

# Apology for omniscience: An eighth-century demonstration of the Buddha's *sarvajñatva*\*

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The last email exchange I had with Helmut was precisely about an article. In his own funny and lovely way, he had invited me to participate in a volume he was editing. I am not aware of what happened to that volume, but I never managed to send my article. For me, this is THAT article, the one he asked for.

## 1. Introduction

The *\*Sarvajñasiddhikārikā* (SSK) (Verses on the Demonstration of the Omniscient One) (Tib.: *Thams cad mkhyen pa grub pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa*) by the Buddhist philosopher Śubhagupta<sup>1</sup> is one of the earliest works specifically devoted to the systematic demonstration of the Buddha's omniscience. It is in fact a pivotal text in the history of the development of this concept in Buddhist thought.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of Śubhagupta's life, works and thought, see Saccone 2018 and Saccone 2022.

<sup>2</sup> To the best of my knowledge, the earliest systematic defenses of the omniscience of the Buddha were introduced in the eighth century by Śubhagupta (ca. 720–780), Śāntarakṣita (ca. 725–788), Kamalaśīla (ca. 740–795) and Prajñākaragupta (ca. 750–810). Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla aim to demonstrate the omniscience of the Buddha in the TS and the TSP, respectively, in particular, in the Atīndriya-darśipuruṣaparīkṣā. On this, see Kawasaki 1992, Kawasaki 1995 (8–11), and McClintock 2010 with literature (2010: 3–4 n. 5). McClintock (2010: 165) argues that, in the last chapter of the TS and the TSP, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla want to prove the theoretical possibility of omniscience in general, and not in connection to a particular person. When dealing with the subject of the omniscience of

Within Śubhagupta's corpus, this small treatise represents what could be defined as an "orthodox" work, one in which the author plainly and openly adopts the views of the Dinnāga-Dharmakīrtian mainstream logico-epistemological tradition. This does not hold true for his *magnum opus*, the *\*Bāhyārthasiddhikārikā* (BASK, Verses on the Demonstration of External Objects) (Tib.: *Phyi rol gyi don grub pa zhes bya ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa*), in which Śubhagupta takes issue with some of the main tenets of the logico-epistemological tradition, particularly the "idealistic" (*vijñānavāda*) turn represented by the Vasubadhu-Dinnāga-Dharmakīrti lineage.

The chronological order of Śubhagupta's works has yet to be determined.<sup>3</sup> The first stanza of the SSK refers to an argument that had been discussed in an earlier writing. Based on a comparison with analogous arguments in certain chapters of the *Tattvasaṅgraha* (TS) by Śāntarakṣita and the *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā* (TSP) by Kamalaśīla,<sup>4</sup> one could surmise that this earlier text was the *\*Śrutiparīkṣākārikā* (Tib.: *Thos pa brtag pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa*),<sup>5</sup> and that this and the SSK were conceived of as parts of a set of works. The *\*Śrutiparīkṣākārikā*, in turn, was preceded by yet another text, most likely the *\*Anyāpohavicārakārikā* (Eltschinger 2016: personal communication)—amounting to the first chapter of a "trilogy."

The SSK is roughly divided into two parts. Part 1 (kk. 1–12)<sup>6</sup> concerns the denial of the Veda's authority, unless an omniscient being is admitted

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the Buddha as treated in the Bahirarthaparīkṣā chapter of those two works, McClintock (2010: 350) notes that both sections bearing on that problem are responses to Śubhagupta's arguments. Prajñākaragupta discusses the topic in the *Pramāṇavārtikālamkārahāṣya ad PV Pramāṇasiddhi* 8–10, 29–33. On this, see Moriyama 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Five works are found in the *Bstan 'gyur* and are explicitly attributed to Dge srungs, i.e., Śubhagupta. These are: 1. *\*Sarvajñasiddhikārikā* (SSK, Tōhoku no. 4243); 2. *\*Bāhyārthasiddhikārikā* (BASK, Tōhoku no. 4244); 3. *\*Śrutiparīkṣākārikā* (Tōhoku no. 4245); 4. *\*Anyāpohavicārakārikā* (Tōhoku no. 4246); and 5. *\*Īśvara-bhaṅgakārikā* (ĪBhK, Tōhoku no. 4247). All of them are recorded in the *Lhan kar ma* (711, 713, 722, 710 and 714, respectively). Another work that is found in the *Lhan kar ma* (no. 712) and is attributed to him, namely the *\*Nairātmyasiddhi* (see Frauwallner 1957: 100), is now lost. Steinkellner (1985: 216–218) regards also the *\*Paralokasiddhi* and its commentary (*Lhan kar ma* 715, 716), both lost, as his.

<sup>4</sup> In the TS, the last chapter (which bears similar arguments to those expounded in the SSK) is introduced with a reference to a reasoning found in the immediately preceding chapter, i.e., the Svataḥprāmāṇyaparīkṣā. However, Kamalaśīla—in discussing the argument that the Veda must be admitted as having an author (which is also Śubhagupta's point in the *incipit* of the SSK)—refers to the chapter entitled Śrutiparīkṣā.

<sup>5</sup> On the *\*Śrutiparīkṣākārikā*, see Eltschinger 1999.

<sup>6</sup> For a critical edition, English translation and analysis of kk. 1–12 of the SSK, see Saccone 2019b.

as its author. It aims at demonstrating the necessary relationship between the authoritativeness (*prāmāṇya*)<sup>7</sup> of scriptures and the perception of extrasensory objects (*atīndriyārtha*) by their author. These ideas are advanced against the Mīmāṃsakas and their theory of the absence of an author (*apauruṣyatā*) of the Veda. Part 2 (kk. 13–25) introduces actual proof of the Buddha’s omniscience. Mainly, he is established as being the only omniscient one among several authors of scriptures admitted by different traditions.

As a matter of fact, moreover, the SSK offers—arguably for the first time—arguments to prove the omniscience of the Buddha that are grounded in His teaching mantras. This certainly has somehow a Dharmakīrtian background.<sup>8</sup> However, as we shall see, it is Śubhagupta who explicitly connects those with a demonstration of the Buddha’s omniscience.

Just like part 1, part 2 features many arguments that parallel those of the TS and the TSP. This holds to such an extent that the TSP in particular appears to provide exegetical tools for a better understanding of Śubhagupta’s terse verses. It is very likely that, with reference to the proof of omniscience, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla owe a great deal to their earlier contemporary Śubhagupta.

In this paper, I shall present a critical edition and the first English translation of the second part of this work (kk. 13–25).

## 2. Śubhagupta’s *\*Sarvajñasiddhi* as a “digest.” A new “genre” within Buddhist philosophical literature

Śubhagupta’s intellectual contribution to the history of Buddhist thought can only be properly assessed by taking into account the reception of his works and ideas within the tradition in which he was active (i.e., the Buddhist school of logic and epistemology).<sup>9</sup> This is particularly evident

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the analogical uses of the term *pramāṇa*, when applied to persons or speech, see Moriyama 2014: 13–14. He quotes also Tillemans 1993: 7, Seyfort Ruegg 1994: 313, Krasser 2001: 173–184.

