This brief text, which has no known commentary, identifies itself (verse 3) as an account of philosophic systems (a "siddhānta"). In it, Maitreya focuses upon several schools' understanding of 'middle way'. Probably, the text was composed as a topical outline for teaching. It is one of a number of his works expounding images or technical terms from Mahāyāna tradition. A Sanskrit version survives, as well as one Tibetan translation.

The work was studied and translated into English by Suniti Kumar Pathak, and published in the Advar Library Bulletin in 1961. There the Sanskrit is reprinted with amendments, and the Tibetan is transliterated from the Nartang edition of the Sacred Canon. To the study is prefixed an account of the author, Maitreya. The use of Tibetan sources signals a knowledgeable and conscientious approach to the subject matter. However, insufficient materials were brought to bear for either study (that of the author, or that of the text) to avoid errors. This is an attempt to bring up to date our understanding of the text, but without correcting the work of Pathak on every point.

Maitreya, also known as maitreya (to the Tibetans, Maitripa) and Asvaghosha, is dated ca 1007-1085. He is known, among other things, for his exposition of a variant of Mahāyāna ('Great Symbol') philosophy known as "manasākāra". His usage of this term will be explored in context of the translation of another of his works.
The Tibetan redactor Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub, in his analytic list of works that expand the Amantikāra system, describes the Six Verses as teaching the philosophic view that characterizes Tantrism. This is the source of the Nārthang catalogue’s identification of this work as “Teaching the tantric view” (Pether 539-40). The context describes the text, however, not the author.

Maitrīgupta shows how each of the four Mahāyāna philosophic systems defines the term “middle Way”. The term is used interchangeably with “freedom from the four extremes” (asserting eternalism, nihilism, neither, and both), and “dependent origination” in context of the correct approach, Maitrīgupta makes the further identifications “clear light nature of a meditational deity” and “non-dual great bliss”. The terms “empty” and “unarising” are also added as equivalents.

Three verses present the views of three systems; three verses follow with the preferred interpretation.

To explain and expand the verses would in effect recreate the Mahāyāna sections of Advayavajra’s Ratnaśvalī, his full exposition of Siddhānta. But a translation of the Ratnaśvalī is forthcoming. So let me limit myself to identifying the four systems, not all of which find room to be named in the Six Verses.

1) Those who profess that cognition possesses forms (the sūkṣma-vāda) describe the object of cognition as existing in a momentary mode. The sūkṣma-vāda consists of the Saumrāntika school, which is regarded as Mahāyāna, plus the sūkṣma-vāda branch of the Vaiśṇava.

2) Those who profess the absence of forms (the nīkṣkāma-vāda branch of the Vaiśṇava), describe reality as an expression of self-awareness.
3) Among the Madhyamsa, those who profess illusion-like nonduality (the mūyavanādhyāya-vāda) describe reality as transparent, or clear light.

4) The Madhyamsa to which this author adheres, those who profess the unsupportedness of all phenomena (the Apparātātāhā-rāya-vāda), is expounded in more detail in the second triad of verses.

In the edition that follows, the Sanskrit has been corrected by reference to the Tibetan, and to meter.

**English Translation**

1) To professors of Sākāra, 'freedom from the four extremes' means understanding that the object of cognition exists in a momentary mode, empty of thought-constructions and lacking objectification.

2) 'Middle way' is defined [by professors of Mīrākāra] in terms of a self-awareness that is not ill; it appears as blue, etc. objects, but characteristics do not arise in it.

3) To professors of Mūyavanādhyāya, 'freedom from the four extremes' is [to know that] the characteristics are false, and [in reality] clear light.

The following system has evidence for its beliefs.

4) To know the emptiness of objects is to know emptiness free of appearance and free of coverings. That is the Middle Way from which the 'subsequent' or conventional has been purged.

5) Whether it is clear light or not, in reality it is unobjectifiable. Because things are by nature unarising in any way, we define 'middle way' without reference to them.

