

BOOK - REVIEW

Gupta, (Dr.) Rita; *Essays on Dependent Origination and Momentariness*; Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Culcutta, 1990; pp. V + 251; Price : Rs. 180/- (HC).

The present book is a collection of nine articles of Dr. Rita Gupta, written over a period of thirteen years. Some of them were published earlier in different journals -- Indian and foreign --, although it also incorporates four papers hitherto unpublished. Those which were published earlier have been included in the present anthology with slight modification, (Acknowledgement, p.i) thus ensuring that their basic structure remains unaltered. As is evident from the title itself, the essays under consideration are broadly related with two themes of major concern in Buddhist thought - *Pratītyasamutpāda* and *Kṣaṇikatā*. These essays reflect Dr. Gupta's sustained interest in Buddhist philosophy and invite attention of the concerned to study carefully the nature and significance of the themes mentioned above and the contribution they made in shaping Buddhist scholarship in this country, prior to its disappearance in the post eleventh or twelfth century era of Indian Philosophical deliberation, inspite of internal differences of opinion and dissensions among the adherents of the principal strands of the Buddhist philosophical thought of Indian origin.

Taking perhaps a clue from the empirical tradition pioneered and articulated by David Hume and J.S. Mill and pointing out some of the important similarities which the Buddhist thought exhibits with it, Dr. Gupta seeks to impress upon the concerned that causal analysis presented by the Buddhist enterprise is at least as rich as that presented by Mill, going beyond the limitations of it as available in the Humean analysis of causation. By way of comparison this is certainly important. Her effort of this kind, however, would have paid richer dividend were she to show that this kind of similarity between them is not a matter of mere accidental occurrence but rather is backed by concern for similar kind of rationale. Similarly, with regard to *Pratītyasamutpāda*, her analysis of the theme would have gathered enhanced value if she were to enlighten the interested regarding the contribution which adherents of the principal currents of Buddhism made to the growth and development of it leading to finer and

deeper insight, inspite of some of the decisive differences among them. That is, such an exercise should have unfolded points of seminal importance within the framework of intra-school Buddhist controversy and its contribution to the philosophical thought of Indian origin -- both Buddhist in particular and broadly Indian in general. In this context it may also be suggested that were she to explōit the distinction between reasons and causes or *sahetukatā* and *Sakāraṇatā* on the one hand and that between anthropocentric and discretely cosmocentric on the other, Dr. Gupta's analysis of *Pratītyasamūpāda* would have turned out to be more instructive and thought provoking.

The other group of essays concentrate upon *Kṣaṇikatā* as a decisive theme in one form or the other. Dr. Gupta is certainly right in holding that *Kṣaṇikatā* was brought in to explain *Anityatā* -- one of the main pillars of Buddhism (p. 236), especially under the pioneering efforts and stewardship of Dharmakīrti (of pp. 116, 142, 177) and elaboration of *Kṣaṇikatā* later on at the hands of such Buddhist stalwarts as Śāntarākṣita and Kamalaśīla on the one hand and Jñānaśrī and Ratnakīrti on the other. From the *Prācīna Nyāya* side the issue of *Kṣaṇikatā* discussed and elaborated by Buddhist philosophers has been responded to and critically evaluated by Vācaspati, Udayanācārya etc, while from the *Navya Nyāya* side by Raghunātha, Gadādhara etc, although during the time of the latter, Buddhism had ceased to be an intellectual force to reckon with. The issue of *Kṣaṇikatā* as discussed by Dr. Gupta, with the help of authoritative texts, certainly brings out one important aspect of it -- viz. (*Prācīna*) *Nyāya* - Buddhist controversy. It is indeed true that this theme engaged attention of the prominent scholars from both the sides for couple of centuries. But in studying this aspect of the controversy Dr. Gupta has merely re-presented the arguments as available in the concerned texts from both the sides. There too, she accepts that in majority of the cases the *Nyaya* scholars presented the Buddhist position and arguments in "the onto - epistemic framework of the *Naiyāyika*" (p. 198) and that "if we treat these *Nyāya Vaiśeṣika* trappings as essential parts of the questions "then" it becomes all the more difficult to answer these questions satisfactorily from the Buddhist standpoint" (p. 198). Likewise, although she does raise the question, "we do not know how, a competent Buddhist logician of the stature of Dharmakīrti or Ratnakīrti, if he were alive at the time of Udayana, would have reacted to Udayana's objections against the Buddhist views" (p. 195), in the entire book there is, however, no attempt to answer it, however partly and incompletely it might be. It is certainly true that such an attempt would have required her to investigate into the sort of conceptual framework