<sup>8</sup> See Eltschinger 2001.

<sup>9</sup> On the details of Śubhagupta’s doctrinal affiliation, see Saccone 2018 and Saccone 2022. This is one of those instances where a sharp distinction cannot be—or does not need to be—drawn between doctrinal affiliations with one school or the other. With all his works belonging by character to the so called logico-epistemological tradition (and showing strong Dharmakīrtian influence), his BASK, in particular, features ontological and epistemological views that oscillate between what is traditionally defined as Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika (see Saccone 2014, Saccone 2015, Saccone 2018). In his AJPSV, Haribhadra Sūri refers to him as a *vārttikānusārin* (follower of the Vārttika). See AJPSV I, p. 337, 23–24: *yathoktaṃ vārttikānusāriṇā śubhaguptena*.

from the analysis of contemporary authors such as Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. He is responsible for major innovations within the tradition: formally, the elaboration of a writing genre—that of manuals, or anthologies, for debates (the *parīkṣās* of the TS and the TSP follow along these lines); and doctrinally, his attempt to validate, within this tradition, a form of *bāhyārthavāda*, externalism, with reference to ontology, and a form of *nirākāravāda*, absence of images in cognition, with reference to epistemology.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike the writings of previous or contemporary representatives of the logico-epistemological and Dharmakīrtian tradition,<sup>11</sup> Śubhagupta's works are not devoted to the exegesis of Dharmakīrti's corpus. They are rather synopses of arguments, some of which are found in the works of that master, to use against opponents and/or to establish Buddhist truths. The form is that of concise verses that probably offered the monks/disputants a mnemonic device for debates. The subjects were single themes from among the most relevant ones of that time, for example, the Vedic revelation, the existence of an Omniscient being, the reality of God and the *apoha* theory. In his brief digests, Śubhagupta follows and utilizes Dharmakīrti's views and arguments in so many respects that he can be considered as the first systematizer of Dharmakīrti's theories and argumentations in an “anti-non-Buddhist-opponent” key. This is especially evident for the views introduced in the PV (or, rather, in some parts of it).

<sup>10</sup> His *bāhyārthavāda* and *nirākāravāda* must have been regarded as disruptive elements within that tradition, since they went against the Vijñānavāda, i.e., “idealistic,” turn of the Vasubandhu-Diñnāga-Dharmakīrti lineage. In particular, Śubhagupta's *nirākāravāda* is tailored to refute the *sahopalambhaniyama* argument as that which better represents this turn in Dharmakīrti. This is particularly evident from the analysis of the Bahirarthaparīkṣā of the TS and the TSP. There, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla fully represent the perspective of that lineage, which had assumed the status of an established “orthodoxy” in the eighth century. In those chapters (particularly in the TSP), which are meant to defend the view of *vijñaptimātratā*, Śubhagupta is the main antagonist and is introduced as the *nirākāravādin* par excellence. On this, see Saccone 2018.

<sup>11</sup> To the best of my knowledge, within the logico-epistemological and Dharmakīrtian tradition, no previous author had composed treatises of such a nature. An exception could be Arcaṭa, whose dates are not definitively fixed. He appears to have composed two digests that are centered on specific themes: the *Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhi* and the *Pramāṇadvitvasiddhi*. They are not preserved, but are mentioned in his HBT (82,14; 87, 24; 189, 2). Funayama (1995: 195) argues that Arcaṭa lived slightly before Śāntarakṣita and Jinendrabuddhi. If this is the case, he might also have preceded Śubhagupta and introduced the genre before him. On the possible identification of a fragment of the *Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhi*, see Saccone/Szántó 2022.

The *\*Sarvajñasiddhi*, particularly in its first part (kk. 1–12), exemplifies this new genre rather well. In the first part, Śubhagupta recreates a fictional debate by putting forth a set of arguments (as well as objections) in order to prove the logical necessity of an omniscient<sup>12</sup> person. Such a person must be admitted as the author of the scriptures that teach extrasensory soterial truths, if those are to be regarded as authoritative. The second part offers less in the way of a back-and-forth debate, and is more straightforwardly centered on providing positive arguments to establish the Buddha’s omniscience. At the same time, the proof is also partly based on a refutation of the Veda’s author being omniscient.

In Śubhagupta’s oeuvre, we find at least two statements that show how he understood the intellectual scope of those works (and their place within his own tradition—whatever he considers that to be).<sup>13</sup> One is in the *\*Īśvarabhāṅgakārikā* (Verses on the Refutation of God), which might indeed be the earliest of his writings that have reached us.<sup>14</sup> There, in k. 3, he argues:

<sup>12</sup> In the SSK, omniscience is intended as the knowledge of soterially relevant truths. McClintock (2010, particularly pp. 23–38; 132–135) notes that there are three ways of construing omniscience in Buddhist sources: (i) knowing what is soterially relevant (*upayuktasarvajñatva*) which she translates as “dharmic omniscience”; (ii) thoroughly knowing all that is knowable (*sarvasarvajñatva*) rendered as “total omniscience”; (iii) having the capacity for knowing absolutely everything to which the attention is directed, like fire that is all-burning (“capacity omniscience”). For the latter type, McClintock (2010: 32 n. 86) mentions the Pūḍgalavādapratīśedha of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKBh). See *naīva ca vayaṃ sarvatra jñānaśaṃmukhībhāvād buddhaṃ sarvajñam ācaṣmahe | kiṃ tarhi sāmāthyāt | yā hy asaṃ buddhākhyaṃ saṃtatis tasyā idam asti sāmāthyam yad ābhogaṃ mātreṇāvīparītaṃ jñānam utpadyate yatreṣṭam | āha cātra – saṃtānena samarthatvād yathāgniḥ sarvabhūmī mataḥ | tathā sarvavid eṣṭavyo ’sakṛt sarvasya vedanāt |* (AKBh p. 467, 16–21). “And indeed we do not proclaim the Buddha as omniscient because of [His] knowledge being turned to everything, but rather because of capacity. For that specific continuum that is called “awakened” (*buddha*) has the following capacity, that [for Him] a non-erroneous cognition arises, by virtue of mere inclination, in relation to what is desired. And on this point he says, ‘As the fire, because of [its] continuous (continuously [*saṃtānena*]) capacity, is considered all-burning, likewise, [the Buddha] must be admitted as omniscient, because He knows everything, [but] not synchronically.’” In the SSK, Śubhagupta wants to establish the possibility of omniscience in the sense of knowledge of those truths that are the object of scriptures. On this, see Saccone 2019b.

<sup>13</sup> In the SSK, Śubhagupta clearly shows himself to be a follower of the Dharmakīrtian tradition.

<sup>14</sup> For a list of his works, see fn. 3 above. As a mere hypothesis, the *\*Īśvarabhāṅga* could indeed be his first work, being the only one (along with the *\*Bāhyārthasiddhi*) that does not start with *de’i phyir*, “therefore.” The other three, the *\*Anyāpohavicāra*, the *\*Śrutiparīkṣā* and the *\*Sarvajñasiddhi*, all start with that “therefore,” which thus connects them with earlier discussions.

