

SAKYA PANDITA'S "SUBHASITARATNANIDHI" A WORK ON ELEGANT SAYINGS

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Sakya Pandita or (Sa-pan as he is usually known among the Tibetan), flourished in 1182-1251 AD. who like his nephew, Lama Phagspa (1235-80 AD) played an important role in the Mongolian period. Sa-pan was not only an important abbot in the long line, and also the leader of one of the most powerful Lamaist sect but also it appears as the king of a large part of Tibet (H. Hoffmann : *Religions of Tibet*, p. 129). He was an erudite scholar in Buddhist lore and composed many original texts on Buddhist philosophy and Tantra and Sanskrit and Tibetan poetics.

The present work under discussion, is a famous work on witty, epigrammatic, instructive and descriptive verses with their sources like Subhasita Ratna Bhaṇḍagara or gems of Sanskrit poetry (Ed. by Narayan Ram Acarya, Bombay, 1952).

The book consists of the following chapters. 1. *mkhas. pa. brtag. pa. ste. rab. tu. byed. pa. dang. Pa'o*, the first ch. Analysis of scholar ; 2. *ya. rabs. brtag. pa. ste. rab. tu. byed. pa. gnyis. pa'o*, the second ch. Analysis of Noble class ; 3. *blun. po. brtag. po. ste. rab. tu. byed. pa. gsum. pa'o*, the third ch. Analysis of fool ; 4. *spel. ma. brtag. pa. ste. rab. tu. byed. pa. bshi. pa'o*, the fourth ch. Analysis of mixed subjects ; 5. *ngan. spyod. brtag. pa. ste. rab. tu. byed. pa. lnga. pa'o*, the fifth ch. Analysis of ill-manners ; 6. *rang. bshin. gyi. tshul. brtag. pa. ste. rab. tu. byed. pa. drug. pa'o*, the sixth ch. Analysis of natural customs ; 7. *mi. rigs. pa'i. tshul. dpyad. pa. ste. rab. tu. byed. pa. bdun. pa'o*, the seventh ch. Analysis of untoward manners ; 8. *bya. ba. brtag. pa. ste. rab. tu. byed. pa. brgyad. pa'o*, the eighth ch. Analysis of actions and 9. *chos. brtag. pa. shes. bya. ba'i. rab. tu. byed. pa. dgu. pa'o*, the ninth ch. Analysis of religious norms. In the prologue of the work author shows his deep obeisance to -Ārya Mañjuśrī, the Buddha, Ācārya Nāgārjuna, sage Vyāsa (rgyas), Kavi Vālmiki (grog-makhar), Muni Akṣapāda (rKang-mig) and his Guru Sarvajña.

In the concluding portion, he himself proclaims his authorship giving identity in the following manner, "the monk belonged to Sakya Order, Kungagyaltshanpalsagpo (Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan dpal-bzang-po) composed this book with pious mind for all round

illumination, following the ancient customs of Brāhmanical as well as Buddhist faith. He has also clearly stated purpose and utility of composition. He compiled this treasure of elegant sayings (Tib.legs.bshad) following the norms of world for the fulfilment of the desires and all-round illumination of the learned. By virtue of immaculate enlightenment—the darkness that originated from ignorance in their (learned) mind will blossom like a *kumuda* flower (the white water-lily said to open at moon-rise; *Nymphaea alba*), their knowledge being purified they will be led to the state of omniscient—the Buddhahood. And that he Kungagyaltshanpalsangpo composed this at Sa-skya monastery.

We cannot assert the point whether Sa-skya Pandita composed the text originally in Sanskrit. There is, however, no doubt that he was a Sanskrit scholar and was a pupil of Khache Panchen of Kashmir, Śākyaśrī. His Tibetan Guru was Dagpagyaltshan (grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan). The Tibetan tradition emphatically says that Sa-pan composed the original text in Sanskrit. So far there is no trace, however, of the Sanskrit version. In the beginning of the text according to traditional Tibetan custom Sanskrit title has been transcribed in Tibetan. This, however, does not testify to the fact that the original composition of the text was in Sanskrit.

