CHAPTER III

ABHIDHARMAKOśA - ITS AUTHOR, DATE

LANGUAGE AND STYLE.
The Abhidharmakosa which is the work of Ādārya Vasubandhu, is a manual or a compendium of the Abhidharma treatises. It is so entitled either because it is a repository or an encyclopaedia of the essential contents of the Abhidharma Śāstra, or because the Abhidharma books like the Jñānaprasthāna constituted its basis or main source on which it has been composed. Though it is written mostly from the point of view of the Vaibhāṣikas of Kāśmīra, yet it is an authority for all Schools of Buddhist thought.

1. 'etasmin arthe śaṣṭhī - tatpuruṣa - samāsah. abhidharmasya Kośabhidharmakośa iti. yatra hy asih praviṣati.sa tasya kośah Vyākhya, p.10.
2. atha vā so'abhidharmo Jñānaprasthan'ādir etasya madhyaśya śāstrasayā āśraya - bhūtah ......... etasmin arthe bahubhīhi-samāsah abhidharmah Kośo'sye'iti Abhidharmakośah, yato hy asir nirākṛṣyate. sa hāva kośa iti - ibid.

It is said that Vasubandhu composed this chapter when he was invited by the Vaibhāṣikas of Kāśmīra to explain the object of his Abhidharmakośa.
The Abhidharmakosa consists of nine chapters (Kośasthānas) of which the first eight chapters, in more or less 600 Kārikās, form the main text, while the ninth chapter, called "Pudgala-Viniścaya" (Exposition of personality), seems to be a later addition or an appendix (Parisīṣṭa) to Chapter VIII.

The Chapters of the Abhidharmakosa are classified as follows: ¹

Ch I Dhatunirdesa - 48 Kārikās (containing a treatment of the elements showing the nature of the substance of all things)

Ch II Indriyanirdesa - 73 " (containing a treatment of the faculties in relation to the dharmas).

Ch III Lokanirdesa - 102 " (containing a treatment of the world considered as the outcome of Sārva dharmas)

Ch IV Karmanirdesa - 127 " (containing a treatment of Karmas considered as the cause of the repeated existences)

Ch V Anuśayanirdesa - 71 " (containing a treatment of 98 anusayas "latent evils" considered as the condition of the repeated existences)

¹ The contents of each of the chapters have been dealt with in detail in the fourth chapter of this work.
Ch VI Pudgalamārganir- 80 Kārikās (containing a treatment of the Noble ones considered as an effect of anāsrava or Nirvāṇa).

Ch VII Jñānaniṃdeśa = 56 " (containing a treatment of 10 knowledges considered as the cause of anāsrava and Nirvāṇa)

Ch VIII Samāpattiniṃdeśa = 43 " (containing a treatment of the Dhyānas considered as a condition of anāsrava or Nirvāṇa)

Ch IX Pudgalaviniścaya - in prose (containing a refutation of Ātman-theories of the Śāmkhya, vaiśesika and the Vātsiputriya schools).

There is also detailed prose commentary on it entitled "Abhidharmakośabhāṣya" which is also ascribed to Ācārya Vasubandhu himself. But unfortunately the

1. Paramārtha tells us that the Bhāṣya was composed by Vasubandhu at the request of the Kāśmīra-Vaihbha-ṣikas while the former was invited to explain the contents of his Abhidharmakośa = J.P.T.S.1908,p.132.
original Sanskrit texts of the both (Abhidharmakośa and its Bhāṣya) were lost in India. In 1935 Pandit Pāhul Saṅkṛityāyana discovered in the Tibetan monastery of Ngör the Sanskrit texts of them and brought back to India their photographic copies. In 1946, V.V. Gokhale first edited and published the Abhidharmakośakārikā in 613 verses. Prof. P. Pradhan edited the Abhidharma-kosabhāṣya which was published from K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna in 1967. Both the Abhidharmakośakārikā and the Abhidharmakośabhaṣya together popularly go by the name of the Abhidharmakośa or the Abhidharmakośa-Śāstra.

In the Chinese Tripitaka, there are two versions of the Abhidharmakośa-Śāstra: (a) the A-p'ī-ta-mo-chu-she-shih-lun in 22 volumes translated by Paramārtha in the 563-567 A.D. and (b) the A-p'ī-ta-mo-chu-she-lun in 30 volumes translated by Hiuen-tṣang in 651-654 A.D.

1. J.B.R.A.S. vol XXII, 1946, pp. 73-102. In the footnotes of his "L" Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu vol. I-VI, L. de la vallée-Poussin also gave the Sanskrit rendering of more than 500 Kārikās in 1922-31. The Late Pandit Rāhul Saṅkṛityāyana also published 595 Kārikās with the help of the Poussin's edition and the Sphuṭārthā.

2. J.P.T.S. 1905, p. 132-133;
There is also a kārikā version entitled A-p'1-ta-mo-chu~she-lun-sung which was also translated by Hiuen-tsong in 651 A.D. In the Tibetan Tanjur also there are two versions of the Abhidharmakośa (Kośa and Bhāṣya) which were translated by Jinamitra and Śrīkutarakṣita not necessarily before the reign of king Ral-pa-can (616-838 A.D.) of Tibet. Prof. Stcherbatsky has published the first chapter and also the first half of the second chapter of the Tibetan version (Bibliotheca Buddhica, 1917-1930, Petrograd).

Of the commentaries of the Abhidharmakośa, only the "Sphuṭārthābhidharmakośavyākhyā" of Yaśomitra is extant in the original Sanskrit and was edited and published by the Wogihara in 1932-1936. It was further rendered into Tibetan by Viśudhāhasimha.

1. Poussin, La Vallee, L' Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu, p. XIV n.
2. There is also another edition, in the Devanagari script, of the Sphuṭārtha, containing the first four chapters only, published by N. N. Law and Dr. N. Dutt in 1949 and 1957 in the Calcutta Oriental series.
and Śrīkūta. Of the other commentaries, preserved in Tibetan translation only, mention may be made of the "Tattvārtha = Abhidharmakṣobhūṣyaṭikā" of Sthiramati (510-570), a disciple of Gunemati which was translated into Tibetan by Dharmapālabhadra and Sha-lu Lotsaba chen-po; the "Laṃsaṃānusarini-Abhidharmakṣobṭikā" of Pṛṇavardhana or Pūrṇavardhana, a pupil of Sthiramati, which was translated into Tibetan by Kanakavarmā and Ni-ma-grags; the "Upāyika-Abhidharmakṣobṭkā" of Samathadeva or Sāntisthiradeva which was translated into Tibetan by Jayasrī and Ses-rab-hod-zer, the

3. Frauwallner E., WzKSO, Band V p. 137.
4. Poussin, L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu Intro, p. xviii and xxi. (In this commentary Sthiramati defended kośa against Saṅghabhadra). A fragment of the Chinese version of the "Tattvārtha" and also a part of its Uighur version have been recently discovered - E.B. p. 59.
5. Śaṅkṛtyāyana, Rāhu, Abhidharmakośa, Intr. p. 18.
6. Banerjee A.C., Sarvastivāda Literature, p. 73.
"Marmapradīpa-Abhidharmakośavṛtti" of Dignāga which was translated into Tibetan by Hjam-hpal-gzhon-pa and Rnal-hbyor-zla-ba and the "Sūtrānurūpā Abhidharmakośavṛtti" by Viśītadeva. All these translations are preserved in the Tibetan Tanjur.¹

From the Sphutarthā of Yaśomitra, we come to know that Guṇamati (about the end of the 5th century A.D.)² and Vasumitra,³ disciple of Guṇamati and

¹ Cordier, Pālmyr., Catalogue du fonds Tibetain etc., P 394, 499;
² III, Mukaji. U., A complete catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist canons, Tohoku Imperial University, Sendai, 1934, P. 622 - 623.
³ Kimura, R., Historical study of the terms Hinayāna and Mahāyāna and the origin of Mahāyāna Buddhism. P. 187

This Vasumitra, therefore, is not the same who compile the Dhatukāyapāda and the Prakaraṇapāda, and also who took part in the compilation of Mahāvibhāṣā. Because Vasubandhu himself has quoted these works in his Bhāṣya and also because in the list of 28 Indian Patriarchs, Vasumitra occupies the 7th place while the Vasubandhu occupies the 21st place - Edkins, Chinese Buddhist, p. 435.
Vasubandhu also composed commentaries on the Kośa-Sastra. Most probably "Laksanānusāra-Sastra" was the commentary of Gunamati.

The entire Abhidharmakośa Sastra was translated into French in 6 vols. by de la Vallée Poussin in 1923 - 1931 following Hiuen-tsang's Chinese version (in comparison with another Chinese version by Paramartha, the Tibetan version, the Bhāṣya and the sphuṭārthā commentary). In 1930 the Late Pañcit Rāhuḷ Śāmkṛtyāyana published the first eight chapters of the Abhidharmakośa.