And that fool who says ‘everything is produced by Īśvara’ [should] be clearly told [the following arguments], in an assembly (*‘khor/\*pariṣad*), in order to dispel ignorance.<sup>15</sup>

The other is in the *\*Bāhyārthasiddhikārikā*, his *magnum opus* and likely his latest work. At the end of it, he declares:

In the investigation of what is logical or illogical, I am not extremely wise; however, let me briefly show many truths stated by others.<sup>16</sup>

The latter is of course quite a common disclaimer and need not be construed literally. However, both verses can be read as Śubhagupta assessing the nature of his works as being digests (in verses, hence very concise) and having the aim of systematizing and making available arguments, stated by previous masters, for use against opponents. The first one, specifically, appears to refer to an assembly of learned men, maybe the context for a debate, as well as to the dismissal of ignorance (that of the opponents, but perhaps also that of the individual monk). However, with particular reference to the first verse, we see a declaration of intent that informs at least four of his works, if not also his *magnum opus*.

With the introduction of this “genre,” Śubhagupta also initiates a new trend in the logico-epistemological tradition, the earliest and most accomplished examples of which are the many *parīkṣās* of the TS and the TSP.

### 3. Analysis of the contents

As mentioned previously, unlike kk. 1–12, the second part of the SSK provides explicit proof of the omniscience of the Buddha. The first part is devoted to establishing that, if scriptures are to be regarded as authoritative, their authors must be admitted as omniscient. Omniscience in this case is tantamount to the extrasensory perception of soterially relevant truths that are the objects of scriptures, not to total omniscience. An opponent could reveal a logical defect in the argument. The fact of

<sup>15</sup> ĪBhK 3: *glen blo gang zhig ‘di dag kun || dbang phyug gis ni byas so zhes || smra ba de yang mi shes pa || gzhom phyir ‘khor du gsal bar brjod ||* Tibetan text from Eltschinger/Ratié, “A Buddhist Refutation of the Existence of a Creator God: Śubhagupta’s *Īśvarabhāṅgakārikā*,” in this volume, pp. 29–72. My English translation is based on theirs.

<sup>16</sup> BASK 185: *rigs dang mi rigs dpyad pa la || bdag la mkhas blo mtshang bcas med || ‘on kyang gzhan smras bden pa ni || mang po mdor bsdus nas bstan gyis ||*.

their teaching extrasensory truths is brought forward as evidence of the omniscience of the authors of those scriptures. However, there are many scriptures admitted by many traditions, and they all state very different and contradictory things. Accordingly, not all of the authors can be omniscient,<sup>17</sup> hence, there is no pervasion between omniscience (i.e., the *sādhya*) and the fact of teaching extrasensory truths (i.e., the *hetu*).

A similar objection is found in the TS and the TSP:

Moreover, since numerous omniscient [beings] teaching contradictory things all have the same cause [for the ascertainment of their omniscience], which one could be surely determined as the one and only [omniscient being]?

Since numerous [beings,] such as the Buddha, Kapila, Kaṇabhakṣa (Kaṇāda), Akṣapāda, are conceived, i.e., are to be established, as omniscient by their devotees, which one and only among these “could be determined,” i.e., ascertained, as an omniscient [being]? This is because for all of them the fact of teaching extrasensory objects, which is the cause for the ascertainment of omniscience, is the same. And it is not tenable that they are all ascertained as omniscient, because they all teach contradictory things. For it is not logical that all of them, teaching [things] that contradict each other, [can] be perceiving the truth, since, regarding things, there cannot be the mixing of many natures that contradict each other, because they have one nature.<sup>18</sup>

Śubhagupta answers that the pervasion holds true provided that those extrasensory objects are shown to be real, which is the case only with the doctrine of selflessness of the Buddha. Since the Buddha is the only

<sup>17</sup> This is introduced as an objection in the first part of k. 13. Following the flow of the argument, the “author” (*byed po/\*kartṛ*) here must be intended more generally as any author of scriptures, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike. At the same time, one could argue that this objection might be from someone, such as a Jain, who questions only the Buddha’s omniscience. Cf. McClintock 2010: 38–42. In this case, the meaning of the objection would be as follows: if the Buddha knows all the soterially relevant truths, and *nairātmya* is one of those truths, how come he teaches about self and sentient beings, etc.?

<sup>18</sup> TSP *ad* TS 3147 p. 995, 14–19 [Jp273b5–273b7]: *sarvajñeṣu ca bhūyassu viruddhārthopadeśiṣu | tulyahetuṣu sarveṣu ko nāmaiko ’vadhāryatām ||* (TS 3147) *bahutareṣu sugatakapilakaṇabhakṣākṣapādādiṣu tadbhaktaiḥ sarvajñatvenopakalpiteṣu sādhyeṣu katama eko ’tra sarvajñatvenāvadhāryatām niścīyatām, sarveṣām atīndriyārthopadeṣṭṛtvasya sarvajñaniścayahetos tulyatvāt | na ca sarva eva sarvajñā ity avadhāryatiṃ yuktam sarveṣāṃ parasparaviruddhārthopadeṣṭṛtvāt | na hi parasparahatopadeṣṭārah sarva eva tattvadarśino yuktāḥ, vastūnām ekarūpatvena parasparaviruddhānekasvabhāvasamsargābhāvāt ||* (*parasparahatopadeṣṭārah em.*] *parasparāhatopadeṣṭārah* Jp S; *parasparahatopadeṣṭārah* K). As for the Sanskrit text of the TS and the TSP, I refer to S, mentioning only the most significant variants from K, Jk and Jp.

one who teaches about the true reality of selflessness, he is the only omniscient being (k. 13).<sup>19</sup>

Analogously, in the TS and the TSP, the previous objection is (also) refuted as follows:

To show that what was said previously by him [i.e., Śāntarakṣita], beginning with “Moreover, since numerous omniscient [beings]” was also responded to, he says [the words] beginning with, “And Vardhamāna and the other [alleged omniscient beings].”

“And Vardhamāna and the other [alleged omniscient beings] do not have this knowledge of selflessness of such a kind, since all non-Buddhists (*tīrthika*) stick to the false view of the self.”

If Vardhamāna, Kapila and the other [alleged omniscient beings] can have the previously stated knowledge of the truth, then we grant that they are also omniscient. All these [beings], taken by [that] disease that is the false apprehension of a self that is the cause of the setting in motion of all the [moral] defects, teach about things that are non-momentary, etc., which are invalidated by the *pramāṇas*, such as direct perception. Accordingly, for those who stumble on things, even though [they are] known up to the children that cognize [them] very well, how will the vision of extrasensory objects attain the condition of adequacy?<sup>20</sup>

Not only he is the only omniscient being, he is also able to teach all sentient beings according to their spiritual needs (k. 14), that ability being another characteristic of the omniscience admitted for the Buddha, who has abandoned the obstacles to the knowable.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See Moriyama 2014: 11–17. According to Moriyama, Dharmakīrti defines the Buddha as “*pramāṇa*,” in the sense of the first characteristic to be as such, namely, being reliable. This distinguishes him from the other *āptas* in other traditions, who are also regarded as *pramāṇa*. The Buddha is the only real *pramāṇa* because he teaches the truth that he has seen for himself, that being, particularly, the doctrine of selflessness.

