

Preface

The *Tattvārtha-ṣaṭalam*, or the Chapter on Knowing Reality, forms the fourth chapter of Part I of the illustrious text, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, composed in the late fourth century by the renowned Buddhist sage and philosopher, Ārya Asaṅga. The text was written in Sanskrit and, having acquired immediate success and fame as a Mahāyāna scripture in its own right, was quickly translated into Chinese and subsequently into Tibetan.

In many respects, the *Tattvārtha* chapter is the focal point of the entire treatise. It is the only chapter which addresses itself specifically to Mahāyāna doctrine, laying bare for the reader the proper ways in which reality should be understood and perceived by one coursing in the Bodhisattva Vehicle. By doing so, it directly takes up the central concern of all Buddhist doctrine, namely, the epistemological concern of correctly judging and validating knowledge about reality as it really is.

Now that the present translation of the chapter is available, Asaṅga's place of esteem among the classical Buddhist doctors is clearly illustrated. Its exposition also greatly clarifies Asaṅga's actual position with respect to Mahāyāna doctrine, which until now has been frequently misconstrued by contemporary Buddhologists.

It is truly remarkable that in this "Dharma-ending age" such a clear explication of the proper modes of cognizing reality according to Buddhist doctrine is now available to us,

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after almost sixteen hundred years. Existing only in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese editions, the text has for many centuries been unavailable to Western readers, even though the whole of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* enjoyed immediate success following its original composition. It was translated into Chinese in the early fifth century by the Chinese savant, Dharmakṣema, and some time later, into Tibetan by the sage-translator Prajñāvarman. However, until the present work there has been no complete translation of the *Tattvārtha* chapter into any Western language.

My work with this text, as well as with Asaṅga's own exegesis of the chapter and other pertinent texts, served as part of the subject of my Ph.D. dissertation work at Columbia University. Having completed the doctorate there, I felt it appropriate and opportune to attempt to make this classic treatise available to a larger group of interested readers. What follows represents the fruit of this effort.

Many people offered their kind and invaluable assistance as I worked on the early phases of this project. My gratitude is extended to Prof. M. Nagatomi, who kindly took two days off from his busy schedule to introduce me to the use of Harvard University's Tibetan collection. During a few weeks' stay in Kathmandu, Nepal in 1974, Mr. Nyingma Lama offered clear explication with regard to some of the more difficult passages of the chapter. His illuminating examples were useful as I settled into the work of translating the chapter itself.

It was my good fortune to spend a month in Madison, Wisconsin the following year, making use of the university's Buddhist Studies collection. In addition, the personal library of the late Professor Richard Robinson was generously placed at my disposal. Most importantly, Geshe Lhundup Sopa revealed to me his broad and deep mastery of Bud-

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dhist philosophy, particularly assisting me in the translation of Asaṅga's very terse and abstruse commentary on the chapter. As this exegetical text is a "root commentary," its meaning could have been fully developed only by one such as he, thoroughly versed in the tradition. My thanks to him are limitless. Responsible for arranging my stay in Wisconsin was my *kalyāṇamitra* of seven years, Lama Thubten Yeshe, a teacher of the Gelugpa tradition, whose incisive wisdom is matched only by his all-encompassing compassion.

Valued as teacher and guide was Professor Alex Wayman of Columbia University. It was he who first suggested that I attempt the project, and who painstakingly reviewed it at every phase. I thank him earnestly for introducing me to the profound depths of Buddhist studies and the illustrious writings of Ārya Asaṅga. Without his guidance, the thesis work would not have been brought to fruition.

It should be mentioned however that this book is not, in any direct sense, solely a revision of the dissertation. Much of the technical discussion found there has been left out here, replaced by a more general introduction to the materials. Asaṅga's detailed exegesis of the work, parts of which were translated in full for the dissertation, finds only mention here; while the "commentary" found here was completely absent from the dissertation. Thus there has been a rather complete reorganization of materials, the benefits of which only time will judge.

My long-time friend, Randa Solick, deserves deep thanks, not only for typing the many drafts of the work, but for offering continued encouragement and support as I read and re-read Asaṅga's works. Robert Solick, a student of psychology as well as Buddhist doctrine, likewise deserves my gratitude for his helpful suggestions as the work progressed, as well as for assisting me with the early preparation

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of the glossary. Ms. Louise Gross typed and retyped manuscript copy. I am grateful for her tireless help.

My sincere appreciation must be offered to Professor Robert Thurman of Amherst College for his careful reading and invaluable critique of the draft manuscript of this work. The book's present form is due in large measure to his helpful suggestions and, without them, should no doubt be the worse for it. In this regard I must also offer thanks to Ms. Karen Mitchell, editor of the manuscript for Columbia University Press. Whatever smoothness and clarity of expression is found here is due to her painstaking editing. I gratefully acknowledge her patient, dedicated, and extremely insightful suggestions.

A word about the translation of the chapter and its presentation here may prove helpful to the reader. For the most part, I have tried to give as literal a translation of the text as possible, while remaining cognizant of the fact that the English and Sanskrit idioms are not perfectly matched. Some English expressions have been added for the sake of clarity, but at no point, I trust, have such additions served to distort the meaning of the original Sanskrit.

The information given in the commentary is primarily drawn from two sources: (1) my own understanding of the text as it stands in its own right and in the light of the history of Buddhist thought in general; and (2) the critically important and informative exegesis of the chapter written by Asaṅga.

I have provided a running translation of the text without commentary so that readers interested in reading straight through the translation without interruption may do so. This is followed by a glossary and a selected bibliography. The notes to the "Introduction" include material intended

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primarily for the specialist, but should also inform the interested general reader.

In order to produce this translation, I read the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts side by side, after having first read each edition through separately. For the Sanskrit version of the chapter, I read both Wogihara's and Dutt's editions of the text, but have relied most closely on the edition by Dutt. The Tibetan edition used is that found in the *Tibetan Tripiṭaka*, Peking edition (*PTT*).

I consulted two "pada" commentaries in their extant Tibetan editions: one by Guṇaprabha, the *Bodhisattvabhūmiṣṭi*, and the other by Sāgaramegha, the *Yogācārya-bhūmau bodhisattvabhūmi vyākhyā*, at the urging of the traditional Tibetan sources. However, neither of these "pada" commentaries added additional insights into the chapter's key ideas. Presumably, both Guṇaprabha and Sāgaramegha wrote their commentaries on the *Tattvārtha* chapter for completeness' sake, both being mainly interested in other chapters of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, notably its *Śīla* chapter. Asaṅga's own exegesis of the chapter, as could be expected, was the most helpful in expounding the chapter's essential aspects. His exegesis was read in the Tibetan edition found in *PTT*. Of course, contemporary translations of certain key scriptures associated with the Yogācāra and other secondary materials have also informed my work. A selected bibliography of these and other important works can be found at the end of this book.

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Lastly, I wish to express my deepest thanks to Professor Barbara Stoler Miller, of Barnard College and Columbia University, who encouraged me to revise the manuscript for publication. Of course, it should go without saying that whatever oversights or errors still remain in the work are due solely to my own imperfections.

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