

‘svacittamâtra’ The Basic Standpoint of the *Laṅkāvatâra sūtra*

Gishin Tokiwa

I. ‘*sva-citta-mâtraḥ*’, the Standpoint of the *Laṅkāvatâra sūtra*

Although the *Laṅkāvatâra sūtra* (represented below as the *Laṅkā*) deals with a great variety of subjects, it seems to make it its own central theme and standpoint that man realize the reality of ‘*sva-citta-dṛśya-mâtra*’. The sutra states :

yathâbhûtāvasthâna-darśanaṃ mahâmate sarvadharmâṇaṃ yaduta *sva-citta-dṛśya-mâtrâvatâraḥ*. (Vaidya ed. 46, Nanjo 112) (By “the ultimate perception of everything that has its own form abiding in its true mode of being” I mean the realization that what appears as external to us is nothing other than our own mind.)

The term ‘*citta-mâtra*’, as is well-known, appears in the *Daśabhūmika sūtra* (at the sixth stage of bodhisattva-practice, V 32, Rahder 49) :

citta-mâtram idaṃ yad idaṃ traidhâtukam. (This is nothing but the mind——this very tripleworld.)

The *Laṅkā* has expressions such as :

svacitta-mâtram-idaṃ traidhâtukam-âtmâtmīya-rahitam (V 34, N 80). **a*
traidhâtuka-svacittatayâdhimuktitaḥ (V 19, N 42).

What deserves attention here is that the *Laṅkā* has the expression ‘*sva-citta-mâtra*’ as well as ‘*citta-mâtra*’, and that the sutra seems to place more significance on the former than on the latter.

The term ‘*sva-citta-mâtra*’, which literally means ‘nothing but one’s own mind’, according to the quotation **a* above, means more than that; it signifies the Self that is free from the ego and the object of the ego, the Self without any form even of the mind.

Here it must be noted that by ‘*citta-mâtra*’, the *Laṅkā* never asserts the ultimate existence of *citta*; rather the term indicates the true mode of being

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which is free from being and non-being, that is, that which is free from the very mind that manifests itself as being and non-being. The verse below states this point very clearly :

na bhāvaṃ nāpi cābhāvaṃ bhāvābhāva-vivarjitam ;

tathatā citta-vinirmuktaṃ citta-mâtraṃ vadāmy-aham (k 30 V 63, N 153).

By adding 'sva' to 'citta-mâtra', the *Laṅkā* does not alter this point—that is, that the delusive manifestation is not final and that the true mode of being which is said to be 'citta-mâtra' is free even from the subjectivity of 'citta' —; it goes on to elucidate that this manifestation-no-manifestation is a matter of the fundamental subject of history itself, rather than being anything objective or external to that subject. No wonder we have the expression,

svacitta-nirābhāsa-mâtrāvatāreṇa prajñā-pāramitā-vihārānuprāptā (V 19, N 42).

(Through attaining the reality as nothing but our own mind, which is the Self free from manifestation, we return to abiding in the final attainment of prajñā.)

So far as the Yogācāra viewpoint of this sutra is concerned, the concept of 'sva-citta-mâtra' as is interpreted here appears to be deeply related to that of 'tri-svabhāva', (i. e., the threefold mode of being of the self-same reality ; parikalpita-, paratantra-, and pariṇipanna-svabhāva). Because of the ultimacy of the 'sva' or Self, 'citta' or mind as the principle of delusion is seen through and overcome immediately here and now. The immediate overcoming of the principle of delusion through the attainment of the Self without form is elucidated in the sutra as follows.

svacitta-dṛśya-dhârâṃ yugapat-tathâgataḥ sarva-sattvânâṃ viśodhayati nirvikalpâṃ nirābhāsa-gocarâṃ (V 24, N 55-56). (Every being's own mind is purified by the tathâgata of its continuous false manifestation immediately here and now because their true Self is free from discrimination and manifestation.)