<sup>20</sup> TSP *ad* TS 3324 p. 1049, 18–23 [Jk170a4; Jp287a7–287a8]: *etena yad uktaṃ – sarvajñeṣu ca bhūyassv ityādi, tad api pratyuktaṃ iti darśayann āha – idaṃ cetyādi | idaṃ ca vardhamānāder nairātmyajñānam idrśaṃ | na samasti, ātmadr̥ṣṭau hi nivīṣṭāḥ sarvatīrthikāḥ || (TS 3324) yathoktaṃ tattvajñānam yadi vardhamānakapilādīnāṃ sambhavet tadā teṣāṃ api sarvajñatvam bhavatu, yāvataḥ sarva evāmī sarvadoṣaprasavahetuvitathātmagrahagrāhagr̥hītāḥ pratyakṣādīpramāṇābādhitākṣaṇikādīpadārthānām upadeṣṭāraḥ, tat katham ā kumāram atipratītipatham upagateṣv api padārtheṣu praskhalatām eṣām atīndriyārthadarśanam sambhāvanāpatham avatariṣyati | (sarvajñeṣu Jp K) sa sarvajñeṣu Ś; nivīṣṭāḥ Jk Ś] vinaṣṭāḥ em. K.; yāvataḥ Jp Ś] yathā K).*

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Kamalaśīla on this: *dr̥ṣṭasyāpi heyopādeyatattvasya yat sarvākārāparijñānam pratīpādanāsāmarthyam ca taj jñeyāvaraṇam | (TSP ad TS 3337, ed. p. 1052, 23–24 [Jp 288a2]) (taj Jp Ś) deest K).* “[And,] regarding the reality of what is to be abandoned or taken up, even though it is seen, the incomplete knowledge of all [its] aspects and the incapability of teaching [it] is the obstacle to the knowable.”



In k. 15, Śubhagupta proceeds by advancing a possible objection to his own argument, albeit not introducing it as such. The real intention of a person cannot be known from the investigation of his linguistic or practical activities, since the person can act in a certain way but have a different intention behind his activity. Therefore, the various omniscient beings admitted by others cannot be ascertained as truly believing in the idea of the self.

Another possible interpretation of k. 15 would be that the opponent is arguing that the intentions that one cannot ascertain are, in fact, the Buddha's (and not those of the other alleged omniscient beings). However, I lean towards the first interpretation based on a similar objection that is found in the TSP:

Let the following be the case: they may well teach false things, nevertheless from that it cannot be determined that they are endowed with false cognitions, since common practices can also be undertaken otherwise, because people have various intentions.<sup>22</sup>

Those both seem to echo a passage in Dharmakīrti's *Svavṛtti* to PV Svārthānumāna:

For people act correctly or falsely due to mental qualities or defects, and these, being beyond the reach of the senses, could be inferred from the physical and linguistic activities that are produced by them. However, the activities can be done, for the most part purposefully, also in a different way, since [they] occur due to people's desires, and those [people] have various intentions. Therefore, not being certain, due to the confusion of inferential marks, how can this [person] know [whether or not someone else is endowed with moral faults]?<sup>23</sup>

The response to this appears to be entrusted to k. 16. Unlike the other cases, one can explain why the Buddha is teaching about sentient beings. He really intends mental continuums, but is aiming to correct a false notion through that teaching. In this sense, while the other omniscient

<sup>22</sup> TSP *ad* TS 3330 p. 1040, 16–18 [Jp 287b2–3]: *syād etat – yadi nāma viparītarthaprakāśanam eṣām, tathāpi mithyājñānānuṣaṅgitvam ato 'vasātum na śakyate, yato 'nyathāpi vyavahārāḥ śakyante kartuṃ vicitrābhisandhitvāt puruṣāṅām [...]*.

<sup>23</sup> PVSV *ad* PV Svārthānumāna 219, p. 110, 11–15: *caitasebhyo hi guṇadoṣebhyaḥ puruṣāḥ samyañmithyāpravṛttayah, te cāīndriyāḥ svaprabhava-kāya-vāgvyavahārānumeyāḥ syuḥ | vyavahārāś ca prāyaśo buddhipūrvam anyathāpi kartuṃ śakyante, puruṣecchāvṛttitvāt, teṣāṃ ca citrābhisandhitvāt | tad ayaṃ līngasaṃkarāt katham anīścīnvan pratipadyeta | (caitasebhyo em.) caitasebhyo Gnoli ed.)*.

beings' intentions are not known, one can infer those of the Buddha through observing the nature of His teachings. K. 16 is also offered as another (alternative) argument to use against opponents to establish the Buddha's omniscience.

The following four *kārikās* (kk. 17, 18, 19, 20) are, in my interpretation, aimed at proving that the Veda's author cannot be admitted as being omniscient. This appears to resume the direct anti-Mīmāṃsaka polemic. In doing this, Śubhagupta connects it with the previous argument in k. 15. If one cannot be totally certain, i.e., have direct access to the real intentions of the Veda's author, he can still plausibly infer them based on the scriptures themselves. The Veda shows a total lack of compassion and is the expression of self-centered desires by specific categories of people. It cannot, especially in Buddhist terms, be authored by omniscient beings who are expected to be compassionate, free from moral faults and fully aware of selflessness of all things.

Finally, in k. 21, Śubhagupta argues that the omniscience of the Buddha is grounded in the fact that he teaches things that are true and, at the same time, beyond the reach of cognition for ordinary beings. These things cannot be learned through concepts, like the visual experience of water cannot be conveyed through words, if someone has not already seen it. Accordingly, someone must directly know these things before talking about them. This theme had already been introduced in k. 6<sup>24</sup> in order to prove that the authority of scriptures was based on the direct perception of a person. In this case, however, Śubhagupta uses explicit reference to mantras and incantations as the kind of things that are taught by the Buddha and are true, i.e., effective. The same holds true for Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla in the TS and the TSP, although they do mention other types of truth in this respect. In this specific case,<sup>25</sup> they mention that kind of knowledge as belonging to other exceptional people, along with the buddhas:

<sup>24</sup> SSK 6: *mngon sum min pa'i dgongs rnam la || rigs dang dngos la brten ma yin || lung la brten pa yin zhe na || de nyid dngos su rtogs pa yin ||* "If [it is said by the Mīmāṃsaka that] one cannot rely on reasoning and real things regarding the intended meanings related to [objects which are] not directly perceived (*mngon sum min pa/apratyakṣa*), [however,] [they] depend on scriptures (*lung/āgama*), [then it will be answered:] precisely these [objects] [must] have been cognized directly (*dngos su/sākṣāt*) [by some person]." On this, see Saccone 2019b: 471, 475–476.

