

EDITOR'S PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This edition of Mahāthera Nārada's book differs very little from the preceding. Here and there a few words have been changed to make a locution more idiomatic, but the style of expression is entirely his. The abundant use of capital letters has been eliminated. A few repetitions have been removed, especially towards the end of the book, and several of the author's longer footnotes have been moved up into the text. At other places footnotes have been added, usually to make some academic point, and these are all indicated as the work of the editor.

The sources of all the citations have been checked and corrected where necessary, though not every work was accessible. The citations from the Pali Canon have all been revised so that section numbers corresponding to the more recent edition from the Nava Nālandā Mahā Vihāra are included, but page numbers still refer to the older Pali Text Society editions. It is hoped that this compromise will prove useful to readers who may seek the original words of Theravadin scripture. It is a matter of regret that some of the quotations have not been found, especially the one from the *Abhisamayālaṅkāraloka* in Chapter 40. This work is readily available but is long, and I simply fail to locate anything like the passage translated by the Ven. Nārada.

The reader is urged not to be intimidated by the author's use of words in the original Pali language, many of which have been eliminated from the previous edition. They do become familiar through use and the avoid ambiguity thereafter. It is common for one first encountering Buddhism to experience confusion because of the different translations given by various authors. Only the original terms can eliminate this confusion completely. After their introduction in the text several words are incorporated as English and used without italics. There is, however, one other potential source of confusion which is quickly removed: several terms are more familiar to English speakers in their Sanskrit forms. Thus Pali *sutta* may already be known in the Sanskrit form *sūtra* and *jhāna* as *dhyāna*. Similarly, Pali *dhamma*, *kamma*, and *nibbāna* are well-known in the forms *dharma*, *karma*, and *nirvāna*. These equivalencies have generally been pointed out in the text.

The pronunciation of the Pali and Sanskrit words should present no serious difficulty either. Two points are crucial to remember: the letter *c* in these words is pronounced as *ch* in "church"; and the letter *h* always

represents an aspiration: *th* is pronounced as in “boathook”, never a fricative as “this” or “thing”.

The vowels all have the values familiar from Latin or derivative Romance languages, except that the unmarked “a” is obscure, as it usually is in the English indefinite article. The other consonants should present no difficult—*ñ* sounds like “ny” as it does in Spanish with the same diacritical mark; the dotted *ṁ* represents a nasalization of the preceding vowel and usually sounds like “ng” in English, though it may also be a nasalized stop which is assimilated to the following consonant, in which case it may be pronounced as *m* or *n* as is convenient. The English speaker may well forget any attempt to give an authentic value to the series of underdotted consonants (*ṭ*, *ḍ*, *ṇ*) and simply say them the same way as the ones without the dot. The dotted series represents sounds that are variously described as cerebral, retroflex, or lingual, but some linguists have said that in fact the English consonants are closer to this series than they are to the pure dentals printed without the dot.

It has been both a pleasure and a privilege to assist in preparing this new edition of the Venerable Nārada’s book. The inception of this edition is due entirely to Dharma Sena, a generous *setṭhi* of Singapore devoted to the Buddhadharmā. This is the clearest and most detailed introduction available to the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism preserved by the indisputably oldest surviving sect. Other Buddhist sects, from Japan, China, or Tibet, have achieved some popularity in Europe and America in recent decades. They may dismiss the Theravadin teachings, the doctrines of the elders, as trivial or superficial, but this is the bedrock of all Buddhism and cannot be denied. Whatever practises or metaphysical theories other sects may have developed, the truths stated by the Sage of the Sākya two and a half millennia ago and preserved by the Theravadin bhikkhus in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia remain fundamental to all.

Curtis F. Oliver

Toronto, Vernal Equinox, 1980