

Laṅkāvatāra on itaretaraśūnyatā

Shiro Matsumoto

There are two types of *śūnyatā* in Mahāyāna Buddhism. One is *lakṣaṇa-śūnyatā*, the other is *itaretara-śūnyatā*⁽¹⁾. These two types of *śūnyatā* are explained in contrast by Kamalaśīla in his *Madhyamakāloka* (MA, D. ed. No. 3887) as follows:⁽²⁾

[1] gañ yañ don gshan gyis dben pañi phyogs la sogs pa ḡgaḡ shig mñon sum gyis bzuñ nas de las gshan pa stoñ pa mñon sum gyis rtogs par bya bar ḡgyur shes bya la sogs pa smras pa de yañ rigs pa ma yin te/ tshul ḡdi ni gcig gis gcig stoñ pa ñid yin gyi/ mtshan ñid stoñ pa ñid ni ma yin no// mtshan ñid stoñ pa ñid kyis ni don dam par chos thams cad ño bo ñid med par ḡdod de/ don dam par de dag gi rañ dañ spyiñi mtshan ñid ji ltar rnam par gshag pa stoñ pañi phyir ro// dños po rnam kyis gcig gis gcig stoñ pa ñid gañ yin pa de ni don dam pa ma yin gyi/ ḡon kyañ tha sñad bden pa la brten pa yin no// (sa 169b6–170a1)

(tr.) The statement⁽³⁾ [of the *Yogācāras*]⁽⁴⁾ is not true that, after having perceived by perception some place etc. devoid of other objects, one will understand by perception that the place etc. are void of other objects. This opinion advocates *itaretara-śūnyatā*, and not *lakṣaṇa-śūnyatā*. According to *lakṣaṇa-śūnyatā*, all properties are considered to have no essence from the viewpoint of *paramārtha*, because they are devoid of the special and the universal characteristics, which are established, from the viewpoint of *paramārtha*. The *itaretara-śūnyatā* of objects is founded not on *paramārtha-satya* but on *vyavahāra-satya*.

Itaretara-śūnyatā is the term given in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (LAS, Nanjio ed., 75, 10, 17, 19) to a kind of interpretation of *śūnyatā*, which can be formulated by the sentence “*yad yatra nāsti tad tena śūnyam*” (when A does not exist in B, B is void of A)⁽⁵⁾. The characteristic feature of this interpretation is that the locus of *śūnyatā* (B, *stoñ gshi*)

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is always regarded as real (*sadbhāva*)⁽⁶⁾ in contrast to the unreality (*asadbhāva*)⁽⁶⁾ of the super-locus of *śūnyatā* (*ston rgyu*). On the contrary, the main point of the *lakṣaṇa-śūnyatā* interpretation, which is asserted by *Mādhyamika* philosophers, is that the locus as well as the super-locus of *śūnyatā* is unreal⁽⁷⁾. Therefore, these two kinds of interpretation concerning *śūnyatā* can be distinguished from one another according to their opinions concerning the reality of the locus of *śūnyatā*. In my previous paper, I postulated a hypothesis for the sake of understanding more simply the historical development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India⁽⁸⁾. According to my opinion, in Mahāyāna, there are two systems of philosophy, which are radically opposed to and must not be identified with each other. One is *Dhātuvāda* (the theory of locus) which asserts that the locus is real, and the other is *Śūnyatāvāda* (the theory of voidness), according to whose theory all is unreal. Therefore, *itaretara-śūnyatā* is the *śūnyatā* of *Dhātuvāda*, while *lakṣaṇa-śūnyatā* is that of *Śūnyatāvāda*. From my viewpoint, the so-called *tathāgatagarbha* theory and the *Yogācāra* philosophy are both the typical forms of *Dhātuvāda*, although the *tathāgatagarbha* theory is the more genuine one. Then, is the *Laṅkāvatāra* a work of *Dhātuvāda* or of *Śūnyatāvāda*? This is a question somewhat difficult to answer, because, although the *Laṅkāvatāra* is famous for its *tathāgatagarbha* theory and for its identification of *ālayavijñāna* with *tathāgarbha*, there are many passages in the *Laṅkāvatāra* which explain the *Mādhyamika*-like *śūnyatā* theory and which are quoted by many *Mādhyamika* philosophers. The most important fact which seems to contradict the contention that the *Laṅkāvatāra* is the work of *Dhātuvāda* is that *itaretara-śūnyatā* is criticized in the sutra as follows:

[2] eṣā ca mahāmate itaretaraśūnyatā sarvajaghanyā sā ca tvayā parivarjayitavyā
//(LAS, 75, 18-19)

(tr.) Oh Mahāmati, this *itaretara-śūnyatā* is the worst of all [the seven *śūnyatās*].
You should abandon this [*itaretara-śūnyatā*].