<sup>25</sup> As we shall see, immediately after, Śāntarakṣita mentions the teaching (and knowledge about) the *mudrās* and *maṇḍalas* as proof of the fact that only the Buddha possesses extraordinary perception.

How is that capacity of *mudrā*, *maṇḍala* and mantra, etc., regarding the liberation from *piśācas* and *ḍākinīs* as well as the eradicating of a poison, etc., which is far beyond [the reach of the] senses, spoken of, if there is no pure cognition of the *munis* and Garuḍa (*tārksya*), etc., [regarding those mantras, etc.,] by virtue of a direct cognition, which is different from what is learned[ , i.e., scriptures] (*śruta*), and inference?

Moreover, if the buddhas, etc., do not know directly this capacity of the mantras, etc., with reference to the eradicating of a poison, etc., which is far beyond [the range of] the senses, how [can] they talk about it? This must be said.<sup>26</sup>

An opponent states that the power of mantras can indeed be known through scriptures.<sup>27</sup> Śubhagupta's answer is that such power cannot be known only through concepts; there needs to be a person who, having directly seen it, teaches it.

As noted by Eltschinger (2001: 45–81), Dharmakīrti uses the power of discerning mantras as evidence against the Mīmāṃsā theme of the untenability of *atīndriyārthadarśana* for human beings. According to him, the philosopher adopts a “confessionally” neutral position on mantras, admitting the power of creating them also for other exceptional persons besides the buddhas. His main interest is that of joining forces with other traditions against the Mīmāṃsakas. However, given the flow of the argument, Śubhagupta appears to be doing more than that. He draws on Dharmakīrti's tenet, but adapts it to the specific needs of his own argument. While Dharmakīrti talks about the creation of mantras by specific exceptional people, Śubhagupta refers *only* to the knowledge (and teaching) of the power of mantras by someone who has direct perception of extrasensory things. The power of these mantras appears to be intended by him as independent from human creation.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> TSP *ad* TS 3451–3452 p. 1083, 17–18 [Jk176b4–176b5; Jp299b2]: *mudrā-maṇḍalamantrāder yat sāmāthyam atīndriyam | piśācaḍākinīmokṣaviṣāpanayanādīṣu ||* (TS 3451) *śrūtānumānabhinnena sāksājñānena nirmalam | munitārksyādivijñānaṃ na cet tad gaditaṃ katham ||* (TS 3452) *kiñca – yad etan mantrādīnāṃ viṣāpanayanādīsāmāthyam atyantaparokṣaṃ tad yadi buddhādibhiḥ sāksān na viditaṃ tat kathaṃ tair bhāṣitaṃ iti vaktavyam |.*

<sup>27</sup> Eltschinger (2001: 86–88) notes that Dharmakīrti ascribes to the Mīmāṃsakas the theory that mantras produce their results through *bhāvaśakti*, a natural power. This theme, he argues, cannot be found in any extant Mīmāṃsā sources.

<sup>28</sup> While Dharmakīrti also talks about the authoring of mantras by specific exceptional people (Eltchinger 2001: 18–21), here Śubhagupta refers only to the knowledge of the power of mantras by someone who has direct perception of extrasensory things. This person, though not explicitly stated, cannot be but the Buddha.

Śubhagupta employs the power of discerning mantras not only as proof of *atīndriyārthadarśana* for human beings in general, but as evidence for the Buddha's omniscience in particular. This also seems to be the case for Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla.<sup>29</sup>

In the overall scheme of the work, I believe that the general proof of *atīndriyārthadarśana* for the authors of scriptures must be considered to be concluded within the first part (kk. 1–12). The second part must instead be regarded as the actual demonstration of the Buddha being the only omniscient person among many other alleged omniscient beings, who are admitted by other traditions as the authors of their scriptures. There are two arguments for the Buddha's omniscience: (i) since he is the one and only being who teaches about selflessness<sup>30</sup>; and (ii) because he knows and teaches true, i.e., effective, mantras.

In the final two verses, Śubhagupta expounds some of his views on spiritual/soteriological matters. To the best of my knowledge, those are the most (and only) explicit statements in his oeuvre regarding such matters. He appears to be including the knowledge of mantras within the overall structure of the attainment of omniscience as consisting in the abandonment of *kleśāvaraṇa* as well as *jñeyāvaraṇa*.<sup>31</sup> This is ultimately connected with the demonstration of the Buddha's omniscience. Virtuous human beings, even after having abandoned the obstacles [consisting]

<sup>29</sup> In this article, I do not expect to give an accurate account of Śāntarakṣita's and Kamalaśīla's positions on the argument that proves the Buddha's omniscience/extrasensory perception based on His knowledge and teaching of mantras. I am only providing a brief and tentative analysis of some of the verses and prose passages that can be found in the TS and the TSP.

<sup>30</sup> As noted by Moriyama (2014: 24–25), while commenting on PV Pramāṇasiddhi 7, Prajñākaragupta defines the Buddha as the only and one omniscient being since he teaches the truth in order to dispel the errors. See *abhūtanivṛttaye bhrāntinivṛtyartham yatas tasya bhagavato bhūtoktis tataḥ sa eva sarvajñah, nāparaḥ*. (Sanskrit text from Moriyama 2014: 24.)

<sup>31</sup> Bobh p. 62, 1–5: *tatra bodhiḥ katamā | samāsato dvividhaḥ ca prahāṇam dvividhaḥ ca jñānam bodhir ity ucyate | tatra dvividhaḥ prahāṇam kleśāvaraṇaprahāṇam jñeyāvaraṇaprahāṇaḥ ca | dvividhaḥ punar jñānam yat kleśāvaraṇaprahāṇāc ca yat sarvasmin jñeye 'pratihatam anāvaraṇam jñānam |* “In this respect, what is the awakening? In short, both the twofold abandonment and the twofold knowledge are called ‘awakening.’ Among these, the twofold abandonment is the abandonment of the obstacles [consisting] in passions and the abandonment of the obstacles to the knowable. As for the twofold knowledge, [this] is that stainless cognition that is not connected with all the passions, due to the abandonment of the obstacles [consisting] in passions. And [it is also] that cognition devoid of obstacles that is not hindered with regard to every knowable, due to abandonment of the obstacles to the knowable.”

in passions (*kleśāvaraṇa*), cannot access that extraordinary type of omniscience that is related to the discernment of mantras and their effects. Such omniscience is intended in the meaning of knowledge of what is soterially relevant. Moreover, the Buddha is indeed proved as being omniscient since he knows about that power of mantras. This knowledge, which Śubhagupta evidently regards as important, cannot be obtained only through mere practice devoted to it (k. 24). It is a person, i.e., the Buddha, (k. 25) who, being established as having extraordinary knowledge, i.e., being omniscient, is also able to teach those extrasensory truths. He does so through the scriptures. In this way he is the source of that knowledge. Analogously, in the TS, the proof of the Buddha's perception of soterially relevant truths is demonstrated indeed through His teaching and knowing of *mudrās* and *maṇḍalas*, etc.:

