

Perception of the Reality for the Benefit of Sentient Beings: With Special Reference to the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*



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1. Introduction

As is well known, the Yogācāra, one of the schools of Mahayana, advocated the idealism. Their philosophical thought is represented by the technical term *vijñaptimātratā* or the mind only. In his *Viṃśatikā Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, Vasubandhu (AD 400-480) declares that the Yogācāra intended to deny the objects of cognition in the external world by using the notion of mind only. He says as follows:

In the Mahayana, [it is] determined that the threefold of sphere is mind only.¹

In this sentence, Vasubandhu doesn't refer to the perfections (*pāramitā*) and ten Bodhisattva stages (*bhūmi*), but Vinītadeva, a commentator on the *Viṃśatikā*, explains that the mind only is related to these two types of practice of Bodhisattva. He says:

This treatise explains the method of removing the object and subject (*grāhya and grāhaka*; 所取能取). Removing [them], [a yogin] enters into the state of mind only apart from the object and subject. Then, by carrying out the [ten] stages (*sa = bhūmi*; 地) [of the Bodhisattva] and the [six] perfections (*pha rol tu phyin pa = pāramitā*; 波羅蜜多), [he] completely removes the object and subject, then realizes the *dharmadhātu*....²

1 *Viṃśatikāvṛtti* (Tibetan) (P si 4b2, D shi 4a3): *theg pa chen po la khams gsum pa rnam par rig pa tsam du rnam par bzhag ste/* 『唯識二十論』(玄奘)(大 vol.31, 74b): 安立大乘三界唯識. 『大乘唯識論』(真諦)(大 vol.31, 70c): 於大乘中立三界唯有識.

2 *Viṃśatikāṭīkā* (P si 203a3-5, D shi 172b6-7): *rab tu byed pa 'dis ni gzung ba dang 'dzin pa rnam par gzhig pa'i thabs nyid ston to// rnam par bshig nas gzung ba dang 'dzin pa dang bral ba'i rnam par rig pa tsam nyid la 'jug go// de nas sa dang pha rol tu phyin pa bsgrub(bsgrub P; bsgrubs D) pas gzung ba dang 'dzin pa ma lus par bsal nas chos kyi dbyings rtogs te/...*

In this interpretation, the understanding of the mind only is deeply connected with the Bodhisattva's practices, namely the ten Bodhisattva stages and the six perfections. At least, there are two steps of removing the cognitive object and subject. In the first step, the mind only can be recognized by the removal of object and subject. But there remain some object and subject, even if the mind only is comprehended. After recognition of the mind only, a yogin attempts to completely purify the object and subject structure arising in the mind through the practice of the Bodhisattva stages and the six perfections. Then the *dharmadhātu*, which is arguably the completely clarified state of mind, can be realized.

The mind only theory attracted the interest of modern scholars. They have been focusing on the philosophical aspect of this theory. Consequently, the three fold of essences, *ālayavijñāna*, and mind only have been mine concern for their studies. However, the Yogācāra philosophers seem to think that it is not enough to understand the philosophical notions. As mentioned above, Vinītadeva comprehends that understanding of the mind only should be transformed into the realization of *dharmadhātu* in the process of practices of the six perfections and ten Bodhisattva stages. One of the earliest example of this tendency is arguably found in the *Mahāyānasamgraha* by Asaṅga. The *Mahāyānasamgraha* explicates *ālayavijñāna*, threefold of characters or *lakṣaṇa* (= threefold of essences or *svabhāva*), and realization of the mind only in the first three chapters respectively, and then in chapter four it declares that the six perfections are the "cause and result" of comprehension of the mind only. In chapter five, the *Mahāyānasamgraha* shows ten stages (*bhūmi*) of Bodhisattva as ten phases of realizing the mind only.

