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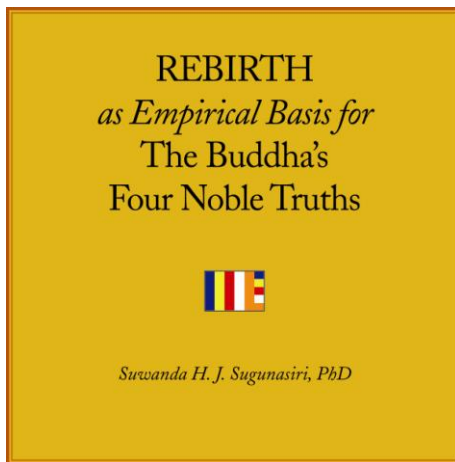
PRESS RELEASE

Richmond Hill, June 6, 2010

Sumeru announces publication of:

REBIRTH AS EMPIRICAL BASIS FOR THE BUDDHA'S FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

By Prof. Suwanda H.J. Sugunasiri, PhD



ISBN 978-896559-02-5

PDF e-book, 28 pages, 8" x 8", 1 MB

Free download at www.sumeru.ca

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Drawing upon the Pali Canon, this exploration reconstructs the series of events that culminated in Samana Gotama cutting off all defilements, becoming an Arhant and the Buddha. Detailing the experience that took place while Gotama was sitting under the Bodhi Tree some 2500 years ago, in the three watches of that critical night (6 – 10 pm; 10 pm – 2 am; 2 – 6 am), the author shows how Gotama's seeing his own past lives as well as those of his kith and kin, friends and enemies, and so on, in a continuing life-cycle, served as the very empirical basis for arriving at the first Noble Truth of *dukkha*, when we can almost hear him inwardly say to himself, "Oh man, what suffering!" It was this initial discovery that prompted him to explore its natural concomitants of Arising (of *dukkha*), Cessation and the Path, giving us the Four Noble Truths.

The crux of the argument is this: had it not been for Gotama's experience of seeing his past lives under the sharpest mindfulness and concentration, through a cessation of ordinary perception, we would have to take the Four Noble Truths as not being experientially discovered, as claimed by the Buddha himself, but as a philosophical, or logical, construct, which they are not.

While the book is not intended as proof of Rebirth (or more accurately Re-becoming, as distinct from the Hindu concept of Reincarnation), it is intended to challenge western scholars who contend that Rebirth is a mere cultural construct the Buddha just borrowed.

The book is intended for the average, non-specialist reader. It outlines the characteristics of each of the Four Noble Truths as in the Canon in detail, making difficult concepts come alive through a simple and engaging style. For the more curious, footnotes and explanations are added, along with Pali terms.

The contribution of “Rebirth ...” is that this piece brings together all the key concepts underpinning the Buddha’s Enlightenment experience, while Canonical texts merely provide extensive details of the events. It also carefully makes the distinction, rarely found in popular literature at least, between attaining Buddhahood (gaining wisdom, in the cognitive domain) and attaining Nibbana (purifying the mind, in the affective domain). A chart at the end of the book provides a neat graphic summary of the three chronological phases, showing the process of what happened during each of them. Where relevant, the author digs into science as well to make his point.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Sugunasiri was founder of the Nalanda College of Buddhist Studies, Toronto, Canada, and is founding editor of the *Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies*, His seminal research paper in *Philosophy East and West* (vol. 45, Number 3, 1995) provides evidence that the ‘seat of consciousness’ in Buddha’s view is the whole body, and not the heart, as held by every school of Buddhism. Sugunasiri served as president of the Buddhist Council of Canada, taught at the University of Toronto, and is featured in *Canadian Who’s Who*. His most recent initiative was presenting series of seminars on Buddhism delivered at the University of Havana, Cuba, in 2010. For a brief treatment of his work in the Canadian Buddhist community over more than 30 years, see *Wild Geese* (Eds: Harding, Hori & Soucy).

ABOUT SUMERU

The Sumeru Press Inc. is a Canadian publisher of Buddhist books and art. Sumeru also maintains a blog on Canadian Buddhism and offers publishing consulting services to Buddhist organizations and initiatives.

Recent Sumeru projects include a redesign of the Buddhism in Canada website (www.buddhismcanada.com) last year. Earlier this year, Sumeru completed a year-long research and development project for the University of Toronto and the Buddhist Education Foundation for Canada, the goal of which was to lay the groundwork for an online scholarly journal dealing with Buddhism and Psychology.

For more information about Sumeru and Canadian Buddhism, please visit www.sumeru-books.com or www.sumeru.ca