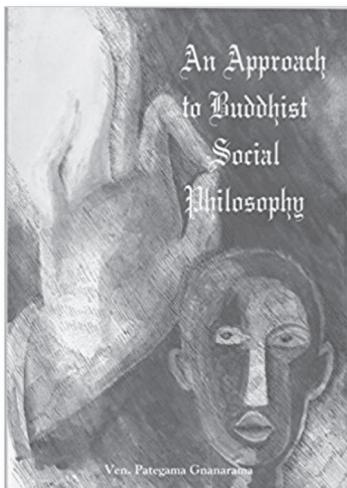


BOOK REVIEW

An Approach to Buddhist Social Philosophy



Dinh Thi Bich Luy



by

Author: Ven. Pategama Gnanarama
Publisher: Buddhist and Pali College
of Singapore, Singapore,
1996, 2005, 2012,
Pages: 263.

INTRODUCTION

This book name is AN APPROACH TO BUDDHIST SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY, indeed, given a comprehensive and lucid exposition on Buddhist Philosophy and has enriched the annals of Buddhist literature. The author has been able to gather the fruits of both oriental and occidental learning, and he abundantly makes use of both experiences. Being a *Buddhaputra*, he has not forgotten the Enlightened one's advice to the *kālama*, beseeching them to analyze whatever is placed before them, find reasons for such things and

accept them thereafter. The writer has included this advice to the *kālamas* in his book following it very carefully and finding space for it to be utilized under the scientific method where such advice correctly belongs. The collection of essays covers various aspects of the Buddhist social philosophy, beginning with social dimension in Buddhist philosophy. This book include varied topic a such as victimless crimes, war and peace and social harmony, social norms and values, social stratification and socialization as well as the Buddhist attitude towards poverty. The beauty of the essays lies in the varied subject areas around which they are woven, the authority of the data patiently collected and the simple manner and style in which the essays are presented. I believe that, a scholar as well as a simple layman without much education would easily read an derive both pleasure and knowledge from this book.

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

This review of book will be in two parts: first will be a review of the detailed guide the social dimension of early Buddhism and social outlook. The second will be a review of his easy on the peace and social harmony that the author mentions at the from chapter 7 to 13 of this book.

In the first essay the author dealt with one of the very popular misconceptions about Buddhism particularly found in the west. This is woven round the belief that Buddhism is highly individualistic. The author cites Max Weber as the person who initially created this misinterpretation. It is sad to find such misinterpretations even in works of Indian authors such as T. R.V. Murti who states that the ideal of an Arahant smacks of selfishness. The author wrote this essay depend on “The Basis of Buddhist Social Outlook”, particularly the section about Buddha’s advice to the Kalamas and the sections following would be of use to those interested in learning about the manner in which the scientific method was understood in Buddhism.

The author’s grasp of Indian history and the Indian background is evident in many an essay. The essay on “Monarchies and Confederacies in Ancient India” is a refreshing contributing to Indian history in the Buddhist context. One is able to understand the historical development of Buddhism, it’s relationship to other religions as well as political developments by carefully adjusting one’s focus along correct directions with the help of such historical material.

CRITICAL EVALUATION

In this book who seek to understand how the Buddha looked at various forms of social stratification such as caste, color, wealth, etc., could benefit much by reading the essay on the same subject. Buddhism contribute to peace and social harmony which would be of great importance to all those living in the present world. Various strategies for social harmony and peace are pursued relentlessly by academics, policy-makers, thinkers, etc. in this context, it could be interesting to read what the Buddha has to say in this vital area. A living example of translating such strategies to action is exemplified in the reign of the great king Asoka in India.

In Buddhist countries, the values taught by the Buddha are gradually disappearing, not solely due to social change, but more due to the ignorance both of the Buddhist clergy as well as the laity about their importance. Ven. Gnanarama suggests the importance of these values sand indicates how such values could even become useful in a non-Buddhist society. In early essay, a reference to crime without victims was referred to. I have elsewhere repeatedly pointed out the importance of incorporating the Buddhist view of crime and punishment into our modern criminal justice system.

CONCLUSION

I would recommend An Approach to Buddhist Social Philosophy for those interested in delving more deeply into an already existing Social Philosophy , but I would be more hesitant to suggest this book as a first experience to Buddhist Social Philosophy. His grasp of the sociological approach to crime is to be appreciated, and this coming from a Buddhist monk augurs well for future development of this area in Buddhist academic studies. When I reviews briefly through this book that can observe many point of Buddhist Social Philosophy, and right way to peace and harmony. There are large amount of literature in Pali Scripture, which are discourse related to peace, harmony and social norms. I found of the Social Dimension of Buddhism and Buddhist Social Outlook. These are foundations of peace and harmony. I has had the experience of social norms and values. Therefore, further research could be done on quantitative research on suitable model for Buddhist Social Philosophy retreat for scholars. It should be importance for social peace and harmony, could be test in order to make the suitable for national model.