



Your Enlightened Mind Wants to Know: Mahayana's Origins and the Implications for Buddhism

J. M. Walsh

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What is Mahayana Buddhism? Author J.M. Walsh, a practicing Buddhist, sets out to answer this question by uncovering the earliest layers of the Mahayana tradition. Focusing on the teachings of one Buddhist school, he undertakes a metaphorical archaeological dig through Tantric, Japanese, Chinese, and Indian Buddhist sources. Citing an array of Buddhist teachers and scholars, he identifies connections to the ancient beliefs found along the Silk Road that link the world's major religions in a surprising way. He shares personal experiences that keep the narrative grounded in the reality of modern Buddhist practice. The diversity found in Mahayana, which leads some to view it as a meditative philosophy and others as a belief system filled with divine beings, is truly puzzling. Prominent in East Asia and Tibet, Mahayana differs greatly from the Theravada Buddhism of Thailand and Sri Lanka. The author leads Buddhists and those who are merely curious through an analysis of these competing strands, and identifies three different perspectives Mahayana could be said to represent: a cosmic law or Dharma; a practical life philosophy; and an emerging universal religion. All three views find support in the Mahayana tradition. His clear, logical writing and sound conclusions provide refreshing relief from religious dogma. His thoughts can serve as an antidote to the influence of fundamentalism in all its forms. Recommended by Independent Reviewers: Clarion Review - 5 Stars (out of five): "... Walsh offers a concise introduction to Buddhism, explores the significance of questioning the origins of teachings, and commences the often-returned-to listing of lineages, translators, and travels of Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings. Walsh also shares his deeply personal motivations for excavating the source of the Lotus Sutra, something he seamlessly weaves into the fabric of the book. The author's quest for clarity and understanding becomes a quest the reader might share. ... Walsh successfully pulls an immense amount of philosophical, esoteric, and practical information together into a profoundly meaningful conclusion that can leave the reader satisfied and potentially a little closer to realizing his or her Buddha nature." Kirkus Reviews: "Walsh investigates the origins of Mahayana Buddhism in his careful, honest search for truth on the spiritual path. Examining religious history can be a polarizing pursuit. The scarcity of tangible proof can lead to holes in the larger narrative, and faith can inspire both zealous belief and bitter skepticism. Walsh ... manages to avoid these pitfalls. His approach falls between scholarship and personal reflection; through investigating the many sources (but few facts) that surround the provenance of Mahayana texts ... Walsh triangulates a 'middle way' between skepticism and faith. ... any student of religious history will benefit from a reading. A sincere, penetrating history whose conclusions are both scholastically and spiritually sound."



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