Dharmakirti- 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. Diśṇīga systematized this school and Dharmakirti 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, Saṇdhyāpakeśā, Vādbiṣṭa, Santāntarasiddhi and Hetubindu.

1. Introduction

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

Dharmakirti is regarded as the most prominent figure among the Buddhist Logicians. Scholars are of different opinion about the period of DK. Dr S.C. Vidyābhāṣā records that DK was 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 Dharmaṇḍa who lived in 635 A.D. and he quotes from the travelogue of the Chinese Traveller It-sing, who came to India during the period of 671-695 A.D. It-sing records that “Dharmakirti made further improvement after Diśṇīga”2. He also recorded that DK flourished in recent years. These statements also clears that Diśṇīga might be the predecessor of DK. Another Chinese Traveller Hsuan-tsang who visited India during the same mentions the name of Dharmaṇḍa, 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. Tīrīṇītha, a famous Tibetan Scholar recorded him as a contemporary and rival of Kumārila. Evaluating all these evidences Dr. S. C. Vidyābhāṣā 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 Cēdamāni3, which is now known as Trimalaya. He was the son of Parirvrjaka Kṛunanda4, the Tīrtha of Brīhma, a caste. DK attained great skill in Vedas, Vedāṅga, Art of healing, Fine arts, Grammar and all the Tīrtha theories. Thus he became the master of all the Tīrthika 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 Upśaka. 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 Tākāla were situated. At Nālandā, he received priesthood from Acīrya Dharmakīrti. He became a great scholar of Tripitaka6. DK learned all the five hundred śūtras and dhāraṇīs by heart7. His teacher Dharmakīrti was a direct disciple of Vasubandhu who also a prominent teacher of Viśuṣaṇavīśa School. From Dharmakīrti DK gained a full-fledged knowledge about logic. He studied under the teacher Iśvarasena. His immediate pupil was Devendrabuddhi.

Tīrīṇītha 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 Tīrtha’s from the Māmśa Esaka named Kumārila. He was a scholar of all the systems and a celebrated Māmśa Esaka without a rival. Being an outcaste from the Tīrtha caste DK couldn’t approach Kumārila to fulfill his desire. So DK disguised himself, went to Kumarila’s house and there he worked as a slave. He succeeded in satisfying Kumarila by working in rice field and doing the house hold works. Kumārila taught him the Tīrthika 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 Tīrthika 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 Brīhmaṇs 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 Tīrtha doctrines while debating with the followers of Tīrtha system. Once he challenged the Brīhma, a Kaṇagupta or Kaṇa, a dagupta, the follower of Kaṇa, 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 Br̥hmins among them to establish a centre for the doctrine of Buddhism. The above narrated incident enraged Kum̘r̥ila. He appeared before DK, surrounded with five hundred Br̥hmins. Kum̘r̥ila appealed and proposed the King that whoever was defeated should be killed. But DK put forward the condition that, if 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 Kum̘r̥ila. Instead of that, Kum̘r̥ila and followers shall be converted into Buddhism. Thus debate started. Kum̘r̥ila raised five-hundred arguments to establish the doctrine of T̥r̥thikas. DK refuted each of these with a hundred arguments. Kum̘r̥ila 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 Vihāra Mountains he was invited by a neighboring King named UtpallapuÀpa, the son of King PuÀpa, to his palace. The King built monasteries for DK. He lived there and composed the treatise on Pram̘ja. Since he was a great admirer of DK, the King ordered to inscribe on his royal gate that “If Dharmakṣeti, the sun among disputants, sets will and his doctrines sleep or die, the false doctrine of T̥r̥thikas then arise”. The majority of the T̥r̥thas 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 jealously 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 Kali`ga in making compositions of great works, teaching Buddhism, engaging public discussions, debates and active propaganda of Buddhism. He died in his monastery of Kali`ga 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 music.12 It is said that neither his predecessors nor his contemporaries able to challenge his reputation as a logician. DK frequently criticized others schools and also being criticized by the others too. Even though DK was a severe critic, his greatness was admitted even by his opponents. It is said that V̥c̥caspati Mīśra criticized DK in the work namely Nyavyārtikapār̥ṣya eka giving answers to DK’s criticisms. Jayantabha¶¶a was another frequent critic of him. But he too admits DK’s excellence in Nyavyamanajjari.

