

to do away with the harmful effects in the world in which people seek an ever-more convenient and comfortable way of life. Lamenting at the constant conflicts in the Middle-East, he does not think it optimistic even when some temporary compromise is reached. The monotheistic ideologies seem incapable of leading us to peaceful coexistence and co-prosperity in this world, he holds.

In a subchapter entitled "Money is only a Means," Professor Matsunami points out that money is necessary as a means of living, but not in itself an end. He illustrates this point by quoting Johann Wolfgang von Goeth, "If one looks at the world with a practical eye, there is not a thing of value." He just combines the value of both East and West by saying that what we must remember is to not be at money's beck and call.

The whole book is full of easy-to-understand moral teachings of Buddhist way of life. It is full of wisdom of oriental culture as well as wise sayings of Western philosophers and poets. At this point, Professor Matsunami makes efforts to blend both cultures so that the wisdom of East and West can capture the minds. Those who are disillusioned by the reality may find it particularly useful for their further understanding of the true meaning of life.

Professor Kodo Matsunami believes that the teachings of the Buddha belong to all human beings. In this age of advanced science and technology, the teachings may illuminate the way of all human beings. Coincidentally, seventy years ago, Chinese Buddhist leader Taixu spoke of same the need of Buddhism in the West. In 1930s Taixu pointed out correctly that if the unrest in the West stops, the unrest in the whole world ceases. Similarly, Taixu also wanted to introduce the Buddhist wisdom to Westerners so that they would overcome their arrogance and taste for fighting. Ever-lasting world peace can become a reality if everyone practices benevolence towards all

according to the teaching of the Buddha, the state of anatman. Therefore, it is important to introduce the oriental medicine of compassion, forbearance, benevolence and righteousness to all.

– By Darui Long

## **Beautiful Living: Buddha's Way to Prosperity, Wisdom and Inner Peace**

**By Bhikku Basnagoda Rahula  
Vimamsa Publishers, Houston, Texas,  
USA, 2006, xv+252 pp.  
ISBN: 0977234304**

Sir Arthur C. Clarke, the celebrated visionary and master of science fiction, who admits being "a life-long secularist," says in the Foreword to this book: "My views on religion have been widely publicized, and I believe all religions are a form of mind virus that affects otherwise healthy – and often educated – human beings." Then he proceeds to say, "Buddhism stands apart in being tolerant, accommodating, and pragmatic. Having lived half a century in Sri Lanka, I have seen how Buddha's teachings are applied by various groups in many different ways. Strange as it might seem, perfectly rational people and rabid fundamentalists both claim to derive their beliefs and attitudes from the same source. Clearly, many liberties are being taken with the original teachings. That is why I welcome the publication of this book by Dr. Bhikkhu Basnagoda Rahula which aims to rediscover the principles and values of Buddhism that have been obscured by centuries of culture and history."

Inspired by Sir Arthur's comment, I read Venerable Dr. Basnagoda Rahula Thera's innovative presentation of the Buddha's teachings to see how far he succeeds in demonstrating that Buddhism is a way to prosperity,

wisdom and inner peace – desiderata of the highest order for humans of all ages and especially of the rapidly changing global village of today. I have anticipated his treatment of the subject to be refreshingly new and even challenging, because he is a rara avis (a rare bird) in the Buddhist circles. With his profound erudition in modern English literature (with M.A. and Ph.D. from Universities in Texas, USA) and his deep commitment to the missionary role of the Sangha as a monastic leader steeped in traditional values, he represents by both training and inclination, a remarkable combination of the wisdom of both the West and the East.

Venerable Rahula rightly sees the Buddha's role as the founder of a new well-organized society consisting of both monastic and lay disciples. He notes that the Buddha "made every effort to lead his ordained disciples to the highest spiritual progress and to guide his lay followers towards prosperity, wisdom and inner peace." While it has to be conceded that the monastic aspect and the soteriological or salvific emphasis of the Buddha's teachings received and continue to receive the greater and wider attention, one may find that the learned author has overstated his case when he says,

Yet history buried a part of his guidance!