If this criticism of *itaretara-śūnyatā* agrees with the main theme of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, this sutra should be regarded not as the work of *Dhātuvāda* but as that of *Śūnyatāvāda*. Then, is *itaretara-śūnyatā* really criticized in the *Laṅkāvatāra*? I do not think so. Firstly, the commentators either give no comment on the passage quoted above or, if anything, vague comment. Jñānaśrībhadrā, in his commentary on the *Laṅkāvatāra* (P. ed. No. 5519), gives no explanation on the passage, although he expounds the idea of *itaretara-śūnyatā* itself (ni 124b2-7). Jñānavajra's comment in his *Tathāgatagarbhālaṅkāra*⁽⁹⁾ (TGA, P. ed. No. 5520) on the passage is as follows:

[3] de ḥdra baḥi stoṅ pa ñid ni byis paḥi skye bo thams cad kyis (orig. kyi) rtogs śiṅ goms kyaṅ kun nas ñon moṅs paḥi phyogs spoṅ shiṅ/skyes bu la ñe bar mkho baḥi don thob pa la mi phan pas de ḥdra ba gtan la phab (orig. phan) pa ni dgos pa med ces paḥo//(pi 149a4-5)

(tr.) Although this form of *śūnyatā* [i. e. *itaretaraśūnyatā*] is understood and practiced by all the foolish people, it is useless to ascertain the form of *śūnyatā* because it is not useful for rejecting the defiled portion and for obtaining the objects desirable to [good] persons.

This comment can hardly be regarded as the philosophical one, because no theoretical defect of *itaretara-śūnyatā* is pointed out here. Therefore, we can conclude that the explanation of the theoretical difference between the two types of *śūnyatā* mentioned above is not given by the commentators on the *Laṅkāvatāra*. The more important fact is that there is in the sutra a passage which seems to support *itaretara-śūnyatā*. This passage reads:

[4] yad apy uktaṃ mayā nirātmānaḥ sarvadharmā iti tasyāpy arthaṃ nibodhavyaṃ mahāmate, nirātmabhāvo mahāmate nairātmyaṃ, svātmanā sarvadharmā vidyante na parātmanā go'svavat/tadyathā mahāmate na gobhāvo 'śvātmako, na cāśvabhāvo gavātmako, sa⁽¹⁰⁾ san nāsan, na ca tau svalakṣaṇato na, vidyete eva tau svalakṣaṇataḥ, evam eva mahāmate sarvadharmā na ca svalakṣaṇena na samvidyante, vidyanta eva (LAS, 188, 7-14)

(tr.) Oh Mahāmati, the meaning of my statement that all properties have no self should be also [correctly] understood. Having no self (*nairātmya*) is the state

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of having no essence (*ātman*). All properties exist with their own essences, and without the essences of other objects, as a cow and a horse. Namely, the being (*bhāva*) of a cow has no essence of a horse, and the being of a horse has no essence of a cow. Indeed this (the being of a horse) exists. They [the beings of a cow and a horse] certainly exist with their own characteristics. In this way, all properties certainly exist possessing their own characteristics.

What is the meaning of this passage? Here it is declared that all objects exist because they have their own essences, although they have no essence of other objects. This interpretation of *nairātmya* is nothing other than the *itaretara-śūnyatā* interpretation, because it is maintained in both interpretations that an object possesses an essence of its own in spite of lacking the essence of other objects.

As for my argument that *itaretara-śūnyatā* is advocated in Passage [4], it seems to be supported especially by Jñānavajra's commentary. He comments on the passage as follows :

[5] deḥi don yañ ji ltar snañ shiñ myoñ baḥi chos thams cad don dam paḥi dños po la sogs par brtags paḥi bdag gis stoñ pa ñid bdag med paḥi don yin gyi/snañ ba tsam gyi (orig. gyis) rañ bshin gyis stoñ pa ni ma yin te/de ltar na snañ ba dañ stoñ pa zuñ du ḥjug paḥi sgyu ma ñid chos bdag med paḥi don yin shes pa ste/—snañ shiñ myoñ baḥi chos dañ/brtags paḥi bdag ñid kyañ phan tshun gcig gi bdag ñid gcig ma yin la/snañ ba tsam po rañ gi ño bor ma grub pa ma yin te/deḥi phyir snañ ba tsam gyi chos can ñid dgag bya ma yin par sñar bstan to// (pi 249b4-7)

