EDITORIAL
A Fresh Look at Themes Within Early Buddhism

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This issue of the *JOCBS* sees the revisiting and re-evaluation of important long-standing themes in Buddhist studies, offering fresh perspectives and insights.

Alexander Wynne opens with a reexamination of Luis Gómez's well-known and yet half abandoned theory of proto-Madhyamaka philosophy in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the Pali *Suttanipāta*. Wynne presents new insights, establishing a fascinating correspondence between the apophatic, silence-oriented traditions of early Buddhism—what he calls No-View Buddhism—and the development of Prajñāpāramitā schools in northwestern India, particularly in Gandhāra. One of Wynne's thought-provoking ideas is that the tension between the more radically apophatic tradition of Nāgārjuna and devotional imaginary of the Lotus Sutra is already present in the earliest corpus of Buddhist texts. He further hypothesizes about the role that Kaccāna could have played in the transmission and development of such teaching in western and northwestern India. More broadly, Wynne's paper offers a general view of the ways in which early Buddhist doctrines and traditions of practice could have developed, and it importantly draws attention to the fact that the Prajñāpāramitā literature was not necessarily a response to the rise of Abhidharma/Abhidhamma scholasticism—a tenet that is virtually taken for granted in our field.

The second article is by **Nir Feinberg**, who recently obtained his PhD at UC Berkeley with a thesis that deals with the concept of *saṃvega*—a word he translates as "turmoil". In the present article, he revisits the *Attadaṇḍa Sutta* of the *Suttanipāta* and provides a wealth of textual evidence that highlights the place of turbulent emotions in the earlier stages of the path to awakening,

challenging the notion that only peaceful emotions are conducive to enlightenment. In his own words: "The Buddhist tradition has consistently recognized that the path to tranquility is filled with emotional turmoil." His work enriches the growing discourse on the philosophy of emotion in Pali literature that is bringing to light evidence of a more complex emotional landscape within early Buddhist practice.

Bryan Levman contributes the first of a two-part article on Pali textual variants. As is well known, the Pali canonical texts (and the non-canonical too, for that matter), contain thousands of variant readings. Not all of them are of the same nature, and not all of them are of the same significance. Levman provides a thought-provoking first half of his typology of variants, analyzing and categorizing them comprehensively. Of course, since the archive of Pali manuscripts remains largely unexplored, Levman's typology is liable to improvements in the future, working as it does, with such a complex topic, on 'best inference'. But overall it provides a solid basis for students of Pali philology to think about variant readings in a complex and critical way. One special feature in Levman's method, that would alone justify the publication of this article, is the effort in tracing non-Indo-Aryan forms to Dravidian or Munda roots. Particularly in onomastica, this line of research reveals itself as most fascinating. Levman's ambitious article will hopefully invite debate, and prompt further development of this important area of Pali textual studies.

Following on is another up-and-coming scholar, **Bernat Font**, who has recently defended his thesis on *vedanā*, a word that he translates as "feeling", at Bristol University.[1] Font's paper investigates the specific topic of the nature of *pīti* "joy". It is perhaps not known to all that *pīti* is sometimes categorized as *vedanā* "feeling" and sometimes as *saṅkhāra* "conditioning factor". The fact that the Theravāda tradition has firmly opted for the latter has major implications: that joy is not something that is felt, but rather a certain kind of mental anticipation. Font elaborates on the technical reasons that may have motivated Theravādins to distinguish *pīti* "joy" and *sukha* "pleasure" as belonging to two different bundles. In doing so he also exposes the shortcomings of such scholastic commitment to systematicity.

[1] https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/what-the-buddha-felt

The final article of the present volume is by **Brian Victoria**, a leading scholar in the field of Buddhism and Violence. His article confronts the sensitive ideas of *karma* and rebirth, taking historical instances where they have been interpreted in ways that legitimize social injustice. Some practitioners, regardless of their Buddhist tradition, may feel challenged by the directness in which Victoria addresses certain issues. However, the central question he raises is essential: "What venues exist in the Buddhist world to address a controversial topic like this one [viz. *karma*], for there can be no doubt that this topic needs to be addressed in light of Buddhism's commitment to reduce suffering in its myriad forms." Such a commitment is, indeed, a foundational aspect of Buddhist ethics. The *JOCBS* wholeheartedly welcomes responses to Victoria's arguments, and those of any other contributors, for the duty of a journal such as this one is to serve as an open platform for academic debate.

This issue also includes a **review** of a recent publication, namely **Javier Schnake**'s critical edition of the *Ekakkharakosa* and its *ṭīkā* (commentary), a medieval Pali grammar, published by the Pali Text Society this year. The *JOCBS* looks forward to expanding its review section in the coming year.