

Dharmakīrti- Life and Works

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Abstract: Logic handled by the Buddhist is commonly known as Buddhist Logic. Nagārjuna, Maitreya Asanga and Vasubandhu handled this topic in a stray manner. Diñga systematized this school and Dharmakīrti enriched this stream of thought by giving more clarity. His seven works were treated as “Celebrated seven Treaties” in Tibet. It has a remarkable place in the Traditional studies of Tibet and especially in the Indian sphere of Buddhist Logic.

Keywords: Pramāṇavārtika, Pramāṇaviniścaya, Nyāyabindu, Saṅghabandhaparīkṣā, Vidyānyāya, Saṅgīntarasiddhi and Hetubindu.

1. Introduction

The logic handled by the Buddhist is commonly known as Buddhist logic. Acārya Diñga and Acārya Dharmakīrti were the two shining stars of the system. Diñga “The master and father of medieval logic” is considered as the earliest systematic writer on Buddhist logic. Dharmakīrti made further improvement after Diñga. Dharmakīrti (DK) is regarded as the most prominent figure among the Buddhist Logicians.

Dharmakīrti is regarded as the most prominent figure among the Buddhist Logicians. Scholars are of different opinion about the period of DK. Dr S.C. Vidyābhāṣa records that DK as a contemporary of Tibetan King ‘Sron-tsan-gam-po’ who lived during the period of 627-698 A. D.¹ He also states that DK was the pupil of Dharmapāla who lived in 635 A.D. and he quotes from the travelogue of the Chinese Traveller named It-sing, who came to India during the period of 671-695 A.D. It-sing records that “Dharmakīrti made further improvement in Logic after Diñga”². He also recorded that DK flourished in recent years. These statements also clear that Diñga might be the predecessor of DK. Another Chinese Traveller Hsuan-tsang who visited India during the same mentions the name of Dharmapāla, who was the Chancellor of the Nālandā University, when he visited India. But he did not mention DK. It might be the reason that DK was too young at that time. Tīrīnītha, a famous Tibetan Scholar recorded him as a contemporary and rival of Kumārabhāṣa. Evaluating all these evidences Dr. S. C. Vidyābhāṣa rightly placed DK around 650.A.D. L.M. Joshi’s *Studies in Buddhist Culture of India* also indicate that DK flourished in the first half of the seventh century A.D.

He was born in the South Kingdom of Cēdamani³, which is now known as Trimalaya. He was the son of Parivṛjaka Kōrunanda⁴, the Tērtha of Brīhmaṇa caste. DK attained great skill in Vedas, Vedāṅgas, Art of healing, Fine arts, Grammar and all the Tērthika theories. Thus he became the master of all the

Tērthika theories in his childhood. He was accepted as a very famous scholar among his fellow scholars. Once he happened to hear learned speech of a Buddhist monk and he was attracted with that speech. He realized that the Teachings of Buddha is faultless and so he started to learn it. He began to wear the donned dress of the Buddhist *Upāsaka*. When the Orthodox Brahmins came to know the changed attitude of DK they declared him as an outcaste. Then he went to Magadha, for gaining more knowledge about the Buddhist Teachings.⁵ During those days the Magadha was a great centre of learning and excellence because of the ancient Universities namely Nālandā and Takṣāṣilā were situated. At Nālandā he received priesthood from Acārya Dharmapāla. He became a great scholar of *Tripiṭaka*⁶. DK learned all the five hundred *sūtras* and *dhāraṇīs* by heart⁷. His teacher Dharmapāla was a direct disciple of Vasubandhu who also a prominent teacher of *Vijñānavāda School*. From Dharmapāla DK gained a full-fledged knowledge about logic. He studied under the teacher Iśvarasena. His immediate pupil was Devendrabuddhi.

