

BUDDHA NATURE:

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Minoru Kiyota

Edited by
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Painting Space with Colors: Tathāgata- garbha in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*- Corpus IX.22-37

Paul J. Griffiths

The early history of Tathāgatagarbha thought in India remains obscure. In attempting to elucidate it much depends upon how one chooses to categorize Tathāgatagarbha as a system, upon the decisions one makes as to which terms, concepts, argument-patterns and so forth must be present in order for it to be proper to characterize some text or text-fragment as representing that system. These are large questions, much too large to enter upon in this paper; my purpose here is much more limited. I intend to offer a reasonably detailed exposition of a set of sixteen verses from the ninth chapter of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* [MSA] (IX.22-37). These verses deal, or so the *bhāṣya* tells us, with the “profundity of the undefiled realm” (*anāsravadhātugāmbhīrya*), and they conclude (37) with the only use of the term *tathāgatagarbha* in the entire text. There is little doubt that this is one of the few early occurrences of the term in Indian Buddhist texts surviving in Sanskrit; a relatively detailed study of these verses may perhaps shed some light upon the historical and doctrinal questions just mentioned.

The systematic question underlying my comments upon these verses throughout will be: what is the relation between the ground of awakening, that which makes it possible, and the fact of awakening, its essential properties?¹

In what follows I shall provide first a brief introduction to the texts of the MSA-corpus; I shall then place MSA IX.22-37 in its context within the text as a whole, and shall translate the verses in full and offer expository comments on them, drawing in so doing upon the surviving Indic commentaries.

The Texts of the Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra-Corpus

The MSA, as is typical for any Indian Buddhist text of importance, inspired a very large commentarial literature, both in India and beyond. In this extended sense, the MSA-corpus is large; even the present essay might be understood as a contribution to it. But, in using the phrase 'MSA-corpus' I have in mind a more limited body of material: the verses of the MSA itself, together with the three most significant surviving Indic commentaries. The MSA-corpus in this limited sense has four layers: first, the verses of the MSA itself; second a prose commentary, or *bhāṣya*, on these verses, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkārabhāṣya* (hereinafter *bhāṣya*); third, an extensive prose subcommentary (*vṛttibhāṣya*) on both the verses of the MSA and the prose of the *bhāṣya*, the [*Mahāyāna*]sūtrālaṅkāravṛttibhāṣya (MSAVBh); and fourth, another, less lengthy, prose subcommentary (*ṭīkā*) on the MSA and *bhāṣya*, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāraṭīkā* (MSAT).

The MSA, the "Ornament of the Sacred Texts of the Great Vehicle", is a Sanskrit verse-text of 805 verses divided into 21 chapters. All the surviving manuscripts² embed the verses in the prose of the *bhāṣya*, and there is thus a sense in which it is misleading to think of the verses of the MSA as constituting a text with

1 This formulation has been influenced by, though is not identical with, the analyses given by David S. Ruegg in, inter alia, *La théorie du tathāgatarāgā et du gotra: étude sur la sotériologie et la gnoseologie de bouddhisme* (Paris, 1969); *Le traité du Tathāgatarāgā de Bu Ston Rin Chen Grub* (Paris, 1973); *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (London, 1989).

2 A description of the Sanskrit ms. of the MSA and *bhāṣya* upon which Sylvain Lévi based his *editio princeps* and French translation of the text is given in that work: *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṅkāra: exposé de la doctrine du grand véhicule selon le système yogācāra*. (2 vols., Paris, 1907-1911). What I take to be a copy of this ms. is available on microfiche from the Institute for Advanced Studies in World Religions in Stony Brook, New York (ms. #MBB-1-83), although nothing explicit is said in that institution's catalogue as to the provenance of the microfiched ms. The IASWR manuscript is on 218 leaves, and shares all the orthographic peculiarities of Lévi's manuscript, as well as all its lacunae. For more recent evidence from Nepalese mss. see Funahashi Naoya, *Nepōru shahon taishō ni yoru daijō shōgon kyōron no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1985).

an independent existence of its own,³ capable of communicating meaning outside of and apart from the commentaries and subcommentaries that explain it.

The question of authorship is difficult. The colophon of the surviving Sanskrit manuscript, which is of the entire MSA and *bhāṣya*, simply says that one Vyavadātasamaya, a great bodhisattva, composed the text with reference to the verses of the MSA; the colophon to the Tibetan version of the *bhāṣya* seems to imply that both the MSA and the *bhāṣya* were composed by Vyavadātasamaya.⁴ The Tibetan translation of the verses of the MSA (the only version in which these verses are preserved as an independent text) attributes their composition to Maitreya,⁵ and later Tibetan catalogues usually include the MSA as one of the 'five treatises' of Maitreya, claiming that the verses of the MSA were spoken by Maitreya to Asaṅga and then later promulgated to the world by Asaṅga.⁶ This, however, is a late and almost certainly unhistorical tradition. The earliest Tibetan catalogues of Buddhist texts translated into Tibetan from Sanskrit and Chinese do not know it, and there is no reason to think that the MSA was attributed to Maitreya when it was first translated into Tibetan, or, indeed, at any point during its circulation in India.⁷

3 The verses of the MSA are, however, preserved as an independent text in the Tibetan bstan 'gyur: Tōhoku #4020, Derge Tanjur [DT] sems-tsam PHI 1b1-39a4; Peking #5521, Peking Tanjur [PT] sems-tsam PHI 1b1-43b3; translated by Śākyasiṃha and Dpal brtsegs, revised by Parahita, Sajjana, and Blo ldan shes rab. For the colophons see DT sems-tsam PHI 39a2-3; PT sems-tsam PHI 43b2-3. The verses of the MSA are found in Chinese only as part of the *bhāṣya* (Taishō #1604).

4 The Sanskrit colophon: *mahāyānasūtrāṅkāreṣu vyavadātasamayamahābodhisattvabhāṣite caryāpratiṣṭhādhikāro nāmaikaviṃśatitamo 'dhikāra*, Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrāṅkāra*, I.189. The Tibetan colophon to *bhāṣya*: *theg pa chen po mdo sde'i rgyan byang chub sems dpa' chen po rtogs pa rnam par byang bas bshad pa las/ spyod pa dang mthar thug pa'i skabs zhes bya ba stel/ le'u nyi shu rtsa gcig pa'o*, DT sems-tsam PHI 260a5-6.

5 The colophons of the versions found in PT and DT differ slightly here. DT reads: *theg pa chen po mdo sde'i rgyan ces bya ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa 'phags pa byams pas mdzad pa rdzogs so* (sems-tsam PHI 39a2). PT reads: *theg pa chen po mdo sde'i rgyan gyi tshig le'ur byas pa rje bisun byams pa mgon pos mdzad pa rdzogs so* (sems-tsam PHI 43b2).

6 Bu Ston's *dkar chag*, for example, attributes the MSA thus. See Nishioka Soshu, "Buston bukkyōshi mokurokubu sakuin," *Annual Report of the Institute for the Study of Cultural Exchange* [University of Tokyo] 6 (1983), 56. An especially colorful form of the legend may be found in Tāranātha's *History of Buddhism*. See Alaka Chattopadhyaya and Lama Chimpa, *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India* (Simla, 1970), 156-159.

7 On the Maitreya-tradition see Th. Stcherbatsky, "Notes de littérature bouddhique: la littérature Yogācāra d'après Bouston," *Le Muséon* 24 (1905), 141-155; Hakamaya Noriaki, "Chibetto ni okeru Maitreya no gohō no kiseki," in *Chibetto no bukkyō to shakai*, ed. Yamaguchi Zuihō (Tokyo, 1986), 235-268. The whole tradition of the 'five treatises' (*chos lnga*) is very late. The Ldan dkar catalogue (see Marcelle Lalou, "Les textes bouddhiques au temps du roi Khri-srong-lde-bcan," *Journal Asiatique* 241 [1953], 313-353) does not know it, and there is no clear witness to it in Tibet until the twelfth or thirteenth century CE. This is not to say that there is no Indian evidence as to the connection between Asaṅga and Maitreya; only that such evidence does not point clearly toward the MSA. Perhaps the earliest reference to Maitreya and Asaṅga in an Indian text is in Sthiramati's *īkā* to the *Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya*. The dedicatory verse of this work offers homage to both the *Madhyāntavibhāga*'s promulgator (*praṇetr*) and its speaker (*vaktṛ*). Sthiramati explains: "The noble Maitreya is the promulgator of this verse-treatise ... the noble teacher Asaṅga is its speaker, and after hearing it from him, the noble and revered Vasubandhu composed a

It is possible, though, to provide the MSA with an approximate relative dating. It was certainly known to and quoted by Asaṅga, perhaps the greatest systematic thinker of the classical Indian Yogācāra.⁸ And since we know, with a fair amount of certainty, that Asaṅga flourished in the latter half of the fourth century CE,⁹ it follows that the compilation of the MSA must have preceded that period—though probably not by much.

