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The Heart of Buddhist Philosophy: Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti, by Amar Singh. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1984. xvi + 168 pp. Appendices, glossary, bibliography and indices.

The purpose of the work under review is to demonstrate that two of the key figures in the history of Indian Buddhist philosophy, Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti, were members of the Sautrāntika school rather than of the Vijñānavāda or any other Mahāyāna school. In evaluating any treatise setting out to defend such an hypothesis, it is important to take into consideration the following three issues: 1) To what extent would certainty concerning scholastic affiliation of these two philosophers affect our interpretation of their works? 2) To what extent is it possible to decide the matter of scholastic affiliation given the evidence now available? 3) How well does the treatise being examined marshal evidence for the conclusion that it advances? Let us examine each of these issues in turn.

Would knowing for certain that Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti belonged to any given school influence our interpretation of their works? Dr. Singh clearly answers this question strongly affirmatively, stating (p. 16) that if his thesis is correct “then the history of the Buddhist Indian philosophy from 5th century onward has to be re-written.” But before agreeing that the scholastic affiliation of Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti is a matter of such radical importance, we must ask exactly what it means to say that a given philosopher belongs to a particular school. In the context of Indian Buddhism does scholastic affiliation imply that the philosopher so affiliated held unswervingly to a given set of well-defined sectarian dogmas, or does it imply merely that he tended to adhere to certain intellectual trends? Is saying that Diñnāga was a Sautrāntika, in other words, analogous to saying that someone is, for example, a Roman Catholic of the Cistercian Order? Or is it more analogous to saying that someone is part of the humanist movement? Insofar as there were rigidly defined sects within Indian Buddhism, these sects tended to be defined according to the body of *vinaya* rules under which their members were ordained. Knowing the set of *vinaya* rules to which Diñnāga was bound might be interesting in itself, but it would hardly shed any light on his investigations into epistemology or indeed into any subject matter other than *vinaya* itself. And so I assume that far more illuminating than knowing a thinker’s sectarian membership would be some determination of the relatively loosely defined intellectual movement to which the thinker belonged.

But here we must proceed most cautiously. For, despite the efforts of later Indian and Tibetan academics to classify Buddhist doctrines into a highly artificial schema of four schools—two Hīnayāna and two Mahāyāna—with well-defined dogmatic boundaries, Indian philosophical schools were constantly evolving. Particularly in the highly creative period to which Vasubandhu, Dīnānāga and Dharmakīrti belonged, it can practically be said that each of the men whose works survive down to the present day was a school unto himself. The differences between Dīnānāga and Dharmakīrti are so many as to make their common membership in a single “school” a very abstract membership indeed, one based on little more than the fact that both philosophers addressed approximately the same set of issues. Like any other abstraction or generalization, the matter of the “school” of Vasubandhu, Dīnānāga and Dharmakīrti will inevitably fail to apply perfectly to any particular member of the school or to any particular text that is deemed to represent the school. In short, knowing to which school of thought Dīnānāga belonged is only of very limited value in helping us understand what, for example, he had in mind when he used the term *svalakṣaṇa*. To settle a problem of how to interpret a specific passage or how to construe a particular technical term, we must set stereotypes aside altogether and engage in the very complex task of textual analysis. And so, supposing that Singh can in some sense prove that Dīnānāga was a Sautrāntika rather than a Yogācāra, a reasonable response would be: “So what?”

Can one prove scholastic affiliation? Clearly, if schools are fluid intellectual trends rather than sects with fixed dogmatic boundaries, the task of assigning someone to a school is relatively arbitrary. Even deciding whether an author was a Mahāyānist not is not an easy matter in the absence of some such reliable criterion as explicit references to texts that only a Mahāyānist would cite as authority. That Kamalaśīla is a Mahāyānist is easy to determine, because he makes explicit issue of the fact and he cites *sūtras* that non-Mahāyānists presumably rejected as spurious. But Dīnānāga and Dharmakīrti do not cite *sūtras* at all as authority. What, if any, *sūtras* they read while not writing works on logic must be regarded as a matter of almost pure conjecture, for it is a dearly held doctrine of the Buddhist epistemologists that *sūtras* do not have an authority independent of reason anyway.

