

The Five Dharmas in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra

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It is generally held that the Laṅkāvatārasūtra is a memorandum in which there are collected all the important teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism at random: the Five Dharmas, the Three Svabhāvas, the Eight Vijñānas, the Twofold Nairātmya, etc. As a matter of fact it is not easy to read correctly the text of this sutra and to determine its true position in a history of Buddhist thought of India, depending upon any text of it. As the texts of this sutra we have the Sanskrit original, a Tibetan translation and three Chinese translations. In addition to them we have two commentaries on it, which are preserved in Tibetan Bstan-ḥgyur⁽²⁾ and regarded to be worthy of the semi-original, as Dr. S. Yamaguchi stated.⁽³⁾ In order to realize the true meaning of the teachings stated in this sutra, we have to make comparative study of the these texts as strictly as possible.

When, in this way, we investigate the teachings in this sutra, we can find the fact that they have a certain direction or order, though they seem to be arranged in a row without having any organized system. It is that which lies in the basis of all the teachings in this sutra and brings them under an aim. In a word it is the world of the inner noble wisdom or the highest wisdom experienced by Buddha (pratyātmāryajñānagati, svapratyāt-

(1) Cf. Dr. D. Suzuki: The Laṅkāvatārasūtra, A Mahāyāna text translated for the first time from the original Sanskrit. London, reprinted 1959, p. XI.

(2) They are the Āryalaṅkāvatāravṛtti by Jñānaśrībhadrā, Peking Ed. No. 5519 and the Āryalaṅkāvatāranāmamahāyānasūtravṛttitathāgatahṛdayālamkāranāma by Jñānavajra, Peking Ed. No. 1520.

(3) Cf. Dr. S. Yamaguchi: "On the Laṅkāvatāravṛtti by Jñānaśrībhadrā" (Nihon Bukkyo Gakukai Nempo. No. 8, pp. 121-155).

māryajñānagati). In this tūtra many synonyms are used to express the same concept: *pratyātma* (so-so raṅ gi), *pratyātmagati*, *pratyātmagatigocara* (so-so raṅ gi rig-paḥi spyod-yul), *pratyātmadharmatā* (so-so raṅ gi chos-ñid), *pratyātmāryajñānagatigocara* (ḥphags-pa so-so raṅ gi rig-paḥi ye-śes kyi spyod-yul), *svapratyātmāryajñānagocara* (so-so raṅ gi rig-paḥi ḥphags-paḥi ye-śes kyi spyod-yul), etc. That which all the teachings in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra indicate to us is to realize or accomplish this Inner-Wisdom (*pratyātmāryajñānādhigama*). In the Buddhist tradition it has been regarded as the most important aim to realize and attain the Self-Enlightenment, since Buddha Śākyamuni's Enlightenment⁽⁴⁾. Therefore that this is not particular to this sūtra is clear: in every Mahāyāna sūtra the highest Wisdom of Buddha himself is emphasized as the true goal to attain ultimately. We have to notice, however, that it is asserted with emphasis in the expression "an Inner-Self-Realization (*pratyātma*, *svapratyātma*; so-so raṅ gi rig-pa)" in all the teachings of this sūtra. The highest wisdom of Buddha himself as the Inner-Self-Realization, in this sūtra, means precisely the Inner-Realization of the one who learn and practise the Buddhist system. That is to say, the sūtra indicates to go straight to the Inner-Enlightenment that is to be spiritually experienced (*pratyātma*). On that point we can see the unity of the theories expressed in this sūtra which is said to be "a kind of memorandum". Accordingly the teachings expressed in this sūtra are consistent to the effect that they point to us the way to the Inner-Realization. For that reason all the teachings in this sūtra are compared to "a finger that points to the moon." The sūtra says:

Considering the two things in the true sense (*saṃdhāya*, *dgoṅs*), Mahāmati, I made this statement. What are the two things? They are the truth of the Inner-Self-Realization (*pratyātmadharmatā*, so-so raṅ gi chos-ñid) and an eternally-abiding reality (*paurāṇadharmatā*, *sñon gyi lugs kyi chos ñid*). Considering these two things in the true sense, I made this statement. Of what true sense in the truth of Inner-Self-Realization? It is that which has been realized

(4) Cf. Dr. G. Nishi: "On Dhyāna, Śamatha Vipāśyana and Jñāna" (Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies. Vol. V, No. 2, pp. 1-12).

