
The *Abhidharmavatāra* is a short *abhidharma* manual, generally dated to the fifth century. No Sanskrit text is extant, but there is a Chinese translation (*Ju A-pì-ta-mo Lun* 入阿毘達磨論, T. 1554) by Hsüan-tsang and a Tibetan translation (*Rab tu byed pa chos mñon la jug*, Tohoku 4098, Peking 5599) by Jinamitra, Dānaśila, and Ye šes sde, as well as fragments of a Tocharian translation. In addition to Japanese translations by Yamagami Sōgen in the series *Kokuyaku Daizōkyō* 國譯大藏經 (Ron-bu 13)(Mizuno 1988: 70; I have not seen Yamagami’s actual translation) and by Mizuno Kögen in the series *Kokuyaku Issaikyō* 國譯一切經 (Ronshū-bu 2), there is a modern Japanese translation from the Tibetan by Sakurabe Hajime and a French translation from the Chinese by Marcel van Velthem.

*Entrance into the Supreme Doctrine: Skandhila’s Abhidharmavatāra*, by Dhammajoti, is the first English translation of the text. It was made from the Chinese translation, but Dhammajoti has also consulted the Tibetan, as well as the commentary, *Sārasamuccaya-nāma-Abhidharmavatāra-tīkā* (Chos mñon pa la ’jug pa rgya cher ’grel pa sñiṅ po kun las btus pa, Tohoku 47, Peking 5598). This is the second edition of Dhammajoti’s work, the first edition of which was, according to its preface, based on his M.A. thesis at the University of Kelanīya.

This volume consists of an introduction, the translation, and the Chinese and Tibetan texts, all with extensive notes, and I begin with a brief description of each part. The introduction has eleven sections, averaging three or four pages in length, on topics such as the date and authorship of the text, its position in *abhidharma* literature, the various translations, and a number of important doctrinal discussions in the text, including those on *avijñāpirūpa*, the *caitasikas*, the *cittaviprayuktasamāskāras*, and the *sanskṛtalaksanās*. In all of these sections, Dhammajoti makes frequent references to other texts, most notably the *Nyāyānusāra* (T. 1562) and the *Samayapradiptikā* of Samghabhadra and the *Abhidharmadipa*. One of his main themes is the similarity between the *Abhidharmavatāra* and those three works, especially the *Abhidharmadipa*, which suggests to him that the *Abhidharmavatāra* is somewhat later than the *Abhidharmakosābhāṣya*, not contemporary with it or earlier, as Sakurabe maintains. Dhammajoti also often refers to the *Vibhāṣā* to illustrate another of his main themes,
that opinions in texts like *Nyāyānusāra and Abhidharmadīpa that are
commonly designated as “Neo-Sarvāstivāda” can in fact be traced back to
standard Vaibhvāśīka doctrine.

The translation begins with a section entitled “Preliminaries,” contain-
ing some verses and a statement of the purpose of the text. There follow
ten numbered sections, the first of which (o) consists of a list of the eight
categories (padārtha) to which the text assigns all existents. Sections I–
VIII contain definitions and discussions of these categories (the transla-
tions are Dhammajoti’s, p. 72): matter (rūpa), sensation (vedanā), ideation
(samjñā), conditionings (samskāra), consciousness (vijñāna), space (ākāśa),
cessation through deliberation (pratisamkhyāntirodha), cessation indepen-
dent of deliberation (apratisamkhyāntirodha). Finally, Section IX is enti-
tled “Concluding remarks.” Following the translation proper are numerous
notes (76 pages of them, for 57 pages of translation), containing references
to the Tibetan translation, particularly when it differs from the Chinese, as
well as text and translations of related passages in other works.

The final part of the book consists of the Chinese and Tibetan texts,
divided and numbered according to the sections of the translation. For each
section, the Tibetan text is given first, followed by the Chinese, which,
according to Dhammajoti, is based on the Taishō edition, but to which
he adds modern punctuation, such as colons, semi-colons, and question
marks. The Tibetan text seems to have been based on the Peking edition,
and indications of the first line of each folio side are provided in brack-
etts. But Dhammajoti has also consulted the edition that he refers to as
Zhong Hua Da Zang Jing 中華大藏經. Publication of this edition started
in Beijing in 1994, and according to Dhammajoti, it is based on the Derge
edition and contains variant readings from the Narthang edition (for more
bibliographical information on this edition, see below). In the case of vari-
ant readings, Dhammajoti includes all the readings in the notes, with the
abbreviations “PEK,” “SNAR,” and “ZH.” Therefore, “ZH” seems to indi-
cate the Derge reading, while “SNAR” indicates the Narthang one, as given
in the notes to Zhong Hua Da Zang Jing. (Dhammajoti states that he has
not examined the Narthang text himself.)

Dhammajoti’s translation of the Abhidharmāvatāna is most welcome. As
the author observes in his introduction, few abhidharma works of what he
calls the “Northern Schools,” by which he presumably means texts that were
not written in Pali, have been translated into modern European languages.
Although the text has already been translated into French, there is certainly
room for another translation, particularly into English. However, a sparsely