

LOST BUDDHIST TEXTS : THE RATIONALE OF THEIR RECONSTRUCTION IN SANSKRIT

In this paper* I intend to spell out briefly the rationale of reconstructing in Sanskrit those philosophical and other Buddhist texts which, unfortunately, are not available in that language. Although such works are not available as they were originally written in Sanskrit, Tibetan or Chinese translations of many of them are fortunately extant. This is a gratifying and encouraging feature of the prevalent situation. We do not wish to go, in this paper, into the tricky question as to how far such Tibetan or Chinese translations of the concerned Buddhist texts are reliable. Instead, presuming that by and large they are reliable, we wish to concentrate on the problem of the necessity of their reconstruction in Sanskrit.

The present paper has three sections. In the first, an attempt is made to outline contours of the diversified culture within the framework of the broadly monolithic and unifying civilization that flourished in this sub-continent. We shall also attempt to sketch some salient features of such a civilization. In the second, importance of Sanskrit is taken into account as a common medium of intellectual exchange. We shall consider importance of this sort of medium, which contributed to the widening and deepening of the vistas of comprehension through feed-back—both positive and negative—without insulating and isolating one trend of thought from the others. In the last section, we hope to highlight some important aspects of the necessity of

reconstruction in Sanskrit of those Buddhist texts which are unfortunately not available in it. This we intend to do in a two-fold way. On the one hand, we hope to bring to surface some important points of strength of such a venture which are decisive from the points of view of the history and growth of intellectual enterprise in this sub-continent. On the other hand, we also intend to show that the path of reconstructing in Sanskrit those Buddhist works which are not available in it is more likely to save us from succumbing to those modes of weakness and vulnerability which other avenues of articulating the content, if not of reconstruction, of the concerned Buddhist texts from their Tibetan or Chinese translations seem perhaps to be inherently open.

I

Inclusive Framework of the Monolithic Civilization and Varied Cultural Strands in it :

It is pointless to harp upon superficial similarity between animal and human modes of life. It is equally unilluminating to subscribe to the view that both animal and human lives are equally mechanical and passive in character. It is a fact that human life falls apart from animal life in certain marked important respects. One important distinguishing aspect of human life is that overall it is consciously purposive in character. Right from ancient times human life is seen to be geared towards realization of certain goals and aspirations. Their plurality has been held to be necessary for taking into account human life in its richness, variety and complexity. Unitary conception of human aspiration is held to be too simplistic in character. Consequently, it does not seem to be taken seriously, especially because it is unable to give satisfactory account of human life in its complexity. Man's initial conception of human aspiration might have been ambiguous and fraught with certain difficulties.

But in course of time, man's conception of legitimate goals and aspirations of human life began to crystallise gradually and eventually different conceptions of legitimate goals and aspirations human life surfaced on the horizon and began engaging attention of the concerned. As we shall soon see, such a conception of legitimate goals and aspirations of human life is an important aspect of any worthwhile civilization.

The most ancient and the oldest concern of man must obviously have been satiation of needs. This sort of concern must have, as is evident, made man basically confined himself to the present—neither much bothering about the past (except in the sense of learning from the immediate and proximate past) nor about the distant future (except perhaps the immediate one). In course of time, however, the unitary aspiration of satiation of needs, geared basically towards the problems of survival and procreation, came to be replaced in this sub-continent, as also perhaps elsewhere, by a pluralistic conception of legitimate human aspirations.

Any worthwhile civilization must bring forth consideration of three important aspects of it—(a) the sort of legitimate aspirations and goals of human life it accepts, (b) the sort of orientation towards them and towards life in general that it adopts, and (c) the mode/s of realization of such goals in human life which it makes available, so that they do not remain merely utopian in character. In addition, there is one more consideration also which is at stake in appropriate conception of a civilization. However, to avoid digression at the present juncture of our argument, we shall return to it at a later stage.

We said above that every civilization, including the one which flourished in this sub-continent, must bring forth a certain pluralistic conception of legitimate human aspirations.

Even restricting to the civilization which flourished in this sub-continent in ancient times, for fear of digression, we do not wish to go into the details of two questions in this paper. They are : whether (a) the same pluralistic conception of legitimate human aspirations – say the *Puruṣārthas*¹ – was accepted by various adherents of different trends of thought which flourished in this sub-continent from their commencement, and (b) the same pattern of interrelationship among them too was accepted by all of them. Leaving aside such issues of historically intricate concern we may proceed to highlight three important salient features² of the sort of monolithic civilization that flourished in this sub-continent and within the general framework of which alone perhaps the whole exercise of the reconstruction of the lost Buddhist texts in Sanskrit could be made some satisfactory sense of.