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” which have become the fundamental works for the study of logic by Buddhists in Tibet and so popular than the works of Di`n̘ga. The seven texts are Pram̘ja avyavrtika, Pram̘ja avyavrtika, Nyavyamanajjari, Sa±rabhadaparek`aj, V̥danyāya, Sant̥inatarasiddhi and Hetubindu.

Pram̘ja avyavrtika: Among the seven celebrated treatise Pram̘ja avyavrtika 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 Di`n̘ga’s Pram̘ja samuccaya, 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. Dharmakṣeti 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 Pram̘ja samuccaya of Di`n̘ga. DK was attracted to the writing style of the author while dealing with the logical problems. This led himself towards I¿varasena, the direct disciple of Di`n̘ga who was in his too old age. Listening Pram̘ja samuccaya for the first time from I¿varasena, DK became as proficient as I¿varasena. At the second time he became equal to Di`n̘ga, and at the third time he found some errors committed by Di`n̘ga in that work. He point out these mistakes to I¿varasena. I¿varasena realised that he himself could not fully understand the real implications of Di`n̘ga’s logic problems better than him. This appreciation helped DK to increase his confidence in adding something to Di`n̘ga’s work Pram̘ja samuccaya. When he mentioned these to I¿varasena, he gave permission to condemn all the mistakes of work and to prepare a critical commentary on it. Thus he began to compose Pram̘ja avyavrtika as the commentary of Pram̘ja samuccaya, which were considered as the major contributions of systematic logic.

Dr S.C. Vidyābhūtā states that the Sanskrit original of Pram̘ja avyavrtika appears to be lost, but a Tibetan translation exists. But R̥hul Samkṣṭṭyāna discovered this work from Tibet, with Man`ratanand’s commentary named ‘Pram̘ja-avvyavrtika-vati’ 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 consists of four chapters as follows. Inference for one’s own self (Śv̥rt̥num̘na), Establishment of the validity of knowledge (Pram̘ja asiddhī), Perception (Pratyakṣā), Inference for the sake of others (Pary̥thav̥kyya or Pary̥thum̘na)14. R̥hul Samkṣṭṭyāna 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 others.15

DK wrote a commentary on the first chapter of Pram̘ja avyavrtika named ‘Pram̘ja-a-flyavrtika-vati’.

Dr. S.C. Vidyābhūtā remarks that the original Sanskrit work is not seemed by him. Only Tibetan translation available is named as ‘Tshad-ma-nam-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.” Karṣṇaṅgaṇa also made a sub commentary to ‘Prāṇijaśīla’ vṛttīkaṅvatī. Devendrabuddhi and Sakyabuddhi made each commentary to the second to fourth chapters of this text. It is also known in the same title ‘Prāṇijaśīla’ vṛttīkaṅvatī. It is a continuation of DK’s commentary. Another commentary is done by Prajñakaragupta, on the second to fourth chapters is known ‘Prāṇijaśīla’ vṛttīkaṅvaiya. Another Scholars named Yami, Jayanta and Ravigupta wrote each commentaries on the second to fourth chapters of the Prāṇijaśīla vṛttika is known in the same name ‘Prāṇijaśīla’ vṛttīkaṅbhaṣaya- teka.16

Prāṇijaśīla vṛttīkaṅvaiya: This is another important work based on Prāṇijaśīla (right knowledge). Dr. S.C. Vidyābhāsa a states that the original Sanskrit work seems to be lost. The Tibetan translation of this work is available named ‘Tshad-ma-rnam-par-nes-pa’, which signifies ‘The Determination of Prāṇijaśīla or the Sources of Knowledge’. This was written by a Kashmirian scholar named Parihita Bhadra and a Tibetan Interpreter named ‘Blo-lan-ses-rab’.17 This work is an abridgement to the Prāṇijaśīla vṛttika. This work is divided into three chapters as follows. The system of perception (pratavācayavastha), Inference for one’s own self (Pratālāhā), Inference for the sake of others (Pratālāhā) respectively. In the concluding lines of this text DK is described as a sage of unrivalled fame who was born in Southern India.18 Prāṇijaśīla vṛttīkaṅvaiya 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.