The *bhāṣya*, as already indicated, is a prose commentary to the MSA. All the verses of this latter text are cited in it; the chapter-divisions and subdivisions of the verses into groups dealing with particular subjects within each chapter are supplied by the *bhāṣya*. So the structure of each text within the MSA corpus as a whole is largely dependent on that supplied by the *bhāṣya*; it is not inherent in the verses of the MSA itself. As such prose commentaries go, the *bhāṣya* is not especially long and not especially complex. The two complete printed editions each run to less than 200 pages of text;¹⁰ the average comment given to each verse thus runs to only a few lines, and very rarely to more than half a page.

The *bhāṣya* was written in classical Sanskrit, by someone sufficiently at home with the complexities of that learned language to note occasional infelicities in the versification of the MSA.¹¹ It survives in that language, as well as in versions in both Tibetan and Chinese, the former translated in the eighth century by

commentary on it" (*yasyāṣya kārīkāśāstrasyāryamaitreyaḥ prañetā ... vaktā punar atrācāryāsaṅgaḥ tasmāc chrutvācāryabhāḍantavasubandhuḥ tadbhāṣyam akarot*, R. C. Pandeya, *Madhyānta-Vibhāga-Sāstra. Containing the Kārīkā-s of Maitreya. Bhāṣya of Vasubandhu and Tīkā by Sthiramati* (Delhi, 1971), 3-4.

- 8 The MSA is mentioned by name in Asaṅga's *Viniścayasaṅgrahaṇī* (DT sems-tsam ZHI 198a4-7), and is frequently cited (though not by name) in the *Mahāyāna-saṅgraha*. It may also have been cited by Chien-i (Sāramati?) in the **Mahāyānāvatāra*, a work extant only in Chinese (Taishō #1634), although this is controversial. See Ui Hakuju, "On the Author of the Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra," *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik* 6 (1928), 218; idem, "Maitreya as a Historical Personage," in *Indian Studies in Honor of Charles Rockwell Lanman* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1929), 101. For a contrary opinion see Hirakawa Akira et al., *Index to the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (3 vols., Tokyo, 1973-78), I.ix. The **Mahāyānāvatāra* was translated into Chinese before 437 CE, so if the citation should prove to be what it seems, we have a fairly certain terminus ad quem for the MSA.
- 9 This is a date based, more than anything else, upon the date at which the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (almost certainly by Asaṅga) was translated into Chinese: before 418 CE. The literature on the historical and chronological problems surrounding Asaṅga's life is enormous. See, recently (and with citations to the earlier literature), Janice Dean Willis, *On Knowing Reality: The Tattvārtha Chapter of Asaṅga's Bodhisattvabhūmi* (New York, 1979), 3-12; John P. Keenan, "A Study of the Buddhābhūmyupadeśa: The Doctrinal Development of the Notion of Wisdom in Yogācāra Thought," (Ph.D dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980), 181-242; Paul J. Griffiths, "Indian Buddhist Meditation-Theory: History, Development, Systematization," (Ph.D dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1983), 13-49.
- 10 Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra*, II; Sitansusekhar Bagchi, *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra of Asaṅga* (Darbhanga, 1970).
- 11 For example, the term *dharama* (for *dharma*) is used in MSA XIX.69b for metrical reasons. The *bhāṣya* comments: *dharmā evātra dharmā ukto vṛttānuvṛtīyā* (Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra*, I.173).

Śākyasiṃha and Dpal brtsegs, and the latter in the seventh century by Prabhākaramitra.¹² There are complete modern translations into Japanese and French.¹³

The *bhāṣya*'s authorship is uncertain. As already mentioned, the colophon of the Sanskrit manuscript names Vyavadātasamaya as the author, and in this the colophon of the Tibetan version concurs. But nothing more is known of this individual, and some have argued that Vyavadātasamaya is not a proper name in any case, but only an epithet.¹⁴ The later tradition in Tibet attributes the text to Vasubandhu,¹⁵ and that in China to Asaṅga.¹⁶ The legends surrounding both of these two individuals are extensive, as is the number of works attributed to each. I have already mentioned the legend of Asaṅga's reception of the verses of the MSA from Maitreya. Here I can only add that, according to an early biography of Vasubandhu, he and Asaṅga were half-brothers, sons of the same mother but different fathers.¹⁷ Whatever the truth of this story—and it is sufficiently deeply rooted in early Indian traditions to be not obviously unhistorical—the fact that this text is attributed to one half-brother in Tibet and to the other in China points at least to the origin of the *bhāṣya* at the time when these individuals were active: say, the late fourth or early fifth century CE.¹⁸ More than this about the *bhāṣya*'s provenance, date, or author, cannot be said with anything approaching certainty.

The MSABh is a lengthy prose subcommentary to both the MSA and the *bhāṣya*. It cites all the verses of the MSA and comments upon almost every word in them. It also cites and comments upon a good portion of the text of the *bhāṣya*. It was, like all our texts, originally written in Sanskrit. It does not, however, survive in that language. Our sole witness to it is the Tibetan translation made by

12 Tōhoku #4026, DT sems-tsam PHI 129b1-260a7; Peking #5527, PT sems-tsam PHI 135b7-287a8; Taishō #1604.

13 Into Japanese by Ui Hakuju, *Daijō shōgon kyōron no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1961), and into French by Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālamkāra*, II.

14 See, for example, Ruegg, *La théorie du Tathāgatagarbha*, 40. I doubt whether Ruegg is correct in this contention.

15 As, for example, by Bu Ston. See Nishioka, "Bu-Ston bukkyōshi," 56.

16 The preface (by Li-pai-yao) to Prabhākaramitra's translation of the MSABh suggests that the whole work is by Asaṅga. See Ui, "On the Author," 216; Ronald Mark Davidson, "Buddhist Systems of Transformation: Āśraya-parivṛtti/parāvṛtti Among the Yogācāra," (Ph.D Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1985), 32.

17 Paramārtha's *Life of Vasubandhu* (Taishō #2049), probably written within two centuries of the relevant events, gives the most famous version of this story. See Takakusu Junjirō, "The Life of Vasubandhu," *T'oung Pao* (1904), 269-296, for a translation of this text.

18 On the life and times of Vasubandhu see especially Erich Frauwallner, *On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law, Vasubandhu* (Rome, 1951); Padmanabh S. Jaini, "On the Theory of the Two Vasubandhus," *Bulletin of the School for Oriental and African Studies* [London] 21 (1958), 48-53; Griffiths, "Indian Buddhist Meditation-Theory," 175-193; Bruce Hall, "Vasubandhu on Aggregates, Spheres and Components: Being Chapter One of the Abhidharmakośa," (Ph.D thesis, Harvard University, 1983), 13-21; Davidson, "Buddhist Systems of Transformation," 14-49, 126-149. Frauwallner makes an excellent starting point for study of this issue since he provides a detailed discussion of the literature on this issue through the late 1940s.

Municandra and Lce bkra-shis in perhaps the eighth century CE.¹⁹ There is no Chinese translation, and no full translation into any modern language.²⁰

The authorship of the MSAVBh is fairly certain. The colophon of the Tibetan (and only) version attributes it to Sthiramati, and there is no reason to doubt this attribution. Sthiramati was one of the great systematizers and scholastics of classical Indian Yogâcāra. While he was not an especially original or exciting thinker (his works have the feel, often, of scholastic texts produced under pressure by an academician), Sthiramati's texts are of great value in the amount of material they preserve, the extent of their citations of other works, and what they tell us about the state of systematic Yogâcāra thought in sixth-century India.

We can also be fairly certain about Sthiramati's date. There is inscriptional evidence which makes it clear that he was active in India during the reign of Guhasena (538-566 CE),²¹ and the generally accepted dates for Sthiramati are ca. 510-570 CE.²² He was probably connected with the great Buddhist university at Nālandā, and appears to have made it his intellectual goal to master and produce commentaries upon all Yogâcāra literature then available. It is significant that he chose not only to comment upon the Yogâcāra texts, but also upon the summa of Vaibhāṣika abhidharma, the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. This suggests a close link in style and content between traditional (non-Mahāyāna) Buddhist metaphysics, and the system-building of the Yogâcāra.

Finally, the MSAT, like the MSAVBh, is a prose subcommentary upon the MSA and *bhāṣya*. It differs from the MSAVBh in two main respects. First, it cites and comments upon both the verses of the MSA and the prose of the *bhāṣya* selectively; many verses are passed over in silence (although the MSAT does tend to cite the *bhāṣya* rather more frequently than does the MSAVBh). Second, the MSAT is considerably shorter than the MSAVBh, and lacks the extended disquisitions which are so much a part of the latter text. It too was originally

19 *Theg pa chen po mdo sde'i rgyan gyi 'grel pa rgya cher bshad pa*, Tōhoku #4034, DT sems-tsam MI 1b1-TSI 266a7; Peking #5531. Rather little is known about this team of translators. The colophon suggests that they were active in Mang-yul, and they certainly belong to the early period (i.e., pre-814 CE) of translation-activity in Tibet.

