

NĀGĀRJUNA'S MAHĀYĀNA-VIṂSAKA

(An English Translation with Notes¹)

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THE TEXT

(Tsa) Adoration to Mañjśrī-kumāra-bhūtā.

(Gi) Adoration to the Three Treasures.

(1) The Buddha who is undefiled and enlightened, elucidates well, being full of mercy, that which is not a word nor is to be expressed in words: therefore I adore the [Buddha's] power which is beyond thought.

(2) From the absolute point of view there is no birth, here again is there no annihilation; the Buddha is like sky, so are beings; they are of one nature.

(3) There is no birth on the other side, nor on this side; Nirvāṇa too in its self-nature exists not. Thus when surveyed by a knowledge which knows all things, empty are the created.

(4) The self-nature of all things is regarded as like shadow; they are in substance pure, serene, non-dualistic and same as suchness.

(5) [To think of] self or of no-self is not the truth; they are discriminated by the confused; pleasure and pain are relative; so are passions and emancipation from them.

(6) Transmigration in the six paths of existence, the excellence and enjoyability of the heavenly world, or the great painfulness of the purgatories,—all these come from apprehending the external world [as reality].

(7) One suffers very much when there is nothing pleasurable; even when there are things to enjoy, they pass

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away because they are impermanent; but it is so settled that goods indeed come from good deeds.

(8) Things are produced by false discrimination where there is no origination, so, when the purgatories, etc., are manifested, the erroneous are burned like a forest fire.

(9) Like unto things magic-created, so are the deeds of sentient beings who take the external world [for reality]. The [six] paths of existence are in substance magic-creations, and they exist conditionally.

(10) As the painter painting a terrible monster is himself frightened thereby, so is the fool frightened with transmigration.

(11) As a stupid child making a muddy pool is himself drowned in it, so are sentient beings drowned in the mire of false discrimination and unable to get out of it.

(12) As they regard non-existence as existence they suffer the feeling of pain. In the external world as well as in thought they are bound by the poison of false discrimination.

(13) Seeing that beings are weak, one with a heart of love and wisdom is to discipline oneself for perfect enlightenment in order to benefit them.

(14) Again, if one with such [a heart] accumulates [spiritual] provisions, one attains, from the relative point of view, supreme enlightenment and is delivered from the bondage of false discrimination. Such an enlightened one is a friend of the world.

(15) When a man perceives the true meaning [of reality] as it becomes, he understands that the paths of existence are empty, and cuts asunder [the chain of] the first, middle and last.

(16) Thus regarded, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa have no real substance. Passions have not any substance. Such notions as the first, middle, and last are done away with when their self-nature is understood.

(17) As perception takes place in a dream which when awakened disappears; so it is with sleeping in the darkness of ignorance: when awakened, transmigrations no more obtain.

(18) When things created by magic are seen as such, they have no existence; such is the nature of all things.

(19) They are all nothing but mind, they are established as phantoms; therefore a blissful or an evil existence is matured according to deeds good or evil.

(20) When the mind-wheel ceases to exist all things indeed cease to exist; thus there is no ego in the nature of all things and therefore their nature is pure indeed.

(21) When the ignorant wrapped in the darkness of ignorance conceive eternity or bliss in objects as they appear or as they are in themselves, they drift in the ocean of transmigration.

(22) Where the great ocean of birth and death filled with waters of false discrimination, who could ever reach the other shore unless carried by the raft of the Mahāyāna?

(23) When it is rightly understood that the world arises conditioned by ignorance, where could false discrimination obtain?

NOTES

(1) This verse (Tsa) agrees generally with the Chinese translation. *Snan-gyur-pa* in the 3rd line is the passive form of *dris*, corresponding to the Chinese 宣說 as well as to *bstan* in Gi; should it not then be the causative of *dris*?

As *blon-me-pa*, the 3rd line, in Gi, corresponds to *bsam-mi-khyab*, the 4th line, in Tsa, *blon-med* does not seem to be correct.

Rgyul-bar, of the 3rd line, in Tsa, is my correction according to the Chinese translation 善, adverbially used here. The original reads *rgyal-ba*.

