

Life of Buddha in Indian Sculptures (Asta-Maha-Pratiharya) An Iconological Analysis

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

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with proper knowledge (*nāna*), which is dealt with in the first and longest section, amounting to almost one-third of the book. Other topics include the noble truths (*saccas*), the factors of enlightenment (*bojjhāngas*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), and the discriminations themselves (*paṭisambhīdās*), which give their name to the text as a whole. These are the discriminations of meaning (*attha*), of ideas (*dhamma*), of language (*vitutti*), and of perspicuity (*paṭibhāna*), which are referred to so commonly in later texts as concomitants of the attainment of arahantship.

A brief glance at Nānamoli's excellent translation of this text makes it clear that the *Paṭisambhīdāmagga*, although found in the *Sutta-piṭaka* of the Pali canon, is by its nature more an Abhidhamma text, and it is something of a problem to explain why it was not included in the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*, where it might have been expected to appear. To Nānamoli's translation, Warder has prefixed a long introduction (pp. v–lxiv) describing not only the chequered history of the translation itself, but also the development of Abhidhamma thought, and the importance of the *Paṭisambhīdāmagga* therein. He has also explained the way in which it was in all probability moved from an early form of the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* to its present position in the *Sutta-piṭaka*.

Not only has the appearance of this translation brought us one stage nearer the point when the whole of the Pali canon will be available in English translation, but it has also shed light upon a text whose difficulty has discouraged scholars from giving it the attention it deserves. A reviewer can only echo Warder's words (p. lxiv) and honour the memory of Nānamoli as a man from whom we have learned a greater precision in the interpretation of Pali texts and gained a deeper understanding of Buddhism.

K. R. NORMAN.

LIFE OF BUDDHA IN INDIAN SCULPTURE (ASHTA-MAHA-PRATIHARYA): AN ICONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS. By RATAN PARIMOO. pp. [xi], 142, front., 128 pl. New Delhi, Kanak Publications, 1982. Rs. 150.

To such scholarly undertakings as A. Foucher's and D. Snellgrove's in the field of iconological studies devoted to early Indian artistic representation of the Buddha, Dr. Parimoo contributes this significant analysis of the sculptural translations. They originate from sites covering almost the whole of northern and central India and executed between the 2nd century B.C. and the 11th century A.D., of the eight major events of Gautama's life (*ashta-maha-pratiharya*). Basing himself on discrepancies between sculptural descriptions and their textual sources (which he believes exist because narrative themes were derived largely from oral traditions preceding the texts), the author investigates the role which the artist's imagination and personal vision played during the process when narratives evolved into icons and symbols became substitutes for events.

He suggests that artistic representation and interpretation supplied the medium through which some aspects of the doctrines concretized, and demonstrates that sculptors not only interpreted, but also created plastic equivalents of profound spiritual states and understanding of doctrines. The widespread transcription of the Buddha's life into visual terms was perhaps the chief resource in the endeavour to widen the popular appeal of his teachings. This is no doubt because the acceptance upon faith and subsequent assimilation of the doctrines depend ultimately on the vital element of ecstasy, which traditional societies have always called upon artists to induce and maintain. Drawing upon his experience as pedagogue and artist, the author describes the difficulties that faced the sculptors in their efforts to correlate visual and verbal languages, and the ways they surmounted them. He sharpens the reader's sensitivity to their innovative flair and the psychological implications of their works, and highlights the unique way in which they combined various temporal dimensions with technical usage of space. He conjures up the quality of the aesthetic experience the sculptures were designed to evoke, without, however, imposing his subjective appreciation on the reader, a feat which a strict but intelligent scholarly approach inspired from the iconological studies of E. Panofsky and E. Gombrich helped him accomplish.

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