

Bhikkhu Bodhi's tribute to Venerable Nyanaponika—A Hundred Years from Birth—is both informative and inspiring. Particularly interesting is the brief essay “Presence within Absence—Reflections Six Years after his Death.”

Buddhist publications Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka is an excellent source of informative and well prepared documents for the study of Buddhism.

– Ananda W.P. Guruge

A Compendium of Buddhist Personal Names: Heritage and Significance of Adoption

By G.K. Ananda Kumarasiri
Published by Sri Lanka Buddhist Temple, Siri Jayanti Association
‘Living’ Buddhism Series
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: 2000, 380 pp.
ISBN: 983-40364-0-2

This 380-page very impressive volume, distributed free by the author, is not merely a compendium of Buddhist Personal Names. It is basically a plea for Buddhist parents to give meaningful names to their children. Kumarasiri points out that the foisting of fanciful, meaningless personal names on a child by unthinking Buddhist parents can cause serious negative repercussions on a child, because the child is unable to spiritually, socially, emotionally and psychologically connect themselves with the name. He urges the adoption of positive, inspiring Buddhist personal names.

Chapter I is a concise presentation of the author's concept of ‘Living’ Buddhism and Chapter IV is a brief account of the birth and naming of Prince Siddhattha. The rest of the introductory 144 pages present with diverse arguments and illustrations the efficacy of the author's thesis that Buddhist children be appropriately named.

It is to assist parents that two comprehensive lists of names for boys and

girls are presented as the bulk of the volume. While the meaning of every name is explained, sometimes with etymological origins, some names are annotated. For example, Dharmapala includes a thumb-nail sketch of the services of Anagarika Dharmapala and Sumedha a brief reference to the meeting with Buddha Dipankara.

It is significant that this same campaign was carried on by Anagarika Dharmapala over a century ago and its impact on Sri Lanka has been significant. It is hoped that Kumarasiri's effort brings similar results.

Copies of the book may be requested from Sri Lanka Buddhist Temple, Lot 85, Jalan Tujuh, Sentul Pasar, 51000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

– Ananda W.P. Guruge

Buddhism, Ethics and Society: The Conflicts and Dilemmas of Our Times

By Padmasiri de Silva
Published by Monash Asia Institute
Clayton, Australia: 2002, 240 pp.
ISBN: 1-876924-08X

The blurb on the book says, “With an emphasis on cross-cultural understanding, philosopher Padmasiri de Silva explains the Buddhist approach to contemporary ethical issues. He counsels compassion, emotional sensitivity and compromise in approaching issues as diverse as environmental degradation, racism, workplace relations, violence and suicide. Padmasiri de Silva's discussion of the Buddhist texts shows that the Buddhist approach is as relevant now as it has been for the last 2500 years. This volume is useful as a guide for students, and as a companion to the discourses of the Buddha. It is also a practical reader for those seeking a way of understanding the problems of the modern world.”

It is with a view to finding out whether the book meets these claims that I began to read it. Padmasiri de Silva began his lucid

analysis of issues with a pertinent question. Does ethics inhabit two worlds, one the secular world of social concerns and the householder's search for a decent and meaningful life; and the other the quest for liberation? His concepts of the relationships between the secular and spiritual is that they take many forms: "there is harmony, there is tension, there is abyss, and in all this there is paradox." It is his conjecture that these conflicting images are only seen with clarity and insight by those who are liberated or those who are close to being liberated.

What interested me most is the author's suggestion that his essays in this volume might be brought under the rubric of socially engaged Buddhism. If so, his thinking would coincide broadly with the main lines of interpretation of Humanistic Buddhism. This becomes clearer when he defines Buddhist ethics as a blend of morality, mindfulness, and the refinement of our skills in the discernment of the nature of things as they are. He certainly makes a profound statement when he says further that Buddhist ethics "are not the ultimate realm of human realization, they are a step on the way." (p. 106)

Each essay challenges the reader to re-evaluate current thinking and embark on innovative approaches whatever be the ethical issue under discussion. The issues are many and his insightful analysis deserves attention and admiration.

Padmasiri de Silva has certainly placed himself in the center of many topical issues and the influence of his novel approaches is bound to last a long time.

— Ananda W.P. Guruge

Visions of Buddhist Life

By Don Farber

Published by University
of California Press

Berkeley & Los Angeles: 2002, 240 pp.

ISBN: 0520233611

Don Farber is undoubtedly a most gifted photographer. That he has devoted this talent over a life-time to bring visions of Buddhist life in the most attractive manner is a lasting service. Huston Smith in an enthusiastic foreword states that one of Farber's hopes was that this book will move photography into the company of the other art forms that have been so vital in the transmission of Buddhism as a religion.

It is not simply a book of photographs—a coffee-table publication to serve as a conversation piece. It is a graphic presentation of Don Farber's awakening to the cultural diversity which Buddhism reflected and the charm and serenity of the Buddhist life as he experienced.

He begins with his first contact with that stimulating and far-sighted Venerable Thich Thien-An. Don Farber says, "Dr. Thich Thien-An loved the diversity of Buddhism, taking keen interest in the many ways that the Buddha's teachings have manifested in different countries. I caught his enthusiasm and have been inspired ever since to see, experience, and photograph Buddhist life in its many forms." Farber saw more than what others saw or it is even possible that his eyes and imagination caught what others failed to see. He was impressed by what he observed in the visage of the Vietnamese refugees who were airlifted in 1966. He says, "It was a great awakening for me to discover that they have an extraordinary spiritual culture... I was deeply moved by the compassion of the elderly Vietnamese women."

Each photograph, whether it is a formal portrait of an eminent Buddhist dignitary or carefully studied pictures of monks and nuns in a procession, dignified proceedings