The passage of twenty centuries made Buddha's teachings for the lay community insignificant, obscure and misleading. We intend to restore it. Breaking through historical and cultural barriers, we strive to trace what Buddha actually taught for the benefit of his lay followers. This book, which identifies, regroups, and elaborates on Buddha's speeches about lay life, marks the culmination of our effort."

But a careful reading of his first chapter would enable to clarify the issue to some extent. One impression that, however, needs to be examined in depth is that the Bhikkhus who preserved the Sutta Pitaka acted in bad faith and saw to it that the Buddha's guidance to lay persons "never occupied its due place in the Sutta Pitaka." (p.11) Again, the early compilers of the Buddha's teachings appear to be blamed for having deliberately adopted a method of grouping Suttas to result in having "Buddha's speeches for the lay community thinly scattered throughout the Sutta Pitaka" (p.12) Venerable Rahula proceeds further to attribute to some modern writers and translators the responsibility for the misconception leading to "the assumption that Buddha discounted worldly life and scorned its happiness." Whether the accusations so levelled against the original compilers of the Canon and its modern translators and interpreters are justified or not is not an important issue here. Venerable Rahula makes a strong and certainly a valid point: that is, there is a wealth of invaluable teachings of the Buddha which apply to the life of the laity and that, too, here and today.

What makes Venerable Rahula's effort most relevant and valuable is that he has organized these teachings in a most attractive manner to address issues which the average lay person meets in his or her daily life. The very list of chapter headings exemplifies this point: Freedom to be Prosperous; Path to Prosperity; Nine Principles to Retain Prosperity; Four Steps to Select People for Closer Relationships; Tips to Establish a Great Marital Relationships; To be a Proud Parent; How to Deal with Interpersonal Conflicts; Right Attitudes and Behavior for a Successful Social Life; False Reasoning that Hinders Wise Decisions; Correct Reasoning for Wise Decisions; The Eight Most Important Don't – do Habits for Daily Practice; How to develop an Attractive Personality; Towards Lasting Happiness.

He elaborates each topic with lucid and readable translations of Canonical texts in the popular style of the ever-increasing Western literature on Self-Improvement. Each chapter spells out steps to be followed in sequence. What makes this book both interesting and challenging is that the authors' commentaries on each statement of the original Pali Canon sound so modern and relevant to life today. Here is an example:

"Of course, Buddha never intended to suppress the sex life of an individual, but he advised his lay followers to be moderate if they were to retain their success.

Itthidhutto (becoming a woman-hunter) is the term the Buddha used to suggest indulgence in sexual relationships. That addiction, according to Buddha, is a formidable threat to a successful person."

Venerable Rahula writes with a significant understanding of the refined and all-round appreciation which the Buddha had of human nature and psychology. Commenting on the Buddha's two-word injunction that one of the five duties of a husband is to give beautiful presents (primarily jewelry), Venerable Rahula writes:

"what is important in today's relationships is the concept behind a male partner's giving of beautiful items to his beloved. He needs to understand that she is an admirer of beauty. While he would not mind driving a decade-old, rusty truck, she would prefer a beautiful new car or a compact SUV. He would be satisfied with grass in the front yard, but she would prefer flowers and ornamental plants in the garden. A male's respect for his female partner's appreciation of beauty is the rational behind his providing attractive things for her."

With his thorough and comprehensive search for perennial Buddhist wisdom and values pertaining to the life of the lay person here and now Venerable Rahula joins the ranks of Venerable Thich Nhat Hahn, the advocate of "Socially engaged Buddhism" and Venerable Grand Master Hsing Yun, the interpreter and promoter of "Humanistic Buddhism." The thoughtfully written and well-arranged chapters of Venerable Rahula's book live up to title "Beautiful Living." They do illustrate the Buddha's way to prosperity and happiness as emphasized in the quotes called the epigraphs with which each chapter begins.

