

BOOK REVIEW

MADHYAMAKĀLAMKĀRA OF ŚĀNTARAKṢITA: *With his own commentary or Vṛtti and with the Subcommentary or Pañjikā of Kamalaśīla.* Edited and translated by Masamichi ICHIGO. Kyoto: Buneido, 1985. cxlv, 409+217 pp. Bibliography and Indices. 2 Vols. 18,000 yen.

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The *Madhyamakālamkāra* of Śāntarakṣita is a major philosophical work of Indian Buddhism, being one of the fundamental treatises of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis within the later development of the Madhyamaka in India. Its author was the Buddhist paṇḍita Śāntarakṣita, who was from Sahor in eastern India (Vaṅga: Bengal-Bihar). According to the biographical sources, he was born a prince in a royal lineage of that region. He flourished in the mid-to late-8th century, and died in the 780s. These dates, unlike those of so many masters of Indian Buddhism, are fairly firm because of his dateable activities in Tibet toward the end of his life. According to the Tibetan sources and their interpretation by most modern scholars, Śāntarakṣita visited Tibet twice: once in about the year 763, and again in the 770s. He participated at the founding of Bsam-yas, the first Buddhist monastery of Tibet, in c. 775 during his second visit (its construction was completed twelve years later in c. 787). He ordained the first group of six Tibetan monastic novices in c. 779 and died in Tibet in c. 788.¹

Śāntarakṣita's main aim in writing the *Madhyamakālamkāra* was to establish the Madhyamaka theory of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) through the reasoning of "absence of oneness and manyness." He stated his basic argument as a formal proof in the opening verse of the work:

[Thesis:] These entities postulated as real by Buddhist and non-

Buddhist schools in reality have no intrinsic nature.

[Reason:] Because they are devoid of a singular and a plural nature.

[Example:] Like a reflection.

In the first main section of the work, Śāntarakṣita defends this argument by reasoning, showing that the structure of the argument is sound and is free from the relevant defects of the Indian inference. To show that it does not entail the fallacy of the unestablished (*asiddha*) reason, he takes up an examination of external entities (verses 2-15) and mind (16-60) as postulated by the various Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools. He also acknowledges (v. 62) that the reason is absent from the class of heterogeneous instances. The second main section of the work (63-90) consists of an investigation according to scripture, in which he examines successively the surface-level of truth (63-66), the ultimate truth (67-82), and liberation (83-90). In the final section he very briefly states the central tenets of his own system (91-93): The ordinary sphere in which causality, etc., come into play is nothing but mind (i. e. no external entities are possible), but this "mind" too must be understood as devoid of any self-nature (91-92). This can be best understood by one who has fathomed the two great schools—the Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra—with the help of Buddhist logic and epistemology (Pramāṇa) (93). Then he concludes with a statement of the superiority of the Tathāgata and his teaching (94-97).

In consonance with Śāntarakṣita's characterization of his own approach in verse 93, the work incorporates methods and concepts of the three main branches of Mahāyāna scholastic philosophy—the Pramāṇa, Yogācāra and Mādhyamaka—while ultimately it was intended as a gradual introduction into the latter. By the time of Śāntarakṣita, the development of all four major philosophical schools of Buddhism was complete. The Mādhyamika scholars of this school therefore sought in fact to take into account the whole of Buddhist philosophy: the different schools were evaluated, ordered, and traversed as necessary steps leading to the pinnacle, which was the Mādhyamaka. Later Tibetan scholars in the traditions of Rngog and Sa-skye (such as Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-seng-ge [1429-1489] of the Sa-skye-pa) considered such a

step-by-step systematic examination and refutation (*bkag pa'i rim pa*) of the theories of the other Buddhist schools to be one of the legitimate methods by which the Madhyamaka could be taught.² And such a systematic approach makes the *Madhyamakālamkāra* of interest to modern scholars of other branches of Indian philosophy since Śāntarakṣita was obliged by his method to criticise the most relevant ontological and epistemological theories of all schools known to him—even those of the non-Buddhists (though his larger work the *Tattvasaṃgraha* contains much more detailed criticisms of the rival non-Buddhist schools).