(A) *Articles of Faith and Belief not Falling outside the Jurisdiction of Bhāratavarṣa*³ –

In this sub-continent, before the advent of people reared, nurtured and brought up in a different mould of civilization three principal groups of people with differential cultural perspective seem to have flourished. They are : (i) those who owed allegiance to the *Brahmanical* tradition in one form or the other, (ii) those who owed allegiance to what is known as *Śrāmaṇic* tradition, within which two important strands are discernible, viz. the *Bauddha* and the *Jaina*, and (iii) those which owed allegiance to neither of the first two perspectives. The latter, further, seem to fall into two main groups : (a) independents like *Cārvākas* and (b) tribals as well as aboriginals. In spite of such differences among them, however, all of them seem to have subscribed to one commitment. It is this that none of them ever accepted any article of faith and belief which did

not fall within the jurisdiction of what may be called *Bhārata-varṣa* in the most inclusive and extended sense of that term.⁴

Further, the article of faith under consideration may be abstract or concrete, proximate or remote, external or internal. That one subscribed to such an article of faith was considered to be a mark of identification, re-identification and recognition of anyone in this sub-continent to be belonging to Indian civilization. This sort of broad and flexible spectrum was sufficiently strong enough to supply a sort of unifying tie to the diversity of cultural and intellectual strands which flourished in this sub-continent. One could call it a sort of civilizational *Swadeśī*.⁵ It is this sort of tie which seems to have ensured non-alienation of any group or cultural strand—no matter whether central or peripheral, *Tāntric* or religiously sectarian, operative in mountains or plains, in the north or south, east or west. Today we fail to realise significance and importance of this kind of unifying tie—although in a sense negative in character—especially because we seem to have lost track of sensitivity to and sensibility as well of discrimination of what is native to our civilization and what is foreign to it. This point has number of implications. For fear of digression, however, we do not wish to pursue it here further.

(B) *Satisfaction as General Orientation to Life* : Various trends of thought and culture—no matter whether *Brahmanical*, *Śrāmaṇic* or *Tribal*—which flourished in this sub-continent, seem to be civilizationaly united in yet other respect. It consists in holding that instead of mere survival or competition—and in the process outrunning the competitor by hook or crook—satisfaction should be the general unifying orientation to life. This seems to have been accepted by all people who flourished and operated within the framework of what could be held to be

Indian civilization. It basically consisted in holding that so long as the possibility—proximate or remote—of deriving satisfaction in human life—individual or social—has not been obliterated there is a charm in living and continuation. The sort of satisfaction derivative in human life was never considered to be governed by or dependent upon material affluence. In fact, falling excessively a prey to the latter in any respect was considered to be detrimental and antithetical to the satisfaction orientation. A consideration of this sort one finds reflected, moderately or extremely, in various considerations concerning human life that have been articulated. This sort of satisfaction — orientation seems to have stood stubbornly in the way of both alienation and undue exploitation. Here it is irrelevant whether the exploitation is sought to be understood collectively or individually. In the former aspect, it may mean exploitation of one group by another, while in the latter it may mean one aspect of one's personality exploiting the other aspects. That is why such so-called traits of what is considered to be a mark of excellence as figuring one's name in Guinness' Book of Record had almost no value in the eyes of people who flourished within the framework of what could be called Indian civilization. This salient feature of Indian civilization could be said to be spelling out its ecology in the sense it stipulates as to within which sort of civilizational climate would legitimate human aspirations be allowed to be realised. It needs to be understood that this sort of satisfaction — orientation remained decisively important with various cultural and intellectual trends which flourished in this sub-continent in ancient times, especially before the advent in it of any persons or groups brought up, reared and nurtured in an alien civilizational framework. This unifying feature of Indian civilization is intimately connected with yet another such feature. It is to the brief consideration of it that we now turn.

(c) *Moral Consideration of any Aspect of Life*

Various groups of people and different cultural strands which flourished in this sub-continent were civilizationally united on yet another count. It basically consists in holding that any aspect of human life – individual or collective – should at least be moral for its being considered to be acceptable. In other words, the most important distinguishing mark of human life, apart from its being purposive in character, was considered to be its being moral. Accordingly, this unifying trait has two important implications : (a) With regard to satisfaction – orientation concerning life it amounts to subscribing to the view that even if one may not be able to create satisfaction in someone else's life, he has no business to make the path of the derivation of satisfaction in someone else's life full of obstacles and difficulties.

(b) Similarly, with regard to realisation of legitimate goals and aspirations of human life too it has an important implication. It consists in subscribing to the view that even if we may not be in a position to help somebody in the realization of legitimate goals and aspirations in his life, we have no business to interfere and put obstacles in his way. In the same vein, it also abhorred the tendency of using someone else as an illegitimate means of the realisation of one's legitimate ends. The question of the realization of illegitimate ends with fair or foul means simply did not arise, since mere illegitimacy of ends was enough to hold them to be unworthy of being realized. Thus considered, if satisfaction–orientation could be said to be spelling out civilizational ecology, then moral consideration of human life in all its aspects could be said to be stipulating the touch–stone or a sulphuric acid test on the basis of which concerning any aspiration of human life–individual or collective–it could be

decisively decided whether it is worthy of being realised or not, its being moral alone being crucially decisive factor in its favour.