2. "Gunamati - Vasumitrādyair Vyākhyākāraṁ
   Padārthavivṛtir yā/
   Sukṛta sā' bhūmatā me likhitā caṭatbā' yam artha iti.//
   - Vyākhyā, P.1.
3. Published in Paris 1923 - 31; Ācārya Narendradeva translated its first three chapters into Hindi which was published from Allahabad in 1958.
in Devanāgarī Script with 505 Kārikās along with a simple prose commentary entitled "Nālandikā" written by himself.

All these apart, many manuals and compendiums on the Adhidharmakosā-śāstra were composed in Chinese, Tibetan and Japanese languages. In English, French and German and modern Japanese languages too many compendiums of the Śāstra have been published. Among them are Th. Stcherbatsky's "The central conception of Buddhism" and "The soul Theory of the Buddhists" being an English translation of the 9th (additional) chapter of the Abhidharmakosā; Poussin's "La morale bouddhique"; O. Rosenberg's "Die Probleme der Buddhistischen Philosophie"; T. Kimura's "A study of the Abhidharmakosāśāstra"; Ouyang Chien's "Preface to


5. In Russian, Petrograd, 1918; translated in German by Mrs. Rosenberg, Heidelberg, 1924.

the Abhidharma-kosa-sastra" by S. Fukaura's "An Introduction to the study of the Abhidharma-kosa", and the like. A complete concordance of Hsuen-tsang's Chinese version of the Kosastra was made by S. Funahashi and I. Funahashi of Japan and a concise concordance of the Sanskrit karikas (of the Kosa) was made by Prof. Andre Bareau, the author of "Les Sectes Bouddhiques du Petit Vehicule, Saigon, 1955." Among introductory works to the study of the Sutra written in Japanese are those by S. Funahashi, Takagi and S. Fukaura (as mentioned above). In English, French and German languages there are some other works (including encyclopedias) which partly deal with the Kosastra. Among them mention may be made of:

1. Nanking, 1924;
2. Kyoto, 1951;
In this connection we must mention the name of Sanghabhadra, a contemporary of Vasubandhu, who compiled
two famous treatises entitled "Nyāyānusāra" (conformity to the Truth) and "Samayapradīpikā" (exposition of the Doctrine) in which he refutes the assertions of the Abhidharmakośa in favour of the Viśṇaṅga. Saṅghabhadra, however, had no objection about the Karikā text of the kośa, he rather embellished the Karikās and regarded them as the source of reference. His only objection was directed to its Bhaṣya in prose, composed by Vasubandhu himself, in which some doctrines of the Sautrāntikas as well as Vasubandhu's views are found incorporated. In his treatises, Saṅghabhadra, therefore, freely cited the Karikās of the Kośa and explained them according to the Viśṇaṅga view points. Hiuen-tsang, however, records that the Nyāyānusāra was first called the "Kośa-pao" or "Kośa-hail-stone", but after Saṅghabhadra's death Vasubandhu changed its name into


Neither the "Nyāyānusāra" nor the "Samayapradīpikā" have come down to us in their original form. They are available only in Chinese translations.
"Nyāyānusāra" out of respect to his opponent. ¹

The last but not the least is the Abhidharmadīpa (with its Vṛttil), a sole surviving original work of the orthodox Vaibhāṣīka school, composed by an unknown author. The Abhidharmadīpa and its commentary called "Vṛttil" are closely connected with the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya and the "Sphutārthā" by Vasumitra. From the contents of the Abhidharmadīpa, it seems that the book was composed in order to refute the views of Vasubandhu incorporated in the Abhidharmakośa. The Dīpakāra declares that he will propound the essence of Abhidharma forgotten by Vasubandhu from the orthodox Vaibhāṣīka point of view. "²

"The Dīpakāra", says Dr. A.S. Altekar, "Scents the Mahāyāna leanings of Vasubandhu and calls him a concealed Vaitulika or Nihilist, drifting away from his Sarvastivāda moorings." ³


Dr. Takakusu however, does not agree with this view. According to him Saṅghabhadrā himself called his treatise "Nyāyānusāra" (Shun-Cheng-li)-J.P.T.S. 1905, P.135n

² Dr.P.S. Jaini, Abhidharmadīpa, Intro.P.129.

³ Ibid, General Editor's Introduction, P. viii.
The two works of Saṅghabhadra and the Abhidharmadīpa (with its Vṛtti) - all belong to the Kāśmīra-Vaibhāṣika school. In their subject-matter, all the three "take the Kośa as their model and retain those parts of the Bhāsyā which are not objectionable to them". Thus they add nothing much to the subject-matter relating to the Abhidharma of the Sarvāstivāda school. But their reference to the Kośakāra (Vasubandhu) shed abundant light on the major points of dispute between the Sautrāntika and the Vaibhāṣika.

As to the sources of the Abhidharmakośa we may mention the following:

1) Saṁyuktābhidharma - ह्रदयास्त्र of Dharmatrāta (or Dharmatāra) which was composed in a place near about Puskarāvatī or Puskalāvatī (Peshwar) in Gandhāra, (2) The Jñānapraṣṭhāna, Prajñaptisāstra, Prakaraṇāyaṇa, Dharmaskandha, Vibhāṣā from which the author of the Kośa

3. ibid P. 25, 74, 184, 285, 312, 412, 423, 114, 125, 169, 184, 191, 246, 419.
5. ibid, P. 114.
6. ibid, P. 154.
received most of his materials, (4) Abhidharmamṛta of Ghoṣaka of Tukhāra₁, (5) Āgamas² and the like. The author frequently quotes passages from these works.

There is no denying the fact that the Kosāsastra occupies an eminent position in the history of Buddhist thought and literature. There are of course various good reasons behind it. Principal of them are as follows:

1) The Abhidharmakoṣa is a treasury of the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism. It contains the fullest and systematic exposition of the Abhidharma doctrines of the ancient Buddhist schools that grew within about eight hundred years after the Buddha's Mahāparinirvāṇa. While going to present an authoritative system of Buddhistic thought which was being "stifled by unprincipled and unbridled sophism" during his time, the author, however, took as his basis

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1. ibid. P. 43, 72, 263, 296, 323, 346, 371.
2. Dirghāgama, Madhyamāgama, Saṃyuktāgama,
the principal literary works of the Vaibhāsikas of Kāśmīra who according to him preserved in an organised form the complete and authentic teachings of Sākyamuni. But in order to make his work perfect and authentic one, he dealt with the Vaibhāsika views very critically, compared them with the existing viewpoints of the other dominating schools like Sautrāntikas, Ābhidharma-kas, Mahāsāvakas, Dārśāntikas, Viḥāravādins, Kāśyapīyas, Vātsīputriyas, yogācārins, and Mahāsaṅghikas, and rejected those systems which seemed to him heretical.

3. ibid, P. 31, 37, 112, 143, 151, 176, 218, 280, 287, 293, 330, 335, 471.
4. ibid, P. 169, 189.
5. ibid, P. 230, 237, 248.
6. ibid, P. 256.
7. ibid, P. 356.
8. ibid P. 461-478; Kosa ch. IX.
9. ibid P. 197.
10. ibid P. 293.
He was so free and thorough in his thinking that he never hesitated to take the tenets of any Buddhist school when he found excellent reasoning in them. Moreover, in almost every case he justified his arguments by quoting original passages from canonical literature, specially from the Sāṃskṛta Āgamas. It may be the reason why the Abhidharmakośa was widely read in India and abroad as a reliable guide book and a manual for the study of Abhidharma. In China and Japan it is still used as a text book and also used as an authority when going to settle some controversial points on Buddhist dogmatics.

ii) It is a repository of the principal Abhidharma works of the Sarvāstivādins. It has systematised and given a definite form to the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma pitaka. We have discussed in the last two chapters how the dogmas of the Sarvāstivādins were given a definite form in the Jñānaprasthāna of Kātyāyanaśruta. But the Jñānaprasthāna too was not exhaustive and free from defects. The Vibhāṣā, therefore, was composed as a commentary to the Jñānaprasthāna. But the Vibhāṣā too was not a systematic treatise. At that

1. Takakusu. J. Essentials of Buddhist philosophy, Indian Ed., 1956, P. c1
time Dharmatrata (or Dharmatara) was residing at a monastery near Puskaravati or Puskalavati (modern Peshwar). It was he who first of all systematised the dogmas of the Sarvastivada school in his Abhidharmahrdayasastra. Next appeared Vasubandhu who very closely followed the Abhidharmahrdayastra, and after rearrangement gave a concrete and systematic shape to the Sarvastivada dogmas in this Abhidharmakośa.

