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The Guardians of the World

Like the Roman god Janus, every person faces simultaneously in two opposite directions. With one face of our consciousness we gaze in upon ourselves and become aware of ourselves as individuals motivated by a deep urge to avoid suffering and to secure our own well-being and happiness. With the other face we gaze out upon the world and discover that our lives are thoroughly relational, that we exist as nodes in a vast net of relationships with other beings whose fate is tied up with our own. Because of the relational structure of our existence, we are engaged in a perpetual two-way interaction with the world: the influence of the world presses in upon ourselves, shaping and altering our own attitudes and dispositions, while our own attitudes and dispositions flow out into the world, a force that affects the lives of others for better or for worse. This seamless interconnection between the inner and outer domains acquires a particular urgency for us today owing to the rampant deterioration in ethical standards that sweeps across the globe. Such moral decline is as widespread in those societies which enjoy a comfortable measure of stability and prosperity as it is in those countries where poverty and desperation make moral infringements an integral aspect of the struggle for survival. Of course we should not indulge in pastel-coloured fantasies about the past, imagining that we lived in a Garden of Eden until the invention of the steam engine. The driving forces of the human heart have remained fairly constant through the ages, and the toll they have taken in human misery surpasses calculation. But what we find today is a strange paradox that would be interesting if it were not sinister: while there appears to be a much wider verbal acknowledgement of the primacy of moral and human values, there is at the same time more blatant disregard for the lines of conduct such values imply. This undermining of traditional ethical values is in part a result of the internationalization of commerce and the global penetration of virtually all media of communication. Vested interests, in quest of wider loops of power and expanding profits, mount a sustained campaign aimed at exploiting our moral vulnerability. This campaign proceeds at full pace, invading every nook and corner of our lives, with little regard for the long-term consequences for the individual and society. The results are evident in the problems that we face, problems that respect no national boundaries: rising crime rates, spreading drug addiction, ecological devastation, child labour and prostitution, smuggling and pornography, the decline of the family as the unit of loving trust and moral education.

The Buddha's teaching at its core is a doctrine of liberation that provides us with the tools for cutting through the fetters that keep us bound to this world of suffering, the round of repeated births. Although the quest for liberation by practice of the Dhamma depends on individual effort, this quest necessarily takes place within a social environment and is thus subject to all the influences, helpful or harmful, imposed upon us by that environment. The Buddhist training unfolds in the three stages of morality, concentration and wisdom, each the foundation for the other: purified moral conduct facilitates the attainment of purified concentration, and the concentrated mind facilitates the attainment of liberating wisdom. The basis of the entire Buddhist training is thus purified conduct, and firm adherence to the code of training rules one has undertaken—the Five Precepts in the case of a lay Buddhist—is the necessary means for safeguarding the purity of one's conduct. Living as we do in an era when we are provoked

through every available channel to deviate from the norms of rectitude, and when social unrest, economic hardships, and political conflict further fuel volatile emotions, the need for extra protection becomes especially imperative: protection for oneself, protection for the world.

The Buddha points to two mental qualities as the underlying safeguards of morality, thus as the protectors of both the individual and society as a whole. These two qualities are called in Pali *hiri* and *ottappa*. *Hiri* is an innate sense of shame over moral transgression; *ottappa* is moral dread, fear of the results of wrongdoing. The Buddha calls these two states the bright guardians of the world (*sukka lokapālā*). He gives them this designation because as long as these two states prevail in people's hearts the moral standards of the world remain intact, while when their influence wanes the human world falls into unabashed promiscuity and violence, becoming almost indistinguishable from the animal realm (*Itiv. 42*).

While moral shame and fear of wrongdoing are united in the common task of protecting the mind from moral defilement, they differ in their individual characteristics and modes of operation. *Hiri*, the sense of shame, has an internal reference; it is rooted in self-respect and induces us to shrink from wrongdoing out of a feeling of personal honour. *Ottappa*, fear of wrongdoing, has an external orientation. It is the voice of conscience that warns us of the dire consequences of moral transgression: blame and punishment by others, the painful kammic results of evil deeds, the impediment to our desire for liberation from suffering. *Acariya Buddhaghosa* illustrates the difference between the two with the simile of an iron rod smeared with excrement at one end and heated to a glow at the other end: ' *hiri* is like one's disgust at grabbing the rod in the place where it is smeared with excrement, *ottappa* is like one's fear of grabbing it in the place where it is red hot.