20 Some sections of the MSAVBh have been translated into Japanese. See the edition and translation of the ninth chapter by the Chibetto Buntō Kenkyūkai, *Ankeizō Daijō Shōgon Kyōron Shakuso: Bodaihon* (2 vols., Tokyo, 1979-1981); I shall make use of this edition and refer to it as CBK. See also Odani Nobuchiyo, *Daijō shōgon kyōron no kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1984), 144-288, for an edition and translation of the fourteenth chapter.

21 On this see Sylvain Lévi, "Les donations des rois de Vallabhī," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, sciences religieuses, études de critique et d'histoire*, second series, VII (1896), 75-100.

22 On the general question of Sthiramati's date see Erich Frauwallner, "Landmarks in the History of Indian Logic," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 5 (1961), 136-137; Kajiyama Yuichi, "Bhāvaviveka, Sthiramati and Dharmapāla," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 12/13 (1968), 193-203; Hakamaya Noriaki, "Sthiramati and Śīlabhadra," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 25 (1977), 35-37. For Bu Ston's treatment, see Ernst Obermiller, *The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet by Bu-ston* (Delhi, 1986), 147-149. Compare Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, *Tāranātha's History*, 180-181.

written in Sanskrit; it exists now only in Tibetan translation,²³ a version made by Śākyasiṃha and Dpal brtsegs in the eighth century CE (and later revised). There is no Chinese translation and no translation into any modern language. The colophon of the Tibetan translation attributes the work to Ngo bo nyid med pa; this may represent either an original Sanskrit Niḥsvabhāva or Asvabhāva. Since no reference to the person in question has been traced in any text extant in Sanskrit, it is not possible to be certain which is the correct reconstruction. In what follows I shall, for the sake of convenience, use Asvabhāva, though without intending to indicate by so doing that I regard this reconstruction as any more likely than Niḥsvabhāva.

Rather little is known about Asvabhāva. Unlike Sthiramati, he was not a scholastic thinker of the first rank in the Yogācāra school. The Tibetan canonical collections preserve only three works under his name, all commentaries on classical Yogācāra texts. His date is a matter of some controversy. It has been traditional, especially among Japanese scholars, to place him fairly early and, following Hsüan Tsang's Chinese translation of the commentary on the *Mahāyānaśāṅgraha*, to portray him as a forerunner of Dharmapāla and an exponent of the view that consciousness necessarily has phenomenological content (*sākāravāda*).²⁴ But more recent Japanese scholarship (there has been almost none on Asvabhāva in the West), basing itself not upon Hsüan-tsang's somewhat tendentious rendering of the *Mahāyānaśāṅgrahōpanibandhana*, but rather upon the much more accurate Tibetan version, has shown this view to be quite anachronistic.²⁵ The internal evidence of Asvabhāva's own works shows him to be very close to Sthiramati, and to be drawing on essentially identical textual and exegetical traditions; there is no convincing internal evidence to suggest that Asvabhāva was an exponent of *sākāravāda* (or, indeed, that the attribution of this doctrinal dispute to anyone in the sixth century is anything but anachronistic).

These facts, when coupled with one clear piece of external evidence, also suggest that we should probably place Asvabhāva later than the traditional late fifth century CE date given to him. Asvabhāva cites Dharmakīrti's *Nyāyabindu* in his *Mahāyānaśāṅgrahōpanibandhana*;²⁶ he must therefore be at least a junior contemporary of that scholar. And since Chr. Lindtner has recently given very good

23 Tōhoku #4029, DT sems-tsam BI 38b6-174a7; Peking #5530, PT sems-tsam BI 45a5-196a7.

24 See, for example, Nakamura Hajime, who suggests ca. 450-530 CE (*Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* [Hirakata City, 1980], 276), and who mentions this view of Asvabhāva's relationship to Dharmapāla.

25 The works of Hakamaya Noriaki are of key importance here. See especially: "Mahāyānaśāṅgraha ni taisuru Asvabhāva chūshaku no tokuchō," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 19 (1970), 444-449; "Asvabhāva's Commentary on the Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra IX.56-76," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 20 (1971), 23-31; "Hsüan-tsang yaku Shōdaijōronshaku," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 18 (1969), 140-141.

26 DT sems-tsam RI 106a7-106b2.

reasons for thinking that Dharmakīrti's dates are ca. 530-600 CE,²⁷ Asvabhāva must have been active in the second half of the sixth century CE, perhaps extending even into the seventh.

The Structure and Content of the Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra

The MSA is not a carefully or tightly structured work. Even with the best efforts of the author of the *bhāṣya* (including the provision of chapter divisions and sectional subdivisions within chapters), it is difficult to avoid the impression that the text is sprawling and repetitious. One of the major themes underlying the whole work is the attempt to establish the superiority of the Mahāyāna, the path of the bodhisattva, over against that of the 'Hīnayāna', a term used in the *bhāṣya* as an aggressive polemical weapon to label what it sees as the inferior path of the 'hearer', the śrāvaka. This polemical thrust is very evident in the early chapters of the *bhāṣya*. The very first chapter is entitled "The Establishment of the Mahāyāna",²⁸ and the main goal here is to show both that the texts enshrining the "supreme vehicle" (*uttamayāna*)—among which, naturally, the *bhāṣya* numbers itself—are superior to those presenting the "vehicle of the hearers" (*śrāvakayāna*), and that the texts must be understood as words of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*).²⁹ That the arguments offered here are so extensive and vehement is sufficient to show that the MSA is a self-consciously Mahāyāna text, and that it was not uncontroversial to be such in the fourth century CE.

A similar polemic is continued in the second chapter, on going for refuge,³⁰ and in the third, on spiritual lineage or potentiality.³¹ In the former, a bodhisattva's taking refuge in the Buddha, in his doctrine, and in his monastic community is said to be superior to the hearer's in four ways: in terms of its omnipresence (*sarvatraga*), its commitment (*abhyupagama*), its attainment (*adhigama*), and its

27 See Chr. Lindtner, "A Propos Dharmakīrti: Two Works and a New Date," *Acta Orientalia* 41 (1980), 27-37; idem, "Marginalia to Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇaviniścaya*," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 28 (1984), 149-175.

28 *mahāyānasiddhyadhikāra*, Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṅkāra*, I.1-8.

29 The definition given here of 'word of the Buddha' is "that which appears in the sūtras or is found in the vinaya, and is not in contradiction with reality" (*yat sūtre 'vatarati vinaye samdrśyate dharmatām ca na vilomayati*, *ibid.*, I.4 [*bhāṣya* on MSA I.10]). The *bhāṣya* goes on to argue that what is found in the Mahāyāna sūtras fits this definition, since these too are sūtras because the words in them are concerned to 'discipline' (*vinaya*) the passions of bodhisattvas, and since there is no contradiction between what is said therein and reality (*ibid.*, I.5 [*bhāṣya* on MSA I.11]).

30 *śaraṇagamanādhikāra*, *ibid.*, I.8-10.

31 *gotrādhikāra*, *ibid.*, I.10-13.

supremacy (*abhibhūta*).³² In this last, a distinction in spiritual lineage or potentiality (*gotra*) is made in accordance with the division of Buddhist soteriological practice into three paths or vehicles (*yāna*).³³ *Gotra*, the term translated here as 'spiritual lineage' or 'potentiality' is multivalent; it refers to an individual's spiritual lineage, to his spiritual capacities and potential, and perhaps also to his nature or essence.³⁴ While there are many complexities involved in coming to a full understanding of it, the division of spiritual lineage to follow the division of the Buddhist path into three 'vehicles' (*yāna*) is, in the MSA, one more conceptual tool in the battle to assert and establish the superiority of the *bodhisattvayāna*.

The next seven chapters of the MSA, from the fourth to the ninth,³⁵ form the heart of the text. These chapters cover the bases of religious training, a standard Yogācāra set of categories used to divide the path into different kinds of religious practice.³⁶ First, the practitioner turns the mind towards awakening (*cittôtpāda*); that is, the practitioner resolves to attain awakening—to become a Buddha—and it is from this resolve that all of a Buddha's actions for the benefit of other sentient beings will eventually issue.³⁷ The practitioner then begins religious practice (*pratipatti*) proper; this is said to be founded upon a turning of the mind toward awakening. It begins with action for the benefit of oneself and others, and issues in

32 *sa eva* [i.e., the bodhisattva] *paramaḥ śaraṇaṃ gatānām itil kena kāraṇena/ caturvidhasvabhāvārthaviśeṣeṇa/ caturvidho 'rthaḥ sarvatragābhyupagamādhiḡgamābhibhūtabhedato veditavyaḥ*, *ibid.*, I.8 (*bhāṣya* on MSA II.1).

33 *asti yānatraye gotrabhedah*, *ibid.*, I.10 (*bhāṣya* on MSA III.2).