iii) It occupies an important place in the development of Mahayana thought and principles. There is very close relation between the Abhidharmakośa system and the Viñaptimātra philosophy, one of the two main philosophical systems of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. Being neither a Vaibhāṣika nor a Sarvastivāsin, the author with strong Sautrāntika leaning has utilised the opinions of the "Ancient Masters" and has dealt with the doctrinal matters like prāṇātī, nikāyasabhāga, antarābhaya, avijñaptikarma and like, from the Sautrāntika stand point. He also makes us acquainted with a notion of the continued existence of a very

1. Poussin La Vallee "L' Abhidharmakośa de vasubandhu" Intro. P. XI
subtle consciousness (=ālayavijñāna of the Yogācārins) and a developed notion of a Buddha-field (Buddhaksetra) that every man has in him the potentiality of becoming a Buddha. These Sautrantika-views discussed in the Kosasāstra, were later on developed in the Mahāyāna schools, and therefore the Sautrāntika school is considered to be a bridge between the śrāvakayāna (=Hinayāna) and the Mahāyāna. In this way, the Abhidharmakośa serves as an introduction to or a forerunner of the Mahāyāna Buddhism. Yamakami Sogen, therefore, very rightly observes that a thorough mastery of the Abhidharmakośa is the only door of entrance to the philosophy of the Hinayāna and consequently also to that of the Mahāyāna.¹ The Chinese and Japanese Mahāyānists still use it as a text book.

In the concluding kārikās (40-43) of the eighth Kośasthāna of the Abhidharmakośa, the author gives some hints about the school or sect to which his treatise belongs and also the purpose of its compilation. Very frankly does the author confess that his treatise is based mostly (prāyah) on the traditions of the Vaibhāṣikas of

Kāśmīra. The word 'prāvah' (mostly) in the kārikā viii (iv, 40) indicates that the author has also utilised the opinions and traditions of other ancient Buddhist schools like the Sarvāstivāda, the Vaibhāṣika outside Kāśmīra (Bhāhireśakas, Pāścātyas and Aparāntakas), the Sautrāntika, the Yogācāra, Vatsīputriya, and the like. Moreover, he often uses the adverb Kila in his Kosa'karika to show his disagreement with the Vaibhāṣika views.

1. Kāśmīra-vaibhāṣikanītisiddhah prāyah mayāyaḥ
   kathito bhidharmah-Kośa, viii/40.

2. In his Kośabhāṣya, the author himself refers to those Schools by name, and also quotes their viewpoints in original.

3. Bhāṣya, P.197. In many places of his Kośabhāṣya, the author quotes opinions of Purvācāryas (Ancient Masters). Yaśomitra, however, identifies these 'Purvācāryas' with the "Yogācāras" headed by Ārya Asanga. "Purvācāryāḥ Yogācārāḥ āryaḥ Asaṅgoprabhṛtayāḥ" - Vāyākhya, P.221.

From his Bhāṣya, we come to know that his real affiliation was with the Sautrāntikas, and on the controversial points between the Vaibhāṣika and the Sautrāntika, he, in some ways, supports the views of the latter. Yaśomitra also, describes him as a "Sautrāntika" (Sautrāntika-pāśikastvam ācāryo = Vyākhyā p.26). But actually he was not a rigid disciple of any particular school of Buddhism, and in his Kośastra he was able to gather into a harmonious synthesis all the great doctrines accepted generally by Buddhists of all schools of his time. Therefore, the Abhidharmakosa does not belong to any particular school.

Vasubandhu has compiled his Abhidharmakosa for a definite purpose. During his time he found that the Buddha's Norm was being taken into confusion by those who had not seen the Truth, (adrṣṭatattvaih)

1. For instance, the expositions on the 'Saṁsthanarūpa' (Kośa, iv. kārikā 2), on the existence of the past and the future, and the like, are not in conformity with the Vibhāṣā-doctrine.

Cf. 'nāsti' saṁsthānam dravyata iti Sautrāntikāh' - Bhāṣya p.194.

"tasmān naivam Sarvāstivādaḥ śāsane sādhurbhavati yadātītānāgataṁ dravyatośti'ti vadati" - Bhāṣya, p.301
by the dévotikaih (niravagrahaih) and by the bad sophists (kutārkikaih). Their lawlessness was gaining recognition among the Buddhist moral philosophers. Disciplinary rules were not observed properly in the Buddhist Saṅgha. The views, destructive of good spirit and virtues, were at liberty. Seeing this miserable condition of the Buddha's doctrine, Vasubandhu had set before himself the task of reviving its lost glory by collecting the authentic texts from the literary works of various Buddhist schools of his time and by compiling them in a single treatise. Though he was favourably disposed towards the viewpoints of the Sautrāntikas, yet his many-sided intellectual sympathies enabled him to write an impartial summary of the tenets of Buddhism which is still generally accepted. Nevertheless he doubts if his work i.e. Abhidharmakośa will fulfil the purpose of its compilation. He admits that the interpretation of the Dharmas is vast and profound; but his knowledge is too poor to diligently search for

1. This reminds us of the devastating dialectic of Nāgārjuna and Aryadeva, the eminent predecessors of Vasubandhu.
2. Kosā, viii/41 - 42.
the school or sect which has actually maintained
the orthodox tradition of the Dharma preach by
the Buddha. He, therefore, confesses that if, in
his treatise, any portion will be noticed to be
wrong or badly represented, that should be treated as his
own fault. Because for the interpretation of the
"Good Law" (Saddharma) the Buddhas, and their great
disciples like Saradvatiputra etc. are the only
authority.1

We have seen before that the Abhidharmakosā is a
key to the knowledge of all that the ancient Buddhism
represented in the entire field of ontology (science
of reality), psychology, cosmology (the nature of the
world process), discipline and the doctrine of karma,
theory of salvation, mysticism, holiness, and the
Buddhist doctrine of the soul. Thus it deals with
the 75 Dharma (72 samskṛta and 3 asamskṛta) of the

1. Yad durghītam tad ihāsmadāgaḥ Saddharmāntau
   munayah prāmāṇam" - Kosa, vii/40.
2. According to Dr. Takakusu the list of Dharma in the
   Abhidharmakosā is quite similar to the lists in the
   Pali Abhidhammatthasaṁgha by Aṇuruddha, the
   Abhidharmahrdayasāstra by Dharmaśītī, the Sañyuktābhi-
   dharmahrdayasāstra by Dharmatrata and the Satyasiddhi-
   Sūtra by Harivarman (250-350 A.D.) - Essentials of
   Buddhist Philosophy, P. 66.
Sarvāstivādins, viz. 11 rūpas, 1 citta, 46 caittas, 14 cittaviprayuktasāmkśaras, and the 3 Asamskṛtas (Pratisamkhyānirodha, Apratisamkhyānirodha and ākāśa). It deals with the 5 Skandhas, 12 Āyatanas and 18 Dhatus, which include all the dharmas expounded in the sūtras, in accordance with the propositions of the Sarvāstivāda school. It describes the nature of 22 faculties (Indriyas) and of atoms (Paramāṇu). It also describes the origin and constitution of the universe, including heaven and hells and immaterial spheres. It explains the mystery and philosophy of karma, and the 98 anusayas (passions). It treats of the path (darśanamārga, bhūvanamārga and aśaikṣamārga) and the saints who tread in it. It gives a detailed account of the ten kinds of knowledge and their nature. This is followed by the various attributes belonging to a Buddha, viz. the ten Balaś, the four Vaisāradvas, the three Smṛtyupasthānas, and the Mahākarunā. It also enumerates the virtues common to the Buddha and the saints, and also to the ordinary beings. It also gives a detailed exposition of the different forms of meditation and rapture. It gives the gain resulting from the different types of meditation, viz. the attainment of the four
Apramānas, the eight Vīmoksas and the eight Abhibhāvatanas. A supplementary chapter (ch. ix) refutes the doctrine of the existence of Pudgala, the self or soul, "the central pivot around which turned the philosophical speculation and controversies among the non-Buddhists as well as some Buddhists like the Vatsiputriya-spiritualists".¹ All these matters have been dealt with here with sobriety and in clear and simple language, with every method of which Indians are capable.² Yet in the very last verse of his Abhidharmakośa,³ the author ironically remarks that he has not cultivated the entire field of the Abhidharma-sāstra which is vast and profound. He has just cared to suggest the main line of reasoning for the benefit of those who may be intelligent enough to grasp it. This is just like injecting a little drop of poison which bound to spread quickly all through the body by its own potency.