(tr.) The meaning of this [passage] is the following one. The meaning of having no self (*nairātmya*) is that all the properties, which are appeared and perceived, are void of the essences constructed imaginarily as real beings (*param-ārthabhāva*?) and so on, and not that they [i.e. perceived properties] are void of the essences which are only appeared. Thus, “property's having no self” (*dharmanairātmya*) means the illusion where appearance and voidness are combined as a pair.……The property, which is appeared and perceived, and the essence, which is constructed imaginarily, are different from each other, for what is merely appeared is established to be existing with its own essence. Therefore, I have declared before⁽¹¹⁾ that [the existence of]

the locus (*dharmīn*) which only appears must not be denied.

First of all, it should be noted that, according to Jñānavajra's comment, the mutual difference between a cow and a horse stated as an example in the *Laṅkāvatāra* means not merely the difference between particular objects, but the difference between the locus appearing only and the super-locus constructed imaginarily on the locus. It is clear that Jñānavajra's comment here is relied on the same philosophical trend of the three *Mādhyamika* masters, Jñānagarbha, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, who accepted the *trīsvabhāva* theory in conventional sense (*vyavahāratas*). For Jñānagarbha, what is appeared only (*ji ltar snañ ba*) and is capable of producing effects (*don byed nus pa*) is the *paratantra* and the locus on which is constructed imaginarily something realistic such as the production of objects in highest sense (*don dam pa pañi skye ba, tāttvikotpat-ti*)⁽¹²⁾. Jñānavajra's comment quoted above, although he is completely influenced there by the philosophical system of Jñānagarbha and so on, seems to be useful in interpreting Passage [4] of the *Laṅkāvatāra*. It is stated in the passage that an object possesses the characteristic of its own (*svalakṣaṇa*). This idea clearly contradicts Kamalaśīla's explanation of *lakṣaṇa-śūnyatā* that all objects do not possess any characteristic special [i. e. of its own] or universal. To say that an object (B) exists with its own characteristic and without the characteristic of other objects (A) is not different from to state that the characteristic of other objects (A) does not exist in the object possessing its own characteristic (B) or in its own characteristic itself (B). Thus, it seems that in Passage [4] *itaretara-śūnyatā* is not denied but asserted, and *Dhātuvāda* is advocated.

It seems very difficult to determine what the philosophical position of the *Laṅkāvatāra* is. To use my terminology, this sutra seems to be a rough composite of *Dhātuvāda* and *Śūnyatāvāda*, at the first sight. However, if we inquire into its content more deeply, we will be taught that the main theme or the real import of this sutra is nothing other

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than *Dhātvāda*. For example, in the following sentence, which succeed directly to Passage [4], the general idea of *Dhātvāda* can be recognized that the teachings of voidness and non-production and having no essence must not be understood in the literal sense of the words, because they have provisional meanings (*ābhiprāyika*).

[6] tena ca bālapṛthagjanair nirātmārthatāvabudhyate vikalpam upādāya na tu avikalpam, evam śūnyānutpādāsvābhāvyam sarvadharmāṇām pratyavagantavyam/(LAS, 188, 14-16)

(tr.) Therefore, the meaning of having no self is understood by foolish people relying on imagination, and not on the cognition bereft of imagination. In this manner, the meanings of voidness and non-production and having no essence of all properties should be understood.

Moreover, there are many passages in the *Lañkāvatāra* where *Dhātvāda* is advocated clearly. For example, in the following verse, short as it is, the theoretical structure of *Dhātvāda* is fully expounded:

[7] yady avastu na śuddhiḥ syāt saṃkleśo nāpi kasyacit/ yasmāc ca śudhyate cittaṃ saṃkleśaś cāpi dṛśyate/ tasmāt tattvaṃ bhaved vastu viśuddham āryagocaram// (LAS, sag. 250, 298, 2-4)

(tr.) If the locus (*vastu*) does not exist, purification and defilement have no locus [or subject]. But, in fact, it is perceived that mind is purified and defiled⁽¹³⁾. Therefore, the locus, which is purified and is the object of saints, exist as real.

Here the reality of the locus is proved by the following argumentation. If there is no locus, there is no super-locus. However, the existence of super-locus is perceived by ordinary experience. Therefore, the locus must be existing as real. This argumentation is the common and indispensable property of *Dhātvāda*⁽¹⁴⁾.

As a conclusion of this paper, although its argumentation seems to have been insufficient, I would like to state as follows:

It is doubtful that the criticism of *itaretara-śūnyatā* in the *Lañkāvatāra* agrees with the main theme of the sutra, because in this sutra there is a passage [i.e. Passage [4]] which seems

to advocate nothing other than *itaretara-śūnyatā*.