In the present-day world, with its secularization of all values, such notions as shame and fear of wrong are bound to appear antiquated, relics from a puritanical past when superstition and dogma manacled our rights to uninhibited self-expression. Yet the Buddha's stress on the importance of *hiri* and *ottappa* was based on a deep insight into the different potentialities of human nature. He saw that the path to deliverance is a struggle against the current, and that if we are to unfold the mind's capacities for wisdom, purity and peace, then we need to keep the powderkeg of the defilements under the watchful eyes of diligent sentinels.

The project of self-cultivation, which the Buddha proclaims as the means to liberation from suffering, requires that we keep a critical watch over the movements of our minds, both on occasions when they motivate bodily and verbal deeds and when they remain inwardly absorbed with their own preoccupations. To exercise such self-scrutiny is an aspect of heedfulness (*appamāda*), which the Buddha states is the path to the Deathless. In the practice of self-examination, the sense of shame and fear of wrongdoing play a crucial role. The sense of shame spurs us to overcome unwholesome mental states because we recognize that such states are blemishes on our character. They detract from the inward loftiness of character to be fashioned by the practice of the Dhamma, the stature of the ariyans or noble ones, who shine resplendent like lotus flowers upon the lake of the world. Fear of wrongdoing bids us to retreat from morally risky thoughts and actions because we recognize that such deeds are seeds with the potency to yield fruits, fruits that inevitably will be bitter. The Buddha asserts that whatever evil arises springs from a lack of shame and fear of wrong, while all virtuous deeds spring from the sense of shame and fear of wrong. By cultivating within ourselves the qualities of moral shame and fear of wrongdoing we not only accelerate our own progress along the path to deliverance, but also contribute our share towards the protection of the world. Given the intricate interconnections that hold between all living forms, to make the sense of shame and fear of wrong the guardians of our own minds is to make ourselves guardians of the world. As the roots of morality, these two qualities sustain the entire efficacy of the Buddha's liberating

path; as the safeguards of personal decency, they at the same time preserve the dignity of the human race.

—Bhikkhu Bodhi

Publications

Recent Releases

A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma. Bhikkhu Bodhi, General Editor.
Hardback: 432 pages 140 mm x 214 mm
U.S. \$20.00; SL Rs. 450 Order No. BP 304H

The Abhidhamma is the Buddhist analysis of mind and mental processes, a wide-ranging systemization of the Buddha's teaching that combines philosophy, psychology and ethics into a unique and remarkable synthesis. For 800 years a little treatise called the *Abhidhammattha Sāratgaha* (Manual of Abhidhamma) has served as the key to open this treasure-store of Buddhist wisdom. The present volume offers an exact translation of the Manual along with the Pali text and a detailed, section-by-section explanatory guide by the Burmese Abhidhamma authority U Rewata Dhamma and Bhikkhu Bodhi, designed to lead the modern reader through the complexities of this ancient philosophical psychology. A long introduction explains the basic principles of the Abhidhamma, while the book specially features 48 charts and tables which represent the subject in a visually accessible format.

Tranquillity & Insight: An Introduction to the Oldest Form of Buddhist Meditation.
Amadeo Sole-Leris.
Softback: 176 pages 140 mm x 214 mm
U.S. \$8.50; SL Rs. 180 Order No. BP S 10S

This widely acclaimed book explains the methods of Buddhist meditation in a concise yet complete account according to the oldest Buddhist tradition, that based on the Pali Canon. While providing all the information necessary to proper understanding, the stress is on the need for practice and personal commitment. "An excellent reference book ... Will appeal to beginners and non-beginners alike." (Buddhist Studies Review)

The Heart of Buddhist Meditation. Nyanaponika Thera.
(Not for sale in U.S.A. In the U.S.A. order from Samuel Weisers Inc., P.O. Box 612, York Beach, ME 03910, or from bookshops stocking books on Asian religions.)
Softback: 224 pages 140 mm x 214 mm
U.S. \$9.50; SL Rs. 200 Order No. BP 5095

A modern Buddhist classic translated into seven languages, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* has been an important bridge in the spiritual encounter of East and West. With the combined powers of deep personal insight and clear exposition, the author conveys the essential principles making up the Buddha's way of mindfulness. "A work of unique importance ... written with great depth, extraordinary knowledge, deep humanity." (Erich Fromm)

Back in Print

The Seven Stages of Purification and The Insight Knowledges. Ven. Mahathera Matara Sri Ñāṇarāma.

Softback: 88 pages 140 mm x 214 mm

U.S. \$5.00; SL Rs. 100 Order No. BP 506S

This is a book born of wide and deep meditative experience, a guide to the progressive stages of Buddhist meditation for those who have taken up the practice in full earnestness. The book treats its subject not only with the author's great erudition, but with the clarifying light of actual meditative experience. The late author was one of the most respected meditation masters of present-day Sri Lanka.