¹ Eliot, Charles, Japanese Buddhism, p. 93; Gokhale, V.V., JBRAS, 1946, p. 75
² Poussin, La Vallée, "L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu", Intro, p. XIX
³ "iti diñ-mātram evedam upadīṣtaṁ sumedhasāṁ / Vrana-deso visasy'eva svasāmarthya-visarpināh //"
The philosopher monk Haribhadra of the 10th century A.D., therefore, paid a glorious tribute to Vasubandhu for his talent of systematic and lucid expositions as well as for his fine grasp of subtle metaphysical distinctions, with the following words:

"Bhāvabhāva-vibhāga-pakṣanipuṣa-ṛṣaṇābhī-
mānānandaḥ /
— Ācāryo Vasubandhur arthakathane
praptaspadah paddhatau //" ¹

Acārya Vasubandhu was very much proud of his talent for systematic and lucid expositions, as well as of his fine grasp of subtle metaphysical distinctions. ²

As already observed that the Abhidharmakośa became so popular in India and abroad that it was used as the primer or manual of Buddhism. It was an indispensable treatise for all the schools of Buddhist thought. The rise of expensive literature

¹ Tucci, G., Abhisamayalākāra lokāḥ of Haribhadra, Gōsā. LIXII, 1932, P. 41.
² Gokhale, V. V., JBRAS/1946, P. 75
of commentaries on it also bears the evidence of its great importance in the history of Buddhism. From the records of Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing, the Chinese pilgrims, we come to know that in the Buddhist monastic institutions of India of those days, (6th - 7th century A.D.) the study of the Abhidharmakosa was compulsory for all students.

Hiuen-tsang himself studied this sāstra under Yasā, the most famous saint-scholar of the Jayendra-Vihara in Kashmir, and translated the same into Chinese in 651-654 A.D. Before him Paramārtha (499-569 A.D.) translated it into Chinese in 563-567 A.D. I-tsing (634 - 713 A.D.) records in his itinerary that students who had acquired proficiency in Sanskrit grammar and composition, began to learn composition in prose and verse and devote themselves to Logic (Hetuvidyā) and Metaphysics (Abhidharmakosa). In the first half of the 7th century also the Kosāsāstra was so widely read in India that, in a description of the Forest Academy

1. Takakusu's (Tr), A Record of the Buddhist Religion, P. 176 - 177
of Divākaramitra Maitrāyanīya, Bang says that even parrots recited the Kośa to one another.¹ Hwui-Lī, the biographer of Hiuen-tsang, records that even the spirits and demons followed the doctrines of Kośa.²

The Abhidharmakośa was introduced into Central Asia in the 6th century B.C. In his "Life of Hiuen-tsang", Hwui-li records that Hiuen-tsang had a dispute in Kucha (Central Asia) with a Mahāyānist doctor who maintained that the book called Tsa-hsin (Saṃyuktā-bhidharmahrdaya), Chu-she (Abhidharmakośa) and P'i-sha (Vibhāṣā) were sufficient for salvation and denounced the Yogāśāstra (Yogācāryabhūmi) as heretical.³ In China also the Kośaśāstra was introduced in the 6th century when Paramārtha translated it into Chinese in 564 A.D. Before its introduction into China, the Jñānapraśthāna, the Mahāvibhāṣā and the Saṃyuktbhidharmahrdaya, had already been translated into Chinese, through which the Abhidharma school (Pi-t'an-tsung)

1. Harṣačarita, viii, P.317 (Bombay Sanskrit Series Edition) - "Trisārasaparaiḥ paramopāsakaḥ śūkairapi sākyasāpanakusalaiḥ kośām Saṃupadiśadbhīh".
2. Beal's (Tr), Life of Hiuen-tsang, P.80
3. ibid, P.39; Julien's (Tr), Histoire de La vie de Hiouen Thsang, P.51
had been introduced there, and among the Abhidharma texts so far introduced, the Samyuktabhādhamahārddaya was recognised as the chief text. But after the Abhidharmakośa was translated into Chinese, it became the principal text for study and the then treatises were put aside. Thenceforward the Chinese Abhidharma Masters came to be known as the Kośa-masters and composed a good number of commentaries and manuals on the Kośaśāstra. Hui-kai composed a commentary on it in 53 fascicules, and after his death Tao-yao abridged his commentary into 22 fascicules. Afterwards Hui-ching wrote another commentary in 30 fascicules. But unfortunately all these commentaries are lost. About nine decades after Paramārtha, Huien-tsang made a new translation of the Kośaśāstra which was highly esteemed by the scholars of his time for its accuracy as well as for its importance as preliminary text for the study of the Vijnaptimātra-tāsiddhi. Since then Huien-tsang's version of the Kośaśāstra became the only text that was studied and Paramārtha's version was put aside for its inaccuracy. The followers of Huien-tsang wrote a number of
commentaries and manuals to this new version of the Kośa. Among them the most famous ones were the commentaries of Shen-t'ai (Hsin-t'ai), P'u-kuang and Fa-pao, each of them in 30 fascicules. Some time later in the K'ai-yuan period (722 = 727 A.D.), Yuan-huei made abridgements from the commentaries of P'u-kuang and Fa-pao, and composed the "Chu-She-lun-sung-shu", as a commentary to the Abhidharmakośakāra only in 30 fascicules. It was concise and easy to study and was a very popular work, and therefore, several sub-commentaries were composed on the same, of which only Wei-huei's "Theoretical notes on the Abhidharmakośa Sastra" in 6 fascicules and Tun-lin's "Record of memorials of Abhidharmakośa Sastra" in 12 fascicules are extant. Among the lost works there were Kuei-chi's "A Record of the Abhidharmakośa Sastra" in 10 fascicules and Hui-su's "Memorials of Abhidharmakośa Sastra" in 15 fascicules.

1. E.B., P. 62-63; Dr. Chou Hsian-Kuang, the History of Chinese Buddhism, P. 131-132.
With the introduction of the Kosasāstra of Vasubandhu into China the Kusha (Chu-she) school was founded in China in the 6th century and flourished there until 900 A.D. Though the Kusha school represented the best about scholastic tradition of India more adequately than any other Chinese school, yet it was somewhat literary and scholastic, technical and arid and had not sufficient vitality to acquire more than a restricted popularity. It was a system of scholastic philosophy rather than a form of religion. Hence it has either disappeared or remains as a historical survival.

The Abhidharmakośa was introduced to Japan in the year 658 A.D. by two Japanese scholars, Chitsu and Chitatsu who went to China to learn Buddhism under Hiuen-tsang's direct disciples. After returning home Chitsu and Chitatsu taught the Abhidharmakośa to Japanese students and thus established the Kusha sect in Japan in 660 A.D. This sect flourished in Japan.

2. Hiuen-tsang died in 654 A.D.
3. Pér1, however, does not believe in the existence of Kusha sect in Japan - B.E.F.E.O,1917, P.17
Sir Charles Eliot, however, maintained that the Kusha was one of the Hasshu or eight ancient sects in Japan - Japanese Buddhism, p.212
until about 900 A.D. when they began to decay.
Later it was affiliated to the Hosso (Dharmalaksana) sect. But the Abhidharmakośastra was still highly esteemed as a fundamental text that must be studied. Because the teachings of the Hosso sect included even those expounded in the Abhidharmakośa. From the Heian (794-1184) to the Kamakura (1185-1333) period, the study of the Sāstra was pursued in the great temples of Japan - The Todai-ji at Nara, the Enryaku-ji on Mt. Hiei, and Kongobu-ji on Mt. Koya, and Genshin (also known as Eshin, 942-1017) and Chingai (1091-1152) were among the most distinguished scholars of the period.
In the Tokugawa period (1603 - 1868), however, this Sātra was studied in institutions and temples belonging to different Buddhist sects and schools. Among the distinguished scholars of this period were Kaido, Hado, Fujaku and Kaion. It is said that these scholars were not satisfied with the mere study of Huien-tsang's version of the Kośastra, and they proceeded to compare it with the Paramārtha's version and thereby made a new contribution towards the study of the Sāstra.
Many commentaries and manuals too were written in Japanese on the Śāstra in different periods.

Buddhism, however, remained moribund in Japan from 1868-1889, during which period it could not receive patronise from the people as also from the Royal families. In 1876, however, private interest in Buddhism was shown by the despatch of missionaries to Shanghai and by the publication of the Tripitaka with necessary treatises in 1880-1884. In 1889 when liberty of religion was granted in Japan many universities were founded wherein the study of Buddhism was organised, and scholars also published books dealing with different aspects of Buddhism. As a result a good number of books have been published on the Abhidharmakosa from Japan. E. Teramoto of Otani University translated the Abhidharmakosakārika into Japanese from the Tibetan version. U. Wogihara of Taisho University edited the Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakosā- vyākhyā of Yasomitra (1932-1936) from Tokyo, and also

1. In this period B. Manjio introduced Buddhist studies at Otani University and published his "A catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka" from Oxford in 1883.
translated its first two chapters into Japanese. The chapter of the Kośaṣṭra and the corresponding chapter of the Sphutārthā have been translated by S. Yamagachi and Funahashi into Japanese. S. Funahashi and I. Funahashi made a complete concordance of Hiuen-tsang's version of the Kośaṣṭra. Among introductory works to the study of the Śāstra written in Japanese are those by S. Funahashi, Takagi and Fukaura.

