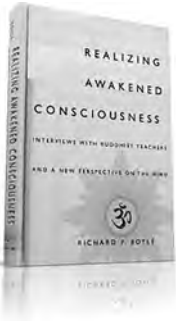


REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



**Realizing Awakened
Consciousness: Interviews
with Buddhist Teachers and a
New Perspective on the Mind**
Richard P Boyle

Columbia University Press, 61 West,
62 Street, New York, NY 10023,
USA. Website: <https://cup.columbia.edu>. 2015. 368 pp. \$95. HB. ISBN
9780231170741.

Not by enmity are enmities quelled ... By the absence of enmity are they quelled, This is an ancient truth.' (*The Dhammapada*, trans. John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawadana (New York: Oxford University, 1998), 3). This 'ancient truth' is hard to interiorise and live out daily for it is in our natures to wish 'for an [equal] opponent ... [and to] roar / Like a hero nourished on royal food' (Gil Fronsdal, 'The Discourse to Pasūra: Not Opposing Any Views', *The Buddha before Buddhism: Wisdom from the Early Teachings* (Boulder: Shambala, 2016), 73).

The book under review teaches us through interviews and empirically how to 'quell' enmities and not bother about the ironically, useless 'royal food' of vain argumentations over one's own opinions, which one mistakenly believes to be the summum bonum of all truth. Richard P Boyle's book is worth studying slowly to find how to achieve what the Japanese call *ikigai*. Boyle's choice of interviewees and his observations read carefully and with respect for the Buddhist way of life, will help both the scholar, as well as the spiritual seeker to experience the Buddha-mind in the here and the now. For instance, an untrained person experiences emotions which 'are cued by stories generated by social reality, as learned during childhood', while an awakened individual's feelings 'are initiated by interoception ... [and since] there are no attachments to the

social self, most of what we usually call emotions do not exist' (285).

The Buddhist teachers interviewed by Boyle show us how to annihilate 'what we usually call emotions' and thus achieve what in another context, the Buddhist scholar Johannes Bronkhorst terms 'absorption', which both Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi loosely term as the brain in 'flow'. Reading this book and Bronkhorst's corpus, one knows that both Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi owe their concepts of 'flow' as integral to positive psychology to Buddhist mindfulness. While both Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi do not credit Buddhism for their discoveries, since both of them pass off their insights as inventions; Boyle in this book has credited Csikszentmihalyi fulsomely in his bibliography. It is important to note that without Buddhist insights into the psychic apparatus, we would not have the discipline of positive psychology as we know of it in 2019. Now then, how do we achieve the Buddha-mind or the states of 'absorption' and 'flow'?

Fronsdal, whose path-breaking book has been quoted above, came to Buddhism through his 'political' concerns with 'environmental degradation' (121) which finally led him to explore 'Daoism and Buddhism' (122). Fronsdal explains:

Even though my original reasons for sitting ceased, I kept meditating twice a day, forty minutes each time, without any conscious rationale for it. Maybe because I am rationally inclined, I thought it was bizarre that I would do something without a reason. I therefore spent a few months exploring the question, Why do I spend so much time meditating every day, without a reason? Eventually the answer that came to me was that I sat to express myself. In the same way an artist might express herself on canvas, through dance, or some other medium, meditation was the deepest, most complete form of self-expression that I knew.

As I continued to meditate in this way, my subjective experience of myself in meditation changed. The most significant change was an increased sense of personal integrity. Eventually, the contrast between the integrity I felt in meditation and the integrity I felt outside of meditation became an issue for me. Noticing this, I became interested in bringing this meditative integrity into my daily life. I continued to sit every day, without any idea that something was supposed to happen in meditation. In addition, however, I became interested in finding out how to have this inner sense of integrity or purity in the rest of my life (123).

Therefore, Fronsdal's 'absorption' into his self, engendered such a powerful 'flow' that he could finally stop his inner need for wanting people to like him, for he 'saw what a burden it was to try constantly to arrange for this ... social gymnastics' (127). It was through meditation within the Zen tradition at Tassajara, California, that Fronsdal could confront his inner demons and could finally find his 'mind ... very empty, very still' (127). Through dharma practice, Fronsdal could become, as it were, one within and without. One other interview will illustrate how Boyle's book can lead us to the heart of Westerners who have embraced and enriched Buddhism, not by mere academic jingoism but by genuine practice arising from their own need to answer the hard questions of life. We are speaking here of the great Buddhist monk Ajahn Amaro:

Ever since I was a kid I'd had these concerns about freedom and truth. A big conundrum for me was how human beings can be free. We're always bound by various things, like having to follow the rules of your parents, the rules of the school, the rules of society and the judiciary and the police force. We're bound by social conventions, the force of gravity, by not having enough money to buy everything that we might want to have. Everywhere you look you see these limitations. Yet you didn't have to be very imaginative to see that even the very rich, like people who are millionaires, you could see that they are bound by all sorts of restrictions. My godfather was a millionaire, but he was not a particularly happy man. He lived in

a stately home, and he had a lot of difficulties in his life. It doesn't come down to simple things like having more cash or evading the law. So there was this question, how can we really be free? It was really because of coming across those teachings from different spiritual masters that I got the sense that these people knew what freedom was. These were free people. How did they do that? It was clear that it was some kind of internal change that we make as human beings. That was the only thing that could make us free, because it wasn't a matter of being a political leader, or being rich. It wasn't just a matter of deciding, 'I'm going to be a free person, I'm not going to worry about what people think of me. I'm just going to do whatever I like.' You could decide that as much as you wanted to, but it wouldn't work. A decision, or an intention, is not enough (74).