非無言 in the Chinese 3rd line does not appear in Gi. *Brjod-par bya-ba-min*, the 2nd line, Tsa, corresponds to *brjod-du med*, Gi, the original Sanskrit probably was *na vācāvācyā*, and this was misread by the Chinese translator as *vācā avācyā*.

(2) That *hgag-pa*, 2nd line, Gi, is changed into *grol-ba*, is justifiable according to the idea upheld in Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamika Śāstra*, chapter on Nirvāna, where the author refutes the view of nirvāna as non-existence (*abhāva*), destruction (*vīnaśa*), annihilation (*nīrodha*), and so on.

隨轉, Chinese 2nd line, seems to be the wrong rendering of *ni vrit*, which the translator read for *anu vrit*.

De-ñid-du (Tsa and Gi) is read in my translation as *tasmin eva*, but as the Chinese has 無性, could this have been *de-(kho-na)-ñid-du (tat-tvena)*?

(3) The first line, Tsa, agrees with the Chinese, but how shall we reconcile this with *bshin-skhyes-pa-yi (yonīśa utpannah)*? *Rtenskyes* (Gi) agrees with the Chinese 緣所生 (*pratitya utpanna*): this evidently corresponds to *mya-nan hdas (nirvāṇam, nirvṛita)*; but in what relation do they stand to each other?

Evidently *hdus-byas (saṃskṛita)* in both Tibetan texts is read by the Chinese translator as *saṃskara 諸行*. *Tshurol* (first line, Tsa) is *tshul-rol* in the original text, the correction was made according to the Chinese reading.

(4) *Dag*, (3rd line, Gi) is *bdag* in the original, but as this corresponds to *rnam-par-dag* (Tsa), *bdag* is incorrect. *Rnam-dag (viśuddhi)* is translated in the Chinese as 無染.

(5) The first line, Tsa, is the assertion of the idea as is expounded in the second stanza in the *Śūnyatā-saptati* (空七十論), where we have “*bdog-med bdog-med min*, there is neither self nor no-self.” To deny both egoism (*ahamkāra*) and non-egoism (*nirahamkāra*) is the fundamental idea of Nāgārjuna philosophy, which is elucidated in his *Madhyamika Śāstra*, Chapter on Ego (*ātma-pāriḥṣā*).

The Chinese translation is in agreement with Gi but not with Tsa.

Bden-pa, (first line, Tsa) is rendered here as *satyah* according to the usual method of transcription, but as it is to be regarded as corresponding to *de-ñid-du* (first line, Gi), it may be meant for *tattva*. In this case the difference between the two Tibetan texts hangs on the particle, *na*, or the privative prefix, *a*.

(6) As the last syllable of the fourth line, Gi, is lost, the sense is not quite clear, but Tsa and Chinese (third line) suggest the following reading, "The objective world is not to be considered real."

(7) The first and the second line, Gi, have again, "pain, old age, disease, and impermanency, which are not enjoyable"; this corresponds to the Chinese. But as we have in the third and the fourth line, Gi, "pleasure and pain variably mature (*vipaka*) from all kinds of karma," the latter half of this stanza differ in all three texts.

Rga-dan-nad, second line, Gi, was originally *rga-dan-na*? the correction is due to the Chinese translation.

(8) The missing second line, Tsa, may have been something corresponding to the Chinese second line, which reads "the fire of passions burns."

Rtog-pas, first line, Tsa, was originally *rtogs-pas*, which is here corrected from the Chinese reading 妄分別.

(10) *Gśin-rje* in Gi evidently corresponds to *yaksha*, and its original probably was *yama*.

(11) Tsa generally agrees with the Chinese especially in the first and the second line; in Gi the agreement is confined to the first line while the rest reads quite differently: "As ignorant betake themselves to pleasures, even so are all beings drowned in the mire of discrimination which is pleasing."

(12) The last syllable in the first line, Gi, originally

read *min*, but judging from its relation to the succeeding line *min* should be *vis* as in Tsa.

Rtog beginning the fourth line, Gi, was originally *dogs*, but in accordance with Tsa and also with the Chinese 虛妄心, *rtog* has been adopted here.

Gnod-par-byed (*bādhayate*) must have come from *bad-hyate* in Tsa.