Even now, there is a proverbial saying among the Japanese Buddhist students: "three years of Vijnaptimātra and eight years of Abhidharmakośa," which shows popularity of the Kośaṣṭra at Japan even today.

In the Tibetan region, the Abhidharmakośaṣṭra was introduced perhaps in the beginning of the 9th century A.D. when Ral-pa-can (816-838 A.D.), the Augustus of Tibet was the ruler. Jinamitra's Tibetan translation of the Kośaṣṭra was first introduced in the country. It is said that king Ral-pa-can summoned from India many celebrated scholars to render the

1. E. B. P. 61.
Buddhist Canon into Tibetan. Among his translators, Jinamitra of the Vaibhāsika school of Kashmir was the most prolific one who worked energetically for the promotion of the Kōṣaśāstra in Tibet. But this tradition was suspended for sometime when king Ral-pa-can came to be murdered in 838 A.D. by the supporters of his superseded elder brother, Glan-dar-ma, who destroyed Buddhism in Tibet. During the later period of propagation, however, Mchims-Hjam-dbyahs of the Kadampa sect fully developed the study of the Kōṣaśāstra at the end of the 13th century, and composed the "chos mnon-pahi mdsod-kyi Hgrel-ba mnon-pahi rgyan". Afterwards the Gelgpa sect "laid even more emphasis on the study of this Sāstra and put it as the final item in the curriculum of exoteric Buddhism." In the successive generations also many Buddhist scholars in Tibet composed explanatory works on the Kōṣaśāstra. Even now the Tibetans reckon the Kōṣaśāstra as an indispensable treatise. Its study is a must for them.

1. We have discussed previously about the other translation works in Tibetan on the Abhidharma-kosa and its commentaries.
In the Lamaist monasteries of Mongolia it is also found that the Kośaśāstra is regarded along with Maitreya's Abhisamayālankāra and Candrakīrti's Madhyamāvatāra, as one of the five principal treatises which students must study.¹

Lastly, it may not be out of place to mention here that in the Theravāda Buddhist countries like Ceylon, Burma, Laos, Cambodia etc., the Abhidharmakośa gained no popularity as it is written in Sanskrit.

Date and authorship of the Abhidharmakośa:

There is no denying the fact that the Abhidharmakośakārikā and the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya were the works of Ācārya Vasubandhu. But the traditionally accepted theory of two Vasubandhus, both of whom dealt with Buddhist philosophy, has led the scholars into a confusion in determining the author of the Abhidharmakośa among the two Vasubandhus. The date of Vasubandhu, therefore, has been the much discussed question in the history of Buddhism and Buddhist literature for the

¹ E.B.P. 62
last two centuries and it is still a polemic among the Buddhist scholars.

We see that opinions widely differ as to the date of Vasubandhu. Some scholars hold that Vasubandhu belongs to the 4th century A.D., while others hold that he lived in the 5th century A.D.\(^1\) E. Frauwallner, however, on a critical analysis of various sources, has confirmed the theory of two Vasubandhus and has come to the conclusion that Vasubandhu, the older, the brother of Asanga, lived in the 4th century A.D.\(^2\) while Vasubandhu, the younger, the author of the Abhidharmakosā, lived in the 5th century A.D.\(^3\)

Fраuwallner's assumption is mainly based on the following works:

1) "The life of Vasubandhu" by Paramārtha (A.D. 469-563).\(^4\)

2) "The sphaṭārthābhidharmakosāvyākhyā" of Yasomitra, a younger contemporary of Paramārtha.\(^5\)

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1. H. Kern, however, places him in the 6th century A.D. - Manual of Indian Buddhism, P.10
2. On the date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu, P.46
3. ibid, P.32
4. Takakusu, "The Life of Vasubandhu by Paramārtha".
5. Edited by Wogihara from Tokyo,1932-1936.
3) Records of Hiuen-tsang's travels in India, 629-645.  
4) "The Ching t'eu shih-i-lun" of Chih-i the founder of the T'ien-t'ai school in China.  
5) A commentary on the Śaṭāśāstra (with the commentary of Vasubandhu) by Chi-tsang of the San-lun school of China, who flourished at the end of the 6th and beginning of the 7th century A.D.  
6) The commentary of one Vajrarṣi (Chin-kang-hsien) on Vasubandhu's Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā śāstra. This was translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci in 535 A.D.  

Other valuable writings which have been utilised by Frauwallner to corroborate his viewpoint on the subject are of the following scholars:  

2. Frauwallner, "on the date etc.", P. 53  
3. ibid, P. 49  
1. Der Buddhismus, 1860 P. 235 ff.
3. Le Théâtre Indien (Bibliothèque de l’École des Hautes Études, Sciences Philologiques et historiques, fasc. 83), Paris 1890, I, P. 165, II, P. 35 ; La date de Vasubandhu, Journal Asiatique, 1890, P.547-554; La date de Candragomin, BEFE0, III (1803), P.38-53;
5. A propos (ie la date de Vasubandhu, in BEFE0, XI,(1911), P. 339-390.
7. Das Datum Candragomin's und Kālidāsa's, Breslau,1903; Kṣāratarāginī, Kṣīraśvāmin's Kommentar zu Pāṇini's Dhātu-pātha (Indische Forschungen Heft 8-9), Breslau,1930, P.266-2.


3. Some notes on the date of Subandhu and Diṁ-nāga, JRAS (Bengal), New Series, Vol. I (1905), P. 253-255, and correspondence on the same in Indian Antiquary, XLI (1912), P. 15 f.

4. E.R.E. vol. XII, 1921, P. 595 f; Asanga's Bodhisattvabhūmi.

5. Kumāragupta, the patron of Vasubandhu, Indian Antiquary, XL (1911), P. 170 f; On Buddhamitra, the teacher of Vasubandhu, Indian Antiquary, XLI (1912) P. 244.

6. Correspondence on "Kumāragupta, the patron of Vasubandhu", Indian Antiquary, Vol. XL (1911), P. 264.

7. Who was the patron of Vasubandhu? Indian Antiquary, XLI (1912), P. 1-3.


6. The date of Vasubandhu seen from the History of Buddhist Philosophy, ibid, P. 93-94.
Let us now critically examine the texts on which Frauwallner has based his opinion. Before going to agree with his assumption we should at least investigate the sources he utilised. The earliest and the best authoritative source utilised by Frauwallner is the "Life of Vasubandhu by Paramārtha", from which we can conjecture that there were two bearers of the name "Vasubandhu"—the elder one being the younger brother of Asaṅga, the great master of the Yogācāra school and the younger one being the author of the Abhidharmakośa. In the biography, however these two Vasubandhus are regarded as one and the same person perhaps out of sheer confusion. For instance, in the second part of the biography, we find that after the compilation of his Abhidharmakośa Vasubandhu had to dispute with the grammarian Vasurāta; but he had to refuse a disputation with Saṅghabhadra, who vehemently criticized his Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, on account of his old age. But in the third part of the biography we find that the old Vasubandhu becomes converted to Yogācāra by his elder brother Asaṅga and develops a great literary activity in favour of Yogācāra school of Buddhism. Tradition ascribes to
hundreds of Mahāyāna works consisting of compendiaums, manuals and commentaries. But how could the same Vasubandhu, who refused a disputation with Saṅghabhadrā on account of his old age, compose such a good number of works after his conversion to Mahāyāna? This is humanly impossible. The authorship of those Mahāyāna works therefore, goes to some Vasubandhu who is other than the author of the Abhidharmakośa.

No Vasubandhu, therefore, was other person than the younger brother of Saṅgā. From this confusion of two Vasubandhus in the same biography, therefore, we may at least guess that most probably Paramārtha himself might have mixed up the two persons of the same name as he had to draw his information only from oral tradition, due to the fact that in the period between him (A.D. 499-569) and Vasubandhu, all the written documents were lost by the disastrous invasion by the Hūnas in

1. 500 according to Mahāyāna traditions.
2. Huien-tsang, however, records that Vasubandhu was not actually old at that time. But as he was afraid of Saṅghabhadrā, he "learning that Saṅghabhadrā was on the way to have a discussion with him, hastily packed up and went off with his disciples. To these he excused his conduct by alleging his age and infirmities." - Beal, S., On Yuan Chwang's travels in India, Vol.I.P. 325.
in India. Or, it is also possible that the followers of Paramārtha might have included the third part of the biography of Vasubandhu to the original one due to mistake or to give more importance to the activities of Vasubandhu who gained a large-scale popularity in India and abroad in those days.