As can be seen from all that I have said up to here, I am at the outset rather dubious about both the significance and the possibility of anyone’s establishing Dīnānāga’s and Dharmakīrti’s

scholastic affiliations. Let me nevertheless make an assessment of Singh's particular arguments. His arguments are, unfortunately, rather chaotically presented and leave the reader confused as to what is being said and towards what end. But focussing on Singh's treatment of one or two issues may be of value in giving some indication of the overall value of his work.

The central argument of Singh's first chapter, "The Sautrāntika Tradition," can be epitomized as follows. Since "Dīnnāga is the follower, commentator and defender of Vasubandhu's philosophical standpoint" and "Dharmakīrti is the follower, commentator, and defender of Dīnnāga," if one can determine Vasubandhu's school one will know the school of Dīnnāga and Dharmakīrti as well (pp. 45-46). If any of these three thinkers had changed his philosophical loyalties during his lifetime, or if there has been a failure of a disciple to be consistent with the views of his master, the Brahmanical critics would have been unlikely to "overlook" such a weak point of an opponent, i.e., his inconsistency (p. 33). Therefore, Singh argues, we can be fairly sure that Vasubandhu, Dīnnāga and Dharmakīrti all held unswervingly to the same philosophical conclusions. Working on this supposition, Singh devotes most of his first chapter to determining the philosophical affiliations of Vasubandhu. His point of departure is Erich Frauwallner's now well-known and widely accepted theory that there were two Vasubandhus, but, as we shall see, Singh's account of Frauwallner's two-Vasubandhu hypothesis is somewhat garbled.

According to Singh, Frauwallner "in 1951 put forward a thesis that there were two famous philosophers by the name of Vasubandhu. One was the Vijñānavādin Vasubandhu, Asaṅga's brother, and the other was the Sautrāntika Vasubandhu who remained Sautrāntika till death." This thesis was attacked by P.S. Jaini in 1957 and Alex Wayman in 1961 and updated by Schmidhausen in 1967. All of these scholarly advances, says Singh, then led Frauwallner to amend his thesis in 1969, stating in this new version that the Sautrāntika Vasubandhu also converted to Vijñānavāda and wrote the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*. Singh, convinced that Frauwallner's 1951 thesis had been correct in the first place (p. 37 and p. 42), sets out to criticize those scholars who putatively led Frauwallner to change his views for the worse. Before looking at some of those arguments, however, let me set the record straight on the development of Frauwallner's two-Vasubandhu theory. In 1951 Frauwallner did indeed argue that the elder Vasubandhu was Asaṅga's brother and composed a number of

key Mahāyāna works, including a commentary to Maitreya-nātha's *Madhyāntavibhāga*, the *Daśabhūmikaśāstra* and others. And in that same work Frauwallner did indeed argue that the younger Vasubandhu wrote the *Abhidharmakośa*. But Frauwallner did *not* commit himself to saying that Vasubandhu II died a Sautrāntika. In fact, he said that he was not yet in a position to decide whether the Vijñānavāda-oriented *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* was written by the elder or the younger Vasubandhu.¹ In 1956 (not 1969), *before* the two-Vasubandhu theory had been criticized by the scholars that Singh mentions and tries to refute, Frauwallner stated the opinion that the younger Vasubandhu had composed the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*.² In 1957 he added three logical works to the list of Vasubandhu II's writing.³ In 1961 he reiterated his opinion that Vasubandhu II had written the *Abhidharmakośa* and "in his old age had completely changed over to Mahāyāna" and written both the *Vimśatikā* and the *Trīṃśikā-Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*.⁴ In other words, Singh is incorrect in saying that "Frauwallner has altered his previous thesis for one which seems less satisfactory" (p. 37), for Frauwallner never did express the thesis that Singh attributes to him as his first. The only alteration in Frauwallner's account was from being undecided to being decided on the authorship of the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* and the logical works. Singh's carelessness with secondary sources, exemplified here in his treatment of Frauwallner, occurs frequently in his book.

