



UNIVERSITY of
HAWAII
PRESS

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Buddhist Insight: Essays by Alex Wayman by George R. Elder

Review by: Paul E. Muller-Ortega

Source: *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Apr., 1990), pp. 254-256

Published by: University of Hawai'i Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1399234>

Accessed: 16-08-2017 09:04 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

University of Hawai'i Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Philosophy East and West*

Buddhist Insight: Essays by Alex Wayman. Edited by George R. Elder. Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984, Pp. vi + 470. Hardcover Rs. 150.

In this volume the reader will find conveniently collected twenty-four essays by the great Buddhologist, Alex Wayman, for many years Professor of Sanskrit at Columbia University. While Wayman is particularly well known for his ground-breaking investigations of the Buddhist Tantra, the articles in this collection, published in various journals between 1959 and 1980, deal with non-tantric Buddhism. Edited by George Elder, a former student of Wayman's and now Professor at Hunter College, the volume is divided into five parts: Buddhist Practice, Buddhist Doctrine, Interpretative Studies of Buddhism, Texts of the Asāṅga School, and Hindu and Buddhist Studies.

In his introduction Elder attempts to situate the present volume as a non-tantric counterpart to Wayman's previous collection of articles entitled *The Buddhist Tantras: Light on Indo-Tibetan Esotericism*, but it must be said that while that volume is given an underlying unity by its single thematic focus, the present volume offers no such unity. It is, quite simply, a miscellaneous collection of scholarly articles on various aspects of Buddhism directed seemingly at fellow specialists. Nevertheless, editor Elder is to be commended for drawing together these articles, some published in rather obscure journals and difficult-to-get commemoration volumes, for the convenience of the reader. The pieces as a whole bear witness to the relentless scholarly pursuit of knowledge about Buddhism, as well as to a commitment to understand and interpret Buddhism on its own terms. Included here are a number of famous pieces ("No Time, Great Time, and Profane Time in Buddhism,") as well as peculiarly idiosyncratic ones ("Secret of the *Heart Sūtra*.") Throughout, the interested reader will marvel at the range of erudition and philological precision Wayman displays as he handles Sanskrit, Pali, and Tibetan Buddhist texts with equal ease.

Wayman addresses himself to a variety of themes here: Buddhist soteriology, monasticism, art history, meditational practice, and doctrinal argumentation. Despite an occasionally abrupt and even quirky style, Wayman writes with great force. He presents a thesis, engages himself in the polemic at hand with vigor, and declares his thesis established. Nevertheless, it is easy to lose one's way in the thicket of philological and technical detail that populate these pieces, especially as the import of these details is not always made clear. Moreover, many of the articles seem purely descriptive, content to review large amounts of information on a particular topic, but often seemingly lacking in a discernable theoretical or methodological focus.

While it is not possible to comment in detail on every article, in what follows certain essays will be selected for brief commentary. Part I, on "Buddhist Practice," offers four articles: (1) "Buddha as Savior," (2) "Ancient Buddhist Monasticism," (3) "Aspects of Meditation in Theravāda and Mahīśāsaka," and (4) "The Bodhisattva Practice according to the *Lam Rim Chen Mo*." These articles number among the best in the collection. In particular, the article on Buddhist meditation presents us with a closely reasoned and comparative account of the progress made by the meditator through the four levels of *dhyāna* and the four formless attainments. Also excellent is the piece on Buddhist monasticism, which describes in detail aspects of the ordination and daily life of monks according to a number of *vinaya*-s, and includes an examination of the major and minor offenses and the resulting punishments.

Part II, “Buddhist Doctrine,” occupies the largest section of the book and contains eight articles: (5) “The Sixteen Aspects of the Four Noble Truths and Their Opposites,” (6) “The Mirror as a Pan-Buddhist Metaphor-Simile,” (7) “The Buddhist Theory of Vision,” (8) “Dependent Origination—The Indo-Tibetan Tradition,” (9) “Nescience and Insight According to Asaṅga’s *Yogācārabhūmi*,” (10) “The Twenty Reifying Views (*Sakkayādīṭṭhi*),” (11) “Who Understands the Four Alternatives of the Buddhist Texts?” and (12) “The Intermediate-State Dispute in Buddhism.” In these articles Wayman displays his passion for the intricate details of the Buddhist *Dharma*. The article on *pratītyasamutpāda*, in particular, is a tour de force of explication concerning what is perhaps the “deepest” doctrine of Buddhism. The articles on the Reifying views and the *Catuṣkoṭi* are both masterpieces of compression and exposition and will repay careful scrutiny.

Part III contains articles under the rubric of “Interpretative Studies of Buddhism” entitled: (13) “No Time, Great Time, and Profane Time in Buddhism,” (14) “The Role of Art among the Buddhist Religieux,” and (15) “Secret of the *Heart Sūtra*.” The first of these is an extended meditation, heavily influenced by Eliadean categories, on the nature of time. The last piece is a curious and, in many ways, rather successful exercise which sets itself the task of composing “an Asian-type commentary” on the famous Perfection of Wisdom text. Entitling his commentary “Explaining the Difficulties,” Wayman attempts to construct an explanatory gloss that will initiate the reader into the mysteries of this celebrated and concise *Sūtra*.

