

All of Ryan's examples have been taken from English translations of the Pali Canon, and the majority of books listed in his bibliography date from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, with only one title—Sangharakshita's *A Survey of Buddhism*, 1993—having been printed later than 1992. I mention this not so much to suggest that Ryan's conclusions are out of date, which they are not, but that the scope of his study might very profitably be widened.

— Tom Graham

The Literature of the Personalists of Early Buddhism

By Bhikshu Thich Thien Chau
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The author's stated purpose in this historical survey of the literature of the "Personalist" school (*pudgalavadin*) of Buddhism, is to "re-construct the main thesis concerning the *pudgala* /i.e., individual person/, the fifteen secondary theses and the two lists of sravakas, by basing ourselves on the four treatises /of the *Pudgalavadins*/ which have been preserved."

He begins his study with a historical survey of the development of the early schools of Buddhism (i.e., the Sthaviravadins, the Mahasanghikas, and the Pudgalavadins, with their two sub-schools, the Vatsiputriyas and the Sammmitiyas), showing briefly how each of these subcommunities developed over various types of disagreements with the more conservative group that came to be known as Theravadins.

He, then, describes the general characteristics of the Pudgalavadin literature and provides an extensive cataloguing of the contents of the four texts that have survived in Chinese (the only language in which these texts have survived). The bulk of the book is

composed of a meticulous presentation of the primary teachings of the Pudgalavadins, including their main theses concerning their belief in the reality of the person (definitions of the person and their various arguments for the reality of the person) and the fifteen sub-theses, a sampling of which includes: the existence of an imperishable thing, the twelve types of knowledge in the path of vision, the nature of the dhammas and the nature of the intermediate world, separating death and rebirth.

The book also includes a number of useful scholarly apparatus: a bibliography of pertinent texts in Japanese, Chinese, Sanskrit, Tibetan and Pali, as well as, modern works in French and English, and an index of place names and author's names, together with an index of Chinese and Sanskrit nouns mentioned in the text.

We should say at the top, that the author has accomplished all phases of his objective with considerable skill. His knowledge of all the relevant literature (Japanese, Chinese, Sanskrit, Pali, French and English) is thorough and comprehensive, almost to the point of being exhaustive. He seems to have left no stone unturned in his attempt to construct a literary chronicle of this school of Buddhism and he pursues this end by describing each document with reference to four topics: its title and author, commentators and translators, its date of composition, the original language in which it was composed and subsequently translated and its doctrinal contents.

The author exercises meticulous care in researching every pertinent aspect of his topic and in citing, untiringly, his scholarly sources. So dense are his presentations of the results of his research into the four topics mentioned above that this reader found it difficult, at times, to maintain his interest *in* and attention *to* the details that fill this book.

Even for this reader who is trained in Sanskrit and Pali, the author's exposition of the material is often difficult to follow

due to his practice of introducing into the main body of the text countless (or, so it seems) bits of information pertaining to the titles of original texts in various Asian languages (both ancient and modern). At many points, the beginning and end of a sentence is separated by a full quarter page of citations within the body of the text itself.

The first half of the book, which traces the history of the emergence of the Pudgalavadins and their literature, reads more like an archival chronicle (something approaching a Sears catalog or a chart of chemical elements) than a historical narrative. It is safe to say that the author elaborates almost not at all on any topic that he introduces. Hence, while he does provide an extremely comprehensive and detailed survey of the "history" of the Pudgalavadin texts, he fails to give the reader any genuine sense of the "historical" nature of these texts, of the courses of their development through time or, for that matter, the richness of the various cultural contexts in which they developed.

But, sadly, there are a number of sections of the book where the continuity of his presentation of materials breaks down, quite seriously, leaving the reader seriously befuddled as to what were the connections among these various topics in the mind of the author.

I will illustrate this criticism with a single example: at one point, under the pretext of discussing the general characteristics of the Pudgalavada *Sutrapitaka*, the author begins by claiming that "several passages of extant texts enables us to infer the titles of other texts contained in the *Pudgalavada Tripitaka*." But then, he turns abruptly to quoting passages from three different texts that distinguish the lifestyle of the householder and the monk. Then, again, without any sort of transitional statement, he presents a series of quotations regarding requests to Yama, the God of the Dead, to punish those who have failed to respect their family and monks. Once more, without proper

transitional connection, he jumps to a number of quotations pertaining to the interpretation of the phrase, "bearing the burden," as referring to a person's being constituted of the five aggregates (*skandhas*). And, finally, he leaps abruptly to a series of quotations regarding the impossibility of pinpointing the temporal beginning of the cycle of birth and death. At this point, he returns without comment on these three sets of quotations to a general consideration of the *Sutrapitaka*, with which he began, again, leaving this reader mystified over the connection between the *Pudgala Tripitaka* and these intervening matters.

This reviewer is also puzzled as to why the author, or the translator or the editor of this volume failed to catch these (and other) serious flaws in the organizational flow of the text.

Having said this, we should reiterate our judgment that the book is, by and large, a thoroughly researched, minutely documented and cogently presented survey of the literature of the Pudgalavadins.

Despite the presence of a number of organizational and stylistic glitches, the book stands as one of the more comprehensive and detailed studies of the history of the literature of this most puzzling and controversial of the early schools of Buddhist thought. Anyone wishing to learn about the doctrinal contents of the texts of this school of thought, could not do better than consult this volume. I will turn to this book again and again in the future as a sourcebook of information concerning the *Pudgalavadins*, but not as a historical narrative of the development of this school of thought.

— J. Bruce Long