On the count of the three above-mentioned major civilizational features there appears to be least variation regarding the central conception of each of them among various cultural and intellectual strands which flourished in this sub-continent. This is not to underestimate or deny altogether variations in their varied cultural expression. However, such expressional variations do not seem to have undermined or obliterated their decisively unificatory civilizational character.

There is, nonetheless, one more civilizational feature and we had promised earlier to take it into account later. It seems to consist in holding, on the one hand, that human life—individual or collective—is constituted basically by three principal kinds of relations : (a) our relation to ourselves — both individually and collectively, (b) our relation with others — humans as well as non-human — and that too both individually and collectively, and (c) our relation with world around us at large.⁶ On the other hand, it also amounts to subscribing to the view that in our coming to live life worthy of human beings three conceptions matter quite decisively : (a) our conception about ourselves, (b) our conception of others, and (c) our conception of the world.⁷ With reference to these conceptions it seems to have been assumed that they are not isolated and that our conception about ourselves is bound to affect, in one way or the other, our conception about others or regarding the world at large. As it is obvious, these two above-mentioned aspects of the fourth salient civilizational feature are intimately and intricately interrelated.⁸

But on the background of this kind of general agreement concerning the fourth salient civilizational feature there sprang

up different cultural and intellectual variations. For example, four major variational cultural strands could easily be mentioned on this count, viz. *Brahmanical*, *Śrāmaṇic*, *Tāntric* and Tribal. Within each of these strands there were internal variations. Consider for instance, one example of each of the first three strands that brings forth internal differences among the adherents of the same generic type. Within the *Brahmanical* tradition, such variations as approaches of *Sāṃkhya*, *Vedānta*, *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Mīmāṃsā* etc. are significant. The *Śrāmaṇic* tradition embraces at least two major variations – the *Jaina* and the *Bauddha*. Within the *Tāntric* tradition, likewise, such variations as *Śaiva-Tantra*, *Śākta-Tantra*, *Bauddha-Tantra* etc. are noticeable. Again within a given strand further sub-species of it are also noticeable. For example, in *Vedānta* such variations as *Advaita*, *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, *Dvaita* etc. arose, while in *Buddhism* such variations as *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna* originated. We need hardly to labour on such chains of variations. It is needless for our present purpose. The point, however, which needs very carefully to be noted is that through such variations differential conceptions concerning ourselves, others as well as world at large also came to be put forth. In this way, within the framework of certain generic civilizationally salient features quite a large cultural and intellectual variety came to be given rise to. This sort of variety also found differential expression through such culturally significant avenues as literature, music, dance, painting, architecture, etc. However, this sort of variety was bound up within the compass and jurisdiction of the unitary civilizational framework and its cementing salient features.

One more consideration also seems to have given rise to some important variations. It was generally accepted that human life—both individual and collective—aims at realization of certain

legitimate goals and aspirations. It was further generally accepted that for this sort of realization one has to strive and that human life is required to be planned to ensure that other things remaining the same the possibility of the realization of legitimate goals and aspirations in it does not come to be obliterated.

But even when this is granted by way of general consensus, there emerges a question : whether individual and collective modes of human life are irreducible to each other or not, although the same legitimate goals and aspirations are to be realised in them. In answer to this question the *Brahmanical* and the *Śrāmaṇic* traditions seem to differ from each other very decisively. The *Brahmanical* tradition generally holds that individual and collective modes of human life are irreducibly different from each other. Even if the same goals and aspirations are to be realised in both of them, this cannot be done in the same way. This not to say that there are no points of convergence between individual and collective modes of human life. They, nonetheless, are not so decisive as to rule out any difference between them. Rather, the points of divergence between them are more decisive than those of convergence. For instance, in a given society some individuals—both men and women—can abstain from procreation. But this cannot be generalised, for otherwise continuity of human race itself would be endangered and jeopardised. And any society cannot adopt such a suicidal move. Therefore, the adherents of the *Brahmanical* tradition held that individual and collective human lives need to be planned and organised differently respectively through *Āśrama-Vyavasthā* and *Varṇa-vyavasthā*,⁹ to ensure, in principle, that for any individual or group realisation of legitimate goals and aspirations of human life does not become impossible.

The adherents of the *Śrāmanic* tradition do not seem to have upheld this view. Nonetheless, their opposition to the view of the *Brahmanical* tradition itself gave rise to a sort of discord among them.¹⁰ It seems that the Buddhists generally held that individual aspect of human life alone is decisively significant, since society is after all nothing else but collection of individuals. Since, in this way, society or group is a construct, there is no justifiable reason to hold society to be as primordial as an individual. For fear of digression we cannot probe deeper into this issue in this paper. The *Jainas*, on the contrary, seem to have held that it is the collective or social aspect of human life that is primary and an individual after all being subsumable under a group, hardly needs to be considered to be as important as the group. Again, for fear of digression, we cannot probe deeper into this issue here. In this way, on the count of realisability of legitimate aspirations of human life three major strands seem to have originated in this sub-continent, one of them within the *Brahmanical* tradition, and the remaining two within the *Śrāmanic* tradition. This, again, happened within the framework of the same unitary general civilizational concern.