The *Madhyamakālamkāra* (hereafter MA) also occupied an important place in the development of Buddhist scholasticism in Tibet. Probably one reason for this was Śāntarakṣita's influential role in the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet. The treatise and its commentaries were first translated and introduced near the end of the earliest period of the expansion (*snga dar*) of Buddhism in Tibet. They were translated in the late-8th or early-9th century by the great translator Ye-shes-sde and his circle. But Glang-dar-ma's persecution of Buddhism in the 840s put an end to any tradition of continuous study of these works that may have existed then, and the MA was afterward neglected for about two centuries, as were most other philosophical and doctrinal works. But its importance was reasserted from the late-11th century onward (i.e. from about one hundred years into the later propagation [*phyi dar*] period) through the activities of Rngog lo-tśā-ba Blo-ldan-shes-rab (1059-1109). The latter reintroduced the study of the MA in Tibet in the last decades of the 11th century, after having studied it in Kashmir. It was one of three texts known together as the "Three Svātantrika Treatises of Eastern [India]" (*rang rgyud shar gsum*) that Rngog taught at his seminary Gsang-phu Ne'u-thog and commented on.³ In the next three centuries these three works, which in addition to the MA included Jñānagarbha's *Satyadvayaavibhaṅga* and Kamalaśīla's *Madhyamakāloka*, were actively taught and studied in the main Tibetan seminaries—especially in those that were linked with the scholastic traditions of Gsang-phu Ne'u-thog. However, in the Dge-lugs-pa school, which was founded in the early-15th century, they did not receive the same attention. This was because Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1419) and his followers

deemphasized them in favor of the pure Prāsaṅgika approach of Candrakīrti. But certain features of Śāntarakṣita's doctrine can be traced in the thought of some of the greatest Tibetan masters, especially those who flourished in the 12th through 14th centuries and certain later scholars from non-Dge-lugs-pa schools.

Till now Śāntarakṣita's best known work among modern scholars has been his great philosophical compendium, the *Tattvasaṃgraha* (TS). The simple reason for this is that the TS (with its commentary by his disciple Kamalaśīla) survives in Sanskrit and therefore could become the object of many studies by Indologists, including its only full English translation by Ganganatha Jha, which appeared as long ago as 1937.⁴ Because the MA autocommentary refers to the TS, the MA can be considered one of Śāntarakṣita's mature, later works. And as a concise statement of his own philosophical position and method, the MA was clearly the more important and influential of the two. Yet since the MA and its commentaries survive only in Tibetan, few modern scholars of Indian Buddhism have been adequately equipped to study it. In the last two decades, however, a number of articles on the MA have appeared, mostly the work of Japanese scholars. One noteworthy example is the article in English by Professor Y. Kajiyama, "Later Mādhyamikas on Epistemology and Meditation," *Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation: Theory and Practice* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1978), pp. 117-132, which contains a clear and quite detailed summary of the contents of the MA.⁵ As one of the few examples of studies by a non-Japanese scholar there is the brief summary of the MA presented by Professor D. Seyfort Rugg in his *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, A History of Indian Literature, Vol. 7-1 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981), pp. 90-92.

In light of the importance of the MA, students of Indian and Tibetan philosophy and Buddhism have good reason to welcome the appearance of Professor Masamichi Ichigo's recently published Tibetan edition and English translation of the MA basic verses (*kārikās*), with the edited Tibetan texts of its autocommentary and Kamalaśīla's sub-commentary. This publication is the fruit of the author's many years of research on the MA. Previously he has contributed other introductory studies on

the same treatise, including his article in English, "A Synopsis of the Madhyamakālaṃkāra of Śāntarakṣita (1)," *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 20-2 (1972), pp. (36)-(42), and several publications in Japanese. His most recent contribution, the subject of this review, is in fact his doctoral dissertation.

The publication consists of two volumes, the first being the Tibetan texts and English translation, accompanied by an English introduction, an outline of the contents of the MA, and four indices. A large part of this volume (i. e. the introduction, topical outline, text of the basic verses, and English translation of those verses) is also forthcoming in *Materials for the Study of Mahāyāna Literature*, Michigan Papers in Buddhist Studies, No. 1 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Collegiate Institute for the Study of Buddhist Literature, 1986). The second volume is in Japanese, and it includes six essays on the philosophical method and doctrinal positions of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. These essays take up the first half of this smaller volume, and they discuss such important questions as the purpose of Śāntarakṣita and his disciple for composing these treatises, the arguments used by Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla and Haribhadra to criticise the theory of "atoms" (*paramāṇu*), Śāntarakṣita's criticism of the theory of the real existence of an external world, Śāntarakṣita's criticism of Yogācāra theory, the relation of Śubhagupta and Śāntarakṣita, and the soteriology of Śāntarakṣita, especially as expounded in MA 67-90. The second half of this volume consists of the author's annotated Japanese translation of the MA *kārikās* and autocommentary. This volume too has a separate index. The present review will restrict itself to a consideration of the first volume only.