That [person,] who teaches about a true object that is not learned or inferred, being intent on that, teaches as such having known its nature through direct perception. [This is] like [someone] who has seen water through direct perception [and] teaches other [people about it].<sup>32</sup> Then (*tat*), the supreme Muni<sup>33</sup> has stated, with certainty, for His own sake and that of the others, a truth that is not learned or inferred, [which is] the characteristic of the *kalpas*, etc., related to *mudrās* and *maṇḍalas*, [which is] extrasensory [and] has a capacity unknown to others.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> I have based my interpretation on TSP *ad* TS 3458–3459 p. 1087, 25 [Jp300a2]: *prayogaḥ–yas tatparo 'śrutānumītasatyārthopadeśī sa sākṣād vividī-tatadarthatatvaḥ, yathā pratyakṣajñātasalilādis tadupadeṣṭā [...]* (*vividīta*° Jp K) *vidīta*° Ś; *upadeṣṭā* K Ś) *upadiṣṭās* Jp). “The proof statement is [as follows]: That [person,] who, being intent on that, teaches a true object that is not learned or inferred, has directly known the true reality of that object. [This is] like [when], for example, [someone,] having known water through direct perception, teaches it.”

<sup>33</sup> Kamalaśīla appears to be commenting on *munisattamaḥ* with *bhagavān*.

<sup>34</sup> TS 3458–3460 [Jk177a2–177a4]: *yo 'śrutānumītaṃ satyaṃ tatparo 'rthaṃ prakāśate | pratyakṣajñātatadrūpaḥ sa tādrk pratipādakaḥ ||* (TS 3458) *pratyakṣa-drṣṭānūrādir yathā 'nyapratipādakaḥ | aśrutānumītaṃ satyaṃ tat para-svārtham uktavān ||* (TS 3459) *aīndriyaṃ parājñātasāmarthyam pariniścayāt | mudrāmaṇḍalalakalpādīlakṣaṇaṃ munisattamaḥ ||* (TS 3460). (TS 3458d: *pratipādakaḥ* Jk<sup>pc</sup> K Ś) *pratipādītaḥ* Jk<sup>ac</sup>; TS 3459b: 'nya° em.] 'nyaḥ Jk K Ś).

## 4. Critical edition

### 4.1. Sources and method

The SSK is lost in its original Sanskrit<sup>35</sup> and preserved in full only in the *Bstan 'gyur*. Since it is mentioned in the *Lhan kar ma* (dated ca. 812; see Hermann-Pfandt 2008: xxii), it must have been translated before or around the beginning of the ninth century. Accordingly, given Śubhagupta's plausible dates, the translation must have been carried out very soon after the composition of the text. The colophon does not record the names of the translators.

This critical edition relies on two sources:

P: 5741, tshad ma, *ze*, 199a6–199b7;

D: 4243, tshad ma, *zhe* 189a2–189b2;

As well as on:

W: Watanabe 1987. A critical edition based on P and D.

My interpretation of the Tibetan translation was guided by an attempt to determine what Sanskrit text was most likely behind it. Generally, with reference to the corresponding Sanskrit terms for Tibetan words, I refer to Negi 1993–2005 and more rarely to the *Mahāvvyutpatti*.

### 4.2. Tibetan Text

*gal te byed po shes ldan na || ji ltar bdag la sogs pa bstan ||*  
*bdag med kho na zhes bshad la || de ni gzhan du mi smra'o || 13 ||*  
*de lta 'ang gzhan don gnyer ba ni || 'ga' zhig nyan pa po la ltos<sup>36</sup> ||*  
*dgongs pa'i dbang gis<sup>37</sup> 'ga' zhig na<sup>38</sup> || de ni gzhan du ston par 'gyur || 14 ||*  
*tha snyad 'dogs pa'i sems can ni || bsam pa sna tshogs snang bas na ||*  
*de phyr de yi bsam pa yang || bdag 'dres<sup>39</sup> shes par mi nus so || 15 ||*  
*yang na sems rgyun la dgongs nas || log<sup>40</sup> pa'i lta ba yongs spong ba'i ||*

<sup>35</sup> This is the case for all of Śubhagupta's works. The BASK represents a unique case due to the presence of many Sanskrit fragments from it in several works by Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist authors. The most conspicuous sources of these are the Bahirarthaparīkṣā chapters of the TS and the TSP. For a detailed discussion of the nature and classification of quotations from the BASK in the TS and the TSP, see Saccone 2018, particularly pp. 48–52.

<sup>36</sup> *ltos* D W] *bltos* P

<sup>37</sup> *gis* D W] *gi* P

<sup>38</sup> *na em.] ni* P D

<sup>39</sup> *'dres* W] *'dras* P D

<sup>40</sup> *log* D W] *ldog* P

*'bras bu ster bar 'gyur ba ni || de ni sems can ston pa yin<sup>41</sup> || 16||*  
*rig byed mchod sbyin las la ni || srog<sup>42</sup> gcod<sup>43</sup> la sogs gang bshad dang ||*  
*cho ga la ni mngon spyod sogs || ma rungs<sup>44</sup> sems can gnod byed pa || 17||*  
*de dag don byed la ltos nas || 'ga' zhig gis ni yi rang ste ||*  
*dper na yul 'khor bsrung ba'i phyir || sdang ba'i sems can btang ba bzhin || 18||*  
*yang na nga rgyal can gyi mi || 'ga' zhig gi<sup>45</sup> ni ched du bstan ||*  
*cho ga gzhan gyis mnyes pa yi<sup>46</sup> || lha rnam gsol ba'i las byed do || 19||*  
*yang na sngon las rnam smin gyis<sup>47</sup> || de ni mthu dang ldan pas na ||*  
*gang zhig srog gcod byas na yang || mthu las nyams par mi 'gyur ro || 20||*  
*sngags sman gdon 'dre'i mthu la sogs || rab tu ston par byed pa'i phyir ||*  
*de shes skyes bu 'ga' zhig 'byung || mi shes phyir na ji ltar ston || 21||*  
*'on te rang gi blos brtags nas || 'ga' yis de ni rab bstan te ||*  
*'jig rten 'di na de tshun chad || lung ni rab tu gnas she na || 22||*  
*de rigs ma yin gdon 'dre dang || gsang sngags ched dpyad rig<sup>48</sup> pa rnam ||*  
*ming tsam gyis ni ji ltar yang || shes par nus pa ma yin no || 23||*  
*chags la sogs dang bral ba<sup>49</sup> ni || mkhas la mngon par brtson<sup>50</sup> yang ni ||*  
*gdon<sup>51</sup> dang gsang sngags mthu yi<sup>52</sup> ni<sup>53</sup> || rnam pa kun tu shes dbang med*  
*|| 24||*  
*de phyir gang gis lung bstan nas || da dung shes pa skye 'gyur ba ||*  
*mngon sum ma yin mthong ba yi || 'jug par byed pa'i skyes bu yod || 25||*  
*thams cad mkhyen pa grub pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa | slob dpon Dge srungs*  
*kyis mdzad pa rdzogs so ||*

