The Real Existence of *Pratisamkhyaṇīnirodha*:
The *Mānuṣyakasūtra* as Scriptural Evidence in the *Abhidharmāvatāra*

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1. Introduction

The ultimate purpose in Abhidharma Buddhism is the elimination of suffering and getting rid of endless transmigration: namely to accomplish nirvāṇa. The Sarvāstivāda, one of the most eminent schools in the Abhidharma tradition, developed a categorical ontology which was based on the real existence of all entities. The Sarvāstivāda assumed the existence of an “unconditioned entity” (asamśkrta-dharma), called *pratisamkhyaṇīnirodha*, to account for nirvāṇa. However, there were Buddhist schools, such as the Sautrāntika, which criticized this core Sarvāstivāda doctrine and denied the real existence of *pratisamkhyaṇīnirodha*. When the Sarvāstivāda were faced with this doctrinal challenge, it was a serious and immediate problem for them to overcome these criticisms and prove its real existence.

Summarizing the arguments for the real existence of the three unconditioned dharmas, namely ākāśa, *pratisamkhyaṇa* and *apratisamkhyaṇīnirodha*, found in various Abhidharma texts, Isshiki [2009] suggests that the following elements are fundamental to the Sarvāstivāda proof: (a) the definition of the intrinsic nature (svabhāva) of the dharma that needs to be proved as a real entity; (b) the demonstration of the intrinsic nature defined above by means of either rational or scriptural evidence; (c) the guarantee of the real existence of the dharma by established intrinsic nature. However, with regard to *pratisamkhyaṇīnirodha*, Isshiki [2009] points out an exceptional proof which depended on the evidential feature which does not belong to the non-real existence and explains that this is because non-ārya people cannot perceive the intrinsic nature of *pratisamkhyaṇīnirodha* directly.

Taking the remarks of Isshiki [2009] into consideration, this essay aims to investigate the proof for the real existence of *pratisamkhyaṇīnirodha* as it appears in the *Abhidharmāvatāra*. The *Abhidharmāvatāra*, an introductory Abhidharma treatise, systematically arranged categories of real entities under the eight-padārtha and provided concise definitions. It
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cites the *Māṇusyakāśūtra* as scriptural evidence to prove the real existence of *pratisamkhyānirodha*. In the following discussion, I clarify the structure and purpose of the *Māṇusyakāśūtra* itself. And then, by analyzing the scriptural proof in the *Abhidharmāvatāra*, I point out two important features. Finally I indicate the relationship between the result of this investigation and the remarks of ISSHIKI [2009].

2. Contents of the *Māṇusyakāśūtra*

The *Māṇusyakāśūtra* is preserved only in the Chinese Āgama, the *Samyukṭāgama*, and cannot be found in the Pāli Nikāyas. The contents of this sūtra can be summarized in the following three logical steps: (Step 1) the human being is an aggregate of elements and these elements are transient and dependently arisen; (Step 2) that which is transient and dependently arisen is suffering; (Step 3) nirvāṇa is a complete elimination of this suffering. 1) As we can see from this set of logical precepts, the aim of the sūtra is to demonstrate the fact that human existence is nothing but suffering and nirvāṇa is the elimination of this suffering.

The *Māṇusyakāśūtra* is used as scriptural evidence in several Abhidharma texts. For example, in the 9th chapter of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, (Step 1) was cited to criticize the theory of a personal entity (*pudgala*). 2) And a part of (Step 1) was also cited in the arguments about citta and caītasika. 3)

3. Scriptural Evidence in the *Abhidharmāvatāra*

In addition to these citations, the *Abhidharmāvatāra* cited the *Māṇusyakāśūtra* to prove the real existence of *pratisamkhyānirodha*. The *Abhidharmāvatāra* explains:

(Definition: ) The *pratisamkhyānirodha* is the elimination (*prahāna*) of suffering, . . .

(Synonyms: ) Its synonyms are the destruction (*kṣaya*), detachment (*virāga*), cessation (*nirrodha*), nirvāṇa and so forth.

