

BOOK REVIEW : I

Chinchore Mangala R., *Santāna and Santānāntara : An Analysis of the Buddhist Perspective Concerning Continuity, Transformation and Transcendence and the Basis of an Alternative Philosophical Psychology*, Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1996, Pages xlviii+314.

Though this is just one more addition to the thousands of scholarly works that have been published on Buddhism, its speciality consists in standing out as one among those very few dealing with the thought of Dharmakīrti. More specifically, it is quite invaluable in being a study of a rare and little known work of Dharmakīrti, the *Santānāntarasiddhi* which is available only in its Tibetan version, which has been translated into Russian by Th. Stcherbatsky and into Japanese by Hidenori Kitagawa. An English translation of Stcherbatsky's translation by Harish C. Gupta published in the *Indian Studies Past and Present Series* way back in the late sixties, is not easily accessible. So is Kitagawa's own English translation published in the early fifties. Some recent and excellent studies of Dharmakīrti do exist, but only in German. Therefore this full-length, detailed study of Dharmakīrti's *Santānāntarasiddhi* is as welcome as it is important in possibly stimulating interest in the long neglected as well as barely understood thought-system of Dharmakīrti.

This work is also a part of a trilogy by the author whose first two volumes dealt with the Buddhist concepts of impermanence and non-substantiality and the Buddhist criticisms of the notion of permanence. Hence it needs to be read along with those two. The doctrines of momentariness and impermanence of the Buddhists were vehemently opposed by other classical Indian philosophers on the ground that they would inevitably lead to scepticism and solipsism. The critics also charged the Buddhists of being self-inconsistent in simultaneously maintaining their theses concerning continuity and transformation along with a doctrine of impermanence. This charge was taken up very seriously by several Buddhist philosophers including Dharmakīrti who have argued in various ways that the charge is philosophically untenable. They have tried to show how, despite

conceiving reality to be changing or noneternal (*anitya*) and momentary (*kṣānika*), the notions of continuity (*santāna*) and transformation (*Santānāntara*) do make perfect philosophical sense. The present work is not only a general exposition of this central argument and defence by the Buddhists as found in various Buddhist philosophical works but also a specific and detailed exposition of Dharmakīrti's arguments as found in his *Santānāntarasiddhi*.

The great merit of the book consists in showing that while arguing for the philosophical feasibility of *Santānāntara*, Dharmakīrti also lays the foundations of an alternative philosophical psychology that is in perfect consonance with the basic Buddhist doctrines of *anityatā* and *kṣānikatā*. One very invaluable contribution of this book is the light it throws on the little known and even less understood subtleties of the very detailed and equally complex internal debates among the different schools of Buddhism. This internal debate is covered very briefly but also very clearly, being limited only by the self-imposed need of the author to focus always on the distinct and unique position of Dharmakīrti *vis-a-vis* the other great Buddhist philosophers. This brief part is so good that it can certainly be expanded into a separate book.

Probably one complaint that readers like me might have is about the style of writing. The abundant caution with which the book is written, together with the author's passion for extreme precision, has ultimately resulted in a very complex style that is somewhat reminiscent of arguments in a court of law. Sentences abound in complex qualifying expressions, detailed pre-emptive clauses and phrases at every turn and these are also repeated on every possible occasion throughout the book as if the author is arguing on behalf of Dharmakīrti before a very forgetful judge. A single sentence sometimes occupies a quarter of a printed page containing close to a hundred words. The desire for precision leads to about 50 pages out of the 103 pages of Chapter I being devoted to a "preamble and preliminary considerations." This kind of extremely cautious, elaborate, circumspect, and defensive argumentation, while its rigour is quite admirable, was probably required a few decades ago when Buddhist doctrines were little known and were also often grossly misunderstood. Such vigorous defence does not seem to be needed anymore since Buddhist concepts and doctrines

are much better known and understood today than ever before.

My other big disappointment is that although the author has reconstructed Dharmakīrti's *Santānāntarasiddhi* from the Tibetan original into Sanskrit, I never got hear the original voice of Dharmakīrti concerning transformation (*Santānāntara*) and transcendence anywhere in the book. The book is backed by very solid and extensive documentation from dozens of original Buddhist works. Chapter II on *Santānāntara* has 117 reference notes, but of these only 8 pertain to *Santānāntarasiddhi*. Of these eight only two contain actual quotations from that work, each of which runs into exactly one and a half lines in print. The remaining six notes only ask the reader to refer to certain verses whose numbers are furnished. Considering the acute inaccessibility of this extraordinary work of Dharmakīrti, scholars all over the world would have been beholden to the author had she chosen to give extensive quotations from *Santānāntarasiddhi* while offering her elaborate and brilliant exposition and defence of Dharmakīrti's views.

There are also a few misprints that need to be corrected when the book is going to be reprinted next. But still, on the whole, this book undoubtedly emerges as one which no serious student or researcher in Buddhism can afford to miss, especially if that person is interested in Dharmakīrti.

SRINIVAS RAO