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II. REVIEWS

An Introduction to Buddhism, by Jikido Takasaki. Translated by Rolf W. Giebel, Tokyo: The Tōhō Gakkai, 1987. 376 p.

This book is the English translation of Professor Jikido Takasaki's *Bukkyō nyūmon* (An Introduction to Buddhism), published in 1983, by Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai.

Professor Takasaki is a well-known Japanese scholar specializing in Buddhism. He is the author of a number of important Japanese publications. Western scholars know his *A Study on the Ratnagotra-vibhāga*, published by IsMEO, Rome 1956. This is an accurate translation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* with an informative introduction and very useful notes. Professor Takasaki was the efficient Secretary-General for the 31st International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa (*CISHAAN*) convened at Tokyo and Kyoto in 1983.

The present book intends, as stated in the Preface to the English version, "to present to Japanese readers . . . a picture in concrete terms of the characteristics of Buddhism as established in India"; it is a book "directed to the general reading public". Anyhow, owing to its nature and qualities, this book deserves also the interest of specialists in Buddhism and will be useful to them.

The book presents, in a systematized way, the "body of Buddhist doctrine in the form it assumed once it had been firmly established several hundred years after the death of the historical Buddha", and within this framework, wishes "to consider Buddhism in all its ramifications". So the author does not deal with Buddhism as it is presented in the original teachings of the founder Śākyamuni, or as it manifests itself in its evolutionary process, or as it appears in any one of its different branches; instead, he takes Buddhism in a well advanced stage of its evolution, and studies it as it appears in that stage without limiting himself to any of its ramifications. Thanks to this procedure, the reader gains a clear idea of the richness and complexity of Buddhism, which certainly could not be given by an analysis of Buddhism in its first stage of development or in its making or in only one of its manifestations.

Following the indicated criteria Professor Takasaki adopts, as frame of reference for his exposition of the body of Buddhist doctrine, the Three Treasures of Buddhism: Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha. Thanks to his masterly knowledge of Buddhism, his exposition impresses because of its clearness and completeness. In many points it enters into interesting and many times

not easily accessible details and references.

Chapter I is dedicated to the life of Śākyamuni and Chapter II to The True Nature of the Buddha. Chapters III–VIII deal with Buddhist doctrine, giving information about its principal tenets under the following titles: The Buddhist Conception of Truth; the Constituent Elements of Existence; Transmigration, Karma and Mental Defilements; The Path to Enlightenment; Mind: The Agency of Practice. Chapter IX has to do with The Precepts and the Organization of the Community. The last Chapter, X, has as its subject-matter The History of Buddhism not only in India but also outside India. This chapter will be especially useful for the specialist in Indian Buddhism, since it allows him to get, in an easy way, a clear account of the development of Buddhism in China, Japan, etc.

The book ends with two excellent indices, one General (pp. 325–351) and another of Characters which appear in the book, (pp. 352–374) giving the Chinese, Japanese and Korean readings.

The translation from Japanese into English was done by Mr. Rolf W. Giebel, who for several years studied under the tutelage of Professor Takasaki in the University of Tokyo, specializing in the field of late Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is a clear and very readable translation.

In resumé: a first-class contribution to Buddhist bibliography, which, though founded in serious scholarship, will contribute to a broader spreading of the knowledge of Buddhism.

Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti

On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem, by Paul J. Griffiths. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1986. Pp. 220. \$12.95.

On Being Mindless is very far from being brainless. In its logical approach the work is well-crafted. In its expository section Pāli and Sanskrit terms are avoided so as to render the concepts in clear English for a wide audience composed of upper-division students and scholars in religion and philosophy as well as the general (educated) public.

Griffiths correctly perceives that altogether to avoid philosophical judgments about Buddhism would be to do the tradition a disservice (xix). A universal rationality thesis is the