If our argument sketched above is generally right, then on the basis of it, it could be easily seen that within the framework of the same general unificatory milieu called Indian Civilization, there arose cultural and intellectual strands and brought forth different philosophical approaches, the adherents of which attempted to articulate variously what they held to be significant. It is further important to note that not only such various strands and approaches flourished concurrently but also that each of them remained in existence in this sub-continent over centuries. On the level of articulation, explication and elaborate explanation of their respective approaches on the one hand, and on the level of responding to the variant or rival approaches on the

other, there emerged another highly intricate situation. It is to the consideration of it that we turn in the next action.

II

Sanskrit : A Unitary Medium of Communication :

As stated above, various philosophical, intellectual and cultural strands and approaches, which emerged in this sub-continent on the general background and within the framework of Indian Civilization, arose side by side and remained in existence over a prolonged period of time not in isolation from but rather in intimate contact with each other. It could be surmised that their initial articulation and explication of the respective views and approaches might have been only oral in character. This is evident from the fact that no book authored by any *Ṛṣi* of the *Upaniṣads*, *Mahāvīra* or the *Buddha* is known to posterity. It is also quite likely that adherents of different strands and approaches might have preferred to communicate in a certain language. For instance, by and large, no important work by any significant adherent of the *Brahmanical* tradition is found to have been written in any language other than Sanskrit. Likewise, while the *Jaina* canons were written in *Prākṛit / Ardhamāgadhī*, those of *Buddhism* known as *Tipiṭakas* were written in *Pālī*. What perhaps might have prompted such a choice of a particular language as a means of communication could very well be surmised. Such factors as language of the region, the language in which intellectual communication was undertaken, the sort of persons for whom the works were mainly considered to be important and the sort of language they understood easily might have weighed with the concerned. That is why, roughly, up to the beginning of the Christian era at least three languages – Sanskrit accepted by the adherents of *Brahmanical* tradition, *Prākṛit* accepted by *Jainas* and *Pālī*

accepted by the *Buddhists* – remained in vogue in this sub-continent as media of scholarly and intellectual communication.

But in spite of the *Brahmanical* and the *Śrāmaṇic* traditions being in operation concurrently there might not have been frequent occasions of communication among them inter-traditionally especially because their respective adherents preferred to communicate in different languages. This is not to rule out the fact that however isolatedly and sporadically it might be at least some scholars of one tradition cared to read the works of the other tradition, though written in a different language. Otherwise it is very difficult to make sense of number of cross-references to works of other tradition found in both the *Jaina* as well as the *Buddhist* canons. Nonetheless, such cases were scattered and sporadic, and hence cannot be held to be a generally decisive trend. Hence, in spite of the *Brahmanical* and the *Śrāmaṇic* trends flourishing concurrently this kind of situation might have led to a certain kind of opacity in communication, isolation of different trends and lack of inter-traditional or inter-school communication.

But if the different traditions and strands, approaches and perspectives were to enter into effective communication with one another, respond to each other's stands and flourish as living trends, then it was necessary to end the above-mentioned kind of opacity and isolation in spite of their flourishing concurrently. For, mere simultaneity of trends does not automatically ensure meaningful communication among them. Perhaps seeing that Sanskrit was adopted by many scholars as effective medium of communication, adherents of the *Śrāmaṇic* tradition too might have begun to use it as a medium of articulation of their views, formulation of principles and entering into communication with adherents of trends of thought other than their own. What might have been initially adopted as a sort of

compromise and means of arbitration, to end an impasse of lack of effective inter-traditional or inter-school communication and the resulting isolation from it, however, turned out to be a lasting feature in course of time.¹¹ This could very well be understood from the fact that once both the strands of the *Śrāmaṇic* tradition – viz. the *Jaina* and the *Bauddha*–shifted to Sanskrit as an effective means of inter-traditional communication, no adherent of any of these traditions wrote later on any worthwhile major treatise either in Prākṛit or Pālī. Thus, the break-away from their respective native and original medium of communication turned out to be decisive and complete. As a result of this, they began using Sanskrit as the only medium of effective communication, no matter whether the occasion was inter-school or intra-school communication. In fact, one can say that irrespective of whatever kind of significant communication they entered into and with whomsoever they entered into, means and medium of such communication remained Sanskrit, once switched over to it, however grudgingly initially they might have done it.

