

RUSSELL WAS NOT BUDDHA

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D. D. Bandiste. *A Study of the Ethics of Bertrand Russell (Russell's Plan of a Happy World)*. Idore, India: Lipika Prakashan, 1984. Pp. [20], 160. Rs. 80/-.

As a thesis for a PH.D. degree, the book has several merits: first, it successfully outlines the nature and scope of Russell's ethics and emphasizes that the promotion of happiness is its fundamental normative principle; second, it contains delightful tree diagrams enabling students to compare, for example, the traditional view with Russell's view of mind; third, it is charming to learn that Russell often writes in Buddha's spirit and that one can talk about his "vision" as well as Russell's eight-fold path; finally, Russell's writings deserve to be widely known and cultivated in India, and Bandiste's book may well contribute to the achievement of that end.

But there are difficulties. Incomplete, and often incorrect, citations may be a cause of consternation, at least to scholars. Perhaps the most flagrant cause of bewilderment is that the author's name is listed as "Bandiste" on the book's cover but as "Bandishte" on the spine and title-page. Bandiste's abridged thesis seems to have the general merits and liabilities of a book I read years ago called *Philosophy Made Simple*. It was highly readable and easy to understand, but then one came to realize that the elimination of a natural complexity of subject-matter was the price paid for the former virtues.

Let me pass in silence over the claim that "there are no weighty arguments against Russell's ethic" (p. 145). Let me instead focus on two points I find especially challenging. It is one thing to say that ultimate moral values are non-cognitive in nature and still another to say that "there are no moral justifications" (p. 146). Bandiste is right on target when he says that, for Russell, increase in kindness is the touchstone of moral progress in the world and that love must be our root motivation. But to suggest it somehow necessarily follows that "love for all or kindness to all must be our root motive" (p. 42) is an error. For Russell it was vital to extend the range of these supportive values but it, in fact, was not possible for man to be universally loving. His implicit argument is as follows: In aiming at the good life, human nature and possibility must be kept in mind. Given human nature, it is not possible for most of us to be universally loving. Therefore in aiming at the good life, we ought not to aim at being universally loving. In this very important sense, Russell was not Buddha.
