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The Ornament Of The Middle Way: A Study Of The Madhyamaka Thought Of Santaraksita



Synopsis

Shantarakshita's *The Ornament of the Middle Way* is among the most important Mahayana Buddhist philosophical treatises to emerge on the Indian subcontinent. In many respects, it represents the culmination of more than 1300 years of philosophical dialogue and inquiry since the time of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni. Shantarakshita set forth the foundation of a syncretic approach to contemporary ideas by synthesizing the three major trends in Indian Buddhist thought at the time (the Madhyamaka thought of Nagarjuna, the Yogachara thought of Asanga, and the logical and epistemological thought of Dharmakirti) into one consistent and coherent system. Shantarakshita's text is considered to be the quintessential exposition or root text of the school of Buddhist philosophical thought known in Tibet as Yogachara-Svatantrika-Madhyamaka. In addition to examining his ideas in their Indian context, this study examines the way Shantarakshita's ideas have been understood by and have been an influence on Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Specifically, Blumenthal examines the way scholars from the Geluk School of Tibetan Buddhism have interpreted, represented, and incorporated Santaraksita's ideas into their own philosophical project. This is the first book-length study of the Madyamaka thought of Shantarakshita in any Western language. It includes a new translation of Shantarakshita's treatise, extensive extracts from his autocommentary, and the first complete translation of the primary Geluk commentary on Shantarakshita's treatise.

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