



# Power, Wealth and Women in Indian Mahayana Buddhism: The Gandavyuha-sutra (Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism)

By Douglas Osto

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This book examines the concepts of power, wealth and women in the important Mahayana Buddhist scripture known as the *Gandavyuha-sutra*, and relates these to the text's social context in ancient India during the Buddhist Middle Period (0–500 CE).

Employing contemporary textual theory, worldview analysis and structural narrative theory, the author puts forward a new approach to the study of Mahayana Buddhist sources, the 'systems approach', by which literature is viewed as embedded in a social system. Consequently, he analyses the *Gandavyuha* in the contexts of reality, society and the individual, and applies these notions to the key themes of power, wealth and women. The study reveals that the spiritual hierarchy represented within the *Gandavyuha* replicates the political hierarchies in India during Buddhism's Middle Period, that the role of wealth mirrors its significance as a sign of spiritual status in Indian Buddhist society, and that the substantial number of female spiritual guides in the narrative reflects the importance of royal women patrons of Indian Buddhism at the time.

This book will appeal to higher-level undergraduates, postgraduates and scholars of religious studies, Buddhist studies, Asian studies, South Asian studies and Indology.

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#### Review

"...his detailed exposition of the text, which takes into account a number of redactions and translations, must be viewed as a valuable contribution to scholarship on the *Ga??avy?ha* and the *Mah?y?na* period of Indian Buddhism in general. For this reason, this book is a must-read for graduate students and specialists interested in debates regarding the origins and nature of *Mah?y?na* Buddhism in India." - Amy Langenberg, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 21 (2014).

'His work will undoubtedly serve as an excellent introduction to the *Ga??avy?ha* and a welcome resource that both surveys and complements the literature already available for the study of this fascinating scripture' - David V. Fiordalis, *H-Buddhism, August 2009*

#### About the Author

**Douglas Osto** is Lecturer in the Religious Studies Programme at the School of History, Philosophy and Classics, Massey University, New Zealand. His research interests are Mahayana Buddhism, Asian philosophies, narrative theory and gender studies.

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