Tīrīnītha recorded Kumarila as a contemporary and the maternal uncle of DK⁸. The story is as follows; DK has an intense desire to learn the secret doctrines of the Tērtha’s from the *Māṃsaka* named Kumārila. He was a scholar of all the systems and a celebrated *Māṃsaka* without a rival. Being an outcaste from the Tērtha caste DK couldn’t approach Kumārila to fulfill his desire. So DK disguised himself, went to Kumārila’s house and there he worked as a slave. He succeeded in satisfying Kumārila by working in rice field and doing the house hold works. Kumārila taught him the Tērthika doctrines and the techniques of debate, but some of the secret teachings were not taught anybody, except his son and wife. DK learned these by pleasing the son and the wife with his efficient services to them. He got scholarship in all Tērthika doctrines under the teacher ship of Kumārila. He realized that there was nothing more for him to learn about the techniques of refuting others, he offered a grand feast to the Brīhmins with his scholarship and returned to Magadha.

On the way to Magadha he reached in the palace of a King named Drumaripu and he put up a notice on the Palace Gate that ‘Does anybody want a debate?’ He proved his excellence in the Tērtha doctrines while debating with the followers of Tērtha system. Once he challenged the *Brīhmaṇa* Kaśyapa or Kaśyapadagupta, the follower of Kaśyapa and five hundred experts. He engaged in debate with him. The debate lasted for three months. Finally, DK defeated them and converted them all into

Buddhism. He selected fifty wealthy Brahmins among them to establish a centre for the doctrine of Buddhism.⁹The above narrated incident enraged Kumāṛila. He appeared before DK, surrounded with five hundred Brahmins. Kumāṛila appealed and proposed the King that whoever was defeated should be killed. But DK put forward the condition that, if he himself was defeated in the debate, he was ready to accept any punishment, even it may be death. He added that if he would be the winner, he should not kill Kumāṛila. Instead of that, Kumāṛila and followers shall be converted into Buddhism. Thus debate started. Kumāṛila raised five-hundred arguments to establish the doctrine of *Tārthikas*. DK refuted each of these with a hundred arguments. Kumāṛila and followers were defeated by DK. They realized that the law of Buddha was correct. They followed DK and received the ordination of Buddhism. From this we can assume that many of his rivals accepted the teacher ship of DK and became the followers of Buddhism. But this story has not much historical evidence.

During his victorious journey through the Vindhya Mountains he was invited by a neighboring King named Utpullapūṅga, the son of King Puṅga, to his palace. The King built monasteries for DK. He lived there and composed the treatise on *Pramāṇa*. Since he was a great admirer of DK, the King ordered to inscribe on his royal gate that “*If Dharmakṛti, the sun among disputants, will set and his doctrines sleep or die, the false doctrine of Tārthikas then arise*”. The majority of the *Tārthikas* fled with fear and others confessed that they were not equal to fight.¹⁰

L.M. Joshi records that a Bu-ston Nepalese biographer, who belongs to the fourteenth century, recorded that even his contemporary heretical scholars were convinced of the subtlety and excellence of DK'S intellectual powers and treatise. Because of jealousy and envy they “fastened the treatise in the tail of a dog” and let the animal run through the streets and with a view to destroy evidence of the levels of his works. DK spent his last days in a *Vihāra* at Kaliṅga¹¹ in making compositions of great works, teaching Buddhism, engaging public discussions, debates and active propaganda of Buddhism. He died in his monastery of Kaliṅga surrounded by his pupils. At the time of his cremation it was said that there fell a heavy rain of flowers fell there and for seven days the whole country was filled with fragrance and music¹². It is said that neither his predecessors nor his contemporaries able to challenge his reputation as a logician. DK frequently criticizes other schools and also being criticized by the others too. Even though DK was a severe critique, his greatness was admitted even by his opponents. It is said that Viśvaspati Miśra criticized DK in the work namely *Nyāyavivṛtikatīparyāyāṅka* giving answers to DK'S criticisms. Jayantabhaṅga was another frequent critique of him. But he too admits DK'S excellence in *Nyāyamaujari*.