On the basis of these views, Frauwallner opines that Paramārtha's biography of Vasubandhu, the author of the Abhidharmakośa is at an end with the second part, and that the third part deals with the biography of Vasubandhu who is the younger brother of Asaṅga.

The second important source is the "Sphuṭārthā-abhidharmakośavyākhyā" of Yasōmitra. In this commentary of the Abhidharmakośa, Yasōmitra clearly differentiates one "Vṛddhācārya - Vasubandhu" or "Stāvira-Vasubandhu" i.e. Molder Vasubandhu, the author of the Abhidharmakośa whom he designates as "Ācārya" throughout his Sphuṭārthā. Further Stcherbaśky is of opinion that Vasubandhu, the author of the Abhidharmakośa,

1. On the date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu, P. 16
2. "Vṛddhācārya - Vasubandhu...Vṛddhācārya-Vasubandhu- dēgiyāh Kaścīt pariharati" -Vyākhyā, P. 35
3. Stāvīrō Vasubandhur ācārya-Manorathopādhya evam āha" -Vyākhyā, P. 289
4. E.g. in Vyākhyā, P. 1-2, 6-7, 26, 30-32, 45, 61-62, etc.
5. The Central Conception of Buddhism, 3rd ed. Calcutta, P. 2n
himself quotes in his own Bhāṣya, the opinions of a Vṛddhacārya Vasubandhu and rejects them. All these evidences, therefore, confirm the theory of two Vasubandhus - Vasubandhu the elder and Vasubandhu the younger.

1. Abhidharmakośakārikā and Bhāṣya, Tibetan text, edited by Stcherbatsky, Petrograd, 1917, P.23 (Kārikā I.13).
2. Yasomitra, however, comments on this as: "Vṛddhacārya - Vasubandhu - desīyah kaścit" i.e. some one quite resembling to an older Vasubandhu - Vyākhyā, P. 35
3. T. Kimura, however, quotes an opinion of P'ou Kouang, the Chinese Commentator of the Abhidharmakośa, that the Vṛddhacārya Vasubandhu, a Sarvāstivādin, was the author of the Abhidharmakośa.—"The date of Vasubandhu seen from the Abhidharmakośa", in Indian studies in honor of Charles Rockwell Lanman, P.91; Poussin, L'Abhidharmakośa etc.,III P.70,n.2.
Records of Hiuen-tsang's travels in India, 629-645 A.D.
and the "Ching t'u shih i lun" of Chih-i form respectively
the third and fourth traditional sources for Frauwallner's
assumption. These provide us with a legendary account
of Vasubandhu's death which is not properly mentioned
in any other sources. The legend goes that after his
death Vasubandhu one day appeared to Asanga and his
disciples in heavenly splendour, and told them of the
Tusita Heaven and of the future Buddha Maitreya.
Frauwallner, however, holds this legendary account as
historical because it implies that Vasubandhu died before
Asanga.¹ In his Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi, a commentary
on Vasubandhu's Trīśikā also Hiuen-tsang, on the basis
of the information collected in Ayodhya in 636 A.D.,
tells us that Vasubandhu lived about 1000 years after
the Buddha's Mahāparinirvāṇa.² From the above we can
however, assume that Hiuen-tsang places Vasubandhu in
the 5th century A.D.²

1. "On the date etc.", P. 53
2. ibid, P. 9
Chi-tsang's commentary on the Sataśāstra is also a valuable source for Frauwallner. This Chi-tsang of the Sun-lun school of China flourished at the end of the 6th and beginning of the 7th century A.D. His commentary on the Sataśāstra with the commentary of Vasubandhu was translated by Kumārajīva (A.D. 344 - 431). In this work Chi-tsang narrates that Vasubandhu, born in Purusapura, was formerly a Hīnayānist and composed not less than 500 works most of which were later lost. Later on he was converted to Māhāyāna by his elder brother Asanga and composed 500 Mahāyāna works. The people of those days therefore called Vasubandhu the "Master of the Thousand Manuals".

This account of Chi-tsang corresponds, in its main outline, with that of Paramārtha's biography. But in some points it differs from the narrative of Paramārtha. Chi-tsang records that as a follower of Hīnayāna, Vasubandhu composed about 500 works, but Paramārtha is silent on the issue. Again the account of the composition of the Abhidharmakośa occupies the major portion in the narrative of

1. This school follows the Indian Mādhyamaka system.
2. Quoted by Frauwallner in his "On the date etc.", P. 49-50.
Paramārtha. But Chi-tsang remains silent about the Abhidharmakosa. From this, Frauwalmer concludes that Chi-tsang in his account, "reproduces the authentic biography of Vasubandhu the older, free from all the information concerning Vasubandhu the younger."¹

Another traditional source taken into account by Frawallner is Bodhiruci's (5th century) translation of the commentary of one Vajrarsi (Chi-kang-hsien) on Vasubandhu's Vajracchedikāpāramitāsūtra. Bodhiruci, however, furnishes us with the following account:²

Maitreyanātha composed the original Vajracchedikāpāramitā. He then transmitted it to Asaṅga. Then Vasubandhu wrote the commentary, called "Vajracchedikāpāramitāsāstra." Vasubandhu communicated this work to Vajrarsi who again transmitted it to Aksayamati. Aksayamati, again, gave it to Shēngchi who again transmitted it to Bodhiruci.

¹ "On the date etc." P. 50
² Nôel Péri, A propos de la date de Vasubandhu, Revue des Études Budhistes, XI (1911), P. 341-344.
Thus the lineage of teachers from Vasubandhu to Bodhiruci covers about 200-years, and Frauwallner, therefore, surmises that Vasubandhu transmitted the Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitāsāstra to Vajrasā most probably in about 350 A.D., which, fairly agrees with the calculation according to the 200 years. This date however, undoubtedly refers to the elder Vasubandhu.

The last but not the least is the account of the Chinese teacher Fa-tsang who flourished about the end of the 7th century. Fa-tsang, in his "Hua yen Ching Chuan Chi" mentions two biographies of Vasubandhu one of which seems to be identical with the biography by Paramārtha, and the other different from it. Frauwallner however, thinks that the biography which is different from that by Paramārtha no doubt concerns with the elder Vasubandhu. Thus it appears that the theory of two Vasubandhus is not at all baseless. Like Frauwallner we also, therefore, may infer that there were two bearers of the name "Vasubandhu" - one elder and the other younger. The elder one was the brother

1. "On the date etc.", P.43
2. ibid, P.47
of Asaṅga while the younger one was the author of the Abhidharmakośa. Dr. P.S. Jaini also, on the basis of the Abhidharmadīpa and its commentary (the Vṛtti), confirms the view. But he does not agree with Frauwallner as the latter maintains that the Kośakāra Vasubandhu was not a Mahāyānist and consequently, not the author of the Mahāyāna works credited to him. In his paper entitled "On the theory of two Vasubandhus"¹ Dr. Jaini presents some new evidence that throws some doubt on professor Frauwallner's thesis and confirms the older and universal tradition about the conversion of the Kośakāra Vasubandhu to Mahāyāna, and his authorship of at least one work belonging to the Vijnānavāda school."²

We now deal with the life-history and date of two Vasubandhus (the elder and the younger) mentioned above.

Vasubandhu, the elder, the second son of three brothers of a Kausīka-brāhmaṇa family, was probably born about the year 320 A.D. at Puruṣapura (modern

2. Ibid, P.49
Peshwar) in Gandhara (Kandahar). Most probably Kausíka was his father who had been an orthodox and vastly learned brahmin and had occupied the most honourable post of a state teacher (Rājaguru). Among the two other brothers of Vasubandhu, Asaṅga was the elder one and Vīrīñcivatsa was the younger one. It is however, doubtful if "Vasubandhu" was the name of a particular brother. It rather seems that "Vasubandhu" was the family-name of the Kausíka-family. All three brothers were converted to the Sarvāstivāda school of Buddhism. 1

The second brother continued to be known throughout his life by the common name Vasubandhu. 2 In his early life Vasubandhu was a famous teacher of the Sarvāstivāda and composed numerous works 3, which were soon forgotten and lost. Frauwallner, however, ascribes to him a commentary to the "Abhidharmasāra" of Dharmasāri. 4

In the later part of his life, Vasubandhu lived at Ayodhyā (Oudh) where he was converted by his elder brother Asaṅga to Mahāyāna. There is an interesting

1. H. Kern however, maintains that Asaṅga was first converted to the semi-orthodox Mahīśasaka school of Buddhism and in course of time he again became a convert to Mahāyāna. P. 128
3. Tradition ascribes to him 500 Hinayāna works.
4. "On the date etc." P. 54
legendary account how Asanga converted his brother to his faith. It was rather a great achievement in the life of Asanga to win over his brother from Hinayāna to Mahāyāna. In the third part of the biography of Vasubandhu by Paramārtha, it is recorded that "when the master Asanga saw that this younger brother of his was superior in intelligence to mankind, that his spirit was deep and comprehensive and that he understood both the inner and the outer, he became afraid that he might write a book and confute Mahāyāna". Asanga, therefore, determined to win over his brother and worked out his plan in every detail with imagination and supreme subtlety. He arranged a meeting place with his brother at Ayodhya (Oudh) in the monastery of the Mango-trees.

