
Cyrus Stearns, *The Buddha from Dolpo — A Study of the Life and Thought of the Tibetan Master Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2002, ix + 318 Pp. Rs. 195.

The history of Tibetan Buddhism is divided into two periods — *snga dar*, the earlier period and *phyi dar*, the later period. Each of these periods was steeped in

¹¹ See Lambert Schmithausen “Zur Literaturgeschichte der älteren Yogācāra-Schule”, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Supplementa I, Teil 3, 1969, pp. 822-823; Shinjō Suguro (勝呂信静), *Studies on early vijñaptimātra philosophy* (初期唯識思想の研究), Tokyo, 1989, pp. 316-320.

controversy. The *Bsam yas* debate was addressed in the *snga dar* period, and in the *phyi dar* period, the most well-known controversy centered on the dispute over *tathāgatagarbha*. The former was an event of such magnitude, that most Tibetan masters came to regard Madhyamaka Buddhism to be the most orthodox form of Buddhism. Research on the debate between Kamalaśīla and Hva shang was carried out based on historical documents supporting Hva shang as well as those in favor of Indian Buddhism. At present though, much of this debate has been resolved.

However, not much research has been conducted on the *tathāgatagarbha* dispute. This is because in the *phyi dar* period, not many people subscribed to the *gzhan stong* theory, and the Jonang School was firmly suppressed by political machine. Thus, any studies on the *gzhan stong* theory were carried out using materials that supported the orthodox *rang stong*, such as the works of Bu ston Rin chen grub and Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma. Prof. David Seyfort Ruegg has published several books and articles in various European languages and Prof. Zuiho Yamaguchi has written some papers in Japanese. On the other hand, after the publication of the 'Dzam thang edition of the "Collected Works of Dolpopa" in 1992, there was an increasing number of studies on the views of Dolpopa. This book is the most well-known among them.

The term "*tathāgatagarbha*" first appeared in several Middle Mahāyāna Sūtras as well as the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, which contains all the ideas associated with the technicalities of this word, thus systematizing its doctrine. The text describes *tathāgatagarbha* — which is associated with *dharmakāya*, *dharmadhātu* — as permanent, bliss, self, and pure, and devoid of *āgantukakleśa*. Therefore, the concept *tathāgatagarbha* is in contrast with the theory of Madhyamaka, which symbolizes emptiness theory, and has its roots in India. In Tibet, Madhyamaka Buddhism was regarded as the highest form of teaching after the *Bsam yas* debate. Nevertheless, Dolpopa made public his view of *gzhan stong* in his work *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho* in 1333 or earlier (this date is in accordance with the author of this book). Bu ston Rin chen grub, one of his contemporaries, criticized Dolpopa's view in *Bde gshegs snying po gsal zhing mdzes pa'i rgyan*, without referring to Dolpopa. From then on, the controversy surrounding the Jonang School and the orthodox schools continued until the 5th Dalai Lama politically suppressed Dolpopa's followers after the death of Tāranātha, who was renowned for his *History of Buddhism (Chos 'byung)*.

"The Buddha from Dolpo" is about Shes rab rgyal mtshan, the propounder of the *gzhan stong* view, who was often called Dolpopa. This book, which is a study on his life and thoughts, is divided into two parts. Apart from the bibliography and index, part one accounts for 2/5th of the entire book; part two comprises 1/5th; and the notes make up 2/5th of the book. Part one comprises three chapters: the life of Dolpopa, a historical survey of the *gzhan stong* tradition in Tibet, and the doctrine of Dolpopa. Part two introduces two texts that are translated into English: *Bstan pa spyi 'grel* and *Bka' bsdu bzhi pa*. The former was written before his masterpiece *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*, and the latter after it.

"The Buddha from Dolpo" is a study on the *gzhan stong* theory from the

perspective of Dolpopa and his Jonang School. As stated by the author, “One of the main aims of the present work is to allow Dolpopa’s life and ideas to speak for themselves” (p. 2). Dolpopa’s life is described based on a biography written by Lha’i rgyal mtshan, one of Dolpopa’s disciples. Although Dolpopa was first believed to have used the term “*gzhan stong*”, the author of this book has indicated an earlier use of the term (p. 50). Further, one purpose of this book is to illustrate the doctrine of the Jonang tradition: the idea of *trivabhāva* is different from that of Cittamātrins and *Dbu ma chen po* is different from *Dbu ma*, a four-fold division of the Buddhist teachings according to the four eons (*yuga*) based on the teachings of the Kālacakra tradition. Another purpose is to highlight Dolpopa’s emphasis on the practice of the six-branch yoga of the Kālacakra. In this regard, Dr. Stearns suggests the possibility of establishing an approximate chronology of Dolpopa’s writings through an analysis of the terminology used in his works. The *Bstan pa spyi ’grel*, for example, is considered to be one of his earliest works because it does not include the terms “*gzhan stong*” or “*kun gzhi ye shes*.”

A translation of two of Dolpopa’s compact works, *Bstan pa spyi ’grel* and *Bka’ bsdu bzhi pa*, enables us to realize their significance. They serve as introductory texts to Dolpopa’s doctrine, on which *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho* is a full treatise.

Finally, there remain several notations to be pointed out. The author sometimes refers to *tathāgatagarbha* as “*bde bzhin gshegs pa’i snying po*” (pp. 1, 235 n. 25); however, it should be referred to as “*de bzhin gshegs pa’i snying po*”. Tibetan masters prefer “*sugatagarbha*” to “*tathāgatagarbha*,” and the Tibetan equivalent of the former is “*bde bar gshegs pa’i snying po*”, which is abbreviated as “*bde gshegs snying po*”. It is possible that the author is confused about this usage.

Further, a single quotation mark (‘) is used as the sign representing ‘*a chung*’ (ཨ) when used as a prefixed letter; however, it is reasonable to assume that this is because of the font and the smart quote function of the author’s or the publisher’s word-processor. It should be changed into the same sign as the other usage of the character.

Moreover, a period (.) is placed immediately after a *shad* (།). Since in Tibetan, a *shad* is a punctuation mark that is similar to a comma or a period in European languages, it should not be followed by a period. Further, a space should be inserted between a *shad* and the letter following it for the same reason.

In spite of these minor errors, this book will undoubtedly be a valuable contribution to studies in Tibetan culture and Buddhism.

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