6) To possess the clear light nature of a meditational unity is to be 'free from the four extremes'. To enjoy the nature of non-real great bliss is identical with dependent origination.
Sanakrit Edition

catuṣkoṭivirnimuktam/ jñānaveṣu saṅkṣaṇitaṃ//
kalpaśeṣam anilambhyam/ viduḥ ekaśravādinaḥ//3//
sveṣāvittāt anucchedat/ nīlādīnām bhāṣānāt//
nimittaṁ anupādāt/ madhyamā pratijāt matē//2//
catuṣkoṭivirnimuktah/ prakāśālīkhaṇeṇaḥ//
maṇipakāvadyaśācalitaḥ/ siddhānto pramanācchedaḥ//3//

vastuśaṅgadh tu yā vittir/ nirāvíla nīrāśjanaḥ//
madhyamā paripat saiva/ tatprāthē śuddhavānityāḥ//4//

prakāśa vā prakāśo vā/ tattvato nopalabhyate/
svayamā jñātartipatvāt/ madhyāmaṁ aparā vidoḥ//5//
catuṣkoṭivirnimuktah/ prakāśā devatāmnakāḥ//
sukhaśāvayasevākātāca/ pratītyotpādāṃśtrahḥ//6//

Notes

1 Work no. 18 in Haraprasad Shastri, ed.,
Advayavaccaśāstraka (Kolkata: Oriental Institute, 1937).

2 viśvetan translation by Vajrāṇi and Maha-tathā
tvēhl-khrims-rgyal-ba. Otani Catalogue no. 3074, Tohoku
Catalogue no. 2230.

3 Sunit Kumar Pathak, “The Medhyanagatka of Metri.”
Advar

4 Mark Tatz, "The Life of the Siddha-Philosopher
(1987):698b. See also idem, “Kaitri-ps and Atiśa” in Proceedings

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of the 4th International Seminar on Tibetan Studies (Munich 1985, in press); and idem, ‘Maññipta and Ratnāraksānti in Burmish Abhino Commemorative Volume (Dharmesla: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, forthcoming).

5 Advayavajra, Manasikāra-uddeśa, Tohoku no. 2249 = Shastri, ed., op. cit. no. 21.


MADHYAMASATKA

DERGE TANAR

་ན་ བཤེགས་བྱུང་། ལྷུན་པོ་།
ཌིང་བ། རྒྱང་།

མཐུན་ཕྲན་ལྡན་དྲུག་པ།
མདོ་མེཉིས་མེཉིས་ལྡན་པ།
ཤིན་པོ་སོགས་དོན་གྱིས་པ།
ཐུབ་བོ་དོན་དོན་གྱིས་པ།

མདོ་མེཉིས་དོན་དོན་པ།
མོའོའོའོའོའོའོའོའོའོ་བར་བ།
རིགས་མེཉིས་དོན་དོན་བ།
དུས་བོས་པ་བ་ཐོད་།

མཐུན་ཕྲན་ལྡན་དྲུག་པ།
མདོ་མེཉིས་མེཉིས་ལྡན་པ།
ཤིན་པོ་སོགས་དོན་གྱིས་པ།
ཐུབ་བོ་དོན་དོན་གྱིས་པ།

དུས་བོས་པ་བ་ཐོད་།
བོད་དཟུང་དབང་པོ་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན།
ོབ་གཉེན་དབང་པོ་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན།
དོན་དཔོན་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན།
ོལ་དཔོན་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན།

བོད་དཔོན་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན།
ོལ་དཔོན་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན།
དོན་དཔོན་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན།

བོད་དཔོན་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན།
ོལ་དཔོན་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན།
དོན་དཔོན་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན།

"བོད་དཔོན་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན། དོན་དཔོན་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན། ང་གོ་ཐོན་ངོ་བོ། དོན་དཔོན་ལྡན་པར་གཅིག་ལེན།"