



Indian Buddhist Iconography

B. Battacharya

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The study of the Buddhist branch of Indian iconography is one of the most interesting and fascinating of all studies. In Buddhist iconography the whole world is interested because Buddhism is not confined within the limits of India like Hinduism or Jainism, but travelled far and wide beyond the Himalayas to Tibet, China, Japan, Korea and Mongolia on one side, and to Indo-China, Siam, Indonesia, Burma and Ceylon on the other. The fountain head of inspiration relating to Buddhist iconography was furnished by the ancient Sanskrit manuscripts of India, and the ideas and directions contained therein travelled to different countries, notably Tibet and China, where they were coloured by the art and culture characteristics of the respective peoples. We have now reached a stage where it is no longer possible to isolate Buddhist iconography of India from its developments in Tibet and China which were profoundly influenced by the Buddhist Tantras of India. This is the second edition of this famous work which has been thoroughly revised and greatly enlarged. New chapters have been incorporated, old chapters have been redistributed. Many pictures have been deleted, and many new ones have been included in order to make the study as up-to-date as possible. But with the availability of fresh material, after the publication of the first edition, the other side, namely the psychic side, also became apparent. Evidence of this change will be found in the Introduction which is almost wholly re-written, as also in other chapters, notably on the Dhyàni Buddhas. The critics of the first edition will also notice how irregularities pointed out by them have been regularised in the second edition. This edition now is totally re-set for the convenience of the readers as the old text was hand composed and posed many problems in reading, especially the references which were set in a very small font size.

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