

Editorial

Welcome to Volume 5 of the Western Buddhist Review.

At the outset of this editorial, I would like to address a possible source of confusion. The Buddhist order and movement with which the Review is associated has recently changed its name, from the Western Buddhist Order and the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order to the Triratna Buddhist Order and the Triratna Buddhist Community respectively. The title of the Western Buddhist Review will remain unchanged, but you will notice that, because the names referred to above were changed within the last few months, all the articles refer to the Order and the movement by their former titles.

This editorial is being written as Volume 5 nears completion. I have to admit that it has taken a good deal longer to complete the volume than I thought it would. But at last here we have six good articles and an interesting collection of book reviews. I think that you will find that there is a wide range of interesting topics represented here. Although I am tempted to let the articles speak for themselves, I am succumbing to an even greater temptation to draw your attention to some of the issues that they refer to.

Dharmacārī Nāgapriya's piece is a substantial critique of D.T. Suzuki. The author investigates the origins of Suzuki's presentation of Zen to the West, and his relationship with militarism, Japanese nationalism and his attitude to non-Japanese people. Nāgapriya concludes that Suzuki's legacy has probably been deeply damaging to the development of the Dharma in western countries:

In stripping away the rituals, traditions, and practices of Zen, as well as its cultural and historical development, Suzuki dismantled Zen as a religious phenomenon. While his emphasis on the goal of Zen is perfectly legitimate, his lack of attention to the path removes the possibility of its realization.

William Ferraiolo compares the teaching of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus with the teaching of the Buddha, and considers to what extent the Dharma can be successfully mediated through Hellenistic philosophy. We are glad to publish this piece in particular since its aspirations are very much in line with the Triratna Buddhist Community's interest in excavating affinities between the Dharma and the work of western philosophers. It seems to me that this topic cries out for further treatment.

The (very sadly) posthumous article by Dharmacārī Ādarśa examines the role of rights language and practice in the policies and practices of an international development agency active in India – the Karunā Trust. The

author traces the origins of ‘rights’ in western discourse and suggests that rights are philosophically inconsistent with the Dhamma. He goes on to claim that whilst this is the case, there is an argument to be made for using rights language tactically, within a context of duty, and supports this contention with reference to the work of Dr Ambedkar, the Indian Dalit leader, of Sangharakshita and others. He surveys Chambers’ ‘Obligations-Based Approach’ which supports such a tactical stance from the angle of development, and outlines what he calls a ‘Dharma-based Approach’. He concludes that:

in relation to the ‘have-nots’, it is possible to use a language of rights since there does not seem to be a better language that our partners can use which enables them to tackle the systemic discrimination they suffer, and because this perspective does lend itself to bringing about meaningful social change. In relation to the ‘haves’, the emphasis would be on duties, as currently is our approach when fundraising on doorsteps or among the team in terms of lower salaries... It seems to be the rule that when Buddhism enters a new culture some adaptation has to take place in order for existing paradigms and practices to be assimilated into what can be recognised as Buddhism.

Dharmacārī Bodhiketu seeks to shed new light on the traditional account of the stages of spiritual maturity: Stream Entrant, Once-returner, Non-returner and Arahant. After exploring the matter of ethical development, Bodhiketu suggests that this schema has been understood in such a way that the bar has been set discouragingly high, which runs the risk of undermining the confidence of Dharma practitioners. His investigations lead him to recommend a more encouraging reading of the schema, which he hopes will benefit readers’ Dharma practice.

Dharmacārī Jayarava offers an annotated translation of and detailed commentary on the one-hundred syllable Vajrasattva mantra, which should be of considerable interest not only to Vajrasattva devotees, but those who are curious about the way in which mantras have come down to us. He draws attention to important themes in the mantra, and considers the nature of authenticity in relation to mantras in general.

Lastly, Dharmachārin Sāgaramati offers a scholarly exploration of the claims made by an eminent Indian scholar that the progressive *nidāna* sequence can be traced to the *Cūlavēdalla Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. In the course of this exploration, he discusses the enormous significance of the progressive sequence as it appears in, for example, the *Samyutta Nikāya*. Although the sequence will be quite familiar to members of the Triratna Buddhist Community through the works of Sangharakshita, it may be that many readers won’t have come across this critically important teaching,

which, if it had been grasped earlier, could perhaps have fundamentally altered the way in which the Dharma has been presented to the West.

In addition to these articles, you'll find substantial book reviews embracing a wide variety of topics: mindfulness and depression, money, sex, war, karma, literary theory and Buddhist scriptures, Aung San Suu Kyi, recent translations from the Pali Canon, Buddhism and science, the origins of Buddhist meditation, what the Buddha taught, and the British Buddhist scene.

I would like to extend my warm thanks to all those who have written either articles or reviews for this volume, to Nāgapriya for his work in securing book reviews, to publishers who have sent us books, to those readers who have assessed articles for publication, to Samudradaka, who has posted our matter on the website for us, given good advice, and has been very generous with his time and expertise in the latter stages of the publication of this volume, and to those who have kindly made very much-needed donations to enable us to pay for (most of) the posting. Many conditions need to come together to produce even as humble a contribution to the welfare of the world as this Review. May it be widely read and benefit many beings!

Please do whatever you can to bring it to the attention of those who you think may be interested to read it, and please don't forget that the Review is, as always, in sore need of funds. The arrangements for donations online or by cheque are unchanged. If you would like there to be a sixth volume of the Western Buddhist Review, please consider giving at least something.

Jñānaketu
General Editor

