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III. BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

Cross Currents in Early Buddhism by S. N. Dube. Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1980. Pp. XIII + 375, Bibliography, Index.

The volume under review, *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism*, is a valuable recent contribution to Buddhist studies. It is substantially based on the Ph.D. thesis presented to the University of Rajasthan under the title "Doctrinal Controversies in Early Buddhism." In fact, it has been a long time since this reviewer has come across a critical study of early Buddhist concepts and ideals so well-documented—especially from the Pali sources. Like Har Dayal's *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, this work refers to source materials copiously and extensively. Indeed, this volume adds materials from the Pali sources on many of the topics discussed in Har Dayal's work, which is mainly based on the Sanskrit Buddhist sources.

In the history of early Buddhism, *Kathāvatthu* and *Milindapañha* are the most important treatises, replete as they are with various controversies that had surfaced gradually in the placid domain of Buddhist thought after the passing away of the Master. This development itself testifies to the vigour of Buddhist ideas that were influencing the thought currents of the times, ultimately leading to the formation of different schools and the emergence of the Mahāyāna. Although both these texts have been translated into English with critical notes and Introduction (*Points of Controversy* by S. Z. Aung and Mrs. Rhys Davids PTS; *The Questions of King Milinda* by Mr. T. W. Rhys Davids, in *Sacred Books of the East*; and *Milinda's Questions* by Miss I. B. Horner, in *Sacred Books of Buddhists*), no comprehensive critical study of these texts has appeared. Dr. Dube, therefore, is to be congratulated for selecting the *Kathāvatthu* as the main subject for his critical analysis.

Attempts at reinterpretation of Buddhist ideals were probably made after the second Buddhist council under the leadership of the Mahāsaṅghikas; and by the time of Aśoka, diverse hypotheses had been advanced to explain the teaching of the Master. These are discussed multifariously in Moggaliputta Tissa's *Kathāvatthu*, the text of which was raised to canonical status, although it was not *buddhavacana* in the strictest sense of the term, being authored by a disciple.

The *Kathāvatthu* abounds in doctrinal polemics, and is of immense importance for the reconstruction of the history of early Buddhism. Dr. Dube rightly remarks that it "presents a broad cross-section of Buddhist thought in an age of critical transition when some of the conflicts and

obscurities latent in the earlier doctrines emerged openly, and when in the course of their discussion ground was prepared for future development" (Preface, p. 1).

The work is divided into three sections: (A) Genesis and Growth of Controversies, (B) Controversies reflecting Religious Development and the Mahāsaṅghika Impact, (C) Controversies reflecting Philosophical Development and the Beginnings of New Schools. Section (B) contains very important chapters on "The Ideal of Arhant: Challenge and Defence," "Apotheosis of the Buddha" and "The Ideal of Bodhisatta." Though these topics have been discussed by Har Dayal, N. Dutt, A. B. Keith, E. J. Thomas and host of other scholars, here for the first time the relevant issues have been discussed and fresh interpretation presented in the light of *Kathāvatthu*. The last section (C) includes controversies over the *puḍgala* theory as well as problem of the unconditioned (*nibbāna*) as redefined by certain sections of Buddhist monks. It also deals with the concept of two *nirodhas* (*paṭisaṅkhānirodha* and *apaṭisaṅkhānirodha*) as well as causal genesis and the Four Noble Truths.

The author links the *Kathāvatthu* with the beginnings of Mahāyāna and says: "If the evolution of Mahāyāna proper is to be placed in the first century B.C. [he quotes various authorities for the date, see p. 31, n. 35], there is no reason why its essentials should not have originated in the third century. B.C." (p. 7). He assigns the *Kathāvatthu* roughly to the middle of 3rd century B.C. (p. 9). However, there are scholars who find Mahāyāna tendencies in the early Nikāyas also (Cf. N. Dutt *Mahāyāna Buddhism* [Calcutta, 1973], chap. II). It is therefore difficult to be precise about the date.