34 On this see, *inter alia*, Ruegg, *La théorie du Tathāgatagarbha*; "Ārya and Bhadanta Vimuktisena on the Gotra-Theory of the Prajñāpāramitā," in *Beiträge zur Geistesgeschichte Indiens*, ed. Gerhard Oberhammer (Vienna, 1968), 303-317. The central point about *gotra* is that the *gotra* one possesses makes possible the nature and extent of one's religious practice. So, using a standard gloss, Ārya Vimuktisena interprets *gotra* as the basis or foundation of religious practice: *pratipattiyādhāro vaktavyaḥ/ gotram ity arthaḥ*, *Abhisamayālaṅkāravṛtti*, Corrado Pensa, *L'Abhisamayālaṅkāravṛtti di Ārya-Vimuktisena* (Rome, 1967), 73. Frauwallner sometimes translates *gotra* as *keim*. See, e.g., *Die Philosophie des Buddhismus* (Berlin, 1956), 258-261, thus assimilating it to *garbha* and stressing the potentiality aspect of its meaning.

35 Chapter IV, *cittôtpādādhikāra*, Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṅkāra*, I.13-19; chapter V, *pratipattiyādhikāra*, *ibid.*, I.19-22; chapter VI, *tattvādhikāra*, *ibid.*, I.22-24; chapter VII, *prabhāvādhikāra*, *ibid.*, I.25-27; chapter VIII, *vipākādhikāra*, *ibid.*, I.27-33; chapter IX, *bodhyādhikāra*, *ibid.*, I.33-49.

36 The *bslab pa'i dmigs pa* (*śikṣālaṃbana*) are referred to by both Asvabhāva and Sthiramati in their introductions to the ninth chapter of the *bhāṣya* (MSAVBH, DT sems-tsam MI 66a1ff.; MSAT, DT sems-tsam BI 105b5ff.). Interestingly, Sthiramati consistently enumerates the *bslab pa'i dmigs pa* as five (see, *inter alia*, MSAVBh, DT sems-tsam MI 66a5; 105b6), while Asvabhāva (at least in his introduction to the *bodhyādhikāra*) mentions seven, presumably basing himself upon the following list from the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*: *kutra punar bodhisattvāḥ śikṣante/ saptasu sthāneṣu śikṣante/ sapta sthānāni katamāni/ svārthaḥ parārthaḥ tattvārthaḥ prabhāvaḥ sattvapariṇāma ātmano buddhadharmapariṇāma 'nuttara ca samyaksambodhiḥ saptamaṃ sthānam*, Nalinaksha Dutt, *Bodhisattvabhūmiḥ* (Patna, 1978), 15. The difference between a fivefold and a sevenfold list is obtained simply by subdividing items (1) and (2) in the fivefold list into two.

37 ... *meghopamaḥ sarvasattvārthakṛtyātadadhīnatvāt tuṣitabhavanavāsādisaṃdarśanaḥ*, Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṅkāra*, I.11 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IV.20).

awakening itself.³⁸ Practices aimed at the benefit of others include such things as teaching, and the use of magical powers to help others. Since, metaphysically, there is thought to be no difference between the bodhisattva and those whom he helps, benefiting them means also benefiting himself; thus the two kinds of practice are merged. As the *bhāṣya* puts it: “For the bodhisattva, what is his own benefit and what the benefit of others? For him there is no difference between the two.”³⁹

The fulfilment of one’s own needs and the needs of others leads to a penetration to the nature of things (*tattva*). At this point the text introduces a number of the key metaphysical doctrines of the Yogācāra; a strong connection between possessing the correct metaphysical views and making progress on the path is asserted. Penetration to the true nature of things leads, in turn, to the full attainment and exercise of magical power. The practitioner comes to have a direct awareness of the condition of every other living being; the ability to hear sounds at great distances; to read minds; to remember previous lives; to engage in teleportation; and to know that all ‘influxes’ or ‘intoxicants’, defilements that prevent awakening, have been destroyed.⁴⁰ Magical powers of this kind, it should be stressed, are always exercised in the service of living beings, and never for the gratification of their possessors.

This leads to the final topic treated before the ninth chapter’s extended discussion of awakening: ripeness (*vipāka*). This is something which the bodhisattva by now both has himself (he is matured, ripe, ready for awakening) and can give to others. Possession of it leads directly to becoming a Buddha and it is that is treated, from a variety of angles, in the ninth chapter

I have explained that the heart of the MSA-corpus is contained in chapters four through nine, and that these chapters provide a sketch of the religious path of the bodhisattva, a path that culminates in the realization of Buddhahood, otherwise called “great awakening” (*mahābodhi*). The ninth chapter itself delineates the properties essential to a Buddha. First (1-3), Buddhahood is said to entail, or even to be identical with, a certain kind of omniscience. That Buddhas are omniscient in very specific sense is a theme commonly presented in Yogācāra texts, and it is not surprising to find the MSA’s discussion of the topic opening with it. Next are treated Buddhahood’s nonduality and its salvific power (4-6), and this second theme is then picked up in a set of five verses (7-11) that discusses Buddhahood as refuge or protection. The next section (12-14) turns to that event by means of which Buddhahood is realized (or, perhaps better, manifested) in the life of some specific individual, a radical event known technically as the transformation of the

38 ... *mahāśrayā cūttotpādāśrayatvāt/ mahārambhā svaparārthārambhāt/ mahāphalodayā mahābodhiphalatvāt*, *ibid.*, I.19 (*bhāṣya* on MSA V.1).

39 ... *bodhisattvasya kaḥ svārthaḥ parārtho vā/ nirviśeṣaḥ hi tasyōbhayaḥ ity arthaḥ*, *ibid.*, I.19-20 (*bhāṣya* on MSA V.2).

40 These are the standard six *abhiññā*, though given in the MSA-corpus (VII.1 and *bhāṣya* thereto, *ibid.*, I.25) in nonstandard terminology and order. Compare the texts and sources given by Étienne Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de la sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra)* (5 vols., Louvain, 1944-81), 1809-1817.

basis. There follow three verses (15-17) giving similes and analogies for Buddhahood's omnipresence; two verses (18-19) on Buddhahood's spontaneity in action, and two verses (20-21) on its endlessness. There then follows a set of sixteen verses (22-37, the topic of the remainder of this paper) in which Buddhahood is explored in term of its 'profundity' (*gāmbhīrya*). This section concludes with the introduction in 37 of a new technical term—*tathāgatagarbha*, the "womb" or "seed" of the Tathāgata (this last being a title of the Buddha)—to explain in what sense Buddhahood is inherent to, an essential part of, all sentient beings. A lengthy section (38-48) details the "mastery" or "dominion" of Buddhahood over all psychophysical functions, and this is followed by a return (49-55) to the theme of Buddhahood's salvific action, providing more similes and metaphors to illuminate how a Buddha acts.

The next section (56-59) is of key importance: here, Buddhahood is defined as the "purity of the Dharma Realm", thus introducing another key set of Yogācāra terms, ones with stronger surface implications of a transcendental ontology. This is immediately followed by a presentation of the theory of the three Buddha-bodies, a way of breaking up the different functions of Buddhas by attributing them to different "bodies" (60-66). Verses 67-76 then analyze the various modalities of a Buddha's awareness, introducing again the theme of omniscience and showing how an apparently atemporal changeless awareness can function (or at least appear to function) salvifically for temporal beings. Verses 77-81 describe, through a set of paradoxes, the nature of the being who becomes a Buddha; 82-85 offer yet another set of images to aid the understanding of how a Buddha acts; and the ninth chapter of the MSA concludes with a summary verse (86) detailing the qualities possessed by the aspirant for Buddhahood.

Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra IX.22-37: Text and Translation

In this section I give, verse by verse, a full translation of sixteen verses of the MSA (IX.22-37), together with the Sanskrit text of those verses.⁴¹ I have tried to follow the order of the Sanskrit quarter-verses in my translation, but the demands of English syntax have not always permitted this. I am comforted in my failure by the fact that the translators of these verses into Tibetan were also unable to follow the Sanskrit *pāda*-order throughout. The reader should note that these verses are not meant to be understood alone. They are very terse and almost always need

41 I give the text provided by Funahashi, *Nepōru shahon*, 29-32, 44-45. Funahashi's text, given the availability to him of Nepalese mss. known neither to Lévi in his preparation of the *editio princeps*, nor to Bagchi in his preparation of a second devanāgarī edition, is by far the best available. I have altered his text only in minor orthographical matters (principally by providing the standard double-t in words like *sattva*)

extensive commentary before they will yield their riches; they were used, most likely, primarily as a mnemotechnical device. Explanatory comments will be supplied in the next section.

