

Delusion, Bilingual Poetry and Commentary Literature

Friday 24 May 2024 14:15 (30 minutes)

Śivasvāmin's Kapphiṇābhyudaya is a fascinating work of epic court poetry (mahākāvya) from 9th-century Kashmir, a product of a highly-developed intellectual culture. This poem builds upon a Buddhist theme, the campaign of the southern king Kapphiṇa against his northern rival Prasenajit. The latter, a Buddhist, calls the Buddha for help when his army is about to be defeated in the decisive battle. The Buddha appears on the battle field, and magically reverts the tide of the battle. Defeated, Kapphiṇa stands in awe and embraces Buddhism.

The penultimate 19th canto of the poem is Kapphiṇa's praise of the Buddha. It is composed using the device of Bhāṣāsleṣa, i.e. it can be read in two languages simultaneously, Sanskrit and Śauraseni Prakrit, with different meanings. This feat requires the text to be highly artificial and enigmatic. As so far no commentary on the poem had been available, it has been an unsolved mystery, leading to different theories being proposed, such as being a simultaneous Buddha- and Śivastotra. A manuscript of a commentary composed by Bhikṣu Tathāgata Indrasimha, a Buddhist monastic, has survived in Tibet. Copies of it have recently become available and the text is being edited.

In his treatment of the Sanskrit text of KA 19.11, discussing the word moha, "delusion," concepts discussed also in Pātañjalayogaśāstra 2.5, which deals with avidyā, are being picked up by the commentator: The misconceptions of eternality in the ephemeral, of happiness in suffering, of purity in foulness and finally of the self in the non-self. Particularly the last two terms being problematic in a Buddhist context. The paper will discuss the treatment of these four sets in the commentaries to the PYŚ, among others Vācaspatimiśra's Tattvavaiśārādī, and put them in relation to Buddhist doctrine.

Peter Pasedach is a research associate at the Indological department of Hamburg University. Currently he mostly works on a DFG-funded project on the two mahākāvyas, works of epic court poetry, surviving from 9th-century Kashmir, and their commentaries. Another area of his work is yoga, where he commenced a new digital critical edition of the Śivasamhitā and is in the preparatory stages of a project on the Tattvavaiśārādī, Vācaspatimiśra's commentary on the Pātañjalayogaśāstra.

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Session Classification: Introspection