Singh is also careless in his translation of Sanskrit. To give one example, he offers "Dārṣṭāntikas are the Vaitulika people who do not follow reason (*yukti*) and the scriptures, but are arrogant regarding their logic (sophistry)," (p. 25) as a translation for *tadanye vādino dārṣṭāntikavaitulikapaudgalikāḥ na yuktyāgamābhīdhāyinaḥ, tarkābhīmānās te*. Through a serious misconstrual of the syntax of the sentence, Singh fails to arrive at a more correct translation, which might be: "Other theorists, namely the Dārṣṭāntikas (or Sautrāntikas), Vaitulikas and Personalists (Pudgalavādins), do not invoke reason and scripture; they have a high regard for speculation."

And equally careless is Singh's formulation of argument. For example, in the context of trying to explain away the traditional attribution of several Mahāyāna works to Diñnāga, namely the *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārtha* and *Yogāvātāra*, Singh argues that the language of the former "clearly reveals the fact that this is not the work of the logician Diñnāga or any other logician. It is apparently a work by a poet who does not know anything about

logic or epistemology" (p. 35). Moreover, the *Prajñā-pāramitāpiṇḍārtha* is full of Mahāyāna terminology that is not to be found in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (p. 34). Therefore, Singh concludes, these two Mahāyāna works cannot have been written by the author of *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. If the suppositions behind this argument were granted, of course, we should also have to conclude that Diñnāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, in which there are virtually no references to *abhidharma* terminology, could not have been composed by the author of the *Abhidharmakośamarmadīpa*, which is virtually free of the technical terminology of *pramāṇa*. But this would thoroughly undermine Singh's entire thesis that Diñnāga must belong to Vasubandhu's school on the grounds that Diñnāga wrote a commentary to *Abhidharmakośa*.

In his second chapter Singh examines the views of a number of modern scholars on the scholastic affiliation of Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti. The arguments of Stcherbatsky, Malvania, N.C. Shah, Vetter, C.D. Sharma, Satkari Mukerjee, Sāṅkṛtyāyana, Dasgupta and Warder are reviewed and criticized. Since there have been so many conflicting conclusions reached, all apparently based on an examination of the available evidence, it is clear that if a definitive answer is to be found to the question of which school the Buddhist logicians followed, that answer must be based either on new evidence heretofore unavailable to modern scholars or on a masterfully careful and impartial investigation of *all* available evidence. Singh provides us with no new evidence on this whole matter, but rather tries to reexamine all the evidence considered by other scholars and to show that it points ineluctably to the conclusion that both Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti were unswervingly Sautrāntika in their commitments. Prima facie this seems like a Quixotic task, since everyone, whether they conclude that Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti are Sautrāntikas or Vijñānavādins, concedes that these philosophers founded a new movement, generally called *nyāyānusārin* (based on reasoning) to contrast it with *āgamānusārin* (based on scripture). And so if Dharmakīrti is a Sautrāntika, he is in any case far from being an uncritical continuator of the early Sautrāntikas or Dārṣṭāntikas whose views are outlined in the Pāli *Kathāvatthu* or in the fragments of works by Kumāralāta, et al., whose views are discussed, sometimes favorably and sometimes unfavorably, in the *Abhidharmakośa*. The very topics upon which those pre-Diñnāga Sautrāntikas expressed distinctive views are not topics that come up in Diñnāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* or in the works of Dharmakīrti. As for post-Dharmakīrti accounts of Sautrāntika views, when they conform to the positions argued by Diñnāga or Dharmakīrti, the confor-

mity is due to the simple fact that the authors of those accounts took Dharmakīrti as the paradigmatic Nyāyānusārin Sautrāntika. But other authors took Dharmakīrti as the paradigmatic Nyāyānusārin Vijñānavādin. So whom should we believe: Vācaspatimiśra, Udayana and others who refer to Dharmakīrti as a Sautrāntika, or Vinītadeva, Manorathanandin and others who refer to Dharmakīrti as a Vijñānavādin? To side with either without compelling reasons seems arbitrary, and a more productive approach might be to begin with the acknowledgment that Diñnāga is just Diñnāga and that he is approaching a new set of issues with a relatively fresh mind, while Dharmakīrti is an ingenious thinker who builds a significantly new edifice upon the foundations of Diñnāga's work. But rather than taking the approach just outlined, Singh tries to show why Vācaspatimiśra is to be believed while Vinītadeva and Manorathanandin are guilty of distorting the facts. For example on pp. 76-77 Singh says:

Vācaspati categorically called Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti Sautrāntikas. When Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti called themselves Yogācāra Vijñānavādins is not to be traced in any of their writings. Some Vijñānavādin commentators have created this confusion. Why does Vācaspati present them as opponents of Yogācāra? Nowhere have they expressed "their own opinion" of belonging to Yogācāra. There is no internal evidence, either in the work of Diñnāga or of Dharmakīrti, that they have called themselves Yogācārins or Sautrāntika-Yogācāra.