The Discourse on the All-Embracing Net of Views: The Brahmajala Sutta and its Commentaries. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi.

Hardback: 350 pages 140 mm x 214 mm

U.S. \$ 15.00; SL Rs. 280 Order No. BP 209H

This is one of the Buddha's most important discourses, his "all-embracing" critique of speculative views on the self and the world, which are captured in a net of sixty-two cases. The inclusion of the massive commentary and subcommentary allow for a close in-depth study of the work.

The Buddha's Words on Karma. Four Discourses from the Majjhima Nikāya, translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli.

Softback: 32 pages 124 mm x 182 mm

U.S. \$1.50; SL Rs. 30 Order No. WH 6

Contains the shorter and longer versions of the Analysis of Kamma suttas and two other suttas, making known the Buddha's own words on the subject. Softback: 48 pages 124 mm x 182 mm
U.S. \$ 2.50; SL Rs. 60 Order No. WH 248/249
The Four Sublime States. Nyanaponika Thera. Contemplations on the four Brahma-vihara of universal love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity; a profound and poetic essay which explores these qualities individually and in their complex inter-relationships.

Price Adjustments

The following price changes are effective from 1 May 1993:

The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga): from \$50.00 to \$40.00

Buddhist Dictionary: from \$20.00 to \$15.00

Kamma and its Fruit: from \$4.50 to \$3.50

Analysis of the Pali Canon: from \$4.50 to \$3.50

Anguttara Nikāya Anthology, Part III: from \$3.95 to \$3.50

The Discourse on Right View: from \$3.95 to \$3.50

Book Review

Buddhist and Freudian Psychology. 3rd Edition. Padmasiri de Silva. Singapore University Press (Yusof Ishak House, Kent Ridge, Singapore 0511), 1992. 230 pp. HB U.S. \$24.00; PB U.S. \$18.00.

This is a new edition, unchanged except for the addition of one chapter, of a work originally published in 1973. At the time, it was a very welcome contribution towards a mutually instructive encounter between Buddhist and Western psychology. Though chronologically not quite the first in the field, *Buddhist and Freudian Psychology* was undoubtedly a significant pioneering effort, and achieved a usefully sharp focus by concentrating on the Freudian and post-Freudian mainstream of Western psychology. ‘

Today, some 20 to 25 years later, many developments have taken place (in particular Maslow’s humanistic psychology, and the whole school of transpersonal psychology) which make the original terms of Professor Padmasiri de Silva’s comparison seem perhaps unnecessarily restrictive. One wishes that the author had taken the opportunity of a new edition to delve further into the implications of his earlier research and, without for all that abandoning the original framework, taken into account the lively developments that have taken place in the meantime in the exploration of Buddhist psychology in Western terms (e.g. to quote but two instances, Rune Johansson’s suggestive *The Dynamic Psychology of Early Buddhism*, 1979, and the rich trove of comparative analyses in the collection of essays by different authors, edited by Nathan Katz in 1983 under the title *Buddhist and Western Psychology*).

This is not to say, however, that *Buddhist and Freudian Psychology* cannot still be read with profit and pleasure as a workmanlike source of information on important points of contact between the two worlds. For the Buddhist material, the author concentrates on the oldest formulations found in the Nikayas, drawing as required also on the later systematic elaborations in the Abhidhamma. He then proceeds to compare a number of basic aspects of the two systems, in order to investigate similarities and differences. As he explains at the outset, the essential similarities “which prompted this comparison of two great philosophies separated by such a vast expanse of time” (p.3) are the basic humanism found in both systems and their explicitly therapeutic purpose. These are confirmed by a closer analysis, although Professor Padmasiri de Silva very properly makes the essential distinction between the aim of adjustment to “normality” (i.e. to the essentially misperceived world of samsāra) pursued not only by Freudian but by all Western psychotherapies, with the recent exception of the transpersonal school, and the soteriological purpose of the Buddha’s teaching—transcendence of saritsara altogether: “the Freudian goal was limited ... to the translation of hysterical misery into everyday unhappiness” (75), while in the Buddha’s teaching “mental illness is continued till the state of arahat is attained,” and a mind can only be called healthy “when all the selfish desires and passions are extinguished, and the mind positively enjoys bliss and peace” (165).

