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Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahāyāna Tradition, by Diana Y. Paul (with contributions by Frances Wilson and foreword by I.B. Horner). Berkeley, California: Asian Humanities Press, 1979. Pp. v + 333 (glossary, bibliography, index).

Paul's examination of the "Images of the Feminine" is a worthy addition to the growing number of studies about women's roles in Buddhism and other institutional religions. Furthermore, Paul (for the Chinese texts) and Wilson (for the Sanskrit) have contributed the first English translations for nine of the nineteen accounts. By so doing, they have made these texts accessible to the larger body of interested students.

In the book's three "Parts" and eight chapters, Paul covers a range of images of women that can be found in the canonical literature of Mahāyāna Buddhism. This range—from woman as "evil temptress" to woman as Buddha—is generally well supported by the texts she has included. In any such ambitious and innovative undertaking, some strain and unevenness, as well as a degree of repetitiveness, is unavoidable.

Paul's weakest section is found in the first part. One suspects that the exigencies of scholarly feminist consciousness underly the problems with this section every bit as much as the actual content of the texts. Paul apparently needed to introduce "implicit" or "latent" meanings to prove that the male authors were actively misogynist. As presented, the texts themselves ("The Sutra of the Buddha Teaching the Seven Daughters" and "The Tale of King Udayana of Vatsa") do not seem to convey the denigration of *all* women that Paul suggests. Her introduction to the section also is overtly one-sided. After quoting a statement that women are ". . .purely sensual with uncontrollable desires. . ." (p. 5) she admits only in a footnote that an unquoted statement discussed "the equivalent obsession men have for women."

In her discussion on the role of "the Merchant's daughter" (in "Sadāprarudita and the Merchant's Daughter") on page 110 she again has relied on inference. On the basis of her translation, I question her view that the Merchant's daughter was a "good friend" to Sadāprarudita, acting out of pity or compassion for his sufferings. I read it as *her* reverence and awe for *his* selfless dedication. If the latter view is valid, the merchant's daughter's homage to Sadāprarudita represents no shift in role, nor subjection of female to male per se, but rather of follower to Bodhisattva. However, I make no claim to doctrinal expertise and would be quick to admit that Paul must have additional evidence for her interpretations, although those supports are not clearly stated.

There are other areas where my own disciplinary inclinations—including psychological anthropology—make me uncomfortable with her commentaries. In particular she seems to have adopted a primarily

Western psychoanalytic view of the relationship between dependency and low self-image. Her argument—that the monk-authors resented their dependence upon female householders because it contributed to a low self-image, and that dependency, and rejection of it, were a double-bind leading to hate and the projection of self-hatred upon the women—assumes that dependency is always contradictory to self-esteem. It may be a firm tenet in the West, but such a view is not as universal as we think. Furthermore, while cross-currents and conflicting views about the sexes exist in many "societies-at-large," Paul fails to recognize the specifically political considerations that arise between institutional religion and the State. Buddhism has never been "out of this world" and its monastic orders have never accurately reflected the "society-at-large." Rather its monastic order has been counterpoised against the State. Even Buddhist kings have had to reconcile the conflicting demands of the *saṅgha* for expanding its membership, and the demands of the State for people to fulfill *its* requirements. Uusually these conflicts have been resolved by "purifying" councils, sponsored by the State, to "preserve and purify" and, incidentally, to *limit saṅgha* membership. Even in Buddhism's heyday in China, the State regulated how many monks could belong to each monastery by confining its subsidies to the permitted number. The rigors of monastic life—including celibacy and the dread of sex—could further restrict the attractiveness of membership. If the women also flocked to the *saṅgha,* the State's labor pool would shrink even more. Male abdication of the householder/progenitor role could be compensated by plural wives. Female abdication would be much more difficult to counteract. State-*saṅgha* rivalry well may underlie the difficulties placed in the path of female—and male—aspirants to the monastic life.

These comments have not been intended to minimize the significance of Paul's contribution, but to suggest avenues to be considered in the next edition. Along these same lines, *ekayāna* is commonly interpreted as "universal salvation." However, salvation's Western connotations of *savior* and *saved* make "salvation" less appropriate than "enlightenment" of "buddhahood" as the universal goal.

Hopefully, the next edition will not include reference to "the *Louts* Sutra" (p. 115) one of the amazingly scarce typographical errors in the volume, and will practice "truth in packaging" by entitling itself "*Women in Buddhist Texts*": Images of the Feminine in Mahāyāna *Canonical Literature.*"

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