

# Śāntarakṣita's Prioritization of Dharmakīrti's Thesis over Bhāviveka's in His Critique of *Vedāpauruṣeyatva*

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## 1. Introduction

The *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* (MHK) and its commentary *Tarkajvālā* (TJ) of Bhāviveka (500–570) are not only the earliest but also one of the most representative doxographical literatures in the Indian Buddhist tradition. As He and van der Kuijp (2014, 311) have recently remarked, among the same kind of literature, only the *Tattvasaṅgraha* (TS) and its commentary *Pañjikā* (TSP) of Śāntarakṣita (725–788) and Kamalaśīla (740–795) may be mentioned as their rivals. However, He and van der Kuijp (ibid.) do not observe any relationship between these two groups of works when they state: “There is also something curious about their intertextuality or, better, the lack of thereof. These large-scale treatises [=TS and TSP] do not even once appear to allude to MH or TJ.”

In this paper, I examine Śāntarakṣita's critique of the Mīmāṃsaka doctrine of *vedāpauruṣeyatva* (the authorlessness of the Veda) and attempt to read traces of Bhāviveka's opinions in it. By doing so, I discuss that Śāntarakṣita weakens the significance of Bhāviveka's claims and he adopts Dharmakīrti's opinion as the final position. At least regarding the few verses under review here, Śāntarakṣita clearly refers to Bhāviveka's works; it is just that he does not take Bhāviveka as the final authority on the matter.

## 2. Weakening Bhāviveka's Opinion 1: On the Evil/Human Authorship of the Veda

Bhāviveka's critique of *vedāpauruṣeyatva* culminates in proving the evil authorship of the Veda at MHK 9.31.

Moreover, it is to be inferred that the Veda is produced by an evil person, because [it teaches evil

acts such as] killing creatures, drinking liquor, and telling lies, just like the treatise of the Magas.<sup>1)</sup>

In addition to the three immoral acts listed in the verse, TJ attributes three more actions——sexual misconduct (D281b7–282a6), stealing (D282b1–3), and prattle (D283a4–283b5)——to the Veda with illustrative Vedic passages for each of these wrongdoings.

Śāntarakṣita also lists three immoral behaviors taught in the Veda.

Also, it is clearly possible that the Veda is of human origin. The characteristics of the Veda——such as speaking of sexual misconduct, killing living beings, and [telling] lies, and being hard to pronounce, vulgar, corrupt, and repugnant to ears——are also found in the words of the heretics and so forth.<sup>2)</sup>

Despite the similarity observable between Bhāviveka's and Śāntarakṣita's critiques of *vedāpauruṣeyatva*,<sup>3)</sup> there is a significant difference between them. Bhāviveka presents the evil authorship of the Veda as an inferable fact whereas Śāntarakṣita does not even attempt to establish the existence of an author. He merely suggests the human authorship of the Veda as a possibility.

### 3. Weakening Bhāviveka's Opinion 2: On the Authorlessness of Buddhist Scripture

Śāntarakṣita's next move is to point out that Kumāṛila's strategy of establishing the authorless nature of the Veda may apply to all religious traditions including Buddhism.

Moreover, with this mode [of reasoning], no [scripture] whatsoever would be of human origin since even the words of the Buddha can be inferred to be such [that is, eternal]. And that (=the Buddha's words) is said to be his (=the Buddha's) because it was [merely] manifested[, that is, not created,] by him.<sup>4)</sup>

Kumāṛila's reasoning is that the Veda is an authorless text since the transmission of the text is eternal and no one is remembered as the author of the Veda.<sup>5)</sup> Applying the same logic to Buddhist scripture, Śāntarakṣita states that the transmission of Buddhist scripture is also eternal and that it was manifested, rather than composed, by the Buddha.

Bhāviveka also invites similar Mīmāṃsaka argument in MHK 9.4: the Veda is authorless as its author is not remembered and it is *the* scripture as its transmission lineage has

not been severed.<sup>6)</sup> To this *pūrvapakṣa*, Bhāviveka presents almost the same reply.

Since a scripture gains its status of scripture based on the non-severance of its tradition, all [scriptures] would be established as the [authentic] scripture.<sup>7)</sup>

Then, Bhāviveka demonstrates how Buddhist scripture can also be considered to be authorless.

If [the Veda's] authorlessness is because of its continuous repetition, Buddhist scripture is also authorless. It is because Buddhas repeat what has been fully realized by previous Buddhas.<sup>8)</sup>

Bhāviveka's answer that Buddhist scripture is also authorless because Buddhas did not add to or omit even a letter from the previous canon<sup>9)</sup> differs from Śāntarakṣita's opinion that Buddhist scripture is merely manifested by the Buddha, and therefore, it is authorless.

However, in his *Prajñāpradīpa*, Bhāviveka shares Śāntarakṣita's opinion.