In the new Chapter VI, however, (“The Freudian Search for the Ideal Therapeutic Model: A Buddhist Perspective”) the author qualifies this by pointing out that for Freud, as well as for some of his followers, analysis is to be regarded “as both therapeutic transformation and growth of self-knowledge” (174), and that Freud himself was keenly aware of the “pathology of normalcy” (174), so that for him “the medical aim is thus in substance a spiritual aim” (180). He sees here a point of convergence with an Eastern, particularly a Buddhist perspective, and refers to two other illuminating studies of Freudian psychotherapy from a Buddhist perspective (Erich Fromm’s “Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis” and David Levin’s “Approaches to Psychotherapy: Freud, Jung and Tibetan Buddhism,” both in *The Metaphors of Consciousness* (1981), ed. by R.S. Valle). In the original five chapters, the author compares the concept of mind and the theory of motivation in Freud and Buddhism, stressing what they have in common as

dynamic psychologies with a profound interest in “the complex interplay of forces both at the conscious and the unconscious level” (3t). In particular, he finds instructive parallels in the nature and contents of unconscious motives (“the points of similarity between the threefold desires of early Buddhism (kama-, bhava- and vibhava-taṇhā) and the libido, ego and the death instinct are very significant,” p.73), and asserts as “our basic thesis that there is a concept of the Unconscious in early Buddhism” (p.49). This is illustrated by reference to early Buddhist psychological terms such as ariyasayas (proclivities or latent tendencies), āsavas (taints or cankers) and asampajāno mano-sankhāras (mental dispositions of which one is unaware), as well as to the later, abhidhammic concept of bhavanga (life continūm, or stream of existence flowing below the level of ordinary consciousness).

Finally, an appendix (reprinted from an article published in the Ceylon Journal of the Humanities) investigates the possible indirect influence of Buddhism on Freud’s psychological thinking through the intermediary of Schopenhauer’s philosophy.

Professor Padmasiri de Silva’s study is primarily in the nature of a preliminary mapping out of territory to be explored in depth subsequently, and one hopes that he will, at some future time, follow up his suggestive adumbrations in greater detail.

—Amadeo Sole-Leris

Notes and News

Staff Veterans Retire. Recently several of our veteran staff members retired after long periods of service to the BPS. One was Mr. T.B. Naranpanawe who joined us in 1987 as Administrative Secretary and later assumed as well the post of Treasurer. Coming to the BPS from a background of highly responsible positions in the civil service, he brought to his work an admirable combination of dedication and diligence. Other staff members who retired recently after long periods of dedicated service: Mr. Norman Alahakoon (20 years), Mr. Rajah Weerakoon (9 years), Mr. P.D. Ampitiya (6 years), Mr. W. Jinadasa (32 years). We wish them all a happy and peaceful retirement, and many more years of good health.

BPS Cover Wins Award. We are happy to announce that our printer, Karunaratne & Sons Ltd., was awarded the first prize for the Best Book Cover for 1992 by the Sri Lankan Association of Printers for the cover of our new edition of Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli’s *Life of the Buddha*. The splendid photograph of the Buddha image on the cover is the work of Roland Wildgruber of Buddha-Haus, Germany.

The Buddha & His Teachings in Vietnamese. The Buddhist Relief Mission, an organization dedicated to supporting the Buddha Sasana worldwide, each year has chosen to print for free distribution a book for an endangered Buddhist community. For 1993 they have decided to reprint the Vietnamese translation of Ven. Narada Thera’s *The Buddha and His Teachings*, to be distributed freely to Vietnamese Buddhist communities around the world. Those wishing to contribute may write (specifying the purpose of the donation) to: Buddhist Relief Mission, 266-27 Ozuku-cho, Kashihara-shi, Naraken 634, Japan.

Guidelines to Sutta Study

The Buddha opened his famous Fire Sermon with the startling declaration “All is burning,” which we discussed in the previous installment of this series. The rest of his discourse is woven upon a framework which can be reduced to three questions: (1) What is the all that is burning? (2) What is the fire that consumes the all? (3) What is the consequence of seeing all as burning? We will now address these questions in turn.

(1) What is the “all” that is burning? The “all” that is burning is the entire cognitive apparatus of human experience, beginning with the six spheres of sense. It comprises the six sense bases, the six corresponding sense objects, the six types of consciousness, the six types of contact, and the six types of feeling.