Singh does not explain, however, why the absence of Dharmakīrti's saying explicitly "I am a Vijñānavādin" shows more conclusively that he was not a Vijñānavādin than the absence of his saying "I am a Sautrāntika" would show that he was not a Sautrāntika. Perhaps the absence of explicit self-identification shows simply that Dharmakīrti himself did not regard his scholastic affiliation as relevant to what he had to say. The effort to place all Buddhist philosophers into the rather flat architectonic of two Hīnayāna and two Mahāyāna schools was, after all, the concern of academics who lived several centuries after Dharmakīrti's time, and it may be quite anachronistic to treat the issue as a concern of Dharmakīrti himself. And so the testimony of such later academics as Vācaspati, Udayana, Pārthasārathi and numerous Tibetan authorities, all of whom were heavily influenced by the artificial four-school schema, should be treated with this possible anachronicity in mind. Above all, both Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti should be allowed to speak for themselves as to their scholastic predilections. Being allowed to do so, they both, as Singh himself acknowledges, remain silent.

In summary, the specialist in Buddhist epistemological theory is unlikely to find new insights into that theory in Singh's book. Nor is the beginner in this area likely to be able to use the book as a reliable guide through the secondary literature on the subject, for the author is far too ready to sacrifice accuracy in order to make every scrap of evidence appear to work towards his conclusion. So convinced is Singh of his conclusion at the outset that one can scarcely imagine his admitting that any fact serves as counterevidence to it, the result being that the book is more a polemical tract than a work of scientific scholarship. If the book succeeds in anything it is to show, albeit inadvertently, the bankruptcy of treating the philosophers under discussion as spokesmen of doctrinaire schools rather than treating the schools as heuristic categories into which individuals, who differ considerably from one another, can provisionally be placed for pedagogical purposes.

Finally, there is a false claim about the author himself that should be rectified. He is identified on the title page as the holder of a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto, and the dustjacket specifies that the Toronto Ph.D. was awarded in 1978. No Ph.D. has ever been awarded by the University of Toronto to Amar Singh, who in 1979 underwent his last unsuccessful attempt (after previous failures) to defend the dissertation on which the book now being reviewed was based.

Richard P. Hayes

NOTES

1. Erich Frauwallner, *On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu*. (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1951), p. 56.

2. Erich Frauwallner, *Die Philosophie des Buddhismus* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958, c. 1956), p. 351. Frauwallner writes: "Ausserdem sind unter dem Namen Vasubandhu zwei kleinere Werke erhalten, die beide den Namen *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhiḥ* . . . führen, eines in zwanzig Versen (*Viṃśatikā*), das andere in dreissig (*Triṃśikā*). Die äussere Überlieferung lässt keine Entscheidung zu, ob diese beiden Werke von Vasubandhu, dem Bruder *Asaṅga* stammen, oder von Vasubandhu dem Jüngeren, dem Verfasser des *Abhidharmakośaḥ*. Meiner Ansicht nach ist Vasubandhu der Jüngere ihr Verfasser, doch kann diese schwierige Frage hier nicht weiter erörtert werden . . . [*Triṃśikā*] gilt als das letzte Werk Vasubandhus, der gestorben sein soll, bevor es ihm möglich war, den beabsichtigten kommentar zu schreiben. Es enthält eine Dogmatik der *Yogācāra*-Lehre in Knappster Form."

3. Erich Frauwallner, "Vasubandhu's *Vādaśiddhiḥ*." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 1:104-146. See pp. 104-105.

4. Erich Frauwallner, "Landmarks in the history of Indian logic." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 5:125-148. See especially pp. 131-132.