

On the authenticity of the Bodhicittavivarana attributed to Ngrjuna

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ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BODHICITTAVIVARAṆA ATTRIBUTED TO NĀGĀRJUNA

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Professor Christian Lindtner has criticised¹ the arguments adduced by me² against the authenticity of the *Bodhicittavivarāṇa* (BV) attributed to Nāgārjuna. Although with some delay, I want to answer Professor Lindtner.

1. First criticism: I said that *Bodhicittavivarāṇa* 71:

/ de bzin ñid dañ yañ dag mtha' //
mtshan ma med dañ don dam ñid /
/ byan chub sems mchog de ñid dañ //
stoñ ñid du yañ bsad pa yin /

is taken from Maitreya's *Madhyāntavibhāga* (MV) I, 14 (15 in Pandeya's edition):

tathatā bhūtaḥkoṭīś cānimittam paramārthatā /
dharmadhātus ca paryāyāḥ śūnyatāyāḥ samāsataḥ //

Professor Lindtner, pp.260-261, argues that it is BV that copies MV. I do not think so taking into account the following reasons:

Maitreya in I, 12 enumerates the topics he will deal with. The first topic is the *lakṣaṇa* of *śūnyatā*, the second one is *paryāyas* (synonyms). In fact first he deals with the *lakṣaṇa* in I, 13 and then in I, 14 he enumerates the *paryāyas*. The *kārikā* with the enumeration is in its right place, in the place that was previously assigned to it, in an organic connection with what precedes and with what follows. But this is not the situation with BV 71: it

- 1 In his article "The Laṅkāvatārasūtra in early Indian Madhyamaka Literature", *Excursus 2*, in *Asiatische Studien* XLVI, 1, 1992, pp.260-264.
- 2 In my article entitled "On Śuddhamati's Pratītyasamutpādayakārikā and on Bodhicittavivarāṇa" in *WZKS* XXX (1986), pp.109-122.

has been introduced where it stands without any connection with the preceding and following stanzas. Let us examine them:

Stanza 70:

A happy mind is tranquil (*śānta*). A tranquil mind is not confused (*mūḍha*). To be unperplexed (*amūḍha*) is to understand the truth (*tattva*). By understanding truth one obtains liberation (*mokṣa*).

Stanza 71:

It is also defined as reality (*tattva*), real limit (*bhūtaḥ*), signless (*animitta*), ultimate meaning (*paramārtha*), the highest *bodhicitta* and emptiness.

Stanza 72:

Those who do not know (*jñā-*) emptiness will have no share in liberation (*mokṣa*). Such fools migrate in the prison of existence [in] one of the six destinies (*ṣaḍgatibhavadāra*).

Lindtner's translation, Copenhagen 1982.

To what word of the preceding stanza 70 does the expression "It is also defined" of stanza 71 refer? To "truth" or to "liberation"? Not to "liberation", because if that expression refers to "liberation", liberation and emptiness would be the same, and stanza 72 presents emptiness and liberation as different (knowing the one, one obtains the other). Then it must refer to "truth", but "truth" is not the central word of stanza 70; the central word is "liberation"; and thus the connection of "It is also defined" with "truth" is grammatically very awkward.

Moreover Lindtner in his translation has added "it", but in fact that word does not exist in the Tibetan text. Thus, if we delete "it", there is no link between stanzas 70 and 71.

Finally, it seems more probable that a syncretic and eclectic work as BV takes a verse from an organically unitary work as the MV, than the contrary process.

These reasons force us to think that BV 71 *pādas* a-b were taken from another treatise (MV) and that BV 71 *pādas* c-d were added to them.

2. Second criticism. Professor Lindtner, pp.261-262, thinks that Maitreya had in mind Nāgārjuna in several passages of MV. This was also noticed by Frauwallner quoted by Professor Lindtner. I accept this fact. But, if BV was not written by Nāgārjuna and belongs to a late period, Maitreya could not have it in mind. And I think that what I say in the preceding paragraphs (First criticism) and in the following ones (Third criticism), proves that BV cannot be an authentic work of Nāgārjuna.

3. Third criticism. The last argument of professor Lindtner, pp.263-264, is based in his thesis that the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (LS) is *older* than Nāgārjuna. But I think that, although the arguments adduced by Professor Lindtner in his article, pp.244-259, are very intelligent and reveal his great knowledge of Buddhist literature, anyhow they cannot destroy the conclusion reached at by Professor Jikido Takasaki that LS belongs to a period *later* than that of Nāgārjuna.³ And consequently the fact that many ideas of BV appear also in LS does not prove that they belong to a period *earlier* than Nāgārjuna. On the contrary, if BV and LS present several similarities, it is a new argument in favour of my thesis.

As for “an early recension of the LS, an ‘Ur-LS’” (Lindtner p.245), it could be accepted, but it cannot be asserted that it existed *before* Nāgārjuna and, moreover, it is not possible to establish which were its form and contents.⁴ And the correspondences between LS and the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās* and other works of Nāgārjuna could be explained as quotations done by LS from Nāgārjuna.

To finish I want to express, regarding *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, mentioned by Professor Lindtner, pp.253-255, that I have written in collaboration with Fernando Tola an article “Against the attribution of the *Vigrahavyāvartanī* to Nāgārjuna”, WZKS, Band XLII, 1998, pp.151-166.

3 In his article “Sources of the *Laṅkāvatāra* and its position in Mahāyāna Buddhism” in *Indological and Buddhist Studies, Volume in Honour of Professor J.W. de Jong on his Sixtieth Birthday*, edited by L.A. Hercus et.al., Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies, 1982, pp.545-568.

4 Cf. Jikido Takasaki, “Analysis of the *Laṅkāvatāra*. In search of its original form” in *Indianisme et Bouddhisme*, Louvain-La-Neuve, Institut Orientaliste, 1980, pp.339-352.