Although not different before or after
It is not tainted by any obstacle;
Suchness, which is Buddhahood,
Is neither pure nor impure. (22)

paurvâparyâviśiṣṭâpi
sarvâvaraṇanirmalâ/
na śuddhâ nâpi câśuddhâ
tathatâ buddhatâ matâ//

In pure emptiness,
By obtaining the supreme self which is
without self,
Buddhas arrive at the great-selfed self
As a result of obtaining the pure self. (23)

śūnyatāyāṃ viśuddhāyāṃ
nairātmyātmâgralābhataḥ/
buddhāḥ śuddhâtmalābhivāt
gatâ ātmamahâtmatām//

Therefore Buddhahood is described
Neither as existent nor as nonexistent;
So when there is a question of this kind about Buddha
The method of indeterminacy is appropriate. (24)

na bhāvo nâpi câbhāvo
buddhatvaṃ tena kathyate/
tasmād buddhatathāpraśne
avyākṛtanayo mataḥ//

Just as with the abatement of heat in iron
And of cataracts in the eye,
So also existence and nonexistence are not
predicated
Of the mind and awareness of Buddha. (25)

dāhaśāntir yathā lohe
darśane timirasya ca/
cittajñāne tathā bauddhe
bhāvābhāvo na śasyate//

In the uncontaminated realm
Buddhas are neither single nor multiple;
[This is] because, like space, they are bodiless,
And because they are conformed to their previous
bodies. (26)

buddhānām amale dhātau
nâikatā bahutā na ca/
ākāśavad adehatvāt
pūrvadehānusārataḥ//

Among the properties of Buddha such as
the [ten] powers,
Awakening is like a mine of jewels
And like a great raincloud
For the harvest of good for the world. (27)

balâdibuddhadharmeṣu
bodhī ratnâkarôpamā/
jagatkuśalasasyeṣu
mahāmeghōpamā matâ//

It is like the full moon
Because it is completely full of merit and awareness;
And it is like the great sun
Because it emits the radiance of awareness. (28)

punyañānasupūrṇatvāt
pūrṇacandrôpamā matâ/
jñānâlokaratvāc ca
mahâdityôpamā matâ//

Just as innumerable rays of light
Blend in the orb of the sun,

ameyā raśmayo yadvad
vyāmiśrā bhānumaṇḍale/

Always performing the single function
Of giving radiance to the world, (29)

sadâikakāryā vartante
lokaṃ ālokaṃ yanti ca//

So is the innumerability of Buddhas
In the uncontaminated realm:
There is a single function blended in their actions,
[The function of] emitting the radiance of awareness. (30)

tathāivānāsrave dhātau
buddhānāṃ aprameyatā/
mīśrâikakāryā kṛtyeṣu
jñānālokaṃ matā//

Just as when a single ray of light is emitted
The sun emits every ray of light,
So it should be understood that
Buddhas emit awareness in just the same way. (31)

yathâikaraśminiḥsārāt
sarvaraśmiviniḥsṛtiḥ/
bhānos tathâiva buddhānāṃ
jñeyā jñānaviniḥsṛtiḥ//

Just as there is no egocentric functioning
Among the sun's rays,
So also there is none
Among the awarenesses of Buddha. (32)

yathâivâdityaraśmināṃ
vṛttau nâsti mamāyitaṃ/
tathâiva buddhajñānānāṃ
vṛttau nâsti mamāyitaṃ//

Just as the world is illuminated
By rays emitted from the sun all at once,
So it should be understood that every object of
awareness
Is illuminated simultaneously by the awarenesses
of Buddha. (33)

yathā sūryâikamuktābhai
raśmibhir bhāsyate jagat/
sakṛt jñeyam tathā sarvaṃ
buddhajñānaiḥ prabhāsyate//

Just as such things as rainclouds
Are considered obstacles to the sun's rays,
So the depravity of living beings
Is an obstruction to the awarenesses of Buddha. (34)

yathâivâdityaraśmināṃ
meghâdyāvāraṇaṃ matam/
tathâiva buddhajñānānāṃ
āvṛtiḥ sattvaduṣṭatā//

Just as colors in cloth are brilliant or faint
Because of the power of knots,
So awareness in liberation is brilliant or faint
Because of the power of penetration. (35)

yathā pāśa vaśād vastre
raṅgacitrâvicitratā/
tathā 'vedhavaśān muktau
jñānacitrâvicitratā//

The profundity of Buddhas in the undefiled realm
Has been described
In terms of defining characteristics, location,
and action;
But it is like painting space with colors. (36)

gāmbhīryam amale dhātau
lakṣaṇasthānakarmasu/
buddhānāṃ etad uditam
raṅgair vākāśacitraṇā//

Although Suchness is in all [living beings]
without differentiation,
When it is pure,
It is the essence of the Tathāgata;
And so all living beings possess its embryo. (37)

sarveṣāṃ aviśiṣṭāpi
tathatā śuddhim āgatā/
tathāgatatvaṃ tasmāc ca
tadgarbhāḥ sarvadehināḥ//

Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra IX.22-37: Exposition

The comments given here are my own, though I have drawn heavily upon what is said by Sthiramati in the MSAVBh and by Asvabhāva in the MSAT.⁴²

The *bhāṣya* marks off this set of verses as a unit, claiming that its topic throughout is the “profundity of the undefiled realm.”⁴³ The *bhāṣya* also provides, in its comments upon the summary verse 36, a schematic analysis of the structure of these sixteen verses;⁴⁴ following this, with some modifications, I propose the following outline: the first five verses (22-26) treat Buddha’s defining characteristics, those properties which are essential to it and which thus make it what it is and not something else. The next nine verses (27-35) treat Buddha’s action, what it does and how it does it. The two concluding verses (36-37) both, in different ways, provide a summary of what has gone before, with the last containing the key statement that all embodied beings have (or are) the *garbha* of the Tathāgata.⁴⁵

What Buddha Is (verses 22-26)

It should be remembered that the project of describing, in precise and analytical terms, what Buddha is, cannot meet with success. Or so the intellectuals of the

42 For the MSAVBh I have used the text given in CBK (see n.20 above), 51-72. These pages contain an edition of the Tibetan text of MSAVBh IX (in Tibetan script), based upon the versions found in the Peking, Cone, and Narthang bstan ’gyurs, as well as a complete translation of the same into Japanese. For the MSAT I have consulted the Tibetan text found in the bstan ’gyur of the Peking edition of the Tripiṭaka (sems-tsam BI 76b2-78b8) and that found in the bstan ’gyur of the Derge edition (sems-tsam BI 68a7-70b3).

43 *anāsravadhātugāmbhīrya*, Funahashi, *Nepōru shahon*, 29 (*bhāṣya*, introduction to MSA IX.22-36).

44 *etad* [i.e., verse 36] *anāsravadhātau buddhānām trividham gāmbhīryam evam uktam/ lakṣaṇagāmbhīryam caturbhiḥ ślokaḥ* [i.e., verses 22-25]/ *sthānagāmbhīryam pañcamaṇ-āikatvapṛthaktvābhyām asthitatvāt/ karmagāmbhīryam daśabhiḥ* [i.e., verses 27-36; the Tib. translation here reads *lhag ma rnam kyis*, “the remainder”, rather than “ten”, perhaps because the enumeration given in the *bhāṣya* accounts for only fifteen of the sixteen verses, saying nothing about verse 37]/ *Ibid.*, 32 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IX.36).

45 My analysis differs from that given in the *bhāṣya* in the following ways: first, I include verse 26 in that section analyzing what Buddha essentially is, while the *bhāṣya* treats it separately as a verse on the location (*sthāna*) of Buddha. Second, I separate verse 36 from the preceding nine, since it clearly looks back to and provides a summary of what has gone before; the *bhāṣya* does not do this. And third, I provide a place for verse 37 where the *bhāṣya* does not.

tradition judge. Using an image borrowed for the title of this essay, verse 36 says that although the profundity of Buddha has been described in the immediately preceding verses, it is in fact like "painting space with colors". The *bhāṣya* expounds this gnomic utterance in this way: "It should be understood that painting space with colors is like teaching about the divisions of [Buddha's] profundity in the undefiled realm; this [undefiled realm] is like space because it is free from conceptual proliferation (*prapañca*)."⁴⁶ Just as the attempt to wash color onto space must fail, so the attempt to apply precise conceptual categories to Buddha must fail. Buddha is, by nature, as free from conceptual categories as space is free from color; the attempt to delineate the defining characteristics of Buddha is therefore as quixotic as tilting at windmills.

The texts nevertheless attempt it, even if apologetically, and that they do so in such detail and with such an appearance of precision leads me to suspect that there is something more here that a quick (and incoherent) appeal to a strong ineffability thesis.⁴⁷ It is true that the description of what Buddha is proceeds in verses 22-26 by the use of a mannered (but purely literary) set of paradoxes: matched pairs of apparently contradictory predicates are suggested as appropriate properties of Buddha, and then both are rejected. But this, as the commentaries make clear, is no more than a rhetorical device. The principle of excluded middle is not called in question, and there is no strong claim to ineffability. A closer look is now needed.