The reason that you present, "there is an author," is not valid. Why? ... The Tathāgata, without any effort, spontaneously brings out [his] words just as the heavenly drum, independently [of a drummer], resonates in the sky. [Also,] as there is neither agent nor receiver according to our teaching, [the reason] that you established, "there is an author," is not valid.<sup>10)</sup>

Bhāviveka finds a reason for the authorless nature of Buddhist scripture in the specific mode of its formulation. Rather than being uttered, Buddhist scripture was revealed with no effort on the part of the Buddha like drummer-less drum-beating sound from the sky. Moreover, Bhāviveka even takes one further step and argues that the Mādhyamikas do not accept the notion of "agent" from the beginning.

Śāntarakṣita, on the contrary, makes it clear that the authorlessness of Buddhist scripture is employed only to refute Kumāra's claim.

If you (=the Mīmāṃsakas) rejoin that such [a thesis of the authorlessness of Buddhist scripture] is not argued for by Buddhists [themselves], [I would answer: if your argument is rational,]<sup>11)</sup> why do they (=the Buddhists) not think in the same line of reasoning?<sup>12)</sup>

Śāntarakṣita, therefore, followed Bhāviveka in pointing out the authorlessness of all scriptures and interpreting the Buddha's authorship as non-authorship; however, he does not endorse this position as belonging genuinely to Buddhists.

#### 4. Śāntarakṣita's Policy of Having Dharmakīrti over Bhāviveka

The fact that Śāntarakṣita does not ultimately argue for the human authorship of the Veda and the authorlessness of Buddhist scripture is because he subscribes to an alternative strategy of criticizing *vedāpauruṣeyatva* held by Saṅghabhadra (衆賢; 5th cen.)<sup>13)</sup> and Dharmakīrti (7th cen.)<sup>14)</sup> This argument is aptly summarized in the following verse of Dharmakīrti:

"The speaker's intention is the cause of these [words'] being restricted [to a single meaning, and] the convention [is that which] reveals this [intention]. [Since] an authorless [word] lacks this [intention], how does it have a single meaning?"<sup>15)</sup>

Śāntarakṣita, following Dharmakīrti, posits that the authorless Veda is a meaningless text. However, curiously, even in Śāntarakṣita's formulation of such argument, we observe traces of Bhāviveka's argument, specifically MHK 9.31 quoted above.

The fools, like Persians to their custom, are attached to the Veda whose form and meaning are unintelligible to humans, and for that reason, which is like darkness [rather than light as you assume]. Those [brahmins], for whom the meaning of it [i.e., the Veda] remains unintelligible, just like [Persians], engage in evil acts such as killing living beings as a consequence of the flow of their past sinful [karma].<sup>16)</sup>

The underlined parts are reminiscent of the reason (*hetu*) and example (*dṛṣṭānta*) parts in Bhāviveka's syllogism. Śāntarakṣita's verses, however, present the act of killing as brahmins' conduct (rather than the Veda's teaching) and a comparison is made between brahmins and Persians/the Magas<sup>17)</sup> (rather than between the Veda and the Magas' treatise). This modification of the use of the same elements is necessitated by the established thesis that the Veda is meaningless. Moreover, it is this thesis that forced the elements from Bhāviveka's syllogism, albeit visible, to serve the different purpose of criticizing brahmins and not their text, the Veda.

#### 5. Conclusion

Śāntarakṣita, criticizing the Mīmāṃsaka doctrine of *vedāpauruṣeyatva*, employs Bhāviveka's critiques of the same doctrine. However, his final position on the subject is indebted to the reasoning of Saṅghabhadra and Dharmakīrti. Bhāviveka's opinions are mere-

ly treated as a possibility or put forward only for the argument's sake. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Śāntarakṣita does not refer to Bhāṣiveka's works.

As this study demonstrates, Śāntarakṣita did not rely exclusively on Dharmakīrti's works and the commentaries on them. One of the sources of information for Buddhist strategies of confronting philosophical others was Bhāṣiveka's MHK and TJ. Traces of Bhāṣiveka's works need to be discerned and acknowledged in our future reading of TS and TSP.