The six sense bases are the sense faculties of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. According to the analytical method of the Abhidhamma, each of the five physical sense bases refers, not to the gross visible organ designated by the same name, but to a subtle type of sensitive substance (*pasada-rupa*) which has the unique function of responding to, or “picking up,” the appropriate sense object. Thus the physical eyes—the two delicately structured balls of tissue and fluids—are called the “composite eye” (*sasamhāra-cakkhu*), while the eye base, the actual sense base or faculty of sight, is called “eye sensitivity” (*cakkhu-pasāda*). It is eye sensitivity that registers forms and thereby serves as the door through which the visible world floods into awareness.

Each of the other physical sense bases is also to be understood to refer to a type of sensitivity. The ear base is the material substance that is sensitive to sounds; the nose base the substance that is sensitive to smells; the tongue base the substance that is sensitive to tastes; the body base the substance that is sensitive to tangibles. The mind base (*manāyatana*), unlike the other five bases, is not a physical substance; it is not the material organ (brain and nervous system) which serves as the support for consciousness. While the mind base is never explicitly identified in the Suttas, the Commentaries maintain that the mind base refers to the aggregate of consciousness as a whole. However, when mind (*mano*) is specified as a condition in dependence upon which mind-consciousness arises, the term “mind” is then understood in a more restricted sense as the mind door (*manodvāra*), which is then identified as the *bhavanga*, the passive stream of subliminal consciousness out of which active processes of cognition emerge. The Buddha states that all six sense faculties and their respective objects are burning.

In dependence on the sense faculty and object, there arises a corresponding type of consciousness. In dependence on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises; in dependence on the ear and sounds, ear-consciousness; ... in dependence on the mind and mental objects, mind-consciousness arises. Consciousness is defined as the cognizing, or knowing, of an object. It is not a knowing self, an enduring self-luminous subject which abides in its own identity. Consciousness is an event, an act, which lights up its object, and the apparent persistence of consciousness is explained as a sequence of fleeting acts of consciousness, each of extremely brief duration.

Each of the five kinds of sense consciousness is tied to a particular sense door and object. Eye-consciousness, for instance, necessarily occurs through the eye door and its function is to see forms. In contrast to the five types of sense consciousness, mind-consciousness is not restricted to a particular door and object. Mind-consciousness can arise through any of the sense doors and can take any kind of sense object; it also arises through its own particular door, the mind door, and takes its own particular class of objects. Mind-consciousness cognizes visible form, for example, when one compares two colours to determine which is more suitable for painting a room, sound when one hears a sequence of notes as a melody, taste when one sips a little tea to see if it has enough sugar, etc. Mind-consciousness also has access to a wide range of objects which are not of a sensuous nature at all. These objects are called *dhamma* (often translated by the non-committal “mental objects”) and comprise everything that can be known apart from the five kinds of sense objects. Of the six classes of consciousness, the Buddha says that they too are burning.

The “coming together” of consciousness, its sense base, and the object is called contact (*phassa*). Contact is a mental factor (*cetasika*), the mental factor that initiates the entire act of

knowing the object. The “coming together” of its three components might be understood as the encounter between consciousness and its object mediated by the sense faculty. It must be borne in mind, however, that the particular act of consciousness which cognizes the object introduced by contact does not temporally precede the occurrence of contact. The two phenomena—consciousness and contact—arise simultaneously in a relationship of mutual dependence: contact supports consciousness and consciousness supports contact. Contact is of six kinds named after the sense base through which it arises: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, mind-contact. All these types of contact, the Buddha says, are burning.

Contact in turn gives rise to feeling (*vedanā*). Feeling is the affective mode in which the object is experienced, the “tone” or quality of the experience. Feeling is often divided into six types in accordance with the type of contact that serves as its source. There is feeling born of eye-contact, feeling born of ear-contact, ... feeling born of mind-contact. But feeling can also be classified in terms of its affective quality. It then becomes threefold: it may be pleasant, it may be painful, or it may be neutral, i.e. neither painful nor pleasant. Feelings of all three kinds can arise at each of the six sense doors, yielding eighteen types of feeling in all. All these types of feeling too, the Buddha declares, are burning.

Thus the answer to our first question, “What is the ‘all’ that is burning?” is that the all of cognitive experience—the six types of consciousness along with their objects, doors, and concomitant contact and feeling—is the all that is burning.

(to be continued)

The Buddhist Publication Society

The BPS is an approved charity dedicated to making known the Teaching of the Buddha, which has a vital message for all people.

Founded in 1958, the BPS has published a wide variety of books and booklets covering a great range of topics. Its publications include accurate annotated translations of the Buddha's discourses, standard reference works, as well as original contemporary expositions of Buddhist thought and practice. These works present Buddhism as it truly is—a dynamic force which has influenced receptive minds for the past 2500 years and is still as relevant today as it was when it first arose.

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