Verse 22 tells us that neither of the matched pair of contradictory predicates 'being pure' and 'being impure' can be straightforwardly predicated of Buddhahood. Why, then, can Buddhahood not be said to be 'pure' (*śuddha*)? The reasoning is that one could say of something that it is pure only if at one time it has been defiled and then has become free from taints as a result of following the path of cultivation (*bhāvanāmārga*).⁴⁸ And this is not the case for Buddhahood; one cannot say of it that at one time it was an ordinary person, a *prthagjana*, and

46 *sēyam anāsrave dhātau niṣprapañcatvād ākāśopame gāmbhīryaprabhedadeśanā yathā raṅgair ākāśacitraṇā veditavyā*, Funahashi, *Nepōru shahon*, 32 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IX.36). Asvabhāva mentions here that the analogy of painting space with colors is to be understood in accord with what is said in the *Sāgaramatisūtra* (*rgya mtsho'i blo gros kyi mdo'i rjes su 'brang bar khong du chud par bya'o*, DT sems-tsam BI 70b3 [MSAT on MSA IX.36]0. The *Sāgaramatisūtra* survives in Tibetan under the more usual title *Sāgaramatiparipṛcchā* (Tōhoku #152); I have not yet been able to locate the analogy in that text. The *Sāgaramati* is frequently quoted in other texts, for example the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, but these quotations do not include the analogy in question. Sthiramati scarcely comments on the analogy, observing only that "freedom from conceptual proliferation" means simply the absence of subject (*grāhaka*) and object (*grāhya*): *spros pa med pa'i phyir zhes bya ba ni gzung ba dang 'dzin pa gnyis med pa'i phyir zhes bya ba'i don to*, CBK 71 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.36).

47 For this term and a perceptive theoretical analysis of the kinds of ineffability see Keith E. Yandell, "Some Varieties of Ineffability," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 10 (1979), 167-179. More recently see John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven, 1989), 236-251.

48 So Sthiramati: *sngon kun nas nyon mongs pa'i rang bzhin yin pa las phyis lam bsgoms te dri ma med par gyur pa ni dag pa zhes bya'o* CBK 51 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.22).

that it then became a Buddha. Rather, it has always been, as the verse says, Suchness (*tathatā*) and so also emptiness (*śūnyatā*),⁴⁹ and this is true even when it is (apparently) still an ordinary person. Even then it has radiance (*ābhāsvara*) as its essential nature, just as it also does when it is (apparently) an *anuttara-samyaksambuddha*; since nothing has been cleansed from it when the apparent transformation from an ordinary person to a Buddha occurs, it makes no sense to call it 'pure'.⁵⁰ Asvabhāva makes similar comments: for purification to occur, and thus for it to be proper to call Buddhahood 'pure', there must be taints to be removed. But since the *dharmadhātu* is untainted both before and after (i.e., always), it is not proper to call it pure.

It is easier to explain why Buddhahood is not 'impure': it is, simply, free from all obstacles (*āvaraṇa*), all taints (*mala*). But to say this, of course, raises the very problem with which I'm concerned here. If Buddhahood is indeed free from such things the implication is that there are such things to be free from. And yet, in denying that it is proper to say that Buddhahood-Suchness-Dharmadhātu is 'pure', our texts have already affirmed that it is not the case that purification has occurred, and therefore also, presumably, not the case that these taints and obstacles exist anywhere to be removed or purified. That the commentators are aware of the problem is made clear by the fact that both of them, in specifying the kinds of obstacle and taint from which Buddhahood is always free (and so neither impure nor pure), are careful to qualify them with the term "adventitious" (*āgantuka*). This means—and to this I shall return—that no obstacle or taint can belong to the essence or genuine nature of Buddhahood. In so far as there is a connection between such things and Buddhahood it must be accidental, contingent, or adventitious.

Verse 22 and its commentaries thus suggest that there is a fundamental identity between the ground of awakening, that which makes it possible, and its nature, what it is really like. No genuine transformation occurs, it appears, when a *prthagjana* becomes an *anuttarasamyaksambuddha*, and yet clearly some kind of transformation must occur, even if one that happens only at the level of appearance. It is with this dialectical tension that the rest of the verses play.

Verse 23 provides some playful tropes on the key term 'self': "By obtaining the supreme self which is without self/ Buddhas arrive at the great-selfed self/ As a result of obtaining the pure self." Buddha has one, indeed a supreme, self, but the

49 *sangs rgyas kyi chos kyi sku ni de bzhin nyid stong pa nyid kyi rang bzhin yin par 'dod del* Ibid., 51 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.22).

50 *stong pa nyid ni so so'i skye po'i dus na yang stong pa dang rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal ba'i rang bzhin yin/ phyi ma ste mngon par sangs rgyas pa'i dus na yang stong pa dang rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal ba'i rang bzhin yin pas dag pa'i rang bzhin du khyad par med de de la sbyang du med pas na dag pa med pa yin no/* Ibid., 51 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.22). Compare Asvabhāva's comments: *snga ma dang phyi ma khyad par med pa'i phyir dag pa yang ma yin zhes bya ba ni gang gi phyir sngar yang kun nas nyon mongs pa ma yin la/ phyis kyang ma yin pa de'i phyir dag pa ma yin tel/ gang la dri ma yod pa de dag par 'gyur na chos kyi dbyings de ni sngar ma phyi ma kyang dri ma can ma yin no/* DT sems-tsam BI 68a7-68b1 (MSAT on MSA IX.22).

essence of Buddha is precisely the absence of self. It is this absence that defines Buddha, just as (to borrow Asvabhāva's image) heat defines fire and hardness defines iron.⁵¹ Further, this supreme self is "pure Suchness" (*viśuddhā tathatā*), the way things are with no adventitious defilements attached. It is interesting that the *bhāṣya* uses verbs of attainment (*labh-*; *āp-*), apparently to refer to a change in Buddha: there is, it seems, a time when Buddha does not have this supreme self, and so at the time when it is obtained a change of some sort must occur. Sthiramati makes this quiet clear, actually using the phrase "at that time" to refer to the moment when the attainment of pure Suchness occurs.⁵² He also specifies that the change in question consists in the removal of the taint of dualistic perception and cognition, perception and cognition, that is to say, dominated by a phenomenological separation of subject and object.⁵³

But once again the question underlying this essay is not clearly answered: does the apparent transformation discussed in this verse refer to the removal of some really existing taint, or to the removal of an illusion? What, exactly, is the ontological status of these taints? On the answer to these questions depends the view to be taken of what it means to say that all living beings have (or are; on this more later) the embryo of the Tathāgata; more simply, some approach to an answer to these questions is needed before I can say what it might mean to assert Buddha Nature in the MSA-corpus.

But the text teases me: in verses 24 and 25 it denies that either existence or nonexistence (*bhāva/abhāva*) can be predicated of Buddha. When such a question is asked, the proper response is to use the "method of indeterminacy" (*avyākṛtānāya*)—which is, simply, to deny an answer to the question in the terms in which it is framed. By extension, I assume, my question about the ontological status of defilements in those who are (phenomenally) non-Buddhas, would be given the same treatment.

This is a familiar tactic in Buddhist philosophical debate, going back to the very earliest times, perhaps even to the historical Buddha himself.⁵⁴ Its application here is entirely typical: what looks like a paradoxical—or even outright incoherent—rejection of both of a matched pair of contradictory predicates turns out

51 *dper na sa ni sra ba'i bdag nyid do zhes bya ba sra ba'i ngo bo nyid do zhes bya bar shes pa dang/ me ni dro ba'i bdag nyid do zhes bya ba ni dro ba'i ngo bo nyid do zhes bya bar shes pa ltar 'dir yang de dang 'dra ste/* DT sems-tsam BI 68b2-3 (MSAṬ on MSA IX.23).

52 *sangs rgyas rnam kyis bdag med pa'i mchog thob par gyur pas/ de'i tshe na sangs rgyas rnam bdag nyid chen po'i bdag nyid du gyur pa ...* CBK 51 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.23).

53 *de'ang nam gzung 'dzin gyi dri ma las dag par gyur na bdag med pa'i mchog tu gzhas go zhes bya ba'i don to/* Ibid., 54 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.23).

54 On the unanswered (and perhaps also unanswerable) questions in the Theravāda tradition see Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism* (Cambridge, 1982), 131-138. More broadly see Lamotte, *Le traité*, 2003-2005. The philosophical technique in question gets developed through the application of the tetralemma (*catuskoṭi*), on which see David S. Ruegg, "The Uses of the Four Positions of the Catuskoṭi and the Problem of the Description of Reality in Mahāyāna Buddhism," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 5 (1977), 1-71 (with extensive discussion of earlier literature).

to be instead an affirmation of both, though an affirmation made by giving very different senses to the words.