Professor Ichigo has broken new ground in his English explanations of the MA and its background, and this becomes clear already from the first sections of his introductory essays. His discussion there of the central tenet of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka school, being mainly an analysis of MA 91-92, is lucid and convincing. In this connection he describes in detail the theories of conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*) and epistemology held by Śāntarakṣita and his teacher Jñānagarbha. He goes on to treat the theory of non-production of Śāntarakṣita, and the

position of this theory within the Madhyamaka as a whole. He clarifies in particular the importance of Jñānagarbha as the leader in the establishment of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka school, and points out some deficiencies in the classification of this master in the *grub-mtha'* treatise by the 14th-century Tibetan scholar Dbus-pa Blo-gsal. It can rightly be said that one of the basic values of the Tibetan *grub-mtha'* literature is that it systematically gives accounts of the comparatively little-known systems of Indian Buddhist philosophy, notably the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis.⁶ But the appearance of this edition and translation makes it relatively easy now to verify the interpretations of the Tibetan doxographers through direct reference to one of the school's fundamental texts and the basic commentaries thereon. One point I would like to have seen explained further in the introduction is the indebtedness of Śāntarakṣita to Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, for example in how self-cognition (*rang rig: svasamvedana*) was established (pp. lxxi-lxxv).

Professor Ichigo's rendering of the ninety-seven basic verses of the MA into English is the first complete translation of this work into any European language.⁷ The translation is generally quite reliable. The author has adopted the convention of putting his own material insertions within parentheses while indicating by means of square brackets those clarifications deriving from Kamalaśīla's subcommentary. Occasionally the hyphens or square brackets were misplaced or omitted during the translating or rewriting of the work. In the first lines of verses 17, 18 and 19, for instance, the subject "knowledge" is not explicitly expressed, and thus parentheses should have been used. In verse 20 there are parentheses within parentheses. In a few passages the omission of parentheses might lead to a misunderstanding, such as in the last line of verse 67, where "we hold no position" should be within parentheses, if it is to be included at all. Here the point seems to be that there is no occasion for dispute (*rgol ba'i gnas med*), and the specific matter of the Mādhyamika's holding no "position" (*phyogs: pakṣa*) is not raised here by Śāntarakṣita. But in most cases, the slight loss of technical precision has been more than compensated for by the fluent and very readable rendering. The translator (together with his

editors) has almost always managed to avoid the stiff and opaque phraseology which is endemic in so many translations of Buddhist philosophical and doctrinal writings.

The only two cases where the general sense of a verse seemed to be misconstrued were numbers 33 and 75. I would translate the first as follows:

I have never experienced in any cognition an appearing of white, etc., whose nature is “atoms” and whose nature is single and impartite. (33)

In other words, I take the word *bdag* as “I” and understand it to be the subject of the verse. I would translate verse 75 in this way:

Those who infer by means of probative reasons—(i. e. reasons) which remove false imputations regarding that (emptiness)—can understand. Those Lords of Yogis understand it directly. (75)

Here Śāntarakṣita is saying that there are two means for understanding emptiness—inference and direct perception—and that these are used by two different types of persons. Inference makes use of a logical reason such as “the absence of oneness and manyness,” which can remove erroneous imputations and can establish an understanding of emptiness. On the other hand, the great meditators who have realized the Gnosis (*ye shes: jñāna*) free from discursive thought do not need inference, but can perceive it directly.

A few other words or phrases that might have been improved on are the following:

verses 12 and 13: “the third atom.” Better: “another atom” (*rdul phran gzhan*), because in this model there are more than three “atoms”

and also one cannot render the *gzhan* in 13 b as “third.” So 13 ab can be translated: “But if one maintains the side which faces another ‘atom’ as being different, ...”

v. 20 d: “a secondary datum.” Better: “merely a designation” (*gdag pa tsam*).

v. 21 d: “(secondary) cognition.” Better: “cognitive image” (*rnam pa*).

v. 32 b: “(of a single color).” Better: “of a single cognitive image” (*rnam pa sna gcig*).