But with adoption of Sanskrit as a medium of articulation of their respective views and approaches by the adherents of the *Brahmanical* and the *Śrāmaṇic* traditions alike two decisively important consequences followed : (i) on the one hand, it ended an era of isolation and insulation of different cultural and intellectual traditions and strands, in spite of their flourishing concurrently, and exposed adherents of them to the view of their adversaries. Prior to the *Śrāmaṇic* tradition switching over to Sanskrit the sort of situation that prevailed in the then prevalent intellectual climate could be surmised to be the following : Among adherents of the *Brahmanical* tradition there could have been, and indeed was a dialogue. Likewise, adherents of the *Jaina* and the *Bauddha* traditions could enter inter into effective

communication only with the co-adherents of the respective strands. This kind of communication must have remained quite stale and non-turbulent in character. For, as it could be conjectured, points of agreement among the persons who entered into such dialogues might obviously have been overwhelmingly preponderant than those of disagreement. One can also surmise that such dialogues might have largely been either narrative or instructional in character as is seen to be the case in the *Buddhist* or the *Jaina* canonical literature on the one hand and the *Upaniṣads* on the other. (ii) But with the advent of different philosophical schools and composition of prominent treatises explicating their respective standpoints on the one hand, and the adoption of Sanskrit as a medium of communication even by the adherents of *Buddhism* and *Jainism* on the other, a crucially significant phenomenon of decisive intellectual importance emerged in this sub-continent. It is this that it ushered in an era of two major sorts of dialogue, debate and controversy : (a) intra-school and (b) inter-school. Thus, roughly from the beginning of the Christian era till almost the end of the twelfth century any major – and very many minor as well – work which adherent of any philosophical school in this sub-continent compiled or wrote at once attempted to score on two major counts : (1) taking cognizance of the views of fellow adherents of a particular trend of thought and bringing to the notice of the concerned as to whether and to what extent they agree with one another, and (2) responding to the views of the adversaries – no matter whether they belonged to the same trend of thought or a decisively different one. Thus, as there are large number of instances of dialogues and controversies among the adherents, say, of *Nyāya*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Vedānta*, *Buddhism*, *Jainism* etc., so too there are various illustrations of prolonged debates, say, between adherents of *Nyāya* and *Mīmāṃsā*, *Jainism* and *Buddhism*, *Buddhism* and

Sāṃkhya, *Buddhism* and *Mīmāṃsā*, *Mīmāṃsā* and *Vedānta Nyāya* and *Buddhism* etc.

With such a kind of prolonged and intricate controversies the current of Sanskrit as a medium of communication became quite turbulent in character. This was so much so that no major trend, significant work or important philosopher of the concerned period – irrespective of the school to which he belonged – could escape without its impact and independently of making any contribution to it, contribution either beneficial or belligerent, major or minor, central or peripheral. Every issue that was taken up for consideration was always sought to be located into the complex net-work of the different thought currents then operative in the prevalent intellectual climate. Every treatise that was written was transparently in response to the urgent demand and pressure of certain issues being considered one way or the other, and also in response to the views of predecessors and contemporaries, no matter whether they hailed from the same school and trend of thought or otherwise. One can see that many works written by first-rate philosophers during the period at once seek to accomplish the twin objective : on the one hand, to expose weakness and vulnerabilities inherent in the views of adversaries and to elaborately explain and vindicate predecessors' or one's own view or that of the school to which one belonged in face of objections raised against it. On the other hand, through this kind of prevalent situation during the time under consideration discussion of different major issues received a twin kind of feed-back – positive and negative. The positive feed-back bolstered up confidence of the concerned scholars in the views, doctrines and principles they upheld and defended. The negative feed-back, on the contrary, brought to their notice points of weakness and vulnerability in their exposition and explanation, and consequently forced them to be

either more cautious and careful or else more refined and clearly articulate so that they do not fall a prey to attacks from their adversaries.

Through articulation and presentation of various thought-currents and philosophical approaches and perspectives in Sanskrit in this way, the language under consideration served as an effective unitary means of communication. It helped exposure of different trends to one another. But apart from this, it also contributed to the discussion of issues in wider perspective and on profounder level of their consideration. In the face of renewed objections, changed circumstances and situations, and refined modes of bringing to surface points of weakness and vulnerability implicit in a certain trend of thought, doctrine or principle concerted intellectual efforts were made to purify them of their crudities by bringing out in the process continued relevance and significance of them. An exercise of this kind contributed to more respectable interpretations of them, or at times exposed more glaringly weaknesses in them. It, thus, led to twofold growth and development of philosophical thought in this sub-continent : chronological over a prolonged period of time and intellectual – in the sense of bringing to the notice of the concerned not only the rationale of the acceptance of certain concepts, doctrines and principles, but also points of their strength and weakness, viability and vulnerability. That is why various issues, be they philosophical, cultural, civilizational, mundane or esoteric, commonsensical or scientific, are found discussed in that language. In short, no significant aspect of human life or no issue of decisive concern which was required to be considered in the then prevalent intellectual climate seems have been left out on account of either indifference or intellectual indolence. Sanskrit, thus, as a unitary medium of communication in this country contributed its hefty mite in two important

respects : widening the vistas of comprehension and deepening our understanding of issues at stake.

With this sort of discussion in the background, the rationale as to why those Buddhist texts – philosophical or otherwise – which are not available in Sanskrit, but the Tibetan or Chinese translations of which are fortunately extant, need to be reconstructed in that language could be taken into consideration. It is to this issue that we turn in the next section.

