Jikido Takasaki, A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra)

Johannes Rahder
Professor of Yale University


In this monumental work Dr. Takasaki made a major contribution to our knowledge of a Buddhist monistic, absolutistic, eternalistic, substantialistic philosophical system, which Erich Frauwallner (Professor at the Univ. of Vienna) in his book “Philosophie des Buddhismus” p. 255-264 (Berlin, Akademie Verlag 1958, 436 pages) called “Die Schule Sāramatis”, dated in the middle of the third century and placed in an intermediate position between the relativistic Madhyamaka and idealistic Yogācāra systems. Frauwallner, whose above listed sourcebook of Buddhist philosophy is not mentioned in Takasaki’s book, brought the Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda-śāstra (Kishinron) into close association with the Ratnagotravibhāga because they share both the Matrix (Garbha) theory (Takasaki p. 53).

Takasaki’s annotated and well indexed English translation owes a great deal to E. E. Obermiller’s English translation from the Tibetan version, published in Acta Orientalia ninth volume (1931) p. 81-306. However, the late E. E. Obermiller (lifespan: 1901-1935) did not know the Sanskrit original, published in Patna in 1950, and could not read the
Jikido Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (J. Rahder)* (55)

Chinese version (Taishō Daizōkyō Text 1611), and some passages, translated into Japanese by Prof. Masaaki Hattori in Bukkyō Shigaku vol. 4 p. 160–174 (Kyoto 1955). Dr. Takasaki collated and interpreted all relevant published Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese materials, so that his excellent monograph is a great improvement on Obermiller’s pioneer study.

The etymology of the term Tathāgata (Takasaki p. 28, 100, 198, 287) as Tathātām āgata “He who arrived at (reached) Suchness (Reality)” in contrast to the traditional etymology of the term Tathāgata as “one who has gone so; Thus come (Lessing’s Mongolian Dict. p. 1185); He that walks in the same ways (as his predecessors) (Jäschke, Tib. Dict. p. 565); Thus gone or come (Edgerton’s Dict. 248)” resembles the etymology of the term Tathāgata the late Unrai Wogihara found in an ancient Chinese Prajñā-pāramitā version, namely “Tathya-āgata”, Prakrit Tacca-āgata (Tacca= Sanskrit Tattva, Tathya according to “Prākṛtasabdamahārṇava” p. 425) “He who reached Suchness (Reality)” (Wogihara’s article published in Taishō Daigaku Gakuho 1930, Bonwa Daijiten p. 522). Takasaki p. 198, 287 (“The Tathāgata being Tathatā”) equates Tathāgata with Tathatā.

When quoting the Mahayanist Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra (Taishō Texts 374–5), “applying the term ātman (a sort of taboo among early Buddhists) to the Tathāgatagarbha”, Takasaki (p. 40) fails to mention the doctrinally affiliated Sammitīyaśāstra (Sammitīpu Lun, Taishō Text 1649, translated from Chinese into French by L. de la Vallée Poussin) manuscript in Louvain and into English by the author of the recent book “Nāgārjuna’s Philosophy” Dr. K. Venkata Ramanan in Visvabharati Annals vol. 5 (Santiniketan, 1954) with translated extracts and parallel passages from the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra), one of the sources of Taisho Texts 374–5.

On p. 34 in Note 57 Takasaki lists 4 Hinayāna sects holding the theory of the purity of the innate mind: Theravāda, Vaibhāṣika, Vātsiputriya, Mahāsaṃghika. He should have added a fifth sect, precursor of the Mahāyāna in many respects, namely the Vibhajyavāda to which the Mahāvibhāṣā attributed this Cittapraṅṭṭi doctrine (Takasaki p. 240 Note 305).
As scriptural evidence of the Theravāda adherence to this doctrine he should not only have quoted the Pali Anguttara Nikāya passages, etc., but also the following passage from the Pali Udāna-āṭṭhakatha p. 284: “Vatthassa ("cloth") āgantuka-malehi kiliṭṭha-bhāvo viya cittassa rāgādi-malehi sankiliṭṭha-bhāvo”, where the defilement of the original, innate pure Mind (citta-prakṛti) by Desire, Hatred, Ignorance and other passions, an optimistic theory of the origin of sin, evil and error, which is the most important doctrine of the Ratnagotravibhāga.

It is to be hoped that Dr. Takasaki will soon carry out his plan to edit the commentary entitled Mahāyanottaratantraśāstraratnasastra (MS. in Patna). His study on the Mahāyānottaratantra is disfigured by many misprints, one or more of them occurring on p. IX (Acta Or. IX, not XI), XIII, 7, 9, 22, 34, 58, 60, 368, 428, 438.

In spite of minor omissions Dr. Takasaki and the Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente are to be congratulated with the publication of this outstanding work, throwing a new penetrating light on the intricate relations between Buddhism and Brahmanism-Hinduism, especially early Vedānta (Takasaki p. 20-21, 28, 38, 54, 61, 128, 167, 189, 203, 235, 355, 368-376: “The Buddha’s Nirmāṇa-kāya is like the great Brahmā”).

---

New Publication

An Index to
the Bodhicaryāvatāra Panjikā, Chapter IX
compiled by
Takashi HIRANO

Suzuki Research Foundation
Tokyo, 1966, ¥ 4,000