(34) The Five Dharmas in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra (A. Sugaṇuma)

by the Tathāgatas and also by me, in which there is neither decreasing nor increasing: it is the realm of Inner-Self-Realization which is free from discrimination of words (vāgvikalpa, thig gi rnam-par rtog-pa) and the two realms of words. What is an eternally-abiding reality? This ancient road of reality, Mahāmati, likes the mine in which gold or silver is preserved. The highest reality (dharmadhātu, chos kyi dbyiñs). Mahāmati, abides eternally; whether the Tathāgatas appear in the world or not, the reality (dharma, chos-ñid) of all things abides eternally, the reality stays perpetually (dharma-masthiti, chos kyi gnas-ñid) and the reality keeps its order (dharmaniyāmtā, chos mi-ḡgyur-ba) like the road in the ancient city. Therefore, Mahāmati, I stated that the Tathāgata has neither uttered, nor ever will utter even one word (ekam apy akṣaram, yi-ge gcig kyañ), from the night of his Enlightenment till the night of his entrance into Nirvāṇa.⁽⁵⁾

The expressions with the same sense are seen everywhere in this sutra.

For example:

The Tathāgatas do not teach the doctrine that is dependent letters (akṣarapatita, yi-ge lhuñ-ba), because, as to letters, their being or non-being is not attainable (anupalabdhi, mi-dmigs-pa). Again, Mahāmati, if there is the man who wants to depend upon the letters and discourses on a truth depended upon the letters, he is a mere pratter because truth is beyond the letters. For this reason, Mahāmati, in the canonical text I myself, other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas declared that the Tathāgatas neither uttered nor answered even a letter (ekam apy akṣaram, yi-ge gcig kyañ), because truths are beyond the letters. It does not mean, however, that (the Tathāgatas) never declare what is connected with the benefit (artha, don) (of living beings). Depending upon discrimination (of living beings), they declare anything. If, Mahāmati, they do not depend upon (discrimination), the scriptures containing all the truths will disappear, and when the scriptures disappear there will be no Buddhas, Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas and Bodhisattvas; when they disappear, what is to be taught and to whom? For this reason, Mahāmati, the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva is should not attach to the words or letters in the canonical

(5) Laṅkāvatārasūtra. p. 143, l. 4-14, p. 144, l. 5-8.

text (deśanāpāṭharuta, bśad-pa brjod-pa brjod-paḥi sgra). (The discription in) the canonical texts, depending upon the minds of living beings, is not fixed in the straightforward course (vyabhicārin, ḥkhrul-pa).Therefore, Mahāmati, the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva should be in conformity with the meaning (artha-pratiśaraṇa, don la rton-pa) and not with the letter (vyañjana, yi-ge⁽⁶⁾).

For the same reason the teachings expressed in the words are likened to a finger that points to the moon, as follows: "As the ignorant grasps the finger-tip (that points to the moon) and does not cognize the moon, so those who cling to the letter do not know my truth." This argument is repeatedly asserted everywhere in this sutra. Consequently it comes to a conclusion that the canonical scripture named the Laṅkāvatārasūtra itself is also nothing but a finger that points to the Self-Realization likened to the moon.

In the light of the theory of the twofold truths (satyadvaya), this means the standpoint which regards the teachings using the argument expressed in the words as 'the popular truth (saṃvṛtisatya)' and the world of Self-Realization that is beyond the words as 'the absolute truth (paramārthasatya)⁽⁸⁾.' It is clear that this standpoint is not particular to this sutra, but general in all other Mahāyāna sutras. We may say, however, that the Laṅkāvatārasūtra is a representative scripture in which this standpoint is most precisely explained by asserting that Buddha has not uttered even one word during his life.⁽⁹⁾

Thus in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra all the teachings expressed in the words are regarded as the popular truth, and the Self-Realization that is beyond

(6) Laṅk. p. 194, l. 3-p. 195, l. 2.

(7) Laṅk. pp. 223-224. G. 3.