"In the evening he led Vasubandhu to a terrace on the bank of the river and left him alone there. It was a beautiful autumn night, and the moon was bathing the river and the surrounding country in a

1. Takakusu, La Sāmkhya-kārikā, études à la lumière de sa version chinoise, in BEFE0, IV (1904), P. 46. Quoted by Fruguwallner in his "On the date etc.", P. 16
ghostly light. The silence of the night was broken only by the occasional cries of birds and beasts and the croaking of bull-frogs, but these sounds tended to intensify the silence and the sense of aloneness.

"Vasubandhu appears to have been hypnotized by his surroundings as Asaṅga intended him to be. The world seemed unreal and life but the dream of a dream. This sense of unreality became more profound when a disciple of Asaṅga, hidden away out of sight, began to read in a sweet voice selections from Asaṅga's idealism. These fitted in so perfectly with his dreamy state and unreal surroundings that he was stirred to the pitch of ecstasy, and fully realized the unreality of all material things, and the truth and beauty of Mahāyāna."

"Suddenly remembering that he had been an opponent of the supreme truth, he was about to tear out his tongue which had spoken against the great doctrine. His brother, however, who was concealed close by, rushed out and prevented him, saying that it would be much better to use his tongue in the proclamation of the truth he had denied. The two
brothers thus united went forth together to spread the knowledge of Mahāyāna idealism. It is said that after his conversion to Mahāyāna, Vasubandhu composed, according to tradition, 500 Mahāyāna works, so that he received the name of "Master of the Thousand Manuals". Among his Mahāyāna works, most famous are the commentaries on Mahāyāna-Sūtras, on the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra, Daśabhūmikasūtra, Vajracchedikāprajñāparamitā, Madhyāntavibhāga, Āsāṅgaśstra, Pratītyasamutpādasūtra, and the like. He also wrote the two classical treatises on idealism, the Viṃśatikā and Trimsākā. He died before his brother Āsāṅga, in about the year 380 A.D. 2

We now turn to the life-history and date of Vasubandhu, the younger, the author of the Abhidharmakośa.

1. Rene Grousset, "In the footsteps of the Buddha", P.131-132
Quoted by C.H.S. Ward in his "Buddhism", Vol.II PP.77-78
2. According to some scholars, Vasubandhu died after Āsāṅga.
This Yasubandhu was born about 400 A.D. We know nothing about his birth place and origin. According to some scholars he was a native of Gandhāra in North India and became a Buddhist monk of the Sarvāstivāda School. According to tradition his teacher was Buddhamitra (Monu-ho-lita i.e. Manoratha, the author of a Vibhāṣā-Śāstra, according to Huien-tsaṅ). Under Buddhamitra he studied the whole of the sacred books i.e. Tripitaka, of the Sarvāstivāda School. Afterwards he leaned more and more towards the Sautrāntika School. He, therefore, started to study, the doctrines of the Sautrāntika. Later on he became convinced of the fact that the doctrines of the Sautrāntikas were more reasonable in many points, then those of his own school. He then "determined to formulate an eclectic system out of the two lines of doctrine along which his mental activity had been directed". But he needed some thorough training for the purpose and went to

1. Manoratha, according to Burnouf - "Introduction a l' histoire du Buddhism indien," P. 567; Maniratha, according to Wassilief - Der Buddhismus, P. 219
Matipura (modern Mandawar near Bijnor),\(^1\) in disguise and studied under Saṅghabhadrā and his teacher Skandhila for a few years without disclosing his real identity. But at last Skandhila suspected him to be no other person than Vasubandhu and advised him to secretly go back to his native land, lest his life would be endangered. Vasubandhu, therefore, returned to his homeland. But immediately after his return he heard that during his absence his teacher Buddhamitra had been defeated by the Sāmkhya teacher Vindhyavāsin (or Īśvarakṛṣṇa), a disciple of Vārsagāya, in a religious disputation. He could not tolerate this humiliation and defeat of his teacher, and composed the "Paramārthasaptati" a treatise of 70 verses in which he admirably refuted all the ground principles of the Sāmkhya philosophy as put forth in the Sāmkhyaśāstra by Vindhyavāsin. It is said that the "Paramārthasaptati" is the first literary undertaking of Vasubandhu. It gained so much reputation that even king Vikramāditya (=Skandagupta, 455-467 A.D.) rewarded

\(^1\) Cunningham, Ancient Geography of India, P.348
him with three lacs of gold. Moreover, it is recorded that the king sent his queen Dhruva with the crown prince Bāładitya to study Buddhism under the celebrated Vasubandhu.

1. Hiuen-tsang, however, records a different account. According to him Manoratha, a teacher of Vasubandhu was harassed by a certain king Vikramāditya. The king resolved to bring public shame on Manoratha and his followers. He organised a gathering of 100 learned heretical scholars to meet Manoratha in debate and issued a decree that if Manoratha and his followers, fail to prevail 'they shall be excommunicated'. Manoratha had defeated 99 heretical teachers, but when he was arguing with the 100th opponent, the king and the heretics cried out and disturbed the meeting. Manoratha, thereupon, bit his tongue, wrote his pupil Vasubandhu "In the multitude of partisans there is no justice", and died. Within a few days the king, too, lost his kingdom, and was succeeded by a king who was virtuous. Under the reign of this king Vasubandhu took the revenge of his master's disgrace by defeating all the heretical teachers - Watters, "On Yuan Chwang's travels in India", Vol.1, P. 211-212

2. Kimuraj K., A Historical study of the terms Hinayāna and Mahāyāna and the origin of Mahayāna Buddhism, P.187
Sanikrtyayana, Rāhul, Purātattva-Nibandhāvalī, 2nd Ed. P. 174-175
Vasubandhu afterwards composed his principal work "Abhidharmakosa" in which he gathered the principal tenets of Buddhism which were accepted generally by almost all the schools of Buddhist thought. But when the book was in the hands of the people of Gandhāra, it met with rigorous opposition from within and from without his school. Yet the final victory was, undoubtedly, on his side. He then sent it to Kāśmīra. The king of Kāśmīra and the scholars were at first delighted with it, imagining that he was expounding and propagating their doctrines. But on the advice of Skandhila, Saṅghabhadra's teacher, who knew that the compendium was not quite favourable to their sect, Vasubandhu was asked to write an explanation of his book. So Vasubandhu composed a commentary known as Abhidharmakośabhāṣya to his "Abhidharmakośa" in which he strongly criticized some of the views of the Vaibhāsikas and in some ways supports the views of the Sautrāntikas. After the composition of the Abhidharma-

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2. Author of the Abhidharmāvatāra.
kosabhāṣya, he successfully defended himself against the attacks of the grammarian Vasurāta.

According to tradition, Vasubandhu enjoyed the favour of two Gupta rulers Skandagupta Vikramāditya (455-467 A.D.) and Narasimhagupta Bālāditya (467-473 A.D.). Bālāditya had his education under Vasubandhu. After his accession to the throne, Bālāditya summoned him to Ayodyā (Oudh) and showered on him the highest honours. Hiuen-tsang, however, records that during this period Vasubandhu composed his Abhidharmakośa, and its Bhāṣya. But tradition goes that, he refused, on account of his old age, a disputation with the Vaibhāṣika master Sanghabhadra, who attacked his commentary to the Abhidharmakośa from the orthodox Vaibhāṣika point of view. He died

1. From Paramārtha's life of Vasubandhu we however learn that a Vasurāta was one of the pupils of Vasubandhu.

2. Frāuwallner, "On the date etc.", P.55

3. Watters, I,P.210

4. It is said that Sanghabhadra composed his "Nyāyānuśāra"and "Samayapradīpikā", in order to refute the assertions of the Kosāśāstra in favour of the Vibhāṣāstra. Hiuen-tsang however, records that Sanghabhadra died before Vasubandhu. - Watters, On Xuan Chwang, I, P. 325-327
at Ayodhya (Oudh) at the age of 80, around the year 480 A. D. 1

Vasubandhu "led a secular life, and his character is baffling and hard to understand. He was truly great, however, both as a man and a philosopher". 2

Yasomitra, therefore, has not committed a wrong by designating Vasubandhu as the "best of the intellectual persons and a second Buddha." 3

Among other works ascribed to Vasubandhu, mention may be made of the following:

The Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa in which he develops new and original formulations of his own philosophical conviction with the Saunterāntika point of view; the

1. Franwallner, "On the date etc.", P. 56
H. Kern, records that Vasubandhu died in Nepal - Manual of Indian Buddhism, P. 129

2. Ward, C.R.S., Buddhism, P. 81

3. "Yam buddhimatam agryam dvitiyam iva Buddham ityānuḥ " - Vyākhyā P. 1
Panca-sandhaka in which he speaks of the Ālayavijnāna and Tathātā; the Trisvabhāva-nirdesa (with 38 Kārikās) in which he describes the threefold world of cognition; the Buddhagotraśāstra in which he refutes the Sāmkhya and the Vaiśeṣika doctrines, and the like.