III

The Rationale of Sanskrit Reconstruction of the Lost Buddhist Texts :

As stated above, accepting Sanskrit to be effective unitary means of communication number of Buddhist scholars originally wrote valuable treatises in that language on matters of great philosophical concern or otherwise. Though such works were originally written in Sanskrit, today unfortunately the only track of them which is available with us is in terms of their Tibetan or Chinese translations. That is, they are lost in their original Sanskrit, although they have not, for that reason, completely vanished into oblivion as is the case with regard to number of the *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Sāṃkhya*, *Mīmāṃsā*, or the *Vedānta* texts. This has happened because their original Sanskrit version is lost, and their translation in any other language is simply not available. So, except lamenting over the irreparable loss nothing more could be done about them in the present circumstances. That is, our loss of them is full and complete and the only information we have about them is that they were written. The situation is so bad that in many cases we even do not know who their authors were. In case of many Buddhist texts the situation is not fortunately so hopelessly bad.

Various factors might have contributed to the loss of many Buddhist texts as they were originally written in Sanskrit. Some of them could easily be enlisted : (1) Since printing was not then in vogue, a very small number of copies of many texts might have been in circulation at any time. (2) Due to climatic conditions, neglect, destruction on account of the sort of material on which they were written etc. many of them might have disappeared from the scene once and for all in course of time. (3) Due to conditions of insecurity and lawlessness that came to prevail in this country on account of external aggressions many valuable texts might have been burnt down, while some of them were carried along with them by those persons and scholars who fled from this country to Nepal, Tibet, China, etc. After they were translated in Tibetan or Chinese the original Sanskrit texts might have either been eaten away by worms or might have disappeared through their continued disuse and neglect, especially because of the absence of persons conversant with that language. (4) Some of the works remaining in this country after disappearance of Buddhism from here over a period of 700-800 years might not have been taken due care of and in consequence might have been destroyed – knowingly or unknowingly. Whatever be the cause, the fact remains that many valuable Buddhist texts are no longer available as they were originally written in Sanskrit.

Under such circumstances, it may be asked, why should one make any effort at all to reconstruct them in Sanskrit from Tibetan or Chinese translation? It may be further argued that Sanskrit has ceased to be an effectively living language in the very country of the origin of such works and although it does continue to enjoy the status of the respected classical language, yet now-a-days no work of any great significance is ever written in Sanskrit. Given this, the argument continues, even

if those Buddhist texts which were originally written in Sanskrit but are no longer available in it are reconstructed in that language from their Tibetan or Chinese translations, such an exercise would be a waste of time, valuable scarce resources and energy. For, even after their being thus reconstructed in Sanskrit hardly anybody may read them. Hence, the proposal of their reconstruction in Sanskrit is worthless and hardly deserves to be taken seriously. Instead, the argument concludes, it would be rewarding to study them in their Tibetan or Chinese translation and present their content – if not translation altogether – in a language which has greater acceptability, say, in Japanese, German, English, French or Russian.

The counter-argument presented above by way of *pūrvaśā* against the plea of reconstruction into Sanskrit of the Buddhist texts which are no longer available in it is brought in deliberately. It is presented to make the concerned aware as to what kind of objection/s against the intended move it would have to withstand and counter. The argument under consideration has two main parts. One the one hand, it pleads for futility and uselessness of reconstruction in Sanskrit of those Buddhist texts which are not available as they were originally written in it. On the other hand, it strongly pleads that presentation of the content of concerned texts from their Tibetan or Chinese translation is not only preferable but much more rewarding as well. We shall deal with these two main aspects of the argument in the reverse order. The reason of it, we believe, would be clear as we proceed. First, therefore, coming to the preference and the reward issue.

The preference under consideration may be sought to be understood via either convenience or wider circulation. The convenience and facility may be accounted for in terms of one's proficiency in the language other than Tibetan or Chinese in

which the content of the concerned text could be presented, either via translation otherwise. The plea under consideration is understandable, although methodologically it is vulnerable. Similar is the case about wider circulation, The problem of primary concern is neither merely of articulation of the content of the text under consideration, nor of its wider circulation. Such moves may be important paedagogically, but they hardly increase research potential and pave thereby a way for enhanced intellectual illumination. For, such moves in themselves do not constitute, methodologically speaking, good research. By the same token, consideration of reward cannot be restricted merely to the gain accruing to the person concerned, Such considerations are important but only in the highly restricted sense of the term. They cannot, therefore, be substituted for genuine methodological and proper research-oriented concerns.