The threefold of characters, *ālayavijñāna*, and the mind only are so called the philosophical notions, but the six perfections, in contrast, represent the ethical aspect of Bodhisattva's practices, because they are directly related to the benefit of others. Added to that, the ten stages of Bodhisattva are also the practical aspect

including the six or ten perfections. Thus, the philosophical notions and ethical practices are theoretically integrated in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*. Nagao [1987:109] indicated that the integration of philosophical notions and ethical practices is particular to the *Mahāyānasamgraha*. In other words, it is considered that most of the Yogācāra works deal the philosophical thought and the ethical conducts independently. For example, Katsumata [1968] indicated that the *Samdhinirmocana sūtra*, one of the earliest works dealing with the Yogācāra philosophy, distinctly separates the insight of the reality from the practice of the six perfections.³ According to these studies, it seems as if Yogācāra philosophers gradually combined the philosophy and ethics which were originally isolated from each other. This impression, however, could be disproved with the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*.

2. The Philosophical Thought of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*

The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* is considered to be one of the oldest portions of the *Yogacarabhūmi*, an encyclopedic works of Yogācāra thought. In the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, the notions specific to Yogācāra philosophy, namely the threefold of essences, *ālayavijñāna*, and *vijñaptimātratā* are not used. Therefore, it is considered that the philosophy of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* remains old-fashioned thought of Yogācāra school. The characteristic notion to indicate the thought of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* is “*vastu*”. *Vastu* means “entity.” According to the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, *vastu* is essentially

3 Katsumata [1968: 406]: かくして解深密経における菩薩道は、止観行が分別瑜伽品に説かれ、六波羅蜜、十地が地波羅蜜多品に説かれており、前者は仏と弥勒菩薩との間に語られた菩薩道であり、後者は仏と観自在菩薩との間に論ぜられた菩薩道であるとされている。これは明らかにこの二つの菩薩道が起源を異にし、異なる菩薩道であることを示すが、…。しかし、この二つの実践道は未だ結合せしめられることなく平行して説かれているところに、瑜伽行派における菩薩道の思想の初期的形態が示されていると見るべきである。

inexpressible but provides the basis for verbal expressions. It claims that *vastu* is existence as the highest truth or *paramārtha*, but ordinary people think it as the object for verbal expressions. Essentially *vastu* as the highest truth cannot be grasped with any appellation, but people falsely give a name like “*rūpa*” and so on to *vastu*. In this way, people understand *vastu* by naming, even though it is essentially inexpressible. The cause of this naming is *vikalpa* or conceptualization. People cannot realize the truth of *vastu* because of the effect of *vikalpa*. In other words, *vikalpa* cover the reality of *vastu* and produces the phenomenal world in front of us.

The relationship between *vastu* and *vikalpa* is not limited to epistemological issues. According to the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, *vikalpa* in the past time (or in the previous life) produces the current *vastu* (or in the present life), and the current *vastu* will produce *vikalpa* in the future (or the next life). It seems to show that *vikalpa* and *vastu* are in the causal relation in karmic incarnation. It might be regarded as a new interpretation of the *pratītyasamutpāda*. In this sense, the notion of *vastu* does not simply mean the basis of verbal expressions.

3. How to Realize the Reality of *vastu*

In the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, the way of realizing *vastu* is four-fold of investigation or *paryeṣanā*, and four-fold of knowing truly or *yathābhūtajñāna*. Bodhisattva investigates the appellation (*nāman*) and regards it as appellation itself or nothing but appellation (*nāmamātra*) correctly. In the same way he understands *vastu* as *vastu* itself (*vastumātra*). The designation (*prajñapti*) about the essence (*svabhāva*) and attributes (*viśeṣa*) should be analyzed in the same way. Through this process, Bodhisattva recognizes that *vastu* is nothing but *vastu* (*vastumātra*), which is essentially isolated from verbal expressions. The inexpressibility of *vastu* can be considered to be the philosophical aspect of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. (cf. Takahashi [2005:2.1.4.3])

4. The Ethical Practices and Realization of *vastu*

Understanding the inexpressibility of *vastu* is not enough from the view point of Bodhisattva practices. Bodhisattva needs endurance, because he should stay in the karmic transmigration to enlighten and edify the ordinary people. Bodhisattva can endure suffering from the difficulty and pain because of mercy and wisdom. The inexpressibility of *vastu* is basically related to the aspect of wisdom. When he realizes *vastumātra* beyond the world cognized with the verbal expressions, he can devote himself to the ethical practices for benefit of ordinary people.