A. Works

There are seven works attributed to DK. Th. Stcherbatsky states that these seven logical works are considered as the fundamental treatise of Buddhist Logic in Tibet even today. So

these works became popularly known as “*Celebrated seven treatise*”¹³ which have become the fundamental works for the study of logic by Buddhists in Tibet and so popular than the works of Diṅga. The seven texts are *Pramāṇavivṛtika*, *Pramāṇaviniścaya*, *Nyāyabindu*, *Saḍbandhaparīkṣā*, *Vijānyāya*, *Santānāntarasiddhi* and *Hetubindu*.

Pramāṇavivṛtika: Among the seven celebrated treatise *Pramāṇavivṛtika* gained great attention and it is considered as the body of the system. This text is called the masterpiece of DK. It is not only a commentary on Diṅga'S *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, it is an original explanation of the elements of logic and critical philosophy also. A story about the composition of this work is very famous as follows. Dharmakṛti in his younger days studied many dialectic *Sūtras*, but he was not satisfied with this mere knowledge. One day he happened to went through the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* of Diṅga. DK was attracted to the writing style of the author while dealing with the logical problems. This led himself towards Iśvarasena, the direct disciple of Diṅga who was in his too old age. Listening *Pramāṇasamuccaya* for the first time from Iśvarasena, DK became as proficient as Iśvarasena. At the second time he became equal to Diṅga, and at the third time he found some errors committed by Diṅga in that work. He point out these mistakes to Iśvarasena. Iśvarasena realised that he himself could not fully understand the real implications of Diṅga. Iśvarasena appreciated DK for his ability to understand Diṅga'S logical problems better than him. This appreciation helped DK to increase his confidence in adding something to Diṅga'S work *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. When he mentioned these to Iśvarasena, he gave permission to condemn all the mistakes of work and to prepare a critical commentary on it. Thus he began to compose *Pramāṇavivṛtika* as the commentary of *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, which were considered as the major contributions of systematic logic.

Dr S.C. Vidyābhāṣa states that the Sanskrit original of *Pramāṇavivṛtika* appears to be lost, but a Tibetan translation exists. But Rāhul Samkṛtyāna discovered this work from Tibet, with Manratanandin'S commentary named ‘*Pramāṇavivṛtika-vṛtti*’ and it published from Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, in 1989. Thus he made a significant service not only to Buddhist philosophy but also to the Indian philosophy. This work is consists of four chapters as follows. Inference for one'S own self (*Svārthajñāna*), Establishment of the validity of knowledge (*Pramāṇasiddhi*), Perception (*Pratyakṣa*), Inference for the sake of others (*Parārthajñāna* or *Parārthajñāna*)¹⁴. Rāhul Samkṛtyāna mentions that order of this work is not systematically done. The order of the chapter division should be arranged in another way, such as Establishment of validity of knowledge, Perception, Inference for one'S own self and Inference for the sake of others¹⁵.

DK wrote a commentary on the first chapter of *Pramāṇavivṛtika* named ‘*Pramāṇavivṛtika-vṛtti*’.

Dr. S.C.Vidyābhāṣa remarks that the original Sanskrit work is not seemed by him. Only Tibetan translation available is named as ‘*Tshad-ma-rnam-hgrel-gyi-hgrel-wa*. In the

concluding lines of the text he described himself as “A great teacher and dialectician, whose fame filled all quarter of the earth and who was, as it were, a lion, pressing down the head of elephant-like debaters.” Karakag^omin also made a sub commentary to ‘*Pramj, avjrtikavṛtti*’. Devendrabuddhi and Sakyabuddhi made each commentary to the second to fourth chapters of this text. It is also known in the same title ‘*Pramj, avjrtikavṛtti*’. It is a continuation of DK’s commentary. Another commentary is done by Prajuakaragupta, on the second to fourth chapters is known ‘*Pramj, a vjrtikabhaṅga*’. Another Scholars named Yamari, Jayanta and Ravigupta wrote each commentaries on the second to fourth chapters of the *Pramj, avjrtika* is known in the same name ‘*Pramj, a-vjrtika-bhaṅga-tṛka*’¹⁶.