It needs to be understood clearly that each one of such a text was written at a particular juncture of time, circumstance, situation and in the intellectual and cultural climate of a particular sort – all of which were deeply anchored in the civilizational framework within which those sorts of issues were discussed. Moreover, the issues discussed in them were not sought to be considered, as argued earlier, in isolation from the views of the adversaries regarding them. Today the texts as they are available in their Tibetan or Chinese translations stand unfortunately doubly severed : on the one hand, they stand segregated from the sort of rich intellectual, cultural and civilizational background with which they were inextricably connected when they were originally written in Sanskrit. But, on the other hand, they also stand segregated from the sort of intellectual conditions prevalent in Tibet or China when they were introduced there in Tibetan or Chinese translations. Mere, therefore, presentation of their content in a language and conceptual frame-

work, which are different from and unrelated to its original background, is more likely to bring in distortion, and make many concepts and notions, doctrines and principles sound either hacneyed, outdated or irrelevant altogether. Or else, they may be twisted, in the process, to make them sensible in our own intellectual climate. This may bring in double error : anachronism and distortion. Something of this kind has already, unfortunately, happened in attempts of presenting outlines of different trends of philosophical thought which flourished one time in this sub-continent in the language and concepts which nineteenth century theologians and students of philosophy or indology who came under their sway, for one reason or the other, alone could understand. We are yet to free ourselves from the impact and influence such a trend has exerted upon us over the decades. Therefore, however the argument in favour of preference, convenience or reward may be attractively presented, the whole project in favour of which it may be presented makes it fraught with many difficulties in face of which it could hardly be said to be warrantable. The question is not so much of spinning an ingenious argument in favour and defence of what we are accustomed to do or are inclined to accept. It is rather that of first deciding what is intellectually appropriate to be done and explicating methodologically defensible rationale of it. The task we are pleading for may be extremely difficult to accomplish. But the dividends it is likely to pay in the long run makes its burden bearable, in spite of hardship and great many difficulties in the way of its accomplishment. It is further arguable that although those Buddhist texts whose Tibetan or Chinese translations are available could be translated into any other language like English or German, or content of the concerned texts could be presented in a language like French or Japanese, yet none of these could be mistaken or substituted for their re-construction in Sanskrit. In fact, their intellectual

cultural and civilizational re-construction in any language other than Sanskrit is neither feasible nor defensible.

If Buddhist studies are to become really intellectually rewarding in a methodologically defensible way not only in India but anywhere else as well, then mere articulation of the content of a given text from its Tibetan or Chinese translation can hardly be sufficient. Likewise, merely knowing at what historical point of time the given text was composed is scarcely satisfactory. These details doubtlessly are important. But, at the same time, it is important to realise that this much alone is insufficient. Sense of history is undoubtedly important. But what is utmost essential from the point of view of a concern for genuine research is to reconstruct intellectual history – both from the point of view of chronology as well as growth and development. For reconstructing intellectual history in this way issues discussed in different texts and by various philosophers would have to be made available. Their connections along two routes would have to be unearthed : on the one hand, connection of a concerned text or a philosopher with his predecessors and successors from the same trend of philosophical thought, and, on the other hand, with those from rival trends of thought. Going this way, many contours, curvatures and linkages so crucial to comprehend inter-school and intra-school dialogues and debates would become available. For this, conceptual framework of the issues discussed in the given text has to be formulated. It, further, has to be situated into the conceptual framework of the concerned philosopher. Further still, such a conceptual framework of the concerned philosopher has to be located into the wider framework of the concerns of the school to which he belonged, and lastly this sort of wider framework of the school under consideration would have to be correlated with that of other schools from the same strand of thought as also with the thoughts and

conceptual frameworks of philosophers and school of thought opposed to it. The task that lies in front of us is extremely complicated, and, hence, prolonged, concerted co-operative efforts, even inter-continental, are required to be made for its accomplishment.

It is important to remember that comprehension of growth and development does not automatically arise through locating points. Ideas, concepts, doctrines, principles are important, But mere typology or narration of them is neither their history nor a methodologically satisfactory account of growth. Comprehension of growth and development seems difficult to make sense of without commensurability or comparability. And such comparability cannot be engineered through an apology, for although an apology has a grammatical form of a descriptive statement, it does not describe any state of affair in the world – past or present

For this kind of appropriately methodological considerations those Buddhist texts which are available in Tibetan or Chinese translation but are not available in Sanskrit would have first to be reconstructed in it. This would not only enable the concerned to situate them into the intellectual and cultural climate in which they were originally written but would also facilitate the study of the concerned authors' response to his predecessors and contemporaries – both intra-school and inter-school. Likewise, it would also enable the concerned to study responses to him of his intra-school or inter-school successors.

The great doyen of Buddhist studies in India, the late Pt. Rahul Sankrityayana had clearly seen the sort of need and necessity of reconstructing in Sanskrit the lost Buddhist texts in a way we are talking about. For he had clearly seen and visualised not only the rationale of such a kind of enterprise

but also the rich dividends its accomplishment would pay. That is why he seems to have left no stone unturned in the sort of circumstances he functioned and operated for the accomplishment of the project under consideration. Our plea for such a reconstruction is a humble tribute to him and his vision. But it also originates from the need of our being able to reconstruct our intellectual history – both in its width and profundity – chronologically as well as from the point of view of its growth and development. In the absence of it we are more prone to get wrapped up into indological and philological nuances which alone can hardly lead to any philosophically worthwhile or intellectually defensible illumination.