In general, the ethical conducts of Bodhisattva are associated with donation, patience and so on, which are elements of perfections or *pāramitā* and so called extroversive practices or practices for the benefit of other people. But some texts indicate that the conducts of Bodhisattva should include the introversive ones like meditation.⁴ The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* also argues on this issue. The *Caryāpāṭala* or Chapter of [bodhisattva's] conduct of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* categorizes the conduct of Bodhisattva into four types: perfections (*pāramitā*), factors to enlightenment (*bodhipakṣya[dharma]*), supernatural knowledge (*abhijñā*), and ripening of the sentient beings (*sattvapariṣkā*)⁵. It says as follows:

[Citation 1] It should be understood that in all bodhisattva stages, beginning with the *stage of conduct*

4 Takahashi [2018:143-145]

5 These four types of the Bodhisattva's conduct are also mentioned in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, one of the earliest works of Yogācāra school. According to the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkārabhāṣya*, a commentary ascribed to Vasubandhu, the six perfections are the conduct of Mahāyānists, and the factors of enlightenment are the method of non-Mahāyānists. The last two elements are related to both of them. Cf. Takahashi [2018:141-142]

that is based upon devotion or adhimukticaryābhūmi, the conduct of bodhisattva is, in brief, of four types. What are the four? [They are] conduct relating to the perfections, conduct that is factors to enlightenment, conduct relating to supernatural knowledge, and conduct relating to the ripening of sentient beings. (Cf Takahashi [2018:145])

BBhw 371, 1-4: adhimukticaryābhūmim upādāya sarvāsu bodhisattvabhūmiṣu bodhisattvānām samāsataḥ catasraś caryā veditavyāḥ. katamāś catasraḥ. pāramitācaryā bodhipakṣyacaryā abhijñācaryā sattvaparipākacaryā ca.

[Citation 2] And then, concisely these [following] four are conducts required Bodhisattvas, by which (=four conducts) there is complete inclusion of these all conducts (= which [four conducts] are including the all conducts required Bodhisattvas). [These four conducts are] repeated practice of goodness for the sake of enlightenment, insight of the reality preceded by that (=repeated practice), complete knowledge about might, and ripening the sentient beings. (Cf. Takahashi [2018:146])

BBhw 373, 25-374,1: catvāri cemāni bodhisattvānām samāsataḥ kṛtyāni. yair eṣāṃ sarvakṛtyānām saṃgraho bhavati. bodhāya kuśalābhyāsaḥ. tatpūrvakaś ca tattvārthapratiavedhaḥ. prabhāvasamudāgamaḥ. sattvaparipācanatā ca.

Citation 1 enumerates *pāramitā*, *bodhipakṣya*, *abhijñā*, *sattvaparipāka* as the conducts of Bodhisattva. The four types of conducts in Citation 2 seems to show the synonyms with them. The last two, namely complete knowledge about might and ripening the sentient beings evidently correspond to *abhijñā* or supernatural knowledge and *sattvaparipāka* or ripening the sentient beings

respectively. Although the correspondence of the first two items is undefined, the latter might be regarded as the factors of enlightenment or *bodhipakṣya*, because in the explanation about the factors of enlightenment the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* adds two more categories to the original 37 factors, namely the four-fold of investigation and the four-fold of knowing truly. These newly added elements are method to realize the inexpressibility of *vastu* mentioned above. It says:

[Citation 3] By summarizing all of the 37 factors of enlightenment beginning with the applications of mentality (*smṛtyupasthāna*), the *four-fold of investigations*, and the *four-fold of knowing truly* [both of which are] mentioned above, [they are] called the conduct that is the factors of enlightenment of Bodhisattvas.

