TRUTH.* By *Buddhadāsa*. Edited by Donald K. Swearer. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1971, 189 pp.

The present work, edited by Donald K. Swearer, consists of a preface by the editor, introduction, and five chapters: (1) *Buddhadāsa*—"Servant of the Buddha," (2) *Toward the Truth of Buddhism*, (3) *Everyday Language and Dhamma Language*, (4) *No Religion*, and (5) *Handbook for Mankind*. The chapters included here are selections from *Buddhadāsa*'s writings. They have been translated by a variety of hands, and then selected, revised, and edited by Dr. Swearer.

*Buddhadāsa* (1906–), now residing in a forest hermitage called "the Garden of Salvation" (*Mokkabalārāma* or *Suan Mok*) outside of Chaiya in southern Thailand, is a prolific writer and speaker. He has been recognized in his country as one of the most important figures in the Buddhist Sangha. He has been acclaimed by some as a *Sotāpanna* or "Stream Winner," the first stage of Buddhist sainthood. According to the introduction of the book, however, *Buddha-*

dāsa's position is not without dispute. A few years ago, an attempt was made to discredit him as a communist, and there are some devout Buddhists who strongly disagree with his interpretation of Buddhism. But I think Buddhadāsa has the ability to bridge the old and new, to synthesize traditional formulation of doctrine with fresh insight derived from personal experience. His primary concern does not seem to be to exposit traditional teachings, rather to revitalize the tradition in such a manner that it becomes a vehicle rather than a block to the realization of Truth, or Buddha Dhamma.

In the second chapter, entitled "Toward the Truth of Buddhism," Buddhadāsa explains the various meanings of the word "Dhamma." However, these interpretations are not so unique; more important and interesting are his expositions on controlling the mind, breathing mindfulness, and the fruit of meditation. In fact, at present there are many meditation centers in Thailand, Burma, Laos, and Cambodia. I have visited some of these centers in order to study the ways of practice of Theravāda meditation. I found that their ways of meditation basically were based on the teaching of the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, in which various types of mindfulness are emphasized, but that their ways of meditation guidance were a little different from each other. Adherents of some criticized others to the effect that if one practiced Satipatthāna meditation seriously he would become neurotic. When after returning from Theravāda Buddhist countries to Japan, I explained these ways of Theravāda meditation at a public meeting at the Institute for Zen Studies, Hanazono College, Kyoto, Rev. Yamada Mumon, one of the most well-known Zen Masters in Japan, said to me, "I wonder if they can get satori (final awakening) through such ways of meditation." This remark impressed me (for I agreed with him) and I have kept it in mind. Reading through this book, I found Buddhadāsa's explanation of Theravāda meditation much more reasonable and consistent than previous explanations I had heard. However, even in this book detailed explanations concerning meditation posture, duration of meditation, mind concentration, the practice of breathing mindfulness, and so forth, are lacking. In order to promote a comparative study of Theravāda and Zen meditation, we in Japan would like to have more elaborate information of Theravāda meditation.

In the third chapter, entitled "Everyday Language and Dhamma Language," the definition of Dhamma language and everyday language is a little vague, but in order to understand Buddhism deeply it is essential, as he emphasizes, to

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discriminate everyday language and Dhamma language. For example:

The Sangha of everyday language is the assembly of monks themselves. The Sangha of Dhamma language is those transcendent qualities the monks represent. The Sangha proper consists of these four stages: the "stream enterer" (sotāpanna), the "once returner" (sakadāgāmin), the "nonreturner" (anāgāmin), and the fully perfected man or arahant. These terms also refer to inner rather than outer qualities, because as to physical frame these men are no different from anyone else. Where they do differ is in spiritual or inner qualities. This is what makes a man a stream enterer, once returner, nonreturner or arahant. This is how the Sangha is to be understood in Dhamma language.

This explanation is reasonable and consistent. We should form our estimate of the present Theravāda Sangha from such an aspect, I think.

In chapter four, entitled "No Religion," explaining such Buddhist terms as voidness and nonattachment in a modern way, he finally says:

In the higher grade of realization there is no "I" and "mine." Everything is void of self and there is no Buddhism, no Christianity, no Islam, for how can they exist since there is no "we," no "they," no "anybody!" There is nothing but Dhamma, suddhadhammā pavattanti, just pure phenomena in constant flux. There is only Nature (Dhamma), either in its conditioned (Sankhata-dhamma), or unconditioned (asankhatadhamma) form. The man who realizes this truth is freed from clinging. He is enlightened and is Buddha.

In chapter five, entitled "Handbook for Mankind," he explains the Four Noble Truths, and the Threefold Training: morality (sīla), concentration (samādhi), and insight (paññā). Finally, he deals with vipassana meditation as the method of emancipation from the world. The expositions are systematic and modern, providing the reader with much information about Theravāda Buddhism. A Glossary of Pali Terms is added at the end of the book.

Donald K. Swearer, the editor, is the author of "Buddhism in Transition," which deals with contemporary problems of Theravāda Buddhism, such as Buddhism and nationalism, Buddhism and "cultural revolution," portraits of Thai Buddhism, and Buddhism and the West. In the second chapter (Buddhism

and Nationalism), he introduces charismatic present-day Buddhist leaders, and deals with the role of the Sangha in the sociopolitical realm. In the fourth chapter, he introduces Buddhādāsa as a “stream winner” and unique Buddhist reformer:

Buddhādāsa’s method of understanding religion has been characterized as existential and phenomenological. It might be well to apply another label—demythological. As a demythologizer he looks for nonliteral levels of meaning in the mythological forms of religious traditions. Hence, in the Genesis creation myth he takes one of the purposes of the Adam and Eve story to be a description of the relationship between man and woman. He also rightly asserts that the discrepancy between the Genesis creation story and the account of modern science is inconsequential, because the story is not a scientific account but an illustration of the spiritual truth that man is only fully man in relation to God.

The present situation of Buddhist activities is concisely reported, based on the year’s experience of the author in Ceylon, Thailand, and Japan. With the major religious forces in Southeast Asia today being vividly reported, we can understand the necessity of modernization in Theravāda Buddhism. Dr. Swearer concludes, “Buddhism’s greatest contribution will probably be measured by the degree to which it challenges and perhaps modifies ideas and practices within the Western religious traditions.”

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