In a basic work of this type, we would have expected the author to demarcate the sects which were hell-bent on denigrating the ideal of Arhant hood instead of making general observations, viz. "The concept of Arhant hood forms a significant issue of debate in the *Kathāvatthu*. The text discusses several theses propounded by different sects. A close scrutiny would show that a number of these theses were in the nature of an impeachment of the Arhants" (p. 90). For, the pivotal issue, as yet undecided, is which sects could be included in the Mahāyāna and which in the so-called "Hīnayāna." We are still in the dark about the exact doctrinal standpoints of the so-called eighteen schools *vis-à-vis* Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna controversies.

The author also discusses the issue of whether a layman can become an *arhant* and presents the Theravāda standpoint that he cannot. The Uttarapathakas believe that a layman may be an *arhant* and in the *Kathāvatthu* (according to its *Aṭṭhakathā*) they cite examples of some laymen becoming *arhants*. Dr. Dube makes a pertinent remark in this connection: "It may be observed that this controversy is merely a Buddhist echo of a larger

issue which may be found in Brahmanical thought . . ." (p. 104). In my view, this issue was raised by a minor section and was never a major issue among Buddhists, as even "Mahāyāna philosophers exalt and glorify monastic celibacy and seclusion, while they condone and tolerate domestic life as an inferior state." (Cf. Har Dayal, *op. cit.* [1932] p. 223.)

The author also refers to "some enigmatic passages in canonical literature, the testimony of which makes it difficult to draw any distinction between the conception of Buddha and Arhant" (p. 112). There are misleading passages in the *Nikāyas*, e.g., in *Arhanta-sutta*, *Samyuttanikāya*, vol. II, p. 310 (Nalanda ed.), *Nadanti te sihanādam, buddhā loke anuttarā*, where the word *buddha*, in my view, is in a general sense of "wise, awakened one," not in the technical sense of *sammāsambuddha*. I would, however, say that right from the beginning of the Buddhist teaching there has been a marked distinction between the status of an Arhant and a Buddha. Every Buddha is also an Arhant but not vice-versa.

The book is well-printed, except for a few misspellings here and there, e.g. *Aṭṭhavargīya* (p. 18) for *Arthavargīya*, *paṭisaddhā* (p. 129) for *paṭipassaddhi*; or misprints like separation of letters in Sanskrit verse (p. 25). Also, wrong page references have crept in, e.g., p. 145, n. 30, p. 146, n. 61, etc.

There also are a few instances of misinterpretation of passages. Referring to the *Majjhimanikāya* (vol. III, pp. 38 ff., Nalanda ed.) the author says: "He [Buddha] had the apprehension that there might arise some differences of opinion on *abhidhamma*, *ajjhājiṇa* and *adhi-pāti-mokkha*. However, these would not be very significant. But in cases there arose any dispute over the fruits (*magga*), path (*paṭipadā*) or the congregation (*saṃgha*), it would be a matter of regret and harm" (p. 42). The author obviously has not followed the use of prefixes *abhi* and *adhi* in the translated passage. Also, there are stray examples of inexpressive translation, e.g., "So far as I understand the *Dhamma*, taught by the Lord, it is that following the stumbling-blocks, there is no stumbling-block at all" (p. 44) which is a translation of the *Majjhima* passage (vol. I, p. 174, see p. 82, n. 47 cited by the author). The passage in question is: *Tathāhaṃ bhagavatū dhammaṃ desitaṃ ājānāmi yathā yeme antarāyikā dhammā vuttā bhagavatū te paṭisevato nālaṃ antarāyāyā ti*. Similarly, the translation of *paravittāraṇā* as "excelled" (p. 102) or "help" or "guidance" (p. 103) is far from satisfactory.

The book is well-indexed and an exhaustive bibliography has been appended. I am sure it will prove a valuable reference work on early Buddhism.

N. H. Samtani