Sanskrit literature abounds in poetical aphorisms and anthologies of Sanskrit gnomic poetry. The most important of them Bhartrihari's *Nītiśataka* or "Century of Tranquility" by Kashmirian poet Silhana *Nītimāñjari* or "cluster of blossoms of conduct". The moral maxims, which it contains are illustrated by stories; according to A. A. Macdonell these are taken from *Rgveda* (*A history of Sanskrit literature*, pp. 378-379).

The anthologies of gnomic poetries earliest rhetorician, Daṇḍin, perhaps to mention Koṣa (anthology) as a species of Kavya (*Kāvyaḍarśa*, 1.13 vide *Saduktikarnāmrta*, Suresh Chandra Banerji, Calcutta 1965). Of the anthologies available at present, the *Subhāṣita-ratna-koṣa*, previously edited by Thomas under the assumed title *Kavindra-vacana-samuccaya*, by one Vidyākara, a Bengali Buddhist of probably the 11th-12th century is the earliest (Ibid. Int. p. iii). This anthology was compiled by Vidyākara probably in the Jagaddala monastery in what is now Malda District in West Bengal. The first edition was compiled about AD. 1100, the expanded edition about AD. 1130 (The *Subhāṣita-ratna-koṣa*, ed. by D. D. Kosambi and V. V. Gokhale, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1957, preface p. vii). The next Bengali anthology of importance is the *saduktikarnāmrta*, compiled by Sridharadasa, under the patronage of King Lakshmana Sena, in 1205 AD, (Ed. S. C. Banerji, Calcutta, Int. p. iii). S. K. De states that the compiler does not confine

himself to Bengal, but his vaishnava inclination makes him give a large number of Vaishnava stanzaṣ (Ibid. Foreword). Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Wales Professor of Sanskrit, Harvard University, has performed a formidable task by translating the above stated anthology, consisting of 1700 Sanskrit verses scattered in 50 sections. This was published from Cambridge, Massachussets, Harvard University Press in 1965. Vidyākara's tasteṣ ran chiefly to courtly love poetry and to verse which described nature of mankind. The translation is in lovely and moving unrhymed verse and effectively catches the lively spirit of the original. The translations are followed by elaborate notes on the text and interpretation of individual poem.

Sa-pan also composed an auto-commentary. In the introductory remark, he states that he mastered poetics, Lexicons and Nītiśāstras. It seems Sa-pan was well-acquainted with epic story of *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata* and vast Sanskrit literature grew up on the basis of the two great Epics. This aspect may be ascertained after a close comparison and examination of the text. He has referred to some Pauranic allusion. The length of the entire xylograph is text (verses) 53 folios and Commentary 113 folios. A print from central Tibet.

It is interesting to note that there are several Mongolian versions of the text. A valuable article has been contributed in *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. VI, No. 2. June, 1961 (Holland) by James E. Bowson of University of Washington, Seattle; entitled "A Rediscovered xylograph Fragment from the Mongolian 'Phags-pa version of the *Subhasītaratnani—dhi*" with transliteration translation, transcription and notes and a glossary of Mongol and English. This gives useful information of Mongolian 'Phags-pa version of the text. He states Erich Haenisch's second volume published in Berlin 1959, contains two rather well preserved xylograph folios of the Mongolian 'Phags-pa version. This is apparently one of the fragments from Berlin collection that were misplaced and lost during the war. T. F. Carter reproduced the left half of the first page in a publication in 1925; and this was the only part of the fragment available to Pentti Alato in 1955. In 1912 Gustav Ramstedt published a xylograph fragment written in 'Phags-pa script, which Marshal Mannerheim had found in Chinese Turkestan. And in 1952 Professor Alato reconstructed the text and identified it with "Altaistica" I. *Studia Orientalia*, VII, 7 (Helsinki, 1952, pp. 1-9). Professor Alato published an article on a second 'Phags-pa fragment of the work, and a third article he added the above mentioned fragment, which had been published by Carter (Berlin, 1955) by comparing the Mannerheim fragment and fragment T III D 322: D 2 of the Berlin Turfan Collection with the Ms. published by Louis Ligeti (Le *Subhāṣītaratnani* Mongol: un document du Moyen Mongol (-*Bibliotheca Orientalischa*) Hungarica, VI. (Budapest;

1948), one can approximately reconstruct the length of the 'Phags-pa edition. For more information of the Mongol 'Phags-pa script or the square script invented in 1269 and used until the collapse of the Yuan dynasty in China in 1368, one can consult Nicholas Poppe's *Grammar of written Mongolian*, weisbaden 1954.