BBhw 371, 18-22: *smṛtyupasthānāny upādāya sarve saptatrimśad bodhipakṣyā dharmāḥ catasraś ca paryeṣaṇāḥ catvāri ca yathābhūtaparijñānāni yathāpūrvanirdiṣṭāny abhisamasya bodhisattvānām bodhipakṣyacaryety ucyate.*

The four-fold of investigations and knowing truly are introduced in Chapter four titled the *Tattvārthapaṭala* of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. The notion of *tattvārtha* is a synonym of “the inexpressibility of *vastu*” in that chapter. It means that the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* attempted to modify the 37 factors of enlightenment, the traditional meditative way, by adding the novel method for realizing *vastu*, i.e. the inexpressible entity. It is considered that this modification enabled them to accept the traditional methodology as the way of realizing the inexpressibility of *vastu* asserted by the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. Therefore, the insight of reality or *tattvārthapratiśvedha* can represent the factors of the enlightenment in this context. The first one, the repeated practice of goodness, is arguably corresponding to the six perfections. There

is no doubt that the six perfections are “good.” In addition, in the *Caryāpaṭala* the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* uses an expression “*dānādīn kuśalān dharmām*” (good dharmas beginning with donation) (BBhw 373,2).

If the correspondence of these two types of categorization can be called “vertical connection,” Citation 2 seems to show the horizontal connection of four elements. It says that the insight of the reality is preceded by the repeated practice of goodness (*tatpūrvaka*). In other words, the insight of the reality is depending on the repeated practice of goodness. It means that the realization of *vastu* relies on the practice of six perfections. Accordingly, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* shows the deep connection of the philosophical notion and the ethical practices.

5. The Six Perfections in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*⁶

In the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, the notion of *vastu* itself is regarded as the real existence which is essentially inexpressible. Chapter Four titled *Tattvārthapaṭala* focuses on the inexpressibility of *vastu* and investigates it in detail. This chapter can be divided into several sections according to topics. Most sections relate to philosophical analysis about the state of *vastu*, but one section, section four in my edition (Takahashi [2005]), views this issue from another angle. It explains how Bodhisattva should behave when he realizes the inexpressibility of *vastu*. Subsection 4.7 says:

[Citation 4] The Bodhisattva indeed correctly comprehends the inexpressibility of dharmas by means of knowledge about selflessness of dharma, [which has been] penetrated [by him] for a long time, and then, doesn’t conceptualize any dharma in any way. [He] just

6 This part is basically an abstract from Takahashi [2018:147-150] which includes the Sanskrit text.

grasps nothing but entity, or nothing but Suchness.

The following subsection (Subsection 4.8) shows acquiring the indifference or *upekṣā*. When Bodhisattva comprehends the inexpressibility of *vastu*, he can acquire the indifference. Then he will never cower from learning the skill for salvation of the ordinary people. Thus, the indifference enables him to act for the sake of sentient beings. Subsections 4.9 and 4.10 describe the Bodhisattva's attitude towards the mundane world.

[Citation 5] And then, he becomes [the man whose] mind doesn't shrink back from all the skillfulness, and becomes energetic (*utsāhavat*), and his activity is not obstructed. Exercising the strong armor practice (*dṛḍhasannāhaprayoga*), he goes round in the *saṃsāra*, and the more specific pains [he] experiences, the more energy (*utsāha*) he increases towards the highest complete enlightenment. ...

[Citation 6] The Bodhisattva, [who] attained the method free from falsehood in this way, and [who confers] many benefits in this way, is correctly acting for the sake of maturing himself for the Buddha's teaching and for the sake of maturing others for the teaching of three vehicles. Then, he is correctly acting in this way, [and also] (1) he becomes free from desire for [his] possessions and [his own] body. He learns about the freedom from the desire for the sake of abandoning [to give] [his] possessions and [his] body to sentient beings. For the sake of the sentient beings, (2) [he] becomes restrained, well restrained with regard to the body and speech. ... (3) [He] becomes patient with all pains and evil-doing from others. ... Then, [he] becomes intent on all subjects of knowledge. ... Then, (4) [he] becomes [one whose] mind is internally

fixed, [namely] [one whose] mind is well concentrated. ... Then, (5) [he] becomes wise [namely] [one who] knows the supreme reality. Then, [he] learns about the Great Vehicle for the sake of becoming [one who] knows the supreme reality, [but] [he doesn't learn it] for the sake of his own entire cessation [of re-birth] in the following [life].