āṅgulyagraṃ yathā bālo na gṛhṇāti niśākaram/
tathā hy akṣarasamśaktās tattvaṃ na veti māmakam//

(8) Cf. Dr. G. Nishi: "The Structure of the theory of the twofold Truth, or Shinzoku nitaisetsu no kāzō" (Dr. S. Miyamoto ed. "Bukkyo no konpon Shinri" p. 199)

(9) Cf. Dr. Nishi: "The Relation of Zen of Bodhidharma to the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, or Daruma no Zen to Ryōgakyō no Kankei" ("Philosophia" No. 48. pp. 20-23).

these expressions in the words is regarded as the absolute truth. We may say that, with regard to the study of the teachings in this sūtra, it has been discussed almost concerning the theory of ālayavijñāna. The characteristic of the teachings in this sūtra, however, is in the sense mentioned above precisely represented by the theories that have been called traditionally "the Five Dharmas, the Three Svabhāvas, the Eight Vijñānas and the Twofold Nairātmya." Especially the theory of the Five Dharmas is very important concept in order to understand the characteristic standpoint of this sūtra.

According to the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, the Five Dharmas⁽¹⁰⁾ (pañcadharma) are Appearance (nimitta, mtshan-ma), Name (nāma, miñ), Discrimination (vikalpa, rnam-par-rtog-pa), Right Knowledge (saṃyagjñāna, yañ-dag-paḥi ye-śes) and Suchness (tathatā, de-bshin-ñid). With regard to the definition of the Five Dharmas the sūtra says as follows:

(1) Appearance is, Mahāmāti, that which is seen as having such characteristics as form (saṃsthāna, dbyibs), shape (ākṛti, byad-pa), distinctive feature (viśeṣa, khyad-pa), image (ākāra, rnam-pa), colour (rūpa, gzugs); this is Appearance. (2) With regard to this Appearance the ideas (saṃjñā, ḥdu-śes) are formed such as a jar, etc., by which one says that this is so and no other; this is Name. (3) When Names are pronounced, Appearances are determined and there is Discrimination, saying this is mind and this is what belongs to it. (4) That these Names and Appearances are after all unobtainable (atyantānupalabdhitā, śin-tu mi-dmigs-pa) because when intellection (buddhi, blo) is put away, the aspect of mutuality ceases to be perceived and imagined; this is Suchness which is characterized as truth (tattva, de-kho-na-ñid), reality (bhūta, tib. omits), exact knowledge (niścaya, yañ-dag-par-ñes-pa), perfection (niṣṭhā, mthar-thug-pa), substantiality (prakṛti, rañ-bshin), self-substance (svabhāva, ño-bo-ñid) and the unattainable (anupalabdhi, mi-dmigs-pa). I myself and the other Tathāgatas, realising this Suchness, have truthfully pointed out, informed, made public and widely shown it (to the people). (5) When it is realized and rightly conceived as neither negative nor affirmative, discrimi-

(10) Dr. D. Suiuki translated 'dharma' by 'category' in this case (ibid. p. 155).

nation ceases to rise and there is a state comfortable to the noble wisdom that is the Inner-Self-Realization (pratyātmāryajñānānukūla, bdag gi ḥphags-pa so-so rañ gi ye-śes dañ ḥthun-pa), which is not the course of controversy pertaining to the philosophers, Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas; this is Right Knowledge.⁽¹¹⁾

According to the explanation of the sutra, Appearances (nimitta) are the qualities that belong to sense-objects such as visual etc., Name (nāma) is the wrong idea which is risen by attaching to these Appearances, and Discrimination (vikalpa) is to name all these objects and qualities, distinguishing one from another. These three dharmas equally belong to the ordinary people (bāla), by which they falsely take the wrong idea of things and wrongly discriminate them. On the contrary Right Knowledge (saṃyagjñāna) and Suchness (tathatā) are beyond this world of the ordinary people. That is to say, by these two dharmas is meant a realm of the Inner-Self-Realization. The sutra says: "A Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva who exists in Suchness (tathatāvyavasthita, de-bshin-ñid la gnas-pa) attains the state of imagelessness (nirābhāsagocara, snañ-ba med-paḥi rtog-paḥi spyod-yul) and thereby attains the Bodhisattva-stage called Joy (pramuditā bodhisattvabhūmi, byañ-chub-sems-dpaḥi sa rab-tu dgaḥ-ba)⁽¹²⁾". Further the Bodhisattva, going up in succession through the second Bodhisattva-stage, etc., reaches the Bodhisattva-stage of Dharma-cloud (dharmameghā, chos kyi sprin) and at last attains the stage of Ttthāgatahood (tathāgatabhūmi, de-bshin-gśegs-paḥi sa).