Pramj, a viniḥcaya: This is another important work based on *Pramj, a* (right knowledge). Dr. S.C.Vidyabhāṅga states that the original Sanskrit work is seemed to be lost. The Tibetan translation of this work is available named ‘*Tshad-ma-rnan-par-nes-pa*’, which signifies ‘*The Determination of Pramj, a or the Sources of Knowledge*’. This was written by a Kashmirian scholar named Parihita Bhadra and a Tibetan Interpreter named ‘*Blo-ldan-ses-rab*’.¹⁷ This work is an abridgement to the *Pramj, avjrtika*. This work is divided into three chapters as follows. The system of perception (*pratyakāvyavastha*), Inference for one’s own self (*Svjrtjnumjna*), Inference for the sake of others (*Parjrtjnumjna*) respectively. In the concluding lines of this text DK is described as a sage of unrivalled fame who was born in Southern India.¹⁸ *Pramj, aviniḥcaya* is considered as a work with mature and comprehensive expression of Buddhist Epistemology and Logic. Its literary status as an independent treatise is also significant. This text is published recently.

*Nyiyabindu*¹⁹: It is an excellent work on Buddhist Logic. The title signifies ‘*A drop of logic*’. The original Sanskrit work is discovered among the palmleaves preserved in Santinatha Jaina temple at Cambay and Tibetan version also exists. The work is called ‘*Rigs-Pahi-thigs-pa*’. This text is also divided into three chapters as follows, Perception (*pratyakā*), Inference for one’s own self (*Svjrtjnumjna*), Inference for the sake of others (*Parjrtjnumjna*).

The first chapter of this text starts with mentioning that ‘right knowledge’ is the cause of human activity and the means for attaining fulfillment. The right knowledge is of two kinds viz., Perception and Inference. Perception is described as a knowledge which is free from pre conception (*kalpani*) and devoid of error (*abhrjnta*). Here ‘preconception’ means experiences of false images which appear as real as if they were capable of being addressed and touched. According to DK perception can be divided into four; such as perception produced by sense organs (*indriyapratyakā*), mental perception (*mjnasapratyakā*), self-consciousness (*atmasaēvedanaē*) and perception attained by yogins (*yogipratyakā*).

DK divides ‘Inference’ into two as Inference for oneself

(*Svjrtjnumjna*) and Inference for the sake of others (*Parjrtjnumjna*). Here inference for oneself represents the nature of knowledge (*jūn;tmaka*), Inference for others represents the nature of verbal knowledge (*ḥabd;tmaka*). Inference for oneself is defined as the knowledge of an inferable is derived through the reason. The reason should be with its three characteristics viz., *pakāasattva*, *sapakāasattva* and *vipakā;asattva*. Inference for the sake of others is defined as the declaration of the formed reason through words. It is of two kinds viz., positive or homogeneous (*s;dharmyavat*), negative or heterogeneous (*vaidharmyavat*). An instance as follows; sound is non eternal, because it is a product; no non eternal things are products, like ether (*ḥk;ḥa*), is a negative type. On this work more than five commentaries of various scholars are available. They are *Nyiyabinduḥḥka* of Vinitadeva, *Nyiyabinduḥḥka* of Dharmottara, *Nyiyabindupi;ḥrtha* of Jinamitra and *Nyiyabindup;ḥrvapakāasamkāipta* of Kamalaḥḥla. This text got very much popularity as a primer to Buddhist logic. H. Nakamura records that another commentary of Santabhadra is also available. But its title is unknown. Another commentary of an unknown scholar is also available and it is published by Swami Dwarikadas in 1994.

Saēbandhaparḥka: This is another important logical treatise. As the name indicates the text deals with the ‘problem of relation’ or ‘*Saēbandha*’ which is based on inference. Dr. S.C.Vidyabhāṅga records that the Sanskrit original of this work is seemed to be lost; but the Tibetan translation exists and it is called ‘*Hbrel-wa-brtag-pa*’ signifying “*Examination of Connection*”.²⁰ This Tibetan translation is prepared by an Indian Teacher named Jūna-garbhā and the Tibetan interpreter ‘*Vande-nam-mkhas*’.²¹ The content of this work is a brief study of subsidiary to inference which is based on relations such as effect and cause. It has two commentaries. One by Vinitadeva namely *Sambandaparḥkaḥḥka* and the other is a commentary written by Sankarananda.