In this paragraph, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* doesn't use the technical terms related to the six perfections. However, Sāgaremeḡha, one of the commentators on the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, understands that this subsection treats the six perfections.⁷

It is noteworthy that the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* regards the comprehension of the inexpressible *vastu* as the important motive to begin the ethical practices like donation. After recognizing the inexpressibility of *vastu*, Bodhisattva acts towards the supreme object or aim (*tattvārtha*) further. He views all of dharmas as equal with the Suchness by means of wisdom (*prajñā*). Such a mental achievement provides Bodhisattva the indifference or *upekṣā* by which he can bear any pains and make efforts to learn various things without exhaustion. After that, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* begins to explicate the practices of the six perfections (Citation 6). In this context, the realization of the inexpressibility of *vastu* is an essential prerequisite for practicing the six perfections. In other words, the ethical conducts for the benefit of other people depend on recognizing the reality.

6. The Perception of the Reality and the Dwelling Stages of Bodhisattva

As a rule, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* considers that the recognition of the reality is fundamentally associated with the benefit of

⁷ Sāgaremeḡha, a commentator on the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* explains that this sentence describes the six perfections. Cf. Takahashi [2018:148-150]

sentient beings. However, the contents in the *Caryāpaṭala* seems to be slightly different from that in the *Tattvārthapaṭala*. In the *Caryāpaṭala*, the six perfections are previous to the realization of the inexpressibility of *vastu*, but the *Tattvārthapaṭala* suggests that the realization provides a motive to actually behave for the benefit of other people. Namely, the sequence of these two factors is not defined. This diminutive issue seems to be associated with the processes of Bodhisattva's practice in the ten stages.

The notion of ten *Bodhisattva* stages or *daśabhūmi* is another significant aspect of Bodhisattva's practice as well as the six perfections. As is well known, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* rearranges the traditional ten stages as thirteen dwelling stages or *vihāra*, which is argued in the *Vihārapaṭala* in detail. In the explanation about the eighth dwelling stage, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* mentions the inexpressibility of *vastu* in the following way:

[Citation 7] Among them, what is the effortless and imageless dwelling stage of Bodhisattvas? Now, in the next preceding dwelling stage the knowledge with ten forms to attain the highest truth of all dharmas is obtained by Bodhisattva. [Ten forms are] ..., [a form of knowledge] with regard to the state that the essence, [which has] appearance shaped from verbal expressions toward *vastu* essentially inexpressible in reality, [and also] does not exist with feature and state of cause, does neither appear nor disappear as contamination itself, [a form of knowledge] with regard to the state that contaminations are same at all times namely beginning, middle, and end because of the wrong adherence, [which is caused by] ignorance about that, toward the *vastu* existing [in reality but] inexpressible, and [a form of knowledge] with regard to removing these contaminations by means of the equality of non-conceptualization [caused by] true and

correct penetration. In this way, [Bodhisattva] arrives at the eighth purified dwelling stage because this knowledge with ten forms is excessive and also complete.

BBhw p.350,12-26: *tatra katamo bodhisattvānām anābhogo nīrnimitto vihārah. iha bodhisattvena prathame 'nantare vihāre daśākāraṃ sarvadharmapamāṛthāvatārajñānaṃ pratilabdhaṃ bhavati. ... paramāṛthato nirabhilāpyasvabhāve vastuni abhilāpābhisamkārapratibhāsasya svabhāvasya lakṣaṇena hetubhāvena cāvidyamānasya tasyaiva samkleśātmanā apravṛttitāṃ cānivṛttitāṃ cārabhya tadajñānamithyābhiniveśahetukāṃ ca tasmim vidyamāne vastuni nirabhilāpye ādimadhyaparyavasānasarvakālasamkleśasamatām ārabhya tathāsamyakpraveśanirvikalp asamatayā ca tatsamkleśāpanayanam ārabhya. ity asya jñānasya daśākārasyādhimātratvāt paripūrṇatvād imam aṣṭamaṃ pariśuddhaṃ vihāram avatarati.*

