

phenomenal domain that pertains to *ālaya-vijnāna*. The Yogacara also accepts the Sarvāstivāda notion of *sahabhū-hetu* or simultaneous causality (which the Sautrantikas had rejected), explaining *ālaya-vijnāna* as simultaneous with *bija*, even giving some of the same examples that the Vaibhaśikas gave.

In conclusion, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* is a book intended for everyone interested in any Buddhist philosophy. It is equally accessible for Theravāda and Mahayana scholars, and its content may help fill a philosophical and historical void separating the two traditions.

* Ven. Yin Shun. "History of the Sautrantikas." Translated by Bhiksuni Chun Yi. *Journal of Buddhist Studies*. Centre for Buddhist Studies, Sri Lanka, May 2003

– Nisala Rodrigo

The Buddha from Dolpo: A Study of the Life and Thought of the Tibetan Master Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltzen

Translated by Cyrus Stearns
Published by Motilal Banarsidass
Delhi, India: 2002
ISBN: 81-208-1833-5

This publication brings into view once again, two of the major writings of one of the "towering figures" in 14th century Tibetan Buddhism by the name of Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltzen (1292-1361). This seminal work, originally published in 1999 by the State University of New York Press, has been little known, even among Buddhologists (and to those few scholars, known primarily through a familiarity with the writings of his detractors). He is regarded, even to this day among Tibetan Buddhists, as the originator of a

controversial doctrine, that he phrased in terminology that was unacceptable in his day, and to some extent, up to the present time. Dolpo attempts, by means of this doctrine, to bridge the gap between Madhyamika and Cittamatra in Tibet, by redefining the relative and ultimate reality, through a reformulation of the definition of those two levels of reality.

Dolpo is known chiefly among modern Tibetan teachers as the founder of the school of thought known as, Zhentong (gzhan stong) or Jonang. Even many modern Tibetan teachers speak of Dolpo, Jonang and Zhentong with disdain. For them, his name evokes an "image of an aberrant and heretical doctrine, which thankfully was purged from the Tibetan Buddhist scene centuries ago." The primary goal of Dr. Stearns is to sweep Dolpopa's life and thought from under the rug of time, and give it a fresh contemporary airing.

The main reason for the rejection of Dolpo's writings by many mainline Tibetan teachers, is that he used "terminology that was new and shocking for many of his contemporaries," as was the idea that he expressed in the phrase he coined, "empty of other." He used the latter phrase to describe ultimate reality as empty (*sunya*), only when viewed in relationship to other, relative phenomena but not "empty" in and of itself.

The issue in 14th century Tibet which Dolpopa addressed was this: the descriptions of emptiness (*sunyata*, *stong pa nyid*), found in scriptures and commentaries led to two confusing notions that came to be identified with two different schools in the tradition—namely, Madhyamika and Yogacara or Cittamatra.

Specifically, the Mahayana idea of an enlightened, eternal essence, or Buddha-nature (*tathagatagarbha*, *bde bzhin gshegs pa' snying po*), embedded in every living being, is to be distinguished from the earlier Nikaya or Theravadin Buddhist emphasis on the absence of substantive and enduring essence in sentient beings. It was

of crucial importance to adherents to Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet, to find a way to reconcile these two apparently opposing doctrinal views of reality.

Drawing upon the teachings and practices of Kalacakra tantra, Dolpo met the challenge head-on by declaring that the absolute and the relative are both empty, but empty in different senses. All phenomena at the relative and conditioned level (*samvrti*, *kun rdzob*) are devoid of own-being (*nir-sambhava*, or *svabhavasunya*, *rang stong*), and stand on a par with the horn of a hare or the offspring of a barren woman. In other words, they are absolutely unreal. The reality of Absolute Truth (*paramartha*, *don dam*), on the other hand, is "empty only of other," (*parabhava-sunya*, *gzhan stong*) conditioned entities, but is not empty in and of its own nature.

The author/translator points out that Dolpo "was not simply setting up the viewpoints of an emptiness of self-nature (*rang stong*) and an emptiness of other (*gzhan stong*) as opposed theories located on the same level." Rather, he saw the pair as complementary polarities. He established this polarity by making a careful distinction between the view of an "emptiness of other" applied only to the Absolute, and an "emptiness of self-nature," applied only to the relative. Dolpo contended that both views were crucial to a proper understanding of the relationship between *samsara* and *nirvana*. "Dolpopa's quarrel was with those who viewed both the absolute and the relative as empty of self-nature (*rang stong*), and who refused to recognize the existence of anything which was not empty of self-nature. From this point of view, the notion of an emptiness of other relative phenomena (*gzhan stong*) did not fit the definition of emptiness /current in his day/."