<sup>41</sup> yin P W] yan D

<sup>42</sup> srog P D] sreg W

<sup>43</sup> gcod P W] gcod D

<sup>44</sup> ma rungs em.] ma bgrungs P D W

<sup>45</sup> gi W] gis P D

<sup>46</sup> yi D W] yis P

<sup>47</sup> gyis D W] kyi P

<sup>48</sup> rig P W] rigs D

<sup>49</sup> dang bral ba em.] dang 'brel pa P D W

<sup>50</sup> brtson P W] brtsan D

<sup>51</sup> gdon D W] gnod P

<sup>52</sup> yi em.] yis P D W

<sup>53</sup> ni W D] na P

## 5. English translation

k. 13. [Objection:] If the author (*byed po/\*kartṛ*) [of scriptures] has [extrasensory] knowledge[, i.e., is omniscient], how is it that he teaches about the self, etc.?<sup>54</sup> [The answer will be that:] The [one and only Omniscient one] teaches that there is only non-self and (*la*) does not say [it] differently.<sup>55</sup>

k. 14. Nevertheless, striving for (*gnyer ba/\*arthin*) the sake of others, depending on certain specific listeners (*\*śrotṛ*), by force of an intended meaning (*dgongs/\*abhīprāya*),<sup>56</sup> in certain cases (*'ga' zhig na/\*kvacit*), He can [also, provisionally,] teach differently [i.e. doctrines that are apparently similar to the non-Buddhists' *ātmavāda*].

k. 15. Since sentient beings involved in ordinary practices are observed as having various intentions, therefore, one cannot know (*shes par mi nus/\*na jñātum śakyate*) whether also the intentions of these [different omniscient beings, which are admitted by others,] are mixed with [the wrong notion of the] self.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Here an objector argues that if one admits that the authors of scriptures must necessarily be omniscient, then there are many omniscient persons, since there are many scriptures accepted by different people. All of their authors, since they all teach about extrasensory things, must equally be admitted as omniscient. However, they say very different and contradictory truths like, for example, the self, which is denied by the Buddhists. Accordingly, those truths cannot all be true, and the authors cannot all be omniscient. Hence, the proof is faulty. Śubhagupta's response to this is that the only omniscient person is the Buddha, who teaches selflessness.

<sup>55</sup> Śubhagupta replies by specifying that omniscience is related to the teaching of true things. Not all the authors of scriptures are omniscient, since not all of them talk about real extrasensory truths. The one and only omniscient being is the Buddha, because he shows the real supersensible truth of selflessness. On this, cf. TS 3339: *etac ca sugatasyeṣṭam ādau nairātmyakīrtanāt | sarvatīrthakṛtām tasmāt sthito mūrdhni tathāgataḥ ||*.

<sup>56</sup> On the concept of *abhīprāya* and *dgongs pa*, see, e.g., Seyfort Ruegg 1985, 1988 and 1989. In this case, *abhīprāya* (translated into Tibetan with the honorific term *dgongs pa*) refers to the word for the final and ultimate intention/intended meaning of the Buddha, while also teaching different things.

<sup>57</sup> This appears to be advanced in the way of an objection. The real intention of a person cannot be known from the investigation of her/his linguistic and/or practical activities. Accordingly, the different omniscient beings admitted by others cannot be ascertained as truly believing in the idea of the self. Exactly like the Buddha, they might be saying one thing, but really mean something else. My interpretation is based on a parallel passage found in Kamalaśīla's TSP (see §3). However, it is also possible to regard that *de'i* (*de yi* in the verse) as "His," i.e., as referring to the Buddha himself. In other words, the objection would be pointing to the fact that one cannot be sure that the Buddha does not believe in the self when he teaches things that are reminiscent of the opponents' *ātmavāda*.



k. 16. Or else [(another argument)], intending mental continuums, He can give the fruit of abandoning a wrong belief, [therefore,] He teaches about [the existence of] sentient beings.<sup>58</sup>

k. 17. And the slaughtering [of animals] (*srog gcod/\*prāṇātipāta*), etc., that is prescribed with reference to the actions related to the Vedic sacrifices, and the rites of harming (*\*abhicāra*), etc., [which are dictated] in the prescriptions (*\*vidhi/\*vidhāna*), are cruel (*ma rungs*) [and] harm sentient beings.

k. 18. Depending on their [= of the rituals] causal efficiency, there is the rejoicing by a certain specific [person], for example the riddance (*btang ba/\*tyāga*) of malicious sentient beings in order to protect the kingdom.

k. 19. Or else, for the sake of some self-conceited man, [the rituals] are taught [so that] the gods that are pleased through a different ritual make the requested actions.<sup>59</sup>

k. 20. Or else, that [person], because he is endowed with a power (*\*śakti*) due to the maturation of previous actions, in spite of having killed some [sentient being], cannot lose (*nyams par/\*cyu*) that power.

k. 21. Since he teaches about mantras (*sngags*), antidotes, the power of evil spirits (*gdon 'dre*), etc., there is a certain person who knows about those [things]. Since/If he [would] not know about that, how [could] he [possibly] teach about it?

k. 22. If [it is argued:] (*\*atha*) having conceptually determined [them] with her/his own thought,<sup>60</sup> someone teaches these [mantras and so

<sup>58</sup> Here, Śubhagupta responds to the previous objection as well as provides another argument for the Buddha's superiority over the omniscient beings that are admitted by others. While the real intentions of the other omniscient beings are not known, one could at least infer the Buddha's intentions from the observation of His teachings. The Buddha talks about sentient beings, really knowing that there are just mental continuums, in order to help some abandon wrong doctrines. This recalls the reverse order (*pratiloma*) argument, as present in the PV *Pramāṇasiddhi*. On this chapter and its structure (as well as later interpretations), see Pecchia 2015: 53–74 with literature.

<sup>59</sup> Though being aware of the idiomatic use of *lha gsol ba*, “worshipping a god,” I believe that the sentence should rather be translated as such.

<sup>60</sup> The interpretation of *rang gi blos brtags nas* as “after imagining them with her/his own thought,” i.e., creating them, is also possible.

on],<sup>61</sup> in common usage (*jig rten 'di na/\*loke 'smin*),<sup>62</sup> the scriptures are [considered as] established based on this,<sup>63</sup>

k. 23. [the reply will be:] This is not correct. The sciences [of spells] with regard to evil spirits, mantras [and herbs], cannot be known in any way through mere verbal expression.