Professor Louis Ligeti has contributed a long article on similar subject, captioned as "Les Fragments Du Subhasitaratnanidhi Mongol En E'criture 'Phags-pa, Mongol Preclassique Et Moyen Mongol" in (*Acta Orientalia Hung.* Vol. XVII, No. 3, 1964, published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Akademiai Kiado, Budapest), wherein he discussed three fragments of the text, along with transliteration of the 'Phags-pa version and its transcription into Mongol, with the instances of verses in Tibetan and Mongolian and extensive notes and glossary; due to our limited knowledge of French language in which the valuable article is written, we could not state more useful points that have been discussed in it.

Another Czechoslovakian scholar G. Bethlenfalvy has also contributed an article in the same journal (Vol. XVIII, No. 3, Budapest, 1965) entitled "Three *Pañcatantra* tales in an unedited commentary to the Tibetan *Subhāṣitaratnanidhi*". There he has referred the *Pañcatantra* tales contained in the version of the *Subhāṣitaratnanidhi* complete with commentary. He further states that this has been directed to him by Professor L. Ligeti, *Le Subhāṣitaratnanidhi Mongol: un document du Moyen Mongol, Partic I re, Le manuscrit Tibeto-Mongol en reproduction phototypique avec une introduction* (Budapest 1948), for the bibliography of the *Subhāṣitaratnanidhi*, see the preface to this work and also L. Ligeti, *Les fragments du Subhāṣitaratnanidhi Mongol en E'criture 'Phags-pa, Le Mongol Preclassique et le Moyen Mongol; (Acta Orientalia, Hung. XVII, pp. 239-292)*, the manuscript of the edition of *Subhāṣitaratnanidhi*, now under preparation. It had been noted by Ph—Ed. Foucaux, A. Shiefner, W.L. Campbell that some of the stanzas of *Subhāṣitaratnanidhi* contains reference to the *Pañcatantra*.

Another point mentioned by Vladimircov was to the effect that in Leningrad Ms of the *Subhāṣitaratnanidhi* complete with commentary, there are stories still unpublished. A version of the *Subhāṣitaratnanidhi* complete with commentary has been published in Mongolian only; Saza bandid Gungaazalcany Zochiol Erdenijn San Subasid, Cachar gevge Luvsancultemijn orcuulga ba tajlbar ed. by C. Damdinsuren and Z. Dugerzav (Ulaanbaatar, 1958). This material has not so far been made the subject of investigation. Here we can mention that Professor C. Damdinsuren has edited the *Pañcatantra* stories. The book is entitled "Rasiyan-Dusul-un Mongol Töbed Tayilburi" or Mongolian and Tibetan stories from *Pañcatantra*, has been published from Instituti Linguae et

Litterarum Academiae Scientiarum Republicae Populi Mongoli (Ulaanbaatar 1964).

In the above mentioned article Mr G. Bethlenfalvy introduces three tales from *Subhāṣitaratnanidhi* commentary, on the basis of a photostat copy of a manuscript from Ulaanbaatar. To make the comparison easier the Tibetan text is given side by side with the Indian (Sanskrit) version, which in the author's judgement answers the purpose best. He further notes that an exact counterpart of the Tibetan version cannot be found in the Sanskrit versions. In summing up he says that none of the three tales chosen at random goes back to a single *Pañcatantra* text; known to us today. In each of the tales we find traces of more Indian versions.

The vast resources of literature on Nītisāstra and fables are preserved in Tibetan and Central Asiatic languages and scripts along with other aspects of literature are being gradually uncovered and brought to light by the competent scholars of Mongolia, Russia, Denmark, Hungary Germany and United States of America in most amazing quantity is a striking feature towards the advancement of east west cultural contact. We hope and anticipate more scholars from the country of origin of Sanskrit should take enthusiastic and keen interest in comparative study of these literature now lost in original but available in different versions.