In this as well as some other important points, by the way, the *Laṅkā* reflects its author's intimate knowledge of the *Vajra-cchedikā prajñā-pāramitā sūtra*. The above quotation from the *Laṅkā* reminds us of the well-known passage from the *Vajracchedikā* (18) :

bhagavân-āha—yāvantaḥ subhûte teṣu lokadhātuṣu sattvāḥ, teṣâm-aham nânābhāvâṃ citta-dhârâṃ prajânâmi. tat-kasya hetoḥ ? citta-dhârâ citta-dhârâ-

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iti subhûte adhârâ-eṣâ—atītaṃ subhûte cittaṃ nôpalabhyate; anâgatam
cittaṃ nôpalabhyate; pratyutpannam cittaṃ nôpalabhyate.

II. *The True Continuity of svacitta-mâtra*

As the *Vajracchedikâ* puts it, svacitta-dṛśya-dhârâ or the continuous false manifestation of our own mind is really ‘adhârâ’, that is, free from continuity, so that one cannot perceive the past mind, the future mind, or the present mind. The sutra says that this no-perception of the threefold mind is the true knowledge of continuity. This means that no continuity is true continuity. This is a very difficult but important point.

The *Lañkâ* mentions the three characteristics of vijñâna: pravṛtti-, karma-, and svajâti-lakṣaṇam. The karma nature of vijñâna, as the source of its pravṛtti aspect, constitutes the apparent continuity (prabandha) of false manifestation both temporal and spatial. The sutra states,

prabandha-[utpâda-sthiti-] nirodhaḥ...yasmâc-ca pravartate. yasmâd-iti...yad-âśrayeṇa yad-âlabhanena ca. tatra yad-âśrayam-anâdikâla-prapañca-dauṣṭhulya-vâsanâ. yad-âlabhanam svacitta-dṛśya-vijñâna-viṣaye vikalpâḥ (V 18, N 38).

But the svajâti or original nature of vijñâna is free from the continuity of arising, abiding, and cessation. This No-continuity of the original nature of vijñâna, (that is, of dharmakâya,) is the very ground (âlayavijñâna) upon which continuous false manifestation takes place only because the original nature is not awakened to. It is for this reason that in this sutra âlayavijñâna, the ground for false manifestation, is identified as dharmakâya (V 20, N 44). Delusion ceases to manifest itself when delusion is realized as such. A Chinese Zen master (Ch’ang-sha Ching-ts’en: Choṣha Keijin, 8-9th c. A. D.), who is recorded to have said,

“No one person in any of the ten directions of the world is anything but me
(*Ching-te Ch’uan-teng lu* 10).”

made these remarks in response to an inquiring monk (*Chodang chip* 17):

Hao-yüeh said, “What do you mean by ‘originally void’?”

The master said, “I mean karma-hindrance.”

“What do you mean by ‘karma-hindrance’?”

The master said, “I mean originally void.”

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Hao-yüeh expressed his deep thanks.

Our problem is, then, on the basis established above, how to consider the creation of history.

III. 'svacitta-utpādaḥ', the Principle of the Creation of History

The creation of history is made possible only by the fundamental subject of history that has overcome and is free from attachment to the delusive manifestations such as the subjective agent and the objective world. Otherwise even the mere raising of a single hand, in so far as it is rooted in the irretrievable discrimination of the self and the world, is just so much contamination of history. The *Laṅkā* has this expression:

nirābhāsa-gocaram-utpāda-sthiti-bhaṅga-varjyaṃ svacitta-utpāda-anugataṃ vibhāvayīṣyanti...bodhisattvāḥ mahāsattvāḥ (V 19, N 42). (Great beings whose fundamental subject is Awakening should practice No-manifestation in which arising, abiding, and cessation are overcome and which is followed by the making up of their own mind.)

This immediately reminds us of the familiar expression in the *Vajracchedikā*, 'cittam-utpādayitavyam' in passages such as:

i. tasmāt-tarhi subhūte bodhisattvena mahāsattvena sarva-smjñā vivarjayitvā anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittam-utpādayitavyam. na rūpa-pratiṣṭhitam cittam-utpādayitavyam...na kvacit-pratiṣṭhitam cittam-utpādayitavyam...apraṭiṣṭhitena bodhisattvena dānaṃ dātavyam (14).

In this passage, the 'cittōtpāda' or determination, of almsgiving takes place in nowhere else than the ultimate Awakening itself, so that it may be free from abiding in and attachment to anything whatever.

ii. subhūte bodhisattva-yāṇa-saṃprasthitena evaṃ cittam-utpādayitavyam—sarve sattvā mayā anupadhīṣeṣe nirvāṇa-dhātau parinirvāpayitavyāḥ. evaṃ ca sattvān parinirvāpya na kaścit-sattvaḥ parinirvāpito bhavati (17 & 3).

