The Concept of rūpa and mūrtatva in the Vaiśeṣika School: A Study of Concept of Matter in Ancient India

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0. Introduction

The concept of matter was one of the most important problems in Western thought. In India, it has not been disregarded, though there was no concept exactly corresponding to matter. Only few attempts, however, have so far been made at the concept of the matter in ancient India.

The Vaiśeṣika School, which is one of six Indian orthodox schools of philosophies, is known as ancient realism. In this paper, the author intends to examine the theoretical structure of the concept of 'matter' in this school, based on the three main texts, the Vaiśeṣika-sūtra (1C. A.D.), the Daśapadārthī (勝宗十句義論 4–5C. A.D.),¹ and the Praśastapāda-bhāṣya (6C. A.D.).

The Vaiśeṣika system has two different material concepts. One is rūpa, the other mūrtatva. Little attention has been given to this point. We will begin by considering these two concepts.

1. The rūpa

Basically, the rūpa is a word meaning both color and form, and was used to indicate matter in ancient India. In the Vaiśeṣika school, the rūpa is one of guṇa (attribute) that is one of six padārtha-s (basic categories).² Also in the Vaiśeṣika school, the meaning of rūpa was the same as its general meaning in ancient India until the time of the Vaiśeṣika-sūtra. But after the Daśapadārthī, the rūpa was strictly limited to only one meaning, that of color. The question is the change in this meaning.

1.1. The rūpa in the Vaiśeṣikasūtra

In the Vaiśeṣikasūtra, the rūpa is defined to the color and form belonging to the dravya (substance), and enabling perception with eyes.³ In other words, only dravya with the
rūpa can be perceived by eyes.\textsuperscript{4) }Also the rūpa enables perception of motion of substances.\textsuperscript{5) }To take a simple example, sabda (sound) without the rūpa cannot be perceived with eyes,\textsuperscript{6) }though the motion of substances which have the rūpa can be perceived with eyes. Viewed in this light, the rūpa in the Vaiśeṣika Sūtra can be regarded as an important concept that enables perception of substance and its motion, and a word that almost indicates matter in the Vaiśeṣika school as well as ancient India.

1.2. The rūpa in the Daśapadārthi and the Praśastapādabhāṣya

Also in the Daśapadārthi and the Praśastapādabhāṣya, the rūpa is one of guṇa belonging to the dravya, and a concept of enabling perception with eyes.\textsuperscript{7) }However, there was no description which relates rūpa to the movement in the Daśapadārthi and the Praśastapādabhāṣya. It was that the term of mūrtatva began to be used as a term for form at about the same time as the Daśapadārthi. In the following the Praśastapādabhāṣya, moreover, the term of rūpa was used only to mean color, and the term of mūrtatva meant form of the moving substance. To sum up, the change in the meaning of the rūpa happened as a result of the mūrtatva, which was a new concept of form in the Vaiśeṣika school. The question which we must consider next is the concept of mūrtatva.

2. The mūrtatva

The word 'mūrtatva' is derived from the past passive participle of root of 'mūrch' by adding the suffix 'tva' meaning solid. And the mūrtatva is used to mean material form in the Vaiśeṣika school after the Daśapadārthi.

2.1. The mūrtatva in the Daśapadārthi

In the Daśapadārthi, the concept of mūrtatva is used as the mūrta (有質礙, material form) in the part of explanation of the motion. The motion is classified into five types in the Daśapadārthi, the one of which is the gamana (going). The gamana is caused by the vega (velocity) belonging the mūrta-dravya (substance with material form), the vega does not exist except the dravya which has mūrta.\textsuperscript{8) }In other words, only the mūrta-dravya can do the gamana,\textsuperscript{9) }and the distinction of movable things and immovable things is the same as the distinction of dravya with mūrta and dravya without mūrta.\textsuperscript{10) }It follows from what has been said that the mūrta (or mūrtatva), in the Daśapadārthi, was an important factor of substances which can move.
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2.2. The mūrtatva in the Praśastapādabhāṣya

Also in the Praśastapādabhāṣya, the concept of mūrtatva is discussed in the relation to motion. The mūrtatva is a common character of five moving dravya, which are kṣiti (earth), jala (water), jyotis (fire), anila (air), and manas (consciousness). And existing in the mūrta-dravya is the one of twelve common characters of the movement. Namely, only the mūrta-dravya (dravya with mūrtatva, or substances with material form) has mobility, and the concept of mūrtatva has a close relation to the motion.

All these things make it clear that the Daśapadārthi and the Praśastapādabhāṣya have the congruous views about the concept of the mūrtatva. Both of them consider the mūrtatva as an important concept relating the motion.

3. Conclusion

It should be concluded, from what has been said above, that the change in the usage of rūpa occurred simultaneously with introducing the new concept explaining motion of substances, which is the mūrtatva, in the text of Daśapadārthi.