- (1) It seems that, to use the terminology by Tibetan authors, *lakṣaṇa-śūnyatā* and *itaretara-śūnyatā* can be called *rañ stoñ* (voidness in respect to its own essence) and *gshan stoñ* (voidness in respect to others) respectively. On the relation between *itaretara-śūnyatā* and *gshan stoñ*, cf. Ruegg D.S.: *La théorie du tathāgatagarbha et du gotra*, 1969, pp. 319–346. Prof. Zuiho Yamaguchi once indicated that nonexistence (*abhāva*) means A's absence in B, while voidness (*śūnyatā*) is \sqrt{A} 's absence in A. This idea of Prof. Yamaguchi concerning the difference between *abhāva* and *śūnyatā* was very stimulating to me, because the fundamental structure of *lakṣaṇa-śūnyatā* and *itaretara-śūnyatā* seems to have been fully made clear by this idea. To use Prof. Yamaguchi expression, it can be said that *itaretara-śūnyatā* is A's absence in B, while *lakṣaṇa-śūnyatā* is \sqrt{A} 's absence in A. Cf. Matsumoto: *Mādhyamika philosophy in Tibet—on the mTha' bral dbu ma'i lugs*, *The Toyo Gakujutsu Kenkyu*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1982, p. 178, n. 16.
- (2) Cf. Ruegg: *op. cit.*, p. 343, n. 2.
- (3) The statement is found in the *pūrvapakṣa* of MĀ (sa 134b3).
- (4) The *pūrvapakṣin* of MĀ is the *Yogacāras*. Cf. Matsumoto: The *ekayāna* theory of the *Madhyamakāloka*, *Journal of Sōtō Sect Research Fellows*, No. 12, 1982, pp. 299–295.
- (5) Cf. Ruegg: *op. cit.*, pp. 320–322; Takasaki J.: Sources of the *Laṅkāvatāra* and its position in Mahāyāna Buddhism, *Indological and Buddhist Studies*, Canberra, 1982, p. 556.
- (6) Cf. *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Wogihara ed.), 47, 11–13; Ruegg: *op. cit.*, p. 322.
- (7) Cf. Matsumoto: The *satyadvaya* theory of Dharmapāla, *JIBS*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 1979, p. 687.
- (8) Cf. Matsumoto: On the *ekayāna* theory of the *Śrīmālāsūtra*, *Journal of the Faculty of Buddhism*, No. 41, Komazawa Univ., 1983, p. 405.
- (9) This commentary has many problems concerning its production. However, at least its title must be corrected. The sanskrit title "*Tathāgatahṛdayālaṃkāra*", as is indicated in the modern catalogues according to the sanskrit title written at the beginning of the work, is wrong, judging from the Tibetan title "*De bshin gśeḡs paḥi sñiñ poḥi rgyan*". According to its colophon (pi 363a8) and Bu ston's report (*Chos ḥbyuñ*, ya 160) this work was written by a Chinese master

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called Jñānavajra (Ye śes rdo rje) and was translated from Chinese into Tibetan. However, this seems unlikely, because the author of this commentary knows well about the texts of the later Indian Buddhism such as the *Pramāṇavārttika* (pi 21a5 etc.) and *Madhyamakāloka* (pi 137a8 etc.), which were never translated into Chinese.

(10) “na” in Nanjio’s edition. My reading relied on Tibetan version: *de ni yod de med paḥaṅ ma yin no//* (ñu 143a8).

(11) *ji ltar snaṅ ba tsam gyi chos can ni khas len dgos la* (TGA pi 69a7).

(12) Cf. Matsumoto: The *satyavaya* theory of Jñānagarbha, *Bukkyogaku*, Vol. 5, 1978, p. 137, n. 30.

(13) In stating that mind is purified and defiled, mind is regarded as the locus of the two super-loci, i. e. purification (śuddhi) and defilement (*saṃklesa*). I have argued that in *Dhātwāda* there is a keen consciousness that mind cannot be the locus. If this argument is true, why is mind stated here as the locus? I consider this statement to be derived from the special standpoint of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, i. e. the identification of *ālayavijñāna* with *tathāgarbha*. Cf. Matsumoto: On the *ekayāna* theory of the *Śrīmālāsūtra*, pp. 393–392.

(14) Cf. Matsumoto: The *satyadvaya* theory of Dharmapāla, p. 687.

(駒沢大学特別研究助成費による成果の一部)