v. 62 b: *rnam pa gzhan dang ldan pa yi* //. This line was omitted from

the translation, though it did not adversely affect the basic sense of the verse. v. 81 c: “as in meditational practice.” Better: “as (when one) has become accustomed (or habituated to something).” The sense is admittedly not very easy, but the Tibetan is *goms*, not *bsgom*. Cf. another correct rendering of this term in verse 83 as “internalized.” v. 84 d: “the distinction between.” Better: “the established relationship (or system) of” (*rnam par gzbag pa*). In the following verse the same term as a verb has been more correctly translated as “established.” verses 88 and 90: “clinging.” Better “objectifying” or “objective apprehension” as a translation of *dmigs pa* (*upalambha*), though conceptual clinging or attachment (*mngon par zhen pa*: *abhiniveśa*) is involved in the process of habitual objectification. The same term *dmigs pa* was translated before (verse 32) as “cognition.” v. 94 a: “neither by the Vaiṣṇavite nor the Shāivite school, etc.” Better: “Neither by Viṣṇu nor by Īśvara (i. e. Śiva) nor other [mundane deities]” (*khyab dang dbang la sogs*). In some of the above cases the translator apparently has given a paraphrase based on the explanations in the commentary or subcommentary. Though this might be necessary sometimes in an unannotated translation (especially of the basic verses of a philosophical treatise), the explanatory words or phrases should always be enclosed within parentheses or square brackets.

When going through this English translation of *kārikā* verses, the reader will sometimes feel the need for explanatory notes to the translation. These verses were, after all, meant by Śāntarakṣita mainly as summarizing devices (to aid memorization), and they were not meant to be studied without a commentary. A detailed annotation in English was evidently beyond the scope of the project as it was conceived, though readers of Japanese can refer to the notes to the Japanese translation of *kārikās* and autocommentary in Vol. 2. For those who cannot read the Japanese and who are also unable to utilize the Tibetan texts, much help is given by an outline of subject headings (pp. civ-cviii). (The same subject headings in English appear in the edited text of the

autocommentary, where they let one ascertain at a glance the polemical context of each verse and comment.) For non-specialist readers, however, this will not always be enough to grasp what is at issue in every argument. For instance, it is not immediately apparent in verse 57 that Śāntarakṣita here is excluding the possibility of the two relations admitted as real by Dharmakīrti, namely: identity (*tādātmya*) and causation (*tadutpatti*). Therefore it might be a good idea for such readers also to consult the above-mentioned summary by Professor Kajiyama as they work through the treatise.

For specialists in Buddhist studies the greatest contributions made in this volume are surely the editions of the Tibetan texts. First there is given the separate text of the ninety-seven basic verses with variant readings and notes. Then after the English translation, the basic verses are given again (though here without notes), together with the autocommentary and Kamalaśīla's sub-commentary. To establish his text, the editor has compared the readings of the four available printed Tanjur editions. Often the readings formed the two typical pairs—Nar-thang and Peking making up one tradition and Derge and Cone another. The arrangement of the texts in this book is very convenient: the basic verses and autocommentary are put on even-numbered pages, and they face the corresponding text of Kamalaśīla's subcommentary on the odd-numbered pages. Here too one misses the presence of explanatory notes on problematic readings, though there is no doubt that the editor has chosen the right readings in the vast majority of cases. One is puzzled, for instance, by the phrase *sa chu la sogs* in verse 12 d, which he translates as "such as a mountain." From *Tattvasaṃgraha* 1990 we learn that the corresponding Sanskrit probably reads *bhūḍharāḍi*, which might indeed mean "a mountain, etc." But for *bhūḍhara*, one would have expected to see the Tibetan equivalent *sa 'dzin*, which is a recognized synonym of *ri* "mountain." What could account for *sa chu*? The autocommentary does not seem to help, since in the parallel passage there occurs the words *sa'i dkyil 'khor* "the earth-maṇḍala," apparently a reference to the fundamental earth disc of Abhidharma cosmology.

There were only a few places where misprints or doubtful readings

were immediately noticeable:

p. ci, n. 69: Yukti-

p. cxv, *kārikās*, v. 13a: *ba 'iṃos=ba'i ṃos*

p. cxxxi, l. 5 (*kārikās*, colophon): *bned=bande*

p. 20, l. 3: *je=de?*

p. 21, l. 20: *sgam po=skam po.*

p. 142, l. 3: omit *can?*

p. 158, l. 10: better *'khrul ba'i bag chags?*

p. 159, l. 4: better *'khrul ba skye ba'i bag chags?*

p. 202, l. 1: *gal te* better in its original position

p. 250, l. 15: *sprul=sbrul*

p. 294, l. 12: better *'dis?*

p. 295, l. 14: better *'dis?*

p. 396: *bdus pa'i don=bsdus pa'i don.*

The editor has rendered the invaluable service of locating many references to or quotes from Śāntarakṣita's sources and those of his *pūrvapakṣas*. Just to have traced these many quotations to their Sanskrit originals or to the Tibetan or Chinese canons was a formidable achievement which anyone who has attempted this sort of work can readily appreciate. Many of the basic verses of the MA were borrowed directly or adapted from the TS. But quite a few others were taken over from Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika*. The numerous cases of such borrowings or influence have been indicated in the notes, and the identical or parallel Sanskrit texts have also been provided when accessible—an invaluable help for understanding some of the more obscure lines.