<sup>61</sup> I believe that, here, the opponent is suggesting the possibility that such a type of knowledge can be acquired conceptually, not through direct perception. He implies that a person might have learned it through inference or from someone else's words. People can make true statements also based on their own inferences, such as in the case of impermanence, and do not need to have immediate access, through perception, to those truths. This is valid also for the Buddhists. A similar objection is found in the TS and the TSP, following the statement of an argument that resembles the one found in k. 21. See TS 3453 and TSP *ad* TS 3453–3454, ed. p. 1086, 19–1087, 11: *anumānato jñātvā bhāṣitam iti ced āha – na cānumānata ityādi | na cānumānato jñānaṃ tasya pūrvam adṛṣṭitah | tena liṅgasya sambandhadarśanānupapattitah ||* (TS 3453) *na hy avidītalakṣaṇasambandhaṃ vastv anumānaviṣayaḥ na ca tenātyantaparokṣeṇa vastunā saha kasyacil liṅgasya sambandhaḥ śakyate niścetum |* (TSP *ad* TS 3453) *parataḥ śrutvā proktam iti cet, na tasyāpi tulyaparyanuyogāt | tathā hi – tathāpy ayam vicāro 'vatarati, tenāpi pareṇa katham jñātam, na hy ajñātvā tathopadeśaḥ sambhavet | tenāpy anyato jñātam iti cet, evaṃ tarhy anavasthā syāt | tataś cāndhaparamparāyāṃ satyāṃ sarveṣāṃ anabhijñātvān na samyagupadeśaḥ syāt | yathoktam – naivañjātīyakeṣv artheṣu puruṣavacanāṃ prāmāṇyam upaiti, andhānām iva vacanaṃ rūpaviśeṣeṣv iti |* (TSP *ad* TS 3454). “If it is argued: Having known it through inference, [He] talked about [that], [to this, Śāntarakṣita] states[, as a response, the words] beginning with, ‘And there is no cognition.’ ‘And there is no cognition of those [extrasensory objects] through inference, because of the logical incongruity of observing a relation between an inferential mark and the [extrasensory objects], since those [extrasensory objects] were n[ever] seen before.’ For it is not the case that one thing that has a relation, the defining characteristic of which is not known, can be the object of an inference. And a relation between any inferential mark [whatsoever] and that completely extrasensory thing cannot be ascertained.” “If it is argued that it is said having heard [it] from another [person, the response will be:] No. [It is not like this,] because, also with reference to it, there is the same objection. To explain, also like this, the following consideration fits: How also by this other [person] is that known? For, if one does not know [something], teaching about it (*tathā*) is not possible [for him]. If it is argued that also by that [other being] [it is] known from another, in this way, then, there would be a *regressus ad infinitum*. Moreover, accordingly, there being a succession of blind men, since they all are non-knowing, there would not be a correct teaching. As it is said, the word of a person regarding things of this sort[, i.e., extrasensory objects,] does not gain authoritativeness, like the word of blind men regarding different visual forms.”

<sup>62</sup> For this correspondence, see BASK 71a and its original Sanskrit found in the Bahirarthaparīkṣā of the TSP: *jig rten 'di na lhan cig sgra ||* (BASK 71a); *sahaśabdaś ca loke 'smin* (TSP *ad* TS 2029–2030 p. 190, 4).

<sup>63</sup> The opponent raises the objection that a person can know extrasensory truths also based on a merely conceptual investigation, namely without accessing them through direct perception. This is the very principle on which the authority of scriptures is based.

k. 24. Even though [some]one, devoid of attachment (*\*rāga*) and the other [*kleśas*], makes a zealous practice (*\*abhiyoga*) with regard to [that] skill/knowledge,<sup>64</sup> [she/he still] will not be able to know all the aspects [i.e., to be omniscient] related to the power of evil spirits and mantras.<sup>65</sup>

k. 25. Therefore, there is a person engaged in the vision of what is not directly perceived (*\*apratyakṣadarśana=atīndriyadarśana*), thanks to whom, once He has taught [that] *āgama*, an even superior cognition will arise [for those who follow His teaching].<sup>66</sup>

The *\*Sarvajñasiddhikārikā*, composed by Ācārya Śubhagupta, is concluded.

## 6. Conclusion

The SSK, particularly its second part, represents a pivotal text within the history of Buddhist thought. It can be seen as one of the earliest systematic demonstrations of the Buddha's omniscience. In kk. 13–25, Śubhagupta goes beyond the mere proof of extraordinary perception by human beings (which is the subject of the first part) to establish the

<sup>64</sup> Here, *abhiyoga* could refer to *abhyāsa*, the longtime and attentive cultivation of the vision of selflessness connected to the abandonment of obstacles to the knowable. Śubhagupta seems to be suggesting that, once the abandonment of the *kleśas* is attained, that cultivation is not enough or apt to obtain the kind of supersensory knowledge related to all the aspects of mantras, etc. On the two types of abandonment, see TSP *ad* TS 3337, ed. p. 1052, 21–1053, 1: *kleśajñeyāvaranaprahāṇato hi sarvajñatvam | tatra kleśā eva rāgādayo bhūtadarśanapratibandhabhāvāt kleśāvaraṇam ucyate | dr̥ṣṭasyāpi heyopādeyatattvasya yat sarvākārāparijñānaṃ pratipādanāsāmarthyam ca taj jñeyāvaraṇam | tatra kleśāvaraṇasya nairātmya-pratyakṣikaraṇāt prahāṇiḥ | jñeyāvaraṇasya tu tasyaiva nairātmyadarśanasya sādaranirantaradīrghakālābhyāsāt | (pratibandhabhāvāt K Ś) pratibandhābhāvāt Jp<sup>pc</sup>, pratibandhāt Jp<sup>pc</sup>; ucyate Jp Ś) ucyante K; taj Jp Ś) deest K* “For omniscience is from the abandonment of obstacles [consisting] in passions and obstacles to the knowable. Between these, attachment[, aversion and ignorance] are nothing but the afflictions; [they are] called ‘obstacles [consisting] in passions’ because they hinder the vision of true reality. [And,] regarding the reality of what is to be abandoned or taken up, even though it is seen, the non-knowledge of all [its] aspects and the incapability of teaching [it] is the obstacle to the knowable. Between these, there is the abandonment of obstacles [consisting] in passions due to the direct perceiving of selflessness (*nairātmya*). However, [the abandonment] of obstacles to the knowable is due to the attentive, continuous and longtime cultivation of that very vision of selflessness.”

<sup>65</sup> Here, Śubhagupta refers to the cognition of the power of mantras, etc., as a superior form of direct perception of extraordinary truths.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. a somewhat similar idea in TS 3461: *tasmād atīśayajñānair upāyabalavartibhiḥ | sarva evādihiko jñātum śakyate yo 'py atīndriyaḥ ||*

Buddha as the one and only omniscient being. In doing so, among other things, he employs His knowledge related to mantras as evidence of His *sarvajñatva*. Before him, Dharmakīrti had already introduced the idea of that type of knowledge as proof of extraordinary perception in human beings. However, Śubhagupta is the first (and one of the few) who revisits that proof in his writings<sup>67</sup> and explicitly relates it to the Buddha's omniscience.

In the final part of the treatise, he argues that, even though the moral faults are abandoned, a mere *abhiyoga*, zealous cultivation, is not enough to account for the type of omniscience related to the knowledge of mantras. The Buddha, who teaches this, is established as possessing perception of extrasensory truths and is the source of that kind of superior knowledge.

As mentioned above, this can be regarded as an attempt of an author merely concerned with logic and epistemology (*pramāṇa*) to include the knowledge of mantras as proof of the Buddha's omniscience. In this sense, in the SSK, Śubhagupta puts this type of knowledge into relation (albeit indirectly) with the Buddhist soteriological path.

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