

Buddhist Reflections on Death

By V.F. Gunaratna

Published by Buddhist Publication Society, the Wheel Publication No. 102/103

Kandy, Sri Lanka: 2001, 38 pp.

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Buddhist Women Meditators of Sri Lanka

By Helle Snell

Published by Buddhist Publication Society, the Wheel Publication No. 443/445

Kandy, Sri Lanka: 2001, 87 pp.

ISBN: 955-24-0223-9

Nyanaponika—A Hundred Years from Birth

By Bhikkhu Bodhi

Published by Buddhist Publication Society

Kandy, Sri Lanka: 2001, 28 pp.

Right Knowledge

By P.D. Premasiri

Published by Buddhist Publication Society, Bodhi Leaves No. 155

Kandy, Sri Lanka: 2001, 23 pp.

The Good, the Beautiful, and the True

By Bhikkhu Bodhi

Published by Buddhist Publication Society, Bodhi Leaves No. 154

Kandy, Sri Lanka: 2001, 29 pp.

The Buddhist Concept of Heaven and Hell

By K. Sri Dhammananda

Published by Buddhist Missionary Society

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: 31 pp.

ISBN: 983-40364-4-2

These recently published little pamphlets serve an exceedingly useful purpose in providing appropriately prepared reading material to general readers interested in the study of Buddhism. Their importance is

enhanced by the concise treatment of the subject.

Dr. Kirinde Sri Dharmananda's "The Buddhist Concept of Heaven and Hell" explains that heaven and hell are not places where one is consigned to after death, but attitudes of mind which can be experienced here and now. Yet, he presents the traditional Buddhist belief in six heavenly realms and adds "although they are not free from ignorance, selfish desire, anger, jealousy and worries." It is a thought-provoking essay which includes a prescription for enjoying heavenly bliss in this very world.

Professor P.D. Premasiri's essay on "Right Knowledge" deals with both the terminology and concepts subsumed in Buddhism as knowledge. It is a convincing argument on the limitation of logic. His conclusion is that scientific knowledge and technological skill could be self-defeating unless they are properly directed by the kind of right knowledge that Buddhism values.

An exceedingly delightful pamphlet is Bhikkhu Bodhi's "The Good, the Beautiful, and the True." It deals with a range of subjects as the quest for happiness, the good, the beautiful, the truth, and the triadic unity of Goodness, Beauty, and Truth. Skillfully he leads the reader to the conclusion that Goodness of ethical purity, Beauty of mind and realization of Truth culminates in Nibbana.

Helle Snell's "Buddhist Women Meditators of Sri Lanka" records in readable conciseness a series of interviews she had had with sixteen meditators. The first person records of their experiences in daily meditation speak volumes on the intricacies of Buddhist meditation, which they had pursued with such goals as "growing in the Dhamma, improving meditation and spiritual life or understanding through daily life." The interviewees, as Snell has found out, bear witness to living Buddhist culture and religion in all its complexity and variability.

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