This conviction in Ajahn Amaro that he needed to be truly free and decisions and intentions were not enough to obtain for him this freedom, led Amaro to practise meditation. He, following the Theravada tradition, recognised his mind had become, through his own practice or effort, 'free of any kind of obstruction ... there ... [remained] no desire, there was no aversion, there was no restlessness, there was no doubt, there was no dullness ... [instead] There was a clear sense of how beautiful the mind is ... when not cluttered with obstructions' (79). In short, both Fronsdal and Amaro realised through their chosen lineages of Buddhist meditation-practice that the mind before meditation and after meditation is not the same mind. Buddhist yoga stills the various modifications of the mind.

Boyle's book is thus, a testament to the power of meditation or raja yoga as taught by the ancient Sage Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutra*. It is not for nothing that meditation is considered the best and fastest path for achieving Buddhahood in this life. One only has to read Swami Vivekananda to know how vital it is to practise meditation daily until the goal of self-realisation is achieved in the here and the now.

Boyle has done a service to humanity by first interviewing eleven meditators and then scientifically analysing the results of the interviews. Now we know that 'awakening [through meditation provides] ... ultimate relief from emotional

suffering ... [and] meditation [moreover] has positive effects on mental distress' (255). The truth that remains is that the enmity spoken of in the *Dhammapada* can be quelled through meditation-generated compassion. Once we awaken, then we need no opponents to prove the truth of our ego-claims of verities since then we know that we are empty. Empty in a good, non-pejorative way. Boyle paves the way for *pratyekabuddha*-praxis.

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Your Doctor is Not God: How to be the CEO of Your Health?
Aanchal Bhatia

Bloomsbury Publishing India Pvt Ltd, DDA Complex, LSC Bldg No. 4, Second Floor, Pocket C-6-7, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi 110070. Website: <https://www.bloomsbury.com>. 2016. xix + 187 pp. ₹299. HB. ISBN 9789385936432.

Health is a primary concern for all and apart from the natural illnesses that a person is subject to, there are innumerable traps all around in the field of medicine.

The book under review is a guidebook providing awareness, knowledge, and support around healthcare decision-making. Aanchal Bhatia cites her own experience of being wrongly treated in her young age for tuberculosis and operated for tonsillitis, while her asthma was discovered later. Also, she recounts the 'harrowing experience' during the critical illness of her father-in-law, 'when we were thrown into a situation where we had to massage a bunch of doctors' egos. ... We thought we had the best doctors in the country, and in fact we did; but little did I realise that they were not a team' (7). With her vast experience in healthcare, she points out: 'I realise now that we did not understand to what level a hospital stoops to make money or understand how the hospital's money-making machinery worked' (8).

Bhatia observes that while all ancient traditions employed natural methods for treating and healing a person as a whole, in the fast-paced world the

focus has turned towards disease and away from health, and physicians often tend to view patients as organs or diseases. Based on the facts of thorough research in the medical field, she points out: '2,25,000 deaths per year in the US ... is at the hands of poor decisions by physicians' (31). She says that these deaths are due to 'iatrogenic diseases', which are diseases due to wrong diagnosis and treatment. The bewildering pace in the growth of the medicine industry has made the situation even worse, as 'most of the marketing money is directed at the physicians who do the prescribing, rather than consumers' (34) and 'drug companies are notorious for dumping drugs that are banned in developed nations onto third world countries' (35). Summing up, Bhatia quotes a 1973 article published in *Harvard Crimson*: 'Clearly the physician cannot have the upper-hand in decision-making. We must view him as a craftsman with indispensable technical expertise, but we cannot allow him to assume the position of a God' (46).

To solve this problem, Bhatia suggests the restoration of a value system based on healing and not mere treating, by adopting the approach of metaphysics in medicine, which tries to address the complex dynamics of mind-body relationships. With her training in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) as a clinical psychologist and experience in treating people with psychological problems, she argues that repressing unfulfilled expectations and unexpressed feelings into the subconscious mind might lead to diseases. Bhatia delineates various levels of mental blockages—material, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual. These blockages lead to various kinds of problems in life as related by her along with the various stages of their manifestations. She gives a long table of the metaphysical causes of different ailments and the metaphysical significance of various body parts (150–82).

Bhatia has given suggestions for both doctors and patients to make the best use of both technology and philosophy to evolve better healthcare and a wholesome life. This is a well-researched and documented work for those who wish to take the responsibility of their health, and a must-read for those in the healthcare industry.

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