Then, it also the four-fold of investigation and the knowing truly as follows:

[Citation 8] And then, [Bodhisattva] staying here (=the eighth stage) acquires Bodhisattva's highest conformity towards the existents without arising. However, what is it (=kṣānti)? This Bodhisattva investigates all dharmas by means of four-fold of investigation. And then, when he recognizes by means of even four-fold of knowing truly, then in the present life he notices the conformity to the state that all contaminations do not arise, because all adherence [cause by] wrong conceptualization toward all dharmas are removed. ...And also, these four-fold of investigations are [same] as previously declared in *Tattvārthapaṭala*. And then, these four-fold of knowing truly are not yet entirely purified from

the *adhimukticaryā* dwelling stage to the effortful and imageless dwelling stage. However, in this dwelling stage they become completely purified. Therefore, it is said that the Bodhisattva has already attained the conformity toward the dharmas without arising.

BBhw 350,27-351,14: *ihasthaś cānutpattikeṣu dharmeṣu paramāṃ bodhisattvaḥ kṣāntiṃ suviśuddhāṃ labhate. sā punaḥ katamā. catasr̥bhiḥ paryeṣaṇābhir ayaṃ bodhisattvaḥ sarvadharmāṃ paryeṣya yadā caturbhir eva yathābhūtaparijñānaih pariḥānāti. tadā sarvamithyāvikalpābhīniveśeṣv apanīteṣu sarvadharmāṇāṃ dṛṣṭe ca dharme sarvasaṃ kleśānutpattyanukūlatāṃ paśyati. ... tāḥ punaś catasraḥ paryeṣaṇāḥ yathā pūrvam nirḍiṣṭās tattvārthapaṭale. catvāri ca yathābhūtaparijñānāni tāny adhimukticaryāvihāram upādāya yāvat sābhoganirnimittād viharān na suviśuddhāni bhavaṃti. asmiṃs tu viharē parisuddhāni bhavaṃti. tasmāt sa bodhisattva anutpattikeṣu dharmeṣu kṣāntipratilabdha ity ucyate.*

Citation 8 describes that the true knowing is not yet purified in the first step of the Bodhisattva practice. This state continues until the seventh dwelling stage. It means that even though Bodhisattva acquires the four-fold of true knowing in the first state called *adhimukticaryāvihāra* he cannot instantly accomplish these methods. In the *adhimukticaryāvihāra*, Bodhisattva understands the inexpressibility of *vastu* intellectually, but he does not yet realize it intuitively. Bodhisattva who arrives at the *adhimukticaryāvihāra* begins the six perfections. Repeated practice of donation and so on could lead Bodhisattva to the higher stages and gradually purify the method to realize the inexpressibility of *vastu*.

In this sense, the comprehension of the inexpressible *vastu* is a motive for ethical practice on the one hand, and it is purified through the ethical practices on the other hand.

7. Conclusion

Some previous studies indicated that the insight of reality and the ethical practices of the six perfections are treated separately in most of the Yogācāra texts. Occasionally, the philosophical aspect like mind only and practical aspects like perfections and Bodhisattva stages are considered to be originally isolated. However, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, one of the earliest works of the Yogācāra school, associates the penetration of the philosophical reality with conducts for the benefit of sentient beings. There is evidently an integrated and consistent system throughout the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. If the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* is regarded as one of the oldest scriptures in the Yogācāra school, the inconsistency and isolation found in the most works of this school should be reexamined from different viewpoints.



Equality is world harmony.
Mutual respect is the core of humanistic thought.
Ecology is the law of the world.
Nature means the perfection of life.

—Source: *The Everlasting Light:
Dharma Thoughts of Master Hsing Yun*