Thus investigating the theory of the Five Dharmas, we can understand that it points out the straightway to the Inner-Self-Realization from discrimination of the ordinary people. It is made fairly clear when this theory is told in the relation to the theory of Three Svabhāvas. We have to attend that the Three Svabhāvas are stated always connected with the theory of the Five Dharmas in this sutra. The Tree Svabhāvas are Parikalpitasvabhāva (kun-brtags-paḥi rañ-bshin), Paratantrasvabhāva (gshañ gyi dbaḥ gi rañ-bshin), and Pariniṣpannasvabhāva (yoñs-su grub-paḥi rañ-bshin), which are the same techniques as used in the works of Vijñānavāda.

(11) Laṅk. p. 228, l. 5 p. 229, l. 1.

(12) Laṅk. p. 226, l. 12-16.

In this sūtra the relation between these Three Svabhāvas and the Five Dharmas is precisely mentioned as follows :

Appearance, Name and Discrimination are the characteristics of the two Svabhāvas, while Right Knowledge and Suchness are the characteristics of Pariniṣpannasvabhāva.⁽¹³⁾

Pursuing the explanation of the sūtra we can see that the theory of the Three Svabhāvas is treated as that which points out the straightway to the Inner-Self-Realization from discrimination of the ordinary people. It is taken in the theory of the Five Dharmas only to this effect. Explaining Parikalpitasvabhāva and Pratantrasvabhāva, the sūtra interprets Pariniṣpannasvabhāva as follows : "Of these, Mahāmati, what is Pariniṣpannasvabhāva? It is Suchness (tathatā, de-bshin-ñid); it is realization of noble wisdom (āryajñānagatigamana, ḥphags-paḥi ye-śes rtog-pa thobs-pa); it is the world of the Inner-Self-Enlightenment by noble wisdom (pratyātmāryajñānagatigocara, ḥphags-pa so-so raṅ gi rig-paḥi ye-śes kyi spyod-yul), which is free from discriminating notions of form, name, reality and character. This Pariniṣpannasvabhāva, Mahāmati, is the essence of Tathāgatagarbha (tathāgatagarbhaḥṛdaya, de-bshin-gśeḡs-pa rnam kyi sñiñ-po thugs)."⁽¹⁴⁾

On closer investigation as to the theory of the Eight Vijñānas and the Twofold Egolessness or Nairātmya, we will find that there is the same reason. With regard to the relation between the Five Dharmas and the Three Svabhāvas, etc., the sūtra observes that the Three Svabhāvas, the Eight Vijñānas, the Twofold Nairātmya and the truth of Buddha are included in the Five Dharmas, and the sūtra concludes as follows :

The Five Dharmas, the (Three) Svabhāvas, the Eight Vijñānas and the Twofold Nairātmya—by them are included all (the teachings of) the Mahāyāna (kṛtsna-mahāyānapariḡraha, theg-chen thams-cad ḥdus-pa).⁽¹⁵⁾

That the Three Svabhāvas, etc. are included in the Five Dharmas, from the viewpoint stated above, never means that they are systematically taken in the theory of the Five Dharmas as doctrine. It is said so only because

(13) Laṅk. p. 68, G. 134.

nimittaṃ nāma saṃkalpaḥ svabhāvadvayalakṣaṇam/
saṃyagjñānaṃ hi tathatā pariniṣpannalakṣaṇam//

(14) Laṅk. p. 67, l. 15 p. 68, l. 1.

each of these theories, in the same meaning that the Five Dharmas mean, points out the straightway to the Inner-Self-Realization from discrimination of the ignorant common people. Therefore, on the effect that each of them points the same straightway to the Self-Realization from discriminating world, all the teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism are included in the Five Dharmas; it is not because they are dogmatically organized in the Five Dharmas as doctrine. In this sense the sutra says, "by them are included all the Mahāyāna."

In conclusion we can say that, in the sense mentioned above, the real characteristic of the teachings in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra that is said to be lack of systematic order is precisely explained by the theory of "the Five Dharmas," which has been traditionally called "the Five Dharmas, the Three Svabhāvas, the Eight Vijñānas, the Twofold Nairātmya, etc." Therefore, from the viewpoint of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, in this reason all the teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism are included in these Five Dharmas.

(15) Laṅk. p. 229, G. 5.

pañcadharmāḥ svabhāvaś ca vijñānāny aṣṭa eva ca/
dve nairātmye bhavet kṛtsno mahāyānaparigrahaḥ//

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