Vjdanjya: This logical treatise is another everlasting contribution of DK to logic. This is also known as *Tarkanjya*. Dr.S.C.Vidyabhāṅga recorded that Sanskrit original was not seen by him, and only Tibetan translation could be seen by him named ‘*Rtsod-pahi-rigs-pa*’²² signifying the “*Method of Discussion*”. The Tibetan translation was prepared by an Indian Sage Jūna-ḥri-bhadra and Tibetan interpreter-monk Dge-wahiblo-gros. But this work is recovered and published with the commentary namely *Vipaḥcit;ḥrtha* of Santarakāita by Rj;hulSamkḥty;jana in 1936. The text *Vjdanjya* starts with the saying of the Great master DK, that it is an effort to eradicate the misconceptions among the persons who engaged in debate with limited knowledge in verbal communication. The central theme of *Vjdanjya* is the discussion on the rules and regulations of a good debate and how a debater tries to acquire knowledge through practice. *Vjdanjya* can be divided into two parts based on its contents. The first part deals with the definition and the classification of the *Nigrahast;ns* in Buddhist philosophy, the second part is the refutation of the

views of *Naiyyikas* namely *Nyjamatakhadanam*. Two commentaries of this work are available. They are the *Vidyanyayakka* of Vinitadeva, and *Vidyanyayavipaucitirtha* of Sntarakaita.

Santjantarassiddhi: This is another philosophical treatise written DK. It is also called '*Tantrjantarassiddhi*'. Dr. S.C. Vidyabhāṣā records that the Sanskrit original of this work was not available to him. But there exist a Tibetan version named '*Rgyud-gshan-grub-pa*' signifying '*Proof of Continuity of Succession*'²³. This was prepared by the Indian Sage Visuddha Simha and Tibetan official interpreter '*Dpal-rtsegs*'. Th. Stcherbatsky translated this work in to Russian and H. Kitagawa published this work with an English translation recently. This is a monograph about the problem of the existence of the mind of other beings. The existence of the mental attitude of others can be inferred through intelligence or the power of consciousness.

HETUBINDU: *Hetubindu*²⁵ is an important logical treatise written by *Dharmakṛti*. Dr. S.C.Vidyabhāṣā records that the Sanskrit original of this work is not available. He could only get the Tibetan version of this work which existed in the collection of Manuscript in Tibet. Later the manuscript of this work published with the commentary of Arcatabhatta, viz., *Hetubindukā* with the sub commentary viz., *Aloka* by Durveka Mīra was discovered and Published by Rāhul Saṅkṛtyayana. This work of Rāhul Saṅkṛtyayana was revised and edited by Sukhlalji Sanghvi and Muni Sri. Jinavijayaji in Gakeward Oriental Series, at Baroda in 1949. Earnest Stein Kellner made another attempt to restore *Hetubindu* from Tibetan version with the help of these commentaries mentioned above. These works help us to approaching the original text with more clarity.

The text *Hetubindu* deals with the nature and role of a *Hetu* (proban) in an inferential process. The title signifies 'A drop of proban'. Though the title denotes that it is a small piece of thought, it gives a complete network of thought in an inferential knowledge. The text can be divided into five chapters based on its contents. DK tries to show his view on proban (*hetu*) and its significance in logical thinking through the first four chapters. Again he defends his position by criticizing the views of other rival schools on the same issue in the fifth chapter.

The text starts with the salutation to Buddha the Enlightened²⁶. He introduces his work with a brief remark about inference (*anumāna*). In this work he elaborates the extensive

layer of the meaning about inference for oneself (*Svarthjnumāna*), which was given in his own text viz., *Pramj,avrtika*²⁷. Thus the major portion of this text bears an analysis about the inference for oneself.

2. Conclusion

DK is recorded as a central figure not only in the scenario of Buddhist logic, but in the development of Indian Philosophical thinking also. His works are related with Epistemology, Ontology and Logic are considered most valuable texts and discussed all over the intellectual sphere.

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