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Volume 7

1984

Number 2

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of the mental furniture of the Buddha and his contemporaries. Not only is there no reason to think that the Buddha had totally dispensed with the mythology of his day, but there is no reason why he *should* have: mythology is an appropriate way of both experiencing and symbolizing complex human dramas of the sort undergone by the Buddha.

These objections aside, *The Way of Siddhartha* is an engaging and rich exposition of the Buddha's life, one that might, with a few caveats, profitably be used as an introduction to early Buddhism. Indeed, though I think that *Alone With Others* and *The Way of Siddhartha* raise—without answering—important questions about how contemporary Buddhists do or might interpret their metaphysical and mythological assumptions, they are clear and articulate works, whose authors deserve our thanks—both for enriching our understanding of the Buddhist tradition and for forcing us to think seriously about how the tradition best can be understood by people living in the midst of that land of no-land, “Modernity.”

Roger Jackson

The Buddha, by Michael Carrithers. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983. pp. x + 102. Map, Bibliography & Index. Softcover \$3.95.

Michael Carrithers' short study of the Buddha's life and thought is one of the recent volumes in Oxford University Press's generally well received *Past Masters* series. The series aims to make available to the general reader brief non-technical introductions to the life and thought of significant individuals in humanity's past. It is an important series in two respects: first because it is less culturally blinkered than other such efforts, taking some account of the contributions of non-Western thinkers to the intellectual development of mankind, and second because it finds a place in the intellectual mainstream for those who have generally been considered “religious” thinkers and therefore banished to the intellectual borderlands. The series already has volumes on Jesus, Muhammad and Confucius and this volume on the Buddha is a welcome addition.

Dr. Carrithers says that he intends to try and show what the Buddha has to offer to contemporary Western thought and cul-

ture, and to do this by writing a biography of the man. In taking this approach Carrithers is following the tradition in which the life of the Buddha is seen as a dramatic representation of the central truths of Buddhist doctrine and therefore as a very appropriate method of communicating those truths. He does not, however, simply retail the legendary accounts of the tradition, accounts that show little or no interest in distinguishing between what is historical and what is philosophically interesting. Instead he uses those legendary accounts and brings them together with the data the dispassionate historian can gather about the Buddha's life, and in so doing illuminates the historical and cultural context within which the Buddha lived and thought while still preserving some tincture of the significance given to the historical individual by the tradition. This is no easy tightrope to walk but Carrithers is, for the most part, successful in preserving his balance.

The Buddha has four major chapters, each relating to a significant part of the Buddha's life. The first, "Early Life and Renunciation," locates the Buddha by outlining what we know of life and thought in the Gangetic plain in the sixth century B.C., stressing the burgeoning urban civilization of that time. Carrithers provides an excellent capsule account of the *varṇa* system (pp. 14–17) and the Buddha's response to it, and outlines the importance of the renunciators, those mendicants who rejected the structures of their society as part of a quest for salvation.

The second chapter, "To the Awakening," describes the Buddha's quest for salvation and is used by Carrithers as a framework for the exposition of basic Buddhist soteriological praxis. This means, of course, meditative practice. Some extremely complex issues are passed over rather lightly here (especially that of the function of the more advanced concentrative states) but that is inevitable in a book of this type and Carrithers is careful to indicate throughout his text that there are many problems with which he does not intend to deal. There is, perhaps, a little too much stress on the radically empiricist nature of the Buddha's method (see especially pp. 38–39)—a stress which is probably the result of excessive exposure to the influential philosophizing of K.N. Jayatilleke's disciples—and not enough emphasis on the importance of constructive philosophical analysis at a very early stage of the Buddhist tradition. But, in the context of the book as a whole, this is not a major problem. Carrithers' exposition of the basic dynamics of the Buddhist no-self theory (pp. 41–46)—always the biggest problem for the novice coming to Buddhism—is especially lucid and useful.

In the third chapter, "The Awakening," Carrithers provides the reader with expositions of some of the central categories of Buddhist doctrine structured around the four truths; he includes discussion of the five aggregates, dependent co-origination and the eightfold path, and the ultimate soteriological goal, Nirvāṇa itself. His expositions have the very unusual (for this field of scholarship) characteristic of being both accurate and interesting; above all he stresses the intimate link in Buddhist thought between dispassionate philosophical description—discussion of the way things are—and compassionate soteriological action. He also points out here, as throughout the work, that the Buddha's analysis of the human condition and the conduct prescribed to deal with that condition can in fact be seen to have a great deal to offer to Western cultures, both intellectually and existentially.

In his final chapter, "The Mission and the Death," Carrithers outlines the Buddha's post-enlightenment preaching career and links some of the elements perceptible in this career to the future of Buddhism as a world religion, describing the relevance of Buddhism for the ordinary man and showing how ethics is related to philosophical theory. For this reviewer this is the weakest part of the book: there are some exceedingly odd remarks (p. 80) stressing Buddhism's tolerance and contrasting it with "missionary religions such as Christianity and Islam," and others (p. 95) suggesting that cultural relativism is now a generally accepted theory in the West and was integral to the Buddhist view of "the varieties of culture." In fact, of course, Buddhism has historically been and continues to be a major (and very successful) missionary religion, and one which has frequently exhibited a degree of intellectual imperialism comparable to anything in Christianity or Islam. Also, Buddhist intellectuals have not, for the most part espoused relativism in any of its forms, and it is probably only among anthropologists in the West that any but the most innocuous forms of cultural relativism are taken to have intellectual plausibility.

But these are minor caveats. For the most part *The Buddha* is a lucid, accurate and interesting presentation of the Buddha's life and thought, one which would be ideal for use as an introductory text for undergraduates in American universities and from which even that peculiarly American academic animal, the professional Buddhologist, can learn something. We have cause to be grateful to Dr. Carrithers and it is strongly to be hoped that his work has wide circulation.

Paul Griffiths