Locating in this way the issues discussed in different Buddhist texts in their historical, cultural and intellectual context we would be able to understand properly the rationale of their being considered at all. But armed with this, we would also be able to comprehend their historically significant intellectual relevance. Starting from this we can also profitably proceed to take into account their contemporary relevance, if any, either with or without modification in them. In the absence of such an exercise our knowledge of Indian intellectual history is most likely to be fragmented and philosophically unilluminative in character. Hence our strong plea for reconstruction in Sanskrit of such texts, the Tibetan or Chinese translations of which are extant.

One example may perhaps clarify the point we are labouring hard to make. It is not unless we reconstruct the text of Dharmakīrti's *Santānāntarasiddhi* in Sanskrit that we are in a position to understand what sort of considerations led him to tackle the sort of issues he discusses in it, in response to the

views of such predecessors of his as Vasubandhu. But, likewise, without such a reconstructed text of the work under consideration we shall also be at a loss to make satisfactory sense of Ratnakīrti's *Santānāntarasiddhidūṣaṇa*.¹³ Various concepts, doctrines, principles which figure in the treatise under consideration have not suddenly sprung from nowhere. They are situated in the respective conceptual frameworks and the latter, in turn, are anchored in the intellectual, cultural and civilizational climate of the time. Such clues which are valuable for the proper understanding of the import and significance of the concerned text would be lost if it is not re-constructed in Sanskrit. It is for these and such other reason that we have been pleading for the re-construction in Sanskrit of those Buddhist texts which are not available in it, although they were originally written in it. I might perhaps be humbly permitted to prefer to end my fervent plea for Sanskrit reconstruction of the lost Buddhist texts saying if a dose of theoretical anarchy, a little deception and slight of hand as to how evidence is to be interpreted, and some very impressive rhetoric are characteristic of good research then one should better abstain from it rather than recklessly indulge in it for whatever paltry and evanescent gain it may fetch.¹⁴

Department of Philosophy,
University of Poona,
POONA 411 007.

MANGALA R. CHINCHORE

NOTES

- * I am profoundly indebted to Prof. M. P. Marathe for valuable discussion on number of points considered in this paper. I am also thankful to him for helping me in writing this paper at different stages of its completion.
1. It is very difficult, for example, to defend a view that four *Puruṣārthas* were accepted to be legitimate human aspirations in the *Brahmanical* as well as *Srāmanic* traditions right from their inception. The problem of their inter-relationship, too, is equally complex. Additional issues, perhaps, would also have to be taken into account if we include the *Tāntric* and the tribal trends as well within the purview of our consideration.
 2. I am thankful to Prof. M. P. Marathe for bringing these points to my notice.
 3. The boundaries of *Bhāratavarṣa* were certainly not co-terminus with those of the present day India or *Bhārata*.
 4. Perhaps at a later stage of history the term *Mleccha* was sought to be used generically to indicate any person or group whose article of faith and belief fell outside the boundaries of *Bhāratavarṣa*. We need not go into details of this issue here.
 5. One wonders whether this feature of civilizational *Swadeśi* was later on converted into complacency and in consequence even crossing sea was considered to be indefensible.
 6. On this count, again, it seems to have been accepted that unless our relation with ourselves is alright, our relation with others or that with world at large cannot be alright.
 7. Hence, again, it seems to have been held that unless our conception about ourselves is tenable, our conception about others or that concerning world at large cannot be tenable and coherent with it.
 8. Their joint consideration seems to bring forth the problem of *Duḥkha-nivṛtti* which engaged attention of the adherents of many philosophical strands, Buddhism not being an exception to it.
 9. Here, perhaps, what *Vyavasthā* means is not mere organization but what Buddhist understood as *Viplava* as well.

10. The situation here seems to be comparable to opposition of non-Euclidean geometries to the Euclidean geometry. In spite of this sort of common bond between the former, they differ among themselves fundamentally in certain respects.
11. Something of this kind seems to have happened in social sphere later on. In face of external aggression and situation of lawlessness and uncertainty which prevailed as a result of it, requisite modifications in the *Varnavyavasthā*, in response to the changed circumstances, did not come to be introduced. Serious thinking about the matter concerned had come to a halt. There was hardly any occasion for exchange and clash of different views. In such a circumstance marks of external discrimination like the sort of dress one wears, the sort of manners and etiquettes one adopts etc. themselves came to be used as identificatory marks of different groups as a temporary measure. But since the condition of uncertainty did not end in short span of time such marks of external discrimination themselves lasted as identificatory marks over a prolonged period of time, no one bothering to consider what values one cherishes and how does he seek to realise them in his life. This is an illustrious example which shows that history continues to repeat with vengeance so long as we stubbornly refuse to learn anything from it.
12. In this context it would be rewarding to consider Prof. M. P. Marathe's article: "Some Perspectives of Research in Indian Philosophy", *Journal of the University of Poona, Humanities section, Vol. 39, 1974, pp. 11-18.*
13. We hope to work along this line on Dharmakirti's *Santānāntarasiddhi* in the years to come.
14. Paper contributed to an International Seminar on "Buddhist Translations : Problems and Perspectives" held in New Delhi from 20th to 24th February, 1990.