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## BHĀSKARA, THE VEDĀNTIN, IN BUDDHIST LITERATURE

BY

H. NAKAMURA

In Buddhist literature the Vedānta philosophy or the Vedānta school is referred to often, but, in so far as the writer of this paper knows, no name of any individual Vedāntic philosopher is mentioned. Even the name of Śaṅkara, the greatest philosopher, is not mentioned by ancient Buddhists. Considering the situation, it is quite noteworthy that the theory of Bhāskara is mentioned in the *Tattvaratnāvalī* by Advayavajra (11th century), a scholar of later Vajrayāna, and that Bhāskara was regarded as the representative scholar of the Vedānta school. With the assertion that there is a danger that the theories of both the sākāra-vijñāna-vādins and nirākāra-vijñāna-vādins merge into the pale of the Vedānta philosophy, he says as follows :

Paramārthasan-nitya-sākāravijñāna-samādhau bhagavataḥ saṁsthita-  
vedāntavādimatānupraveśaḥ / sa hi paramārthasan-nityaṁ svacid-rūpabra-  
hmābhinnapariṇāmarūpaṁ jagad icchati / tathā cōktaṁ —

yad yad vai dṛśyate kiñcit tat tat brahmeti kalpayet /  
tato nānyagataṁ cittam brahmaṇyevāvatiṣṭhate //

iti samādhimalaṁ sākāravādināḥ /

evaṁ nirākāravādināpi nitya-nirābhāsa-niṣprapañca-svasaṁvedanavijñā-  
nabhāvanāyāṁ Bhāskaramata-sthita-Vedāntavādi-matānupraveśa-prasaṅgaḥ /  
so'pi vyapagata-sakalanāmarūpa-prapañcopaplavaviśuddhaprakāśānandagha-  
na-nitya-brahmābhyupagacchati /<sup>1</sup>

“ When one practises the contemplation of the knowledge endowed with images which is eternal and existent in the absolute sense, he might merge into the theory of the Vedāntavādins which was set up by the Lord. For he admits that the world is existent in the absolute sense, eternal, and that its essence consists in the development ( or manifestation ) which is not essentially different from brahman, the self-cognizant. So, it is said :—

Whatever is seen, one should consider it to be brahman.

Mind does not exist in anything else which is different from it; it exists in brahman only.

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1. *Advayavajrasaṁgraha*, edited by Haraprasad SHASTRI. Gaekwad's Oriental Series, vol. 40, 1927, p. 19. I have cited this passage with emendations by the late Hakuji UI, in his *Daijō Būten no Kenkyū*, pp. 5-6.

So far is the defilement of the contemplation on the part of the one who practises the contemplation ( of the knowledge ) endowed with images.

Likewise, for the one who admits the knowledge endowed with no images also there is a danger that, in practising the contemplation of the self-cognizant knowledge which is eternal, without manifestations and without phenomenal diversity, he might merge into the opinion of the Vedāntavādins who adhere to the opinion of Bhāskara. For he also admits the brahman which is eternal, pure, splendour and bliss only, which is deprived of the defilements of phenomenal diversity consisting of all names and shapes. ”

The distinction between the sākāravijñānavādins and the nirākāravijñānavādins was made and adopted by later Buddhist philosophers of India, such as Kamalaśīla ( in his *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* ), Mokṣakaragupta ( in his *Tarkabhāṣā* ) and others. In this connection, Bodhibhadra’s definition in his *Jñānasārasamuccayanibandha* may be helpful for clarifying the passage. He says :—

“ Here the Yogācāras are of two kinds, ( those who maintain that knowledge is ) always ( endowed ) with images ( *sākāra* ) and ( those who maintain that knowledge in its absolute state is ) without images ( *nirākāra* ). Of these, *sākāra* is propounded by Dignāga and his followers. They teach that the images of cognition belong to the dependent nature ( *paratantra-svabhāva* ), as is said in the following : The object of cognition is none other than internal image that appears pretending to be externally existent.<sup>1</sup> . . . . . They talk only of six kinds of cognitions. *Nirākāra* is taught by Ārya Aśaṅga and his followers. They maintain that the images of cognition belong to the represented nature ( *parikalpitasvabhāva* ) and are ( as much false as ) the hair seen by one suffering from partial blindness. Concerning this the following is said : If the object of cognition is established as an external reality there would not be non-conceptual knowledge ( *nirvikalpakajñāna* ) ; without it Buddhahood cannot be attained.<sup>2</sup> And again : When non-conceptual knowledge is acquired, all objects never appear ; therefore one must understand the non-existence of the object, and since it is non-existent the content of cognition is also non-existent.<sup>3</sup> They talk of eight kinds of cognition ; but some say there is only one kind. This theory of one kind ( of cognition ) is maintained also by some of the *sākāravādins*. ”<sup>4</sup>

1. *Ālambanaparīkṣā*, v. 6.