- 1) MHK 9.31, *anumeyas ca vedo 'yam asatpuruṣakarṭṛkaḥ/ bhūtaḥiṃsāsuraṇāpānamithyokter magaśāstravat//*
- 2) TS 2786–2787, *sambhāvyate ca vedasya vispaṣṭaṃ pauraṣeyatā/ kāmamithyākriyāprāṇihīṃsāsatyābh idhā tathā// durbhaṇatvānūdāttavakliṣṭatvāśravatādāyāḥ/ vedadharmā hi dr̥ṣyante nāstikādivacassv api//*
- 3) Not only are the three acts in Śāntarakṣita's verses included in MHK and TJ 9.31, the passages that Kamalaśīla quotes match those of TJ except for the case of telling lies. Compare TJ on MHK 9.31 (D281b1–284a2) and TSP on TS 2786–7 (vol. 2, 896).
- 4) TS 2789–2790ab, *kiñ cāmunā prakāreṇa pauraṣeyam na kiñcana/ śakyam saugatam apy evam anumātuṃ vaco yataḥ// tadabhiyaktarūpatvāt tadīyam ca tad ucyate//*
- 5) TS 2341–2342, *vedasyādhyayanam sarvaṃ gurvādhyayanapūrvakam/ vedādhyayanavācyaṭvād adhūnādhyayanam yathā// bhārate tu<sup>1</sup> bhaved evaṃ karṭṛsmṛtyā tu bādhyate/ <sup>2</sup>vede tu na smṛtir yāpi<sup>2</sup> sārthavādānibandhanā//* (<sup>1</sup> 'pi in the Ślokavārttika. <sup>2</sup> vede 'pi tatsmṛtir yā tu in the Ślokavārttika.) These verses are quoted from Kumāṛila's *Ślokavārttika* (Śaṣṭrī 1978), *vākyādhikaraṇa*, 366–367. Kumāṛila, differentiating the Veda from the *kalpasūtras*, advances a similar argument in the *Tantravārttika* (See Yoshimizu 2008, 60–64).
- 6) MHK 9.4abcd', *kartur asmarāṇāc ceṣṭo vedo 'puruṣakarṭṛkaḥ/ saṃpradāyānupacchedād āgamo 'sau...*
- 7) MHK 9.19abc, *saṃpradāyānupacchedād āgamasyāgamatvataḥ/ sarvasyāgamatāsiddheḥ.*
- 8) MHK 9.25, *anuvādād akartṛtve bauddham apy asty akartṛkam/ pūrvabuddhābhisambuddham yato buddhair anūdyate//*
- 9) TJ D280a5–6, *sngon gyi sangs rgyas kyis rdzogs par sangs rgyas nas bstan pa de dag nyid yi ge mang nyung med pas bcom ldan 'das kyis bstan pa yin no. de'i phyir sangs rgyas kyī gsung yang rjes su bstan pa yin gyi byas pa ni ma yin pas tshad ma nyid yin no.*
- 10) PP<sub>C</sub> (T 1566), 119b17–21, “若有作者，汝出因義不成，何以故？…如來無功用，自然出言說。猶如天鼓空中自鳴。如我法中作者受者皆無故，汝立有作者義，是因不成。” This part of the text is not found in the Tibetan version of the *Prajñāpradīpa*.
- 11) TSP on TS 2791 (vol. 2, 897: 21–23), *yady ayam artho yuktyupetaḥ syāt, tadā kim iti bauddho nābhyupagacchet? na hi nyāyopapanne 'rthe prekṣāto 'nabhyupagamo yuktaḥ.*
- 12) TS 2791ab, *parair evaṃ na ceṣṭaṃ cet tulye nyāye na kiṃ matam//*
- 13) \**Nyāyānusāra* (T 1562), 530c14–16, 又非覺慧所發音聲，唯可耳聞，無定詮表。既許明論非覺爲先，是則亦應非定量攝。
- 14) To my knowledge, Saṅghabhadra is the first Buddhist who critically discussed the doctrine of *vedāpauruṣeyatva* and who opined that the Veda must be meaningless text should it be maintained that it is authorless. Whether Dharmakīrti was influenced by Saṅghabhadra is hard to determine. Here I merely point out that they shared a similar opinion of the doctrine of *vedāpauruṣeyatva*. Another possible influence of Saṅghabhadra on Dharmakīrti concerns the latter's notion of *arthakriyā*. For a survey of previous studies on this matter and how Śāntarakṣita, possibly “strategically,” equates Saṅghabhadra's

“kāritra” with Dharmakīrti's “arthakriyā,” see Shiga (2015, 158ff.).

15) *Pramāṇavārttika* 1.327 (Gnoli 1960, 172: 17–18), *vivakṣā niyame hetuḥ saṃketas tatprakāśanaḥ/apauruṣeṣe sā nāsti tasya saikārthatā kutaḥ*// Translation is from Eltschinger, Krasser, and Taber (2012, 58–59).

16) TS 2806–2807, *narāvijñātārūpārthe tamobhūte tataḥ sthite/ vede 'nurāgo mandānāmī svācāre pārasīkavat// avijñātata darthāś ca pāpaṇiṣyandayogataḥ/ tathaivāmī pravarttante prāṇihimsādikalmaṣe*//

17) TJ (D281b1) glosses “maḡa-” in MHK 9.31d as “those who reside in the land of foreigners such as Persians” (*par sig la sogs kla klo'i gnas na gnas pa*).

## Abbreviations

MHK *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* of Bhāviveka. The edition of the ninth chapter used for this study can be found in Kawasaki 1992, 406–467.

PP<sub>C</sub> Chinese translation of Bhāviveka's *Prajñāpradīpa*; T 1566 (般若燈論釋).

TJ *Tarkajvālā* of Bhāviveka. *Dbu ma'i snying po'i 'grel pa rtog ge 'bar ba*. D 3856, Dza 40b7–329b4.

TS *Tattvasaṅgraha* of Śāntarākṣita. Ed., Shastri, Dwarikadas. *Tattvasaṅgrahaḥ of Ācārya Śāntarākṣita with the Commentary Pañjikā of Śrī Kamalaśīla*. Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1968.

TSP *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā* of Kamalaśīla. See TS.

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