Such is the case with verses 24-25. "Buddhahood," it is said, "is described neither as existent nor as nonexistent" (25ab), but as the commentaries make clear, "existence" and "nonexistence" are given different senses before they are denied (from which it follows that each of them is also affirmed in the contradictory of the sense in which they are denied). The *bhāṣya* explains the apparent contradiction by identifying Buddha with Suchness, which does exist: thus the sense in which Buddha may be said to exist (or to not not-exist). It then points out that Suchness, in turn, is characterized by the absence or nonexistence of persons (*pudgala*) and things (*dharma*): and this provides the sense in which Buddha may be said not to exist.⁵⁵ The later commentaries, by Asvabhāva and Sthiramati, make the same point, but in somewhat different terminology. They introduce the technicalities of the three-aspect (*trisvabhāva*) theory of experience,⁵⁶ explaining that it is not proper to say that Buddha exists because of the absence (nonexistence) therein of everything that is imaginatively constructed (*parikalpita*), and that it is not proper to say that Buddha does not exist because of the presence (existence) therein of what is perfected (*pariniṣpanna*)—that is, Suchness.⁵⁷

Verse 25 illustrates the point with an analogy. The ontological status of passionate attachment (*rāga*) and metaphysical ignorance (*avidyā*) in Buddha is likened to that of heat in red-hot iron and cataracts in the eye. The analysis given to this analogy is somewhat complicated. To simplify matters I shall consider only one-half of it, the half that likens the absence or removal (*śānti*, more literally 'tranquillization' or 'peace') of cataracts (*timira*) in the eye (*darśana*, more literally 'seeing' or 'vision') to the absence or removal of ignorance (*avidyā*) in Buddha's awareness (*jñāna*). There are three terms here: there is a subject (*buddhajñāna* or *darśana*), a property (*avidyā* or *timira*), and its removal (*śānti*). Existence is denied

55 *tenāiva kāraṇena buddhatvaṃ na bhāva ucyate/ pudgaladharmābhāvalakṣaṇatvāt tathatāyās tadātmakatvāc ca buddhatvasya/ nābhāva ucyate tathatālakṣaṇabhāvāt/* Funahashi, *Nepōru shahon*, 30 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IX.24). On the nonexistence of persons and things see, classically, *Triṃśikābhāṣya* on *Triṃśikā* 1ac, Sylvain Lévi, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: deux traités de Vasubandhu: Viṃśatikā (La Vingtaine) accompagnée d'une explication en prose, et Triṃśikā (La Trentaine) avec le commentaire de Sthiramati* (Paris, 1925), 15-17.

56 For a discussion of which see Nagao Gadjin, "The Buddhist World-View as Elucidated in the Three-Nature Theory and its Similes," *Eastern Buddhist* 16 (1983), 1-18; Paul J. Griffiths, *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem* (La Salle, Illinois, 1986), 84-91; Aramaki Noritoshi, "Paratantrasvabhāva I — A Diagrammatic Account," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 15 (1967), 955-941. The doctrine is given classical exposition in the *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa*, a useful annotated edition and translation of which may be found in Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti, "The Trisvabhāvakārikā of Vasubandhu," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 11 (1983), 225-266.

57 *sangs rgyas ni chos kyi sku yin la/ chos kyi sku ni stong pa nyid yin pas stong pa nyid la ni kun tu brtags pa'i gang zag gi dngos po yang med/ kun tu brtags pa'i chos kyi dngos po yang med pa'i phyir dngos po yod pa ma yin pa'ol/ yongs su grub pa'i rang bzhin ni yod pa yin la/ kun brtags kyi chos dang gang zag gi ri bong gi rva bzhin du med pas ni de'i tshe na yod par mi gzhas gol/ dngos po med pa yang ma yin te/ de bzhin nyid yongs su grub pa'i mtshan nyid de'i tshe yod pa'i phyir rol/* CBK 55 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.24).

because the subject does not essentially, inherently, possess the property in question: eyes exist and function without cataracts, and Buddha's awareness exists and functions without ignorance.⁵⁸ And nonexistence is denied because, precisely, the subject does possess the property of being free from the property under discussion: healthy eyes, that is to say, do possess the property of not having cataracts in them, and Buddha's awareness does possess the property of being free from ignorance. But once again, the thrust of the analogy is to suggest a real transformation in Buddha's awareness at a particular time, a real removal of something that really exists, and a real attainment of something not present before. The now-healthy eye sees clearly when its cataract is removed, just as Buddha obtains omniscience when metaphysical ignorance is removed.⁵⁹ Certainly, the ground of awakening (the healthy eye or Buddha's awareness) existed throughout; but so, until the moment of transformation that defines awakening, did the defilements.⁶⁰

So, in terms of the text's analysis of what Buddha is, the provisional conclusion can only be that matters are not clear. Some of the language used—most especially the programmatic statement at the beginning of verse 22—"Although not different before and after/ It is not tainted by any obstacle"—strongly suggests that no real transformation can occur in Buddha, other language (especially in verses 24 and 25) equally strongly suggests that a real transformation does occur, and that real defilements are removed by it. It is consistently and clearly stated that no defilement is an essential property of Buddha; but it is less clear exactly what is meant by calling such defilements as Buddha possesses (or appears to possess) "accidental" or "adventitious" (*āgantuka*). And this, of course, is the fundamental problem in elucidating Buddha Nature or Tathāgatagarbha thought. Perhaps matters will be clearer after a look at what the texts say about Buddha's action.

58 The *bhāṣya* says this laconically: *yathā ca lohe dāhaśāntir darśane ca timiramalasya* [Funahashi prefers this reading on the basis of ms. evidence, but Tib. reads simply *rab rib*] *śāntir na bhāvo dāhatimirayayor abhāvalakṣaṇatvāt*, Funahashi, *Nepōru shahon*, 30 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IX.25ab). Asvabhāva employs the image of the cure of a fever to make the same point: *rims nad med pa bzhin nol ji ltar rims nad dang bral ba yod pa ma yin pa de bzhin du tsha ba dang rab rib dang bral ba yang yod pa ma yin nol* DT sems-tsam BI 68b6-7 (MSAT on MSA IX.25ab). Sthiramati's comments (CBK 56-57) are also useful.

59 Sthiramati makes this connection: ... *sems rnam par grol ba dang/ shes rab rnam par grol ba'i dus na 'dod chags kyi tsha ba dang/ ma rig pa'i rab rib med pa'i phyir rol med pa zhes kyang mi brjod del sems rnam par grol ba dang/ shes rab rnam par grol ba phyi na yod pa'i phyir rol de la 'dod chags dang bral na ni sems rnam par grol bar 'gyur tel mya ngan las 'das pa thob ces bya ba'i don tol ma rig pa dang bral na ni shes rab rnam par grol bar 'gyur tel thams cad mkhyen pa'i ye shes thob ces bya ba'i don tol* CBK 58 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.25cd).

60 I pass over in silence here verse 26, which introduces a theme of marginal relevance to this essay: that of the singularity and/or plurality of Buddha. The apparent contradiction is resolved in the same way: there is a sense in which Buddha is single (in its Dharma Body), and a sense in which it is plural (in its Enjoyment and Transformation Bodies). There is a parallel (though more extensive) discussion in the *Mahāyānasāṅgraha*-corpus. See Paul J. Griffiths et al., *The Realm of Awakening: A Translation and Study of the Tenth Chapter of Asaṅga's Mahāyānasāṅgraha* (New York, 1989), 241-243.

How Buddha Acts (verses 27-35)

These verses employ a number of analogies for Buddha's action, among which the most important is that of the sun and its rays, first mentioned in verse 28 ("... it is like the great sun/ Because it emits the radiance of awareness") and picked up and developed throughout verses 29-33. Verses 34 and 35 introduce a new and fascinating analogy—that of the knots in cloth—to explain how it is that Buddha's awareness is not (or does not seem to be) omnipresent: this is the central question of this essay. I shall discuss these images or analogies in turn.

Just as the sun emits rays of light (*raśmi*), so Buddha emits awareness (*jñāna*); and just as the sun does so everywhere, in all directions, so Buddha's awareness illumines the minds of all living beings.⁶¹ Verses 29 and 30 develop and apply the analogy: the rays of light coming from the sun are not really multiple; rather, they are single, blended or mixed (*miśra*' *dres pa*) together with just one function—that of bringing radiance to the world.⁶² Verse 30 concludes: "There is a single function blended in their actions/ [The function of] emitting the radiance of awareness" (30cd). Sthiramati explains in detail: just as the common function of each and every ray of the sun is to ripen and illuminate, so the common function of Buddha's awareness is to "suffuse" (*khyab pa/sphar-*) all possible objects of awareness with itself, and to bring living beings to full religious maturity by the use of such things as magical transformations—a clear reference to the *nirmāṇakāya*, the body of magical transformation through which Buddha appears to human persons in the world of physical form.⁶³ This point is made also in verse 33: "So it

61 So Sthiramati: *dper na nyi ma chen pos stong gsum* [*gyi stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams*; *stong gsum* is a shorthand expression for *trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu*] *kun du snang bar byed pa de bzhin du/ de bzhin gshegs pa rnam kyi ye shes las kyang dam pa'i chos bshad pa'i 'od zer byung gnas phyogs bcu'i sems can thams cad kyi sems kyi rgyud la snang bar byed pas na nyi ma chen po dang 'dra stel* CBK 63 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.28d)

62 Or, as the *bhāṣya* puts it, "the function of ripening and drying and the like" (*raśmīnām ekakāryatvaṃ pācanaśoṣaṇādisamānakāryatvād vedītyam*, Funahashi, *Nepōru shahon*, 31 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IX.29ab). Sthiramati's comment on *ameyā ... yadvad vyāmiśrā* from verse 29ab is useful here, especially his gloss on *vyāmiśrā* as "having a single function": ... *'dres pa gcig tu 'jug pa bstan tel 'dres pa gcig ces bya ba'i don tol 'od zer de dag dang po yang nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor las byung ba la/ byung ba'i tshe na yang dus gcig tu byung zhing tha dad pa mi 'dra ba med par 'byung la/ rten kyang nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor la brien cing 'od zer thams cad snang bar byed par 'od zer gcig gis snang ba'i las byas pa na 'od zer tshad med pa gzan thams cad kyi snang ba'i las kyang 'od zer gcig po des byas pa yin tel* CBK 63 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.29ab).