2. *Mahāyānasamgraha*, ed. LAMOTTE, II, 14 b. c = VIII, 20c.

3. Ibid. II, 14 b. f. = VIII, 20. f.

4. Peking ed. 51, b. 3 ff. I have cited this English translation with slight alteration from Prof. Yuichi KAJIYAMA’s paper, *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies*, vol. XIV, No. 1, Dec. 1965, p. 31.

This distinction has been admitted in traditional Vijñānavāda scholarship of China and Japan also, in which the representative scholar of the *sākāravāda* was recognized as Dharmapāla and the representative tradition of the *nirākāra* has been recognized in the theory of Asaṅga chiefly conveyed by Paramārtha.

Anyhow, the terms *sākāravāda* and *nirākāravāda* in the above-cited passage are used in a way quite different from the current use in Indian philosophy in general, in which *sākāravāda* is maintained by the Sāṃkhya, Vedānta as well as the Sautrāntika, whereas the *nirākāravāda* was held by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the Kumārila school and probably the Vaibhāṣika.<sup>1</sup> The use of these two terms, derived from the traditional use by later Vijñānavādins, was adopted by Vajrayānists.

From the discussion above, some noteworthy conclusions can be drawn out.

- (1) Buddhists were aware of the fact that the teachings of the Vedāntins were quite close to those of the Buddhists.<sup>2</sup> This fact was also admitted by Akalaṅka, the Jain philosopher, in his commentary on Samantabhadra's *Āptamīmāṃsā*, v. 24. Advayavajra inherited this kind of evaluation.<sup>3</sup>
- (2) Advayavajra compared the *sākāra-vijñānavāda* to the Vedāntic teachings of Hindu theism, whereas he compared the *nirākāra-vijñānavāda* to the Vedāntic teachings of Bhāskara. This judgment can be justified to a considerable extent.
- (3) Advayavajra mentioned Bhāskara as the representative Nirākāra Vedāntin, and not Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara, the Vedāntin, is not mentioned even a single time in any Buddhist or Jain philosophical work, whereas Bhāskara is mentioned in this passage and in a commentary on Dharmakīrti's work (according to the information by Prof. Y. KAJIYAMA). The teachings of the Advaita Vedānta are criticized in the Buddhist works by Bhavya, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla and in the Jain works by Samantabhadra and Akalaṅka. It is likely that this comment holds true with the Advaita theory criticized in the *Dvādaśāranayacakra* of Mallavādisūri and Siṃhasūri's commentary on it.

1. Satkari MOOKERJEE, *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, p. 77.

2. e. g. *Madhyamakahr̥daya* VIII, 60 ; 78 ; 91. *Tarkajvālā*, VIII, 79 ; 87 ; 91 ; *Tattvasaṃgraha*, v. 330.

3. Striking enough, the Buddhist Vijñānavādins call themselves "Advaita-vādinah". *Pramānavārttikabhāṣya* of Prajñākaragupta, edited by A. S. ALTEKAR, Patna, K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1953, p. 606,

- (4) From the above-mentioned conclusion another conclusion comes out that it is likely that Śaṅkara's scholarly tradition became influential in the sociological context in later days. We cannot say since when, but during some centuries after the demise of Śaṅkara the scholarly influence of Bhāskara was stronger than that of Śaṅkara.<sup>1</sup>

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1. This fact may correspond with the chronological strata of architectural remains at Shringeri, the headquarters of Śaṅkara's scholarly tradition. There remain only the Śṛicakra and the samādhi of Śaṅkara as the remains from the time of Śaṅkara. All other monuments and buildings derived from later times, especially from the reign of the Vijayanagara dynasty.