Nyāyabinduṭṭhaka: 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 (pratavācayā), Inference for one’s own self (Pratālāhā), Inference for the sake of others (Pratālāhā). 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 (kalpana) and devoid of error (abhṛṣṭa). 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 (indriyapratyakṣā), mental perception (manastapratyakṣā), self-consciousness (ātmaśramāvedānā) and perception attained by yogins (yogipratyakṣā).

DK divides ‘Inference’ into two as Inference for oneself (Pratālāhā) and Inference for the sake of others (Pratālāhā). Here inference for oneself represents the nature of knowledge (jñāna), Inference for others represents the nature of verbal knowledge (abdhā). Inference for oneself is defined as the knowledge of an inferable declaration of the formed reas object. Inference for others is defined as the declaration of the formed reason through words. It is of two kinds viz., positive or homogeneous (śādhyāvyatā), negative or heterogenous (vaidharmavyatā). An instance as follows; sound is non eternal, because it is a product; no non eternal things are products, like ether (ātmaśramāvedānā), is a negative type. On this work more than five commentaries of various scholars are available. They are Nyāyabinduṭṭhaka of Vinitadeva, Nyāyabinduṭṭhaka of Dharmottara, Nyāyabindupājī, Vinitadeva 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 Dwarkikadas in 1994.

Saṃbandhapareṇaka: This is another important logical treatise. As the name indicates the text deals with the ‘problem of relation’ or ‘Saṃbandha’ which is based on inference. Dr. S.C. Vidyābhāsa a records that the Sanskrit original of this work is seemed to be lost; but the Tibetan translation exists and it is called ‘Hbre-lwa-brtag-pa’ signifying “Examination of Connection”.20 This Tibetan translation is prepared by an Indian Teacher named Jñāna-garbhā and the Tibetan interpreter ‘Vande-nam-mkhas’. The content of this text 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 Sambandhapareṇakaṭṭhaka and the other is a commentary written by Sarkananda.

Vādanyāya: This logical treatise is another everlasting contribution of DK to logic. This is also known as Tarkanyāya. Dr. S.C. Vidyābhāsa a recorded that Sanskrit original was not seen by him, and only Tibetan translation could seen by him named ‘Rtsod-pahi-rigs-pa’ signifying the “Method of Discussion”. The Tibetan translation was prepared by an Indian Sage Jñāna-paṇḍita and Tibetan interpreter-monk Dge-wahiblos. But this work is recovered and published with the commentary namely Vipakṣeyāvarta of Santarākṣita by RgyudSamdkṭayupaṇa in 1936. The text Vādanyāya 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 Vādanyāya is the discussion on the rules and regulations of a good debate and how a debater tries to acquire knowledge through practice. Vādanyāya can be divided into two parts based on its contents. The first part deals with the definition and the classification of the Nigrahastriṇa in Buddhist philosophy, the second part is the refutation of the
views of Nārâyikas namely Nyāyamātakha-danam. Two commentaries of this work are available. They are the Vidyāyavipaṣcita of Vinitadeva, and Vidyāyatvāpaṇacitaṛtha of Śīnatarakāita.

Śaṁn'ét;ñätarasiddhi: This is another philosophical treatise written DK. It is also called 'Ṭantrāyatrasiddhi. Dr. S.C. Vidyābhāṣā records that the Sanskrit original of this work was not available to him. But there exist a Tibetan version named Ṣgyud-gshan-grub-pa signifying Proof of Continuity of Succession. This was prepared by the Indian Sage Visuddha Simha and Tibetan official interpreter ‘Dpal-rtseg’. Th. Stcherbatsky translated this work into 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 Dharmakirti. Dr. S.C. Vidyābhāṣā 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 Arcatabhata, viz., Hetubinduṭṭekṣḍaṇa by Durveka Mīśā was discovered and Published by Ralṣa Ekṣṛkatya. This work of Rahul Samkrtyayana was revised and edited by Sukhlalji Sanghvi and Muni Sri. Jainavijaya in Gawkward 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 Hētu (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 (hētu) 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 Enlightened 26. 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 (Svarthunanā), which was given in his own text viz., Pramāṇa-saṁsāraṇa 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.

References

[4] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid. p. 318.
[23] Ibid. p. 319.
[26] x̂EÉEá ÆOãÉEÉE * HB p. 3.
[27] {E@ÉÉÉxòÉÉÉxòÉE®ÉE®}ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ© ÉEÁ**Pramāṇa-saṁsāraṇa.