In support of the Frauwallner's aforesaid date of Vasubandhu (400-480 A.D.), the author of the Abhidharmakośa and its Bhāṣya, some new evidences may be cited. First of all we should mention about the "Abhidharmadīpa", and its Vṛtti (Commentary) both of which, according to Dr. P.S. Jaini, were composed by some Vimalamitra, a distant teacher of Saṅghabhadra, approximately between 450 and 550 A.D. Now, Vimalamitra, a master of the Abhidharmaśāstra of the Kāśmir-Vaiśeṣika sect, the possible author of the Abhidharmadīpa and its Vṛtti, borrows in his Vṛtti (commentary) about fifty large passages from the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya of Vasubandhu

1. Edited by Sujit Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, Visvabharati, 1939.
2. Edited by Dr. P.S. Jaini and published by K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna, 1959.
4. Ibid. P.18, 33, 47, 65, 81, 90, 93, 98, 133, 149, 168, 222, 279, etc.
with the aim of refuting the views of the latter, whom he suspects to be a Mahāyānist disguised as a Vaibhāṣika Ācārya, and presents the subject-matter in more or less identical words. This shows that Vasubandhu, the author of the Abhidharmakośa, was either elder than Vimalamitra, the author of the Dīpa and Vṛtti, or at least contemporary of the latter. So, if Jaini's date of Vimalamitra (450-550) is taken to be authentic then Frauwallner's date of Vasubandhu (400-480) is quite justifiable.

Secondly, in the Abhidharmakośa itself there is a concrete evidence which also possibly goes in favour of Frauwallner. But Frauwallner himself does not take it into account on account of the uncertainty of the Nirvāṇa era of the Buddha. In the closing verses of the 8th Kośasthāna of the Abhidharmakośa, Vasubandhu observes that with the Mahāparinirvāṇa of the Buddha and with the decease of his disciples who realised the Truth propagated by him, the Saddharma (Good Law i.e.

1. Ibid, Intro., P. 129
2. Frauwallner, "On the date etc.", P. 60
3. Kośa, VIII, 41-43
Buddha’s doctrine) has been thrown into confusion by those who have not seen the truth (adrstatattvaih) i.e. heretics and sophists. 1 He, therefore, concludes: "Seeing that the doctrine of the Buddha lies in the throes of death, and that this is the time when vices and lawlessness are powerful, those who want to be delivered must not be negligent." 2 From this instance one thing we may infer that Vasubandhu composed his Abhidharmakosa shortly before the imminent destruction of the Buddha’s doctrine. Here is the pertinent question as to the duration of the Buddha’s teaching. From the majority of the Buddhist scriptures, we come to know about a prophecy by the Buddha that his doctrine will last only 1000 years after his Mahaparinirvāna. Vasubandhu too was quite aware of the fact and he, therefore, recorded the same in his Abhidharmakosabhasya. 3

1. Dr. Gokhale thinks that Vasubandhu perhaps remarked about the perversion of the devastating dialectic of his predecessors, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva -JBRAS, 1946, P. 75
2. "Iti Kaṇṭhagatapraṇāṃ vidīvā sāsanām muneḥ/balakālam malanām ca na pramādyām mumukṣubhaḥ" - Kośa, VIII/43.
3. Bhāṣya, P. 267, 459
   i) Evam Varṣasahasrāntam sāsanam vabhūva" - Bhāṣya, P. 267
   ii) "Ato yāvadete sthāsyanti tāvat sādharma iti Veditavyam. Yeṣām tu varṣasahasram avas-thāna-māhuh" - Bhāṣya, P. 459
If we, therefore, base our calculations from 480 B.C. (which is recognised by the majority of scholars) as the date of the Buddha's Mahāparinirvāṇa, it is sure that the Buddha's doctrine lasted upto (1000-480=520 A.D.) approximately. Now, from the words of Vasubandhu himself we may conjecture that during his time the Buddha's doctrine did not yet decline, but it was just in the throes of death (Kanṭhagatapṛāṇa).¹ So, in order to ascertain the date of Vasubandhu we can roughly deduct three to four decades of years from 520, and by doing so we get a period which quite agrees with that of Frauwallner i.e. 400-480. Again, if we base our calculations from 543 B.C., the only date of the Buddha's Mahāparinirvāṇa (according to the Annals of Ceylon), which, according to S. Beal, pretends to some historical accuracy, we get more or less the same result. According to this date, Buddha's doctrine lasted upto (1000-543 =) 457 A.D. approximately, the period which coincides with that when the Hūnas invaded India and gave a disastrous blow to Buddhism by their sacrilegious acts against it,

¹ It was perhaps the Hūna invasion (of this period) and its destructive effects that had resulted in Buddhism's decline.
and thereby caused its decline hasty in the land of its origin. Then we may, however, infer that Vasubandhu composed his Abhidharmakośa before 457 A.D. otherwise he would have mentioned about this Hūna persecution as one of the main causes for which Buddhism was lying in the throes of death in his time (Kaṇṭhagatapraṇāmaḥ Śāsanam). Again, the Gupta king Narasimhagupta Bālāditya, who is known as the youngest patron of Vasubandhu, is said to have driven out the Hūnas from Central India. This occurrence took place no doubt a few years after 457 A.D. We, therefore, find that this date in connection with the career of Vasubandhu, agrees more or less with that what Frauwallner had suggested for Vasubandhu.

The last but not the least is the opinion of Sir Charles Eliot. Sir Charles Eliot is of opinion that Saṅghavarman was one of the senior opponents of Vasubandhu. He tries to identify this Saṅghavarman.

1. Dr. N. Dutt, however, tries to identify this Bālāditya with Tāruṇātha's king Buddhapakṣa a nickname given to him by the Buddhists as a patron of Buddhism and an enemy of the Hūnas. - Foreword to N.K. Sahu's "Buddhism in Orissa", P. VIII.

2. One Saṅghavarman translated into Chinese the "Suhrilkeha" of Nāgārjuna" in about 433 A.D. - Winternitz, Hist. Ind. Lit. Vol. II. P. 347 n
with the translator of the Samantapādikā into Chinese who was at Canton in 489 A.D., and concludes that "Vasubandhu, who lived to be an old man, must have been alive at that time" (i.e. in 489 A.D.). This date also, therefore, agrees fairly with that of Frauwallner's mentioned above.

LANGUAGE AND STYLE: The Abhidharmakośakārikā is written in chaste Sanskrit. It consists of 600 sloka-quatrains. Kārikās. The metres used herein are mainly Anuṣṭup, Tristūp, Jagatī and Ati-Jagatī. The opening two Kārikās are composed in Indravajra metre of the Tristūp class. This is followed by a kārika in Praharṣini metre of the Ati-Jagatī class. The rest of the 600 Kārikās (excepting the concluding kārikās) are composed in the Anuṣṭup group of metres. The concluding kārikās contain four stanzas. Of them, the first stanza is composed in the Indravajra metre of the Tristūp class. The next two stanzas are composed in Vamśasthavila metre of the Jagatī group. The last one is again written in Anuṣṭup metre. The 9th

Kośasthāna, which is the concluding chapter is composed in prose. There are however few verses towards the end.

The Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, a detailed commentary on the 600 sloka-quatrain kārikās, composed in simple prose.

Both the Abhidharmakośa-kārikā and its Bhāṣya are composed in the Vādirbhā style (Riti). High sounding words and big compounds are rarely found.

Regarding the grammatical methods employed, we find that Vasubandhu has followed the Pāṇini system.

Lastly, it may be mentioned that the author has a great command over the language. This is amply proved by his selection of appropriate words, style of the language, and the like.

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