The last section of the volume is also very useful, consisting of four painstakingly assembled indexes: (1) of the sources quoted in the autocommentary and sub-commentary, (2) of the verses of the MA and those found in the autocommentary and subcommentary, (3) of general terms and proper names in Sanskrit, and (4) of general terms and proper names in Tibetan.

In a ground-breaking work of this scope it is natural that there will be a few places where different readings and interpretations might be suggested. But the remarks and suggestions made above are marginal comments, and they do not detract substantially from the importance

and great usefulness of the present publication. It is the best introduction to this major work now available, and the edited texts presented here will remain valuable sources for years to come. In effect, this study is an invitation to other scholars to conduct further research on the major writings and ideas of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka. Thanks to its publication, the way has been made much easier for those who follow.

NOTES

¹For the chronology of Śāntarakṣita and further references and studies on it, see for instance D. Seyfort Ruegg, "Towards a Chronology of the Madhyamaka School," *Indological and Buddhist Studies* (Cambera: 1982), pp. 508 and 524, n. 17; and D. Seyfort Ruegg, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India, A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. VII, Fasc. 1 (Wiesbaden: 1981), pp. 88 f. and n. 284. More or less the same chronology is accepted by a number of Japanese scholars who work on Tibetan history and Buddhist philosophy (for example, Z. Yamaguchi and K. Mimaki). But there is also a school of thought in Japan that attempts to place the dates of Śāntarakṣita's life several decades earlier, i.e. to the period c. 680-740. See for instance H. Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism, A Survey with Bibliographical Notes*, Intercultural Research Institute Monograph No. 9, (Hirakata, Osaka: Kansai University of Foreign Studies, 1980), p. 281 and n. 73. More recently a consensus seems to be growing among some Japanese scholars that the "Council of Tibet" took place c. 780, thus necessitating a revision of Śāntarakṣita's death date from c. 740 to at least the 770s. See for instance Seizan Yanagida, "The *Li-Tai Fa-Pao Chi* and the Ch'an Doctrine of Sudden Awakening," *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series 5, pp. 14 and 46, n. 2.

²See Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-seng-ge, *Rgyal ba thams cad kyi thugs kyi dgongs pa zab mo dbu ma'i de kho na nyid spyi'i ngag gis ston pa nges don rab gsal*, Sa skya pa'i bka' 'bum (Tokyo: Tōyō Bunko, 1969), Vol. 12 (ca 14a-14b). Cf. the similar procedure of Sa-skya Paṇḍita (1182-1251) in his *Mkhas pa rnams 'jug pa'i sgo*, Sa skya pa'i bka' 'bum (Tokyo: Tōyō Bunko: 1968), Vol. 5, pp. 107.2.3-108.1.2 (*tha* 53b.3-55a. 2).

³Rngog's *bsdus don* commentaries on these three treatises are listed near the end of the addendum to Bu-ston's *Chos 'byung*. See the edition of S. Nishioka, "Index to the Catalogue Section of Bu-ston's 'History of Buddhism,'" *Annual Report of the Institute for the Study of Cultural Exchange, University of Tokyo*, No. 6 (1983), p. 118, nos. 3080, 3081, and 3084. In addition, he is also said to have composed a *rnam bshad* commentary on the *Satyadvayavibhaṅga*. See no. 3086.

⁴For translations of and studies on the *Tattvasaṃgraha*, see for example Karl Potter, *Bibliography of Indian Philosophies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), pp. 125 ff., and Peter Pfandt, *Mahāyāna Texts Translated into Western Languages, A Bibliographical Guide* (Bonn: Religionswissenschaftliches Seminar, 1983), pp. 104 f.

⁵For other studies in Japanese, see the sources listed in M. Ichigo, "A Synopsis of the Madhyamakālaṃkāra of Śāntarakṣita," *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 20-2 (1972), p. (37), note 4; in K. Mimaki, *Blo gsal grub mtha'* (Kyoto: Zinbun Kagaku Kenkyusyo, Kyoto University, 1982), pp. xxxiv and 5, note 18; and in the bibliography of the work by M. Ichigo under review, p. xx, under MA.

⁶K. Mimaki, *Blo gsal grub mtha'*, pp. 4 f.

⁷See Peter Pfandt, *Mahāyāna Texts Translated into Western Languages*, p. 118, where the only mention of the MA is in connection with the quotes from Nāgārjuna's lost *Vyāvahārasiddhi* found in Śāntarakṣita's autocommentary.