Here this determination is said to take place so that all beings whose ground is originally complete nirvāna may be awakened to that ground as their fundamental subjectivity.

Returning to the *Laṅkā*, we have seen that emphasis is put on the concept of 'sva' so as to prepare the way for considering the fundamental subject of

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history. Creating history is the work of this fundamental subject who has overcome the basic dilemma of history through his awakening to the Self without form. No dilemma or contradiction of history remains external to him or prevents him from freely forming history, because he is the depth (religion) himself, and therefore is the whole extension of space (the world) and the whole length of time (history) himself as well. This seems to be what is meant by the title of this sūtra, “entering (or attaining) *Laṅkā*”. *Laṅkā* here means the historical world whose fundamental subject is awakened to the Self without form. Based on this viewpoint, it seems to me, the sūtra takes up the pessimistic quietism of (Sāṃkhya’s) *abhivyakti* view and the optimistic rationalism (of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika).

IV. *Criticism of Erroneous Views on the World and History*

According to the *Laṅkā*, erroneous views concerning the world and history (*tīrthakara-vāda-kudṛṣṭi*) are a consequence of the failure to realize that what appears as external is nothing but one’s own mind (*svacitta-mâtrānavatāreṇa*. V 19, N 40). Conversely, this means that the world is mistakenly viewed to exist outside, so that history is considered as either proceeding from what is to what is not, or as being built up from what is not to what is.

In (Sāṃkhya’s) *abhivyakti* view, some substance (*dravya*) as the cause of the world manifests itself through time, and the manifestations thus arise, abide, and disappear. This process goes on outside the observer, who sees everything culminating in destruction and who neither desires nor knows how to participate in the process. His only recourse is to try to detach himself from it. The sūtra says this is an annihilistic view which utterly removes continuity, action, arising, breaking, being, *nirvâna*, the way leading to *nirvâna*, karma, its fruition, and truth (*ibid.*). The sūtra criticizes this, and says that in not having realized that what appears as external is merely one’s own mind discriminated as such, one fails to see the uninterrupted occurrence of disappearance. The implication is that in disappearance one should see nothing other than one’s own mind, which is free from not only disappearance but appearance as well.

The rational optimism (of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika) begins where the former nihilistic view ends. In other words, in the midst of mere non-being, being is introduced

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when the three conditions—kriyâ (action), karma (the object of action), and karaṇa (the means of action)—combine to work. In this view, effect always follows cause, and there cannot be any miscalculation regarding causal relations. Wherever there is a combination of the three conditions, they believe that significant change takes place. Such a view appears to result in a very active commitment to the formation of history. Nevertheless, the sutra criticizes this too, commenting as follows.

vijñânânâṃ tri-saṅgati-pratyaya-kriyâ-yogena-utpattir-abhaviṣat, asatâm-api mahâmate kûrma-romnâm-utpattir-abhaviṣyat, sikatâbhyo vâ tailasya. pratijñâ-hânir-niyama-nirodhaś-ca mahâmate prasajyate, kriyâ-karma-karaṇa-vaiyarthyaṃ ca sad-asato bruvataḥ (V 19, N 41).

(Should the three conditions of perception gather to make things arise, there would be bristles growing on a tortoise or oil from stones. This is followed by the abandonment of propositions and the negation of fixed rules. For these advocates of this view, which attaches itself to being and non-being, action, the object of action, and the means of action, i. e. the three conditions become useless.)

What is wrong with this latter view, which appears applicable to the modern world, lies in taking what appears as external merely as such, however active the commitment may be in making things arise.

According to the sutra, these two viewpoints, a pessimistic quietism and an apparently optimistic rationalism, are the outgrowth of a lack of confidence (śraddhâ) in the true sense of the term. Confidence obtains in freedom from the personal and historical dilemma in which man finds himself; that is, the dilemma of oneness and difference, being and non-being, etc. The *Laṅkā's* consistent elucidation of 'sva-citta-mâtra' presents to us the method by which to attain, and the content of, this freedom and confidence.