The usage of rūpa remained as the guṇa belonging to the dravya, and a concept of enabling perception by eyes. This usage may be common to throughout the Vaiśeṣikasūtra, both in the Daśapadārthi and the Praśastapādabhāṣya, and was inherited by posterior the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school. We have, however, the most significant fact that the rūpa enabled perception of motion of substances until the Vaiśeṣikasūtra, but the usage of rūpa was subdued, as was showed by the fact that there was no description that rūpa related to movement since the Daśapadārthi.

On the other hand, the mūrtatva, which is not discussed in the Vaiśeṣikasūtra, began to be used simultaneously as an important factor of movement in the Daśapadārthi and the Praśastapādabhāṣya. The mūrtatva means material form, and only the mūrta-dravya (substances with material form) can move. And the concept of rūpa came to be used only to mean color since the Daśapadārthi.

Then, why did not the rūpa relate to the motion and did not comes to be used only to mean color? It is for this reason that the problem of movement of the vāyu (air) and the manas (consciousness) arose. The movement of the vāyu cannot be seen with eyes, because the vāyu does not have the rūpa. Since the manas is minute, the movement of the manas cannot be seen with eyes, either. Therefore, the factor of movement common to the
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vāyu and the *manas* are needed, and its factor is the *mūrtatva*.

Most significantly, the problem of how to conceive and explain motion of substances, which was the very peculiar to Vaiśeṣika school, affected the concept of matter itself, and brought the change of usage of the concept of the *rūpa* and the *mūrtatva*, which are the material concept, in the Vaiśeṣika theory. In the Vaiśeṣika system, the concept of matter has a close relation to their original movement theory.

(Notes)
1) Since original Sanskrit texts of the *Daśapadārthi* have been lost in India, we examine a Chinese version translated by Xuangzang (玄奘: 602–664) of the *Daśapadārthi* (= DP) in this paper.
2) VSC 1.1.5: *rūpa-rasa-gandha-sparśāh sānkhyā parimāññī prthaktvam samyoga-vibhāgau paratva-aperatvā brahmaḥ sukha-duḥkhe icchā-dveṣau prayatnas ca günā (p. 2, ll. 17–19).
3) VSC 4.1.6: mahaty aneka-dravya-vātvd rūpāc ca_upalabdhiḥ (p. 33, l. 2).
4) VSC 4.1.8: *rūpa-samskāra-abhāvād vāyān anupalabdhiḥ* (p. 33, l. 8).
5) VSC 4.1.9: aneka-dravyena dravyena samāvāyād *rūpa-viśeṣāc ca_upalabdhiḥ* (VSC: p. 33, l. 12).
6) VSC 4.1.12: *sānkhyā parimāññī prthaktvam samyoga-vibhaṅgau paratva-aperatvā karma ca rūpi-dravya-samāvāyāc cākṣusāṇī* (p. 33, ll. 21–22).
7) VSC 4.1.13: *arūpiśv acākṣuṣātvatāt* (p. 34, l. 3).
8) DP [13]: 劉云何。謂。唯眼所取。一依。名色。 [What is the *rūpa*? That which is perceived only by eyes and has one [substance] as its locus is the *rūpa*.] (p. 256, l. 1), [40]: 現量者。於至實色等根等合時。有了相生。是名現量。 [The direct cognition: That which takes form of direct experience and is produced when perceivable substances, the *rūpa* and sense organs and so on come in contact [which each other] is direct cognition.] (p. 257, l. 2).
9) VSC 2.2.28: *[sabha] acākṣuṣātvan na karma* (p. 21, l. 15).
11) DP [54]: 作因者。謂。摂揑等生業所生。依附一實。有質礙實所有勢用。是名作因。行。謂勢用。 [The cause of action: That which is produced by action caused by hitting, shaking and so on, has one substance as its locus and is the *vega* (velocity) of the *mūrti-dravya* (substances with material form) is cause of action, that is, impression called the *vega*.] (p. 257, ll. 20–21).
12) DP [65]: 行業云何。謂。一切有質礙和合。依一實。合離因。名行業。 [What is the *gamana* (going)? That which is inherent in all of the *mūrti-dravya* (substances with material form), has one substance as its locus and is the cause of connection and separation is move-
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10) DP [85]: 如有動作無動作, 有質礙無質礙, 有勢用無勢用, 有彼此體無彼此體, 應知亦爾. [It should be known that the distinction between movable things and immovable things is the same as that between things with mūrta and things without mūrta, between things with velocity and things without velocity and between things with priority and posteriority and without priority and posteriority.] (p. 259, ll. 14–15).


〈Abbreviations and Bibliography〉
VSC: Muni Śri Jambuvijayaji (Ed.), Vaiśeṣikasūtra of Kaṇāda with the commentary of Candrānanda (G.O.S. No. 136), Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1982.
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