In like manner, Dolpo identified the Absolute with the Buddha-nature (*tathagatagarbha*), which was, thus, viewed

as eternal in nature and not empty of self-nature, but only empty of other.

The body of this book is composed of a richly detailed account of the life of Dolpo gathered both from traditional Tibetan writings and from the works of modern scholars, followed by a historical survey of the development of the Zhentong view in Dolpo's writings. The author, then, provides a most informative and insightful examination of Dolpo's understanding of the emptiness of self-nature and emptiness of other, on the basis of which he redefines *Cittamatra* and *Madhyamika* as two different but interlinked approaches to enlightenment.

In the second section of the book, Stearns provides an introduction to and translation of two of Dolpo's most influential writings, *A General Commentary on the Doctrine*, and *The Fourth Council or The Great Calculation of the Doctrine* which has the Significance of a Fourth Council.

The first text is composed entirely of a series of "homages" to the "Dharma Lords," or "excellent masters" of the past, for their role in correctly teaching the three turnings of the Wheel of the Dharma. In this hymnic offering to the masters who came before him, Dolpo expounds, in brief order, his doctrine concerning the emptiness of conditioned entities and "emptiness of other," with regard to Absolute Reality.

In the second work, he presents in greater detail his view of the relationship between relative and absolute reality, combined with an autocommentary in which he elaborates on the doctrinal implications of this viewpoint. A brief sampling of this work will provide a sense of the philosophical richness and density of his writing:

It is impossible for the two truths /relative and absolute/ to have a single essence, but they are also not different in essence, nor are they without any difference, for there is the difference of the exclusion of a single essence. In regard to precisely this, it is

stated that the essence is inexpressible as precisely one or another. Precisely this procedure also /applies/ to phenomena and true nature, and for samsara and nirvana, limit and center, incidental and primordial, fabricated and natural, and husk and essence, the procedure is also precisely this. (p. 129)

The translator also provides a richly documented set of citations and quotations from Sanskrit and Tibetan texts and from the writings of modern Buddhologists by way of enriching his translations and interpretations of these most important texts.

This is a most informative and engaging work regarding the life and writings of a controversial and provocative 14th century Tibetan thinker, a man, who with considerable courage and insight, attempted to produce an acceptable reconciliation between the Madhya-mika and Cittamatra aspects of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. In achieving this goal, he has greatly enriched our understanding of both the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and of Buddhism as a whole.

– J. Bruce Long

Dāna — Giving and Getting in Pāli Buddhism

By Ellison Banks Findly
Published by Motilal Banarsidass
Delhi, India: 2003

The present work entitled, *Dāna - Giving and Getting in Pāli Buddhism*, is a research monograph published under 'Buddhist Tradition Series' as volume 52. The author, Prof. Ellison Banks Findly, has chosen a topic of extremely important for her research. The editor Alex Wayman has written a brief but valuable foreword for the book and mentions that the author demonstrates an ability to expose and develop properly this remarkable topic.

Dāna (giving) is one of the basic virtues in Buddhism and it is the first step of Buddhist path. In his preaching to non-renunciants Buddha usually started from talking about the importance of giving (*dāna kathā*), as the attachment is a very strong hindrance to spiritual development. This important virtue was then developed to a perfection (*Dānapāramitā*) which was subdivided into three in Theravada Buddhism depending on the nature of what was given, i.e. *Pāramī*, *Upapāramī* and *Paramattha Pāramī*. It became very much associated with the Bodhisatva path in Theravāda Buddhism. The practice of Dāna (giving) became extremely important for the survival of Saṅgha as well as the spiritual development of the lay community too.

The book has nine chapters which is the main research. In addition there is a preface as well as an introduction. In the Preface the author has emphasized the importance of giving (*dāna*) and its function of bridging two communities the renunciants (Saṅgha) and lay followers (the donors). Further the author has mentioned that this elementary teaching of giving has the power to make lay people and renunciants to understand their interdependence. A further elaboration of this point is found in the introduction. This is a kind of reciprocal relationship between renunciants and householders. The Saṅgha has to depend on lay community for basic requisites: food, clothing, shelter and medicine, and in return the lay community depends on the Saṅgha for their spiritual development. This is called *Dhammadāna* by Saṅgha to their supporters. In the introduction there is a useful discussion on the reciprocal ethics of the *Sigālovāda Sūtra* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. And also three important sub-topics: A Child and the Family, A Renunciant and the Saṅgha and A Donor and the Saṅgha have been dealt with.

Chapter one, *Buddhist Donation: A Religious Response to a Changing World*, begins with a short description of social, political and economic changes that took