Part IV of the book is given over to “Texts of the Asaṅga School” and contains: (16) “The *Sacittikā* and *Acittikā Bhūmi*, Text and Translation,” (17) “Asaṅga’s Treatise, the *Paramārtha Gāthā*,” and (18) “Asaṅga’s Treatise on the Three Instructions of Buddhism.” Each of these essays reproduces a transliterated Sanskrit text accompanied by a translation, sometimes interspersed with Wayman’s own remarks. The first of these deals with the stages of meditational accomplishment known as “with thought” and “without thought,” each of which is examined from a number of points of view. The second text contains an early version of Yogācāra philosophy, while the last deals with the three categories of Buddhist training: Morality, Meditation, and Wisdom.

The last section of the book is entitled “Hindu and Buddhist Studies” and contains articles dealing with (19) “Two Traditions of India—Truth and Silence,” (20) “The Hindu-Buddhist Rite of Truth—An Interpretation,” (21) “Significance of Dreams in India and Tibet,” (22) “The Significance of Mantras, from the Veda down to Buddhist Tantric Practice,” (23) “The Goddess Sarasvatī—from India to Tibet,” and (24) “The Twenty-one Praises of Tārā, a Syncretism of Śaivism and Buddhism.” These are among the most interesting and suggestive pieces in the collection, perhaps because we here find Wayman ranging rather more freely and interpretively over his materials. The first essay claims to uncover two related though quite different traditions centering respectively on the *muni*-s, those who have taken a vow of silence, and those who speak out the truth, *satya*. This typology allows Wayman to make interesting distinctions between, for example, the teachings of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*-s. An equally suggestive and wide-ranging article examines various typologies of dreams, as well as their classification and interpretation. The longest and perhaps most intriguing investigation in this section, on *mantra*-s, takes Wayman back

into the area of Tantric studies in which he is so adept. The book is made easier to handle by the inclusion of a rather long and detailed index. In short, this is a collection which all interested scholars will want to add to their libraries and which may be used profitably by graduate students, and even perhaps by instructors of undergraduate classes on Buddhism who might wish to expose their students to the best in Buddhological research.

PAUL E. MULLER-ORTEGA
Michigan State University

Nāgārjuna's "Seventy Stanzas": A Buddhist Psychology of Emptiness. *By David Ross Komito.* Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1987. Pp. 226. \$14.95.

David Ross Komito, in his preface to this new translation of Nāgārjuna's *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness* (*Śūnyatāsaptati*), credits Geshe Sonam Rinchen and Tenzin Dorjee with improving his understanding of the text, which he first translated as part of his 1979 dissertation at Indiana University. This book contains their collaborative translation of Nāgārjuna's text, along with Geshe Rinchen's commentary on each of the seventy-three verses. Komito organizes the book into three chapters. The first chapter is his own commentary on the text from the perspective of psychology. This chapter introduces the basic Buddhist doctrines that have influenced Nāgārjuna's works and the later teachings on epistemology and logic incorporated into the Tibetan monastic curricula, which have influenced contemporary Dge-lugs-pa scholars' interpretations of Nāgārjuna's works. The second chapter contains the heart of the book: a translation of the stanzas alone and the translated stanzas along with Geshe Rinchen's commentary. In the third chapter Komito discusses the authenticity of the *Seventy Stanzas* and of the "autocommentary" attributed to Nāgārjuna, and traces the history of the text's transmission into Tibet.

This short work of the great Indian Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (circa 150–250 CE) presents the Mahāyāna teaching of the emptiness (Sanskrit, *śūnyatā*; Tibetan, *stong pa nyid*) of all phenomena against the backdrop of the early Buddhist formula of the twelve limbs of dependent origination (Sanskrit, *pratītyasamutpāda*; Tibetan, *rtan 'brel*). Komito explains that people's habitual perception of phenomena as "independent, self-sufficient entities which bear their own characteristics independently of the perceiving subject" is the fundamental distortion in the cognitive process that generates attraction and revulsion and "sets the saṃsāric cycle of the twelve limbs in motion" (p. 73). He devotes much of the first chapter to summarizing the contemporary Dge-lugs-pa scholars' explanations of sections of Asaṅga's *Compendium of Abhidharma* (*Abhidharmasamuccaya*) and Dharmakīrti's *Commentary to Ideal Mind* (*Pramāṇavarttika*) on cognition. Since these works constitute an important part of the monastic curriculum, this summary provides the reader with a context for understanding Geshe Sonam Rinchen's commentary on the *Seventy Stanzas*. But the methodological problems of explaining Nāgārjuna's thought in terms of epistemological theories developed centuries later in India and refined further in the monastic colleges of Tibet