within which the arguments from both the sides were formulated and the kind of respective rationales by which they were backed. This is nowhere readily articulated in any book, no matter written in Sanskrit or any other language. But it is precisely for this reason that undertaking such a task would have been more challenging and illuminating as well. Instead, as remarked earlier, Dr. Gupta seems to have chosen to remain content with articulating briefly the aspects of the controversy under consideration as they are available in books written in Sanskrit either by Buddhists or *Naiyāyikas*, although in the latter, as observed earlier, their own bias and conceptual preference is most glaringly and unmistakably present in such a bold relief that it is difficult to fathom through it into the characteristic Buddhist approach and perspective, not to talk of its justifiable rationale. Dr. Gupta holds that it is Dharmakīrti who, for the first time in the Buddhist tradition, formulated the conception of *Kṣaṇikatā* leading later on to the doctrine of *Kṣaṇabhaṅga*, the latter being elaborated by Ratnakīrti in his *Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhi*. In this context, it needs to be noted that although expressions like *Kṣaṇa*, *Kṣaṇika*, etc. do occur in Dharmakīrti's *Hetubindu*, *Pramāṇavārtika* etc. and commentaries on them, none of them, however, could be said to be given to elaborate and defend the concept of *Kṣaṇa* as well as that of *Kṣaṇabhaṅga* and whatever they imply. These expressions also occur in the works of earlier Buddhist scholars like Asaṅga and Vasubandhu not to talk of Buddhapālita and Bhāvaviveka as well. Yet, none of them is said to have systematically formulated the doctrine of *Kṣaṇikatā* to explain *Anityatā* as later on is obviously done. On the count of *Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhi*, it is the work of Dharmottara bearing the same title that seems to have pioneered the basic tenets of the doctrine under consideration, which under the impact and influence of Jñānaśrī seem to have been summarily reformulated by Ratnakīrti in its two main forms. Be this, however, as it may.

This also brings one to another aspect of the issue under consideration. It consists in recognising that the discussion of *Kṣaṇikatā* as explanatory of *Anityatā* at the hands of later Buddhist Scholars seems to have twin aspect : on the one hand, inter school controversy between adherents of Buddhism and those of *Nyāya - Prācīna* or otherwise; on the other hand, it also brings in aspects of intra-school Buddhist controversy. It consists basically in the fact that although adherents of Buddhism from earlier times did subscribe to *Anityatā* as a decisive feature of Buddhist thought, yet adherents of each sect and strand of Buddhism did not necessarily stretch it in the direction of *Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhi*. Accordingly, there arises a question : What would have been those compulsions which

might have necessitated some of the later Buddhist scholars to probe and investigate in these directions? What sort of inadequacies did they notice in the thought of their predecessors and how did they attempt to get over them with the help of *Kṣāṇikā* and *Kṣāṇabhāṅga*? Were the reasons basically epistemological, ontological or methodological in character? Or rather, were they combinatory of them? What was the sort of rationale by which they were backed? An investigation along these lines would have enabled Dr. Gupta to unfold some of the important aspects of intra-school Buddhist controversy as well. The growth and development - not to talk of degeneration and decay as well - of any philosophical strand in this country in ancient and medieval times seems to have been shaped by two-fold controversies - inter-school as well as intra-school, both of them occurring almost concurrently, although some times one or the other aspect of it might have remained predominant and preponderant. An inquiry along these lines would have made Dr. Gupta's work more illuminative and rewarding an intellectual exercise.

To say, however, these things does not in any way amount to undermining or belittling the worth and importance of her work. It is certainly interesting that she has brought out some important aspects of *Pratīyasamutpāda* and *Kṣāṇikā* to the notice of the concerned through her essays published in this anthology and for that matter any student of Buddhist philosophical thought should be grateful to her. In years to come one may rightly hope greater illumination and insight coming from her which would be intellectually more rewarding and fulfilling than what it has been in the present case.

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