For wisdom and inner peace, he sees the importance of meditation, on which he makes a number of relevant statements: e.g. "Inner development is possible through bhāvanā methods, which are popularity known as meditation." (p.207) "Practicing loving kindness meditation seems to be a very effective habit [for clearly protecting our own peace of mind]" (p.224). "Buddha specifically encouraged his lay followers to see themselves as a part of nature instead of regarding their bodies as objects attachment. Developed as a form of meditation, this attitude would allow us to realize and accept the inevitability of physical changes." (p.228) Yet he says that "the Buddha's most authentic speeches do not provide evidence of his appeal to lay followers to meditate on impermanence or dissatisfaction." (p.10)

A similar discontinuity may be observed in his comments on Nibbāna which Venerable Rahula categorizes as "the highest level of inner development" (p.174). He also says, "Buddha employed this word [Dukkha] for the purpose of directing the Bhikkus toward Nibbāna and not for instruction of his lay disciples." (p.13) Earlier he has said, "The concepts of impermanence and dissatisfaction with worldly pleasure and detachment from secular life predominantly served the purpose of

training and maintaining the community of Sangha. This statement does not suggest that Nibbāna, the blissful state that one can achieve by eliminating mental attachment to worldly pleasure, is merely a technique to train the Sangha" (p.9)

I have read this book and found it extremely informative, stimulating and profitable. If I have raised any question it is in response of the Venerable author's challenging concept that the world-view of impermanence, suffering and selflessness, the four noble truths, the noble eightfold path, the dependent causation and the like was meant for ordained followers and not the laity.

I recommend it to all who wish to utilize the Buddhist wisdom and values to gain happiness and success here and now.

– Ananda W.P. Guruge

## **The Buddha's Discourse and Wittgenstein**

**By A. D. P. Kalansuriya  
Compassion Buddhist  
Institute, Sri Lanka, 2003.**

Professor A. D. P. Kalansuriya of the Department of Philosophy, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka has reproduced his earlier book, **A Philosophical Analysis of Buddhist Notions**, under the new title, **The Buddha's Discourse and Wittgenstein**. It seems that, as the title indicates, the book is a comparative analysis of Buddhist philosophy and that of Wittgenstein. The book consists of ten chapters, a Preface to the second edition and an introduction by Prof. Ninian Smart.

In the Preface to the second edition it has been mentioned that the Dhamma, which is Buddha's discourse, deals with issues and solutions. The interpretations made by scholars have generated many complicated problems. The aim of the present work is to make a philosophical analysis of the

Dhammic concepts and criticism regarding Buddhist modernism.

**Ludwig Wittgenstein** (1889-1951) is considered as one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century. Born in Vienna, Austria, he became a British citizen and did his philosophical writings at Cambridge, England. In 1939 he became the Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge University after G. E. Moore.

Chapter one of the present work is the **Introduction** which is termed as **Buddha and Wittgenstein**. This chapter has been divided into three parts. Part one is **Reflections in Brief on Buddhism- the Dhamma**. Part II is a short introduction "Buddhist modernism" and the Part III is a briefing of the "objective of the study".

Part I, **Reflections in Brief on Buddhism – the Dhamma**, is a brief introduction to what the Buddhist scholars of East and West have done in the past. It has been mentioned that their interpretations and understanding of Buddhism have created many problems. Part II of the introduction is **Buddhist Modernism and Philosophy**. This section begins with a remark made by Stcherbatsky regarding the study of Buddhism by Western scholars. Even though much has been written on Buddhism over a period of one hundred years we are still in the dark about the fundamental teachings of this religion. In this section it has been pointed out that modern writers on Buddhism have not sufficiently clarified the conceptual structure of Buddhism. Various opinions as to whether Buddhism is scientific, empirical or philosophical have been presented in this section. It has been mentioned that even though K. N. Jayatilaka and Kalupahana, who attempted to explore central conceptions of Buddhism in terms of positivistic empiricism of Vienna circle thinkers and early-Wittgenstein, they have failed to identify the true position of the Dhamma.

Part III of the Introduction is **The Objective**. At the beginning it has been said that the objective of the present work