63 *ji ltar nyi ma'i 'od zer gcig gis 'jig rten gyi khams snang bar bya ba kun tu snang bar byed pa de bzhin du 'od zer gnyis pa la sogs pas kyang gcig gis khyab pa'i gnas kun tu khyab*

[note continues]

should be understood that every object of awareness/ Is illuminated simultaneously by the awarenesses of Buddha."⁶⁴

But all this raises very difficult questions. If Buddha's awareness really is omnipresent and spontaneous, like the sun's rays, then it is difficult to see why it is not immediately apparent everywhere, why all living beings are not at once brought to full religious maturity—for this is the single function of Buddha. To put the question differently (and it is the old question in a different guise): how is it possible for Buddha's awareness to be obstructed, and what ontological status do such obstructions have?

Verse 34 begins to speak to this, offering the analogy of rainclouds obscuring the sun's rays. Similarly, it is the wickedness or depravity (*duṣṭatā*) of living beings that obstructs the proper functioning of Buddha's awareness. This again suggests that depravity is real; after all, it can prevent Buddha's awareness from effecting its salvific work, and so seems to be something that genuinely needs removing. And this presents yet again the basic problem: how can the undifferentiated, single Buddha-awareness be differentiated, split, and separated by being present (apparently) to different extents and in different ways in different places—that is, in different living beings?

The opening half-verse of 35 is important here: "Just as colors in cloth are brilliant or faint/ Because of the power of knots ...". This is an analogy drawn from the cloth-dying trade, as Sthiramati's comment makes clear. When a dyer dyes white cloth—cloth that is naturally of one color—the cloth is evenly permeated with the dye where there are no knots to prevent the color soaking through. But where there are such knots an uneven or variegated pattern is produced.⁶⁵ There is, perhaps, a play on the word *pāśa*, 'knot', here: this is not only a term used in dying, but also a term used more broadly to refer to any bond or fetter, anything that prevents spiritual advancement.

The point of the image is, in any case, clear enough. The radiance of Buddha's awareness is not present everywhere to precisely the same extent because there are some things—knots or fetters—that prevent it suffusing the entire cosmos

cing snang bar byed pa de dang 'dra bar de bzhin gshegs pa gcig gi ye shes kyis shes bya kun la khyab cing snang ba dang/ Ibid., 65 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.30cd).

64 The commentaries are unanimous that it is Buddha's freedom from egocentricity (*mamatvābhāva*) which makes possible the spontaneity and simultaneity of Buddha's awareness. Asvabhāva's comment is typical: *de bzhin du sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das chos kyi sku la gnas pa nyon mongs pa dang shes bya' i sgrib pa bag chags dang bcas te spangs par ngar 'dzin dang nga yir 'dzin pa spangs pa rnams kyi ye shes me long lta bu la sogs pa gang dag yin pa de dag 'jug pa la yang bdag gir 'dzin pa mi mnga' l nga yir 'dzin pa mi mnga' bar shes bya thams cad la 'jug gol* DT sems-tsam BI 70a1-2 (MSAT on MSA IX.33). The reference to *ādarśajñāna* is significant, pointing forward as it does to MSA IX.67-68, where this is discussed in detail. I have made some comments on this in my "Omniscience in the Mahāyānasūtrāṅkāra and its Commentaries," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 33 (1990), 85-120.

65 *dper na gos dkar po' i mshan nyid rang bzhin gcig kyang mdud pa bar nas tshon du btsos na gang du mdud pa ma bor bar ni tshon gyis zhen lal gang du mdud pa bor bar ri mo bkra ba de bzhin du zhes bya ba' i don tol* CBK 69 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.35ab).

evenly.⁶⁶ There is another interesting implication: the white cloth is naturally not the same color as the dye; otherwise there would be no point in dying it. And so, it would seem, living beings are not naturally (inherently, essentially) awakened; they need to be dyed with the dye of Buddha's radiance before they can become so. But this is an implication only. There is no evidence in the commentaries that the tradition wished to make it explicit, though its presence can hardly be accidental.

Living Beings and Tathāgatarbha

The last verse to be discussed is verse 37, in which for the first and only time the term *garbha* is used. I quote the verse again in full:

Although Suchness is in all [living beings] without differentiation,
When it is pure,
It is the essence of the Tathāgata;
And so all living beings possess its embryo.

The *bhāṣya* explains that “its embryo” (*tadgarbha*) means *tathāgatarbha*. Since the verse states an identity between “pure Suchness” and “the essence of the Tathāgata”, this entails that living beings also have the embryo of pure Suchness. I am assuming here that both the key compounds found in the *bhāṣya* on verse 37 are to be interpreted as *bahuvrīhi* compounds. So when the *bhāṣya* uses the compound *tadviśuddhisvabhāva* to modify *tathāgata*, I would translate “the Tathāgata has as his essential nature the purity of that [Suchness]”; and when the *bhāṣya* introduces the compound *tathāgatarbha* to modify *sarve sattvāḥ*, I would translate “all living beings possess the embryo of the Tathāgata”.⁶⁷ But other interpretations are possible. One could take *tad[tathatā]viśuddhisvabhāva* as a simple *tatpuruṣa*—“the Tathāgata is the essence of the purity of Suchness” (*tathatāyā viśuddheḥ svabhāvah*)—and do the same with *tathāgatarbha*—“all living beings are the embryo of the Tathāgata” (*tathāgatasya garbhah*). The Tibetan translation, in fact,

⁶⁶ This theme comes up throughout the MSA-corpus. See, for another good example, the image of the moon and the broken waterpots in MSA IX.16, and Sthiramati's comments thereto (DT sems-tsam MI 116b5-117a2). I have discussed this elsewhere; see especially “Buddha and God,” 518-523.

⁶⁷ Technically, the analysis of these compounds would be: *tadviśuddhisvabhāvah* (understanding the demonstrative pronoun to refer to *tathatā*) = *tathatāyā viśuddhiḥ svabhāvo yasya sa tathatāviśuddhisvabhāvah*; *tathāgatarbhāḥ* = *tathāgatasya garbho yeṣāṃ te tathāgatarbhāḥ*. One could also, I suppose, analyze *tathāgatarbha* thus: *tathāgato garbho yeṣāṃ te tathāgatarbhāḥ*, but it's not clear that this would make much difference to the meaning.

appears to take the first compound as a *tatpuruṣa* and the second as a *bahuvrīhi*;⁶⁸ one could also take both compounds as *tatpuruṣas* (though none of the commentaries do so).

Something of philosophical importance does follow from these grammatical niceties. If one does interpret the compound *tathāgatagarbha* as a *tatpuruṣa*, the *bhāṣya* would here have to be translated "all living beings are the embryo of the Tathāgata"—and this suggests something very different from the claim that all living beings *have* the embryo of the Tathāgata. The former is the stronger claim: if all living beings have as their defining characteristic Buddhahood *in potentia*, then the claim that all living beings will inevitably become Buddha will usually also be pressed, and along with this will go a concomitant ontological or metaphysical devaluation of the obstacles to becoming Buddha. If, on the other hand, one interprets verse 37 to say that living beings possess the embryo or germ of the Tathāgata, then it remains possible to deny that all beings will become Buddha and to give the defilements and passions that might prevent them from becoming so a more prominent place. For on this reading, the knots in the cloth, the rainclouds in the path of the sun's rays, and the cataracts in the eye are all real, damaging, and potentially preventive of awakening.

On balance, acknowledging that I, like my texts, am doing no more than coloring space, I judge that the MSA-corpus probably intends to affirm the second position. To say that all living beings possess *tathāgatagarbha* is only to say that there is a possibility that they might become Buddhas; it is in no sense to minimise the reality of evil, of *kleśa*- and *jñeyāvaraṇa*, of *mamata*, and of the importance of the path of religious practice designed to remove them. The MSA-corpus is a long distance, then, from Sino-Japanese theories of original awakening (*hongaku*); and in this I judge it to be on both safer and more properly Buddhist ground.

68 *de bzhin gshegs pa yang de rnam par dag pa'i ngo bo nyid yin tel de'i phyir sems can thams cad ni de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po can*, DT sems-tsam PHI 156b7-157a1 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IX.37). On this grammatical issue see David S. Ruegg, "The *gotra*, *ekayāna* and *tathāgatagarbha* Theories of the *Prajñāpāramitā* According to Dharmamitra and Abhayākara-gupta," in *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems*, ed. Lewis Lancaster (Berkeley, 1977), 283-312, especially 287-288. MS IX.37 appears also in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, and the discussion of the compound *tathāgatagarbha* given there (... *tathāgatas tathatâiṣām sarvasattvānām iti*, E. H. Johnston, *The Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānōttaratantraśāstra* [Patna, 1950], 71 [i.148]) supports the interpretation of *tathāgatagarbha* as a *bahuvrīhi*—and this interpretation is supported also by the Tibetan translation using the possessive particle *can*.