As regards the third line, Gi, inasmuch as *ñam-na* is derived from *saṃśaya*, we are led to the Chinese 疑惑 (uncertainty, doubt), but how shall we understand it in the light of the third line, Tsa? Further evidence is needed to clear this up.

(13) Gi reads "seeing them without shelter, the Buddha as he has a pitying heart applies himself to enlightenment for the benefit of all beings." 救 (salvation) in the Chinese text corresponds to *śaraṇa*, Gi, rather than to *sāra*, Tsa. 佛 (Buddha) is the subject in the Chinese as well as in Gi.

(14) *Kun-rdsoḅ* (*saṃvṛiti*) stands in contrast to *para-mārtha*; according to the latter view, there is no merit to accumulate, no provisions to store, they are all empty in essence, all is absolute quietness where we cannot speak of gain or loss. Therefore, to say that perfect enlightenment is, as in the present stanza, realisable through the accumulation of spiritual merit, is in accordance with the *saṃvṛitya* view of truth.

Chinese translation is evidently from a text considerably different in form from the Tibetan versions.

(15) "The beginning, middle, and ending are laid aside,"—the idea also appears in the latter half of the twenty-fifth stanza in *Yuktishashṭika* (六十如理論): 從無明種生, 離初中後際, *ma-rig rgyu-las śin-tu byun*, *thog-ma dbus mthaḥ rnam-par spans*: (it grows from the seed of ignorance; the beginning, middle, and ending are laid aside). According to Candrakīrti, "As all component things are produced from the seed of ignorance as cause, they have no existence

of their own. In order to explain that they have no self-nature in themselves, Nāgārjuna says that the beginning and middle and ending are laid aside; in other words, it means that there is no production, no abiding, and no destruction." *Ji-ltar ño-bo-ñid-kyis grub-pa (med-pa de-ltar bstan-paḥi phyir, thog-ma dbus mthaḥ nam-par spañs, shes-bya-ba) stone-te skye-ba dañ gnas-pa dan ḥjig-pa dañ bral-ba shes-bya--baḥi tha-tshig-go.* (Bstan-ḥgyur. B. 24. 21 b. 2-3.)

The same thought is expressed in "kālapariksha prakaranam," of Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamika Śāstra: uttama-ādharma—madhyādin—ca lakshyet.*

從生, first line, Chinese, evidently corresponds to "pratītya sanutpāda," of the first line, Tsa; against this, Gi has in the second line, *utpannajñānāḥ*: in what relation does this stand to the Chinese as well as to Tsa? Can we regard the Chinese 生已 as equivalent to *utpanna*?

(16) According to Gi, the present stanza reads; "They do not see the ego (reality) as belonging to saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. There is no defiling, no changing; there is serenity from the first, and lucidity." This corresponds to the Chinese.

How did the fourth line of the preceding stanza come to be repeated here in the Tsa text? There must have been some confusion.

(17) The second line, Tsa, originally stood *so-sor rtog-pa snañ-ba-yin*, but in accordance with the Chinese and Gi, *rtog* was changed into *rtogs* and *yin* into *min*.

(19) All three agree generally; especially the Chinese 安立 in the second line is the exact rendering of Tibetan *gnas-pa*. If we follow the Chinese, *nam*s in the fourth line may be altered into *smin*.

(21) This stanza (Tsa) seems to be the amalgamation of the two stanzas 16 and 17 (Gi) which correspond to the Chinese 18 and 19.

Gi, 16, reads: "When such thoughts as eternity, ego,

and bliss are entertained in objects which have no self-nature, the night of avarice and ignorance falls and there arises the ocean of beings.”

This roughly corresponds to the Chinese, 18, line 2, and to 19, lines 3 and 4.

Gi, 17, has: “While there is no birth in its self-nature, worldly people discriminate that there is birth: discrimination as well as sentient beings have no existence.”

This is equivalent to the Chinese, 18, lines 3 and 4, and 19, line 2.

Tsa is the translation by Paṇḍita (堪布) Candrakumāra and Bhikṣu Śakhayaprabhā; Gi is by Paṇḍita Ānanda of Kaśmīr and Bhikṣu Kīrtibhūtiprajñā of Lotsāba.