

Buddhanusmrti: a glossary of Buddhist terms by Kala Acharya

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Buddhânusmrti: A Glossary of Buddhist Terms. Kala Acharya. New Delhi: Somaiya Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2002. 281 pages. Rs. 425.00. ISBN 81-7039-246-2

Kala Acharya's book is an attempt to introduce Buddhism by defining its main ideas and concepts. It also provides the reader with a useful tool for a deeper study of Buddhism. The glossary approach used by Acharya has the advantage of being less selective than a standard descriptive work in the treatment of the refine points of the Buddhist philosophical tradition, thus presenting valuable details helpful to envisage the diversity and the complexity of this tradition as a whole.

In addition to the glossary, the book has a short introduction sufficient to give the reader the historical and philosophical backgrounds of the main terms discussed. It is divided into seven sections covering the life of the Buddha, Buddhist philosophy, the main schools and sects of Buddhism and, a survey of its literature. There is also one chapter dealing with the important concept of Dharma and its various sectarian interpretations and classifications.

Other interesting tools provided in the book are references to the key passages used to compile the entries and an abundant use of Sanskrit and Pali terms. These two features are often lacking in other types of introductory works on Buddhism thus rendering cross-referencing difficult.

In short, this book is a useful tool to understand and remember the essential ideas of Buddhism and certainly would be a good companion to the reading of Buddhist scriptures, either in the original or in translation. There is, however, one thing Acharya's work does not provide: a few notes about the differences of interpretation, among modern translators and commentators of Buddhism, with regard to some of the fundamental Buddhist ideas such as the doctrine of no-self or the concept of *bodhicitta*. To be fair with the author, although quite valuable for Buddhist scholars, this kind of tool would have greatly exceeded the scope of this work. As Acharya herself puts it: "The glossary is not a mere academic pursuit. The contents of the book may prepare a ground for sowing the seed of faith in all which is good in the beginning, in the middle and in the end." Kala Acharya, being a Hindu, therefore produced her glossary of Buddhist terms as an attempt to promote understanding among members of different faiths. In this regard, her work is commendable as it provides detailed and objective information useful for anyone interested to discover or rediscover Buddhism from a non-sectarian perspective.

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