

Jawahar Lal Nehru's motion in the Constituent Assembly of India on the national flag and Arnold Toynbee's comparison of Aśoka and Akbar are historically significant statements, considering that Aśoka remained unknown in his native land for over a millennium and a half, while the rest of Asia was remembering him for his piety and service to Buddhism.

A useful addition to this collection of articles are the list of Asokan studies compiled by H.B. Chowdhury and Bhikkhu Bodhipala and the three book reviews: namely on Ananda W.P. Guruge's *Aśoka the Righteous: A Definitive Biography* by Vinnie Vitharana; of U. Schneider's *Aśoka's Great Rock Edicts* by Bhikkhu Pasādika; and of *Aśoka with Inscriptions and the Mauryas* by A.R. Biswas.

Hemendu Bikash Chowdhury deserves to be congratulated on a job well done and on utilizing his journal in a manner that it lives up to its name *Jagajyoti*: a beacon of light to the world.

– T. Dhammaratana

Studies in the Philosophy of the Bodhicaryāvatāra

By Paul Williams,
Published by Motilal Banarsidass,
Private Limited, Delhi, India, 2000,
272 pp.

Studies in the Philosophy of the Bodhicaryāvatāra is an attempt to evaluate Shāntideva's Mādhyamika thinking embodied in the Bodhicaryāvatāra written during the eighth century. Shāntideva is a well known scholar monk of the Prasāngika tradition of the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism founded by Nāgārjuna (A.D. 150). Shāntideva, in this excellent work, combined both the original rigorous philosophical phase of the Mādhyamika tradition and Mahāyāna devotionalism. Nāgārjuna used the dialectic form of logic

to negate the opponent's view. During the course of development of this teaching some scholars of the school did not like this method, as there was no room for the opponent's view. This group established the Svātantrika tradition to show the fairness of their approach to the opponent's view. Shāntideva made a commendable attempt to syncretise philosophy, logic, and Mahāyāna devotionalism in writing Bodhicaryāvatāra.

Paul Williams of University of Bristol, United Kingdom has made an admirable attempt to study this treatise and the result is a book entitled: "*Studies in the Philosophy of the Bodhicaryāvatāra.*" It consists of five essays of which three had been published before and half of the material is new. The essays are independent studies and no attempt has been made to bring them into line with each other in style.

The author has extensively used Tibetan translations and commentaries as well as Sanskrit commentary, Bodhicaryāvatāra Pañjikā, written by Prajñākaramati. The book, however, is not a comprehensive study of Bodhicaryāvatāra; it is confined to some selected verses from the eighth and ninth chapters of the text.

The first chapter is written on the concept of Prakṛtīr-nirvāṇa/ Prakṛti-nirvṛta. Four types of Nirvāṇa,

- (1) Prakṛti or Natural
- (2) Apratishhita or Nonabiding
- (3) Sopadhīṣeṣa or Nirvāṇa with remainder and
- (4) Nirupadhīṣeṣa or Nirvāṇa without remainder,

have been explained according to Indo-Tibetan commentarial tradition. This analysis is based on verse thirteen of the ninth chapter of the text. Before clarifying the verse the author gives a list of Indian and Tibetan commentaries chronologically. Then the four types of Nirvāṇa are explained.

The second chapter on Altruism and Rebirth is a study of the 97th and 98th verses of the eighth chapter of the Bodhicaryāvatāra. This chapter begins with the Mādhyamika conception of *Svabhāva* (self-existing nature or inherent nature) on which the doctrine of *Sūnyatā* (voidness) was founded by Nāgārjuna. Neither *Svābhava* nor *Parabhāva* has an independent existence. The author has emphasized the fact that Shāntideva's new vision is a kind of move from self-centered egoism to perfect altruism. It is the Mahāyāna ideology practiced by Bodhisatvas as against the self-centered ideology emphasized by Southern Buddhist tradition.

Chapter Three, an argument for *Cittamātra*, is an analysis of verse twenty eight of the ninth chapter of the Bodhicaryāvatāra. At the beginning of this chapter the author has raised an important issue regarding Tibetan commentators' understanding of the Bodhicaryāvatāra language. The Tibetan commentators understood Bodhicaryāvatāra in the line of Tathāgatagarbha tradition of the Ratnagotravibhāga Sūtra. This approach is not seen in Indian commentaries. Nor is it implied in the Bodhicaryāvatāra. The author is aware of the fact that in this chapter Shāntideva has a strong argument for *Cittamātra*, the concept developed by the teachers of Yogacāra School of Buddhism. Early Mādhyamika position was that mind as well as its objects have no self-existing nature and, therefore, mind and its objects do not really exist.

The Fourth chapter, Identifying the Object of Negation, is an explanation of the verse 140 of the Chapter Nine of the Bodhicaryāvatāra. At the very outset of this chapter the author points out that, when one puts forward emptiness, it is necessary to identify what is being denied. Kamalaśīla made this clear. Identifying the object of negation is essential for the meditation on emptiness. Shāntideva too has emphasized this point. Without touching intellectually a conceptually

constructed entity, the negation cannot be apprehended (Bodhicaryāvatāra, 9. 140). This idea is a modification of the early Mādhyamika negation of phenomena.

The fifth chapter, The Absence of Self and the Removal of Pain, is a study of the verses 101, 102 and 103 of the eighth chapter of the text. It begins with the problem of determining morality. Shāntideva's position with regard of morality is explained by the author. The necessary component of the Bodhisatva path is non-discrimination between oneself and others. This fact was emphasized by the Buddha in his ethical teaching in early Buddhist texts. Prof. Williams emphasizes that moral consistency requires both removing one's pain as well as that of others. The implication of this idea is that there should not be the minutest difference between oneself and others according to Bodhisatva path. The position held by Shāntideva is underscored.

The book includes notes, a bibliography and an index. Notes are not merely footnotes referring to other sources; they are further comments and clarifications of important points. Notes include relevant quotations from Tibetan commentaries of Bodhicaryāvatāra. So the notes are a valuable part of the book. '*Studies in the Philosophy of the Bodhicaryāvatāra*' is a valuable contribution to the vast field of Buddhist studies. — *Kottegoda S. Warnasuriya*

Buddhism for the New Millennium

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