(Citation of the MS: ) The *Māṇusyakāśūtra* also says as follows: “(Step 1) Oh, bhikṣus, . . . and dependently arisen, (Step 2) That which is impermanent etc. is . . . and origination are suffering too. (Step 3) That which is the complete elimination (*aśeṣa-prahāṇa*), casting away, removal, destruction, detachment, cessation, calming down and setting down of this suffering, and [that which is] the non-subsequence, non-grasp and non-arising of the other suffering, this is tranquil and excellent, namely [it is] the casting away of all substrata (*sarvopadhi-pratinihsarga*), destruction of the avidity (*trṣṇā-kṣaya*), detachment (*virāga*), cessation (*nirrodha*) and nirvāṇa.”
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(Commentary on the Citation: ) Herein, . . . [the sūtra includes the term] “destruction of the avidity,” because the avidity is destroyed when one sees or hears this [pratisamkhyānirrothā]. [It includes the term] “detachment,” because the affection disappears when this has been acquired. [It includes the term] “cessation,” because the suffering ceases when this has been accomplished. [And it includes the term] “nirvāna,” because one overcomes all harmful things, all injurious things and all defilements when this has been acquired. 4)

The structure of the scriptural proof can be summarized as follows: I. Definition: pratisamkhyānirrothā = the elimination of the suffering; II. Synonyms: pratisamkhyānirrothā = the destruction etc.; III. Scriptural Evidence: the elimination of the suffering = the destruction etc.; IV. Commentary: the sūtra includes these terms, because pratisamkhyānirrothā is their cause. In the citation, (Step 3) is the main portion of the scriptural evidence. From I. and III., II. is established. However, with respect to the elimination of the suffering, the Māṇḍūkya Sūtra does not utilize the term pratisamkhyānirrothā, and when it discusses the elimination of the suffering, it does not make a claim for its real existence. The Abhidharmāvatāra, on the other hand, employs the Abhidharma neologism pratisamkhyānirrothā, and views it as a real entity. Thus there was a fundamental difficulty, for the author of the Abhidharmāvatāra, in indicating that “destruction,” and other closely related terms in the Māṇḍūkya Sūtra, were synonymous with pratisamkhyānirrothā. To overcome this difficulty, IV. explained that one can relate these functions to pratisamkhyānirrothā as its synonyms because this neologism was causally prior to the terms utilized by the Māṇḍūkya Sūtra.

In this scriptural proof, we can point out two important features. Feature 1: because it was impossible to find the Abhidharma term “pratisamkhyānirrothā” in the Āgamas, the Abhidharmāvatāra related it to terms, appearing in the Āgamas, such as destruction; Feature 2: the Abhidharmāvatāra presumes that the appearance of these terms in the Āgama guaranteed the real existence of pratisamkhyānirrothā because there was a causal relation which bound them together. Because this line of reasoning is dependent upon the Sarvāstivāda’s theory of pratisamkhyānirrothā, this scriptural proof inevitably faced Sautrāntika criticism. In the 2nd chapter of the Abhidharma-kosabhāṣya, the Sautrāntika denied the validity of the Māṇḍūkya Sūtra as scriptural evidence for the real existence of pratisamkhyānirrothā. 5)
4. Conclusion

I have pointed out the fact that the Abhidharmāvatārā cited the Māṇusyaśaṅkara as scriptural evidence to prove the real existence of pratisamkhyaṇirodha, deviating from the original purpose of the sūtra. And by analyzing this scriptural proof, I have clarified the two principal features of the argument. In this scriptural proof, we cannot find the exceptional proof that Isshiki [2009] points out with respect to pratisamkhyaṇirodha. However, the second feature in the Abhidharmāvatārā corresponds to the inference (a–c) that Isshiki [2009] points out on the two unconditioned dharmas other than pratisamkhyaṇirodha. Concerning this point, we can assume that the Abhidharmāvatārā had to leave the confirmation of the function or intrinsic nature of pratisamkhyaṇirodha up to the Āgama, because non-ārya people cannot perceive it directly and cannot prove its real existence rationally.

Notes
1) MS T vol. 2, 87c18–88a20: 〈Step 1〉如是我聞....眼.色.此等法名爲人.於斯等法作人想....此諸法皆無常.有爲.思願.緣生.〈Step 2〉若無常.有爲.思願.緣生者....一切皆苦.〈Step 3〉若復彼苦無餘斷....所謂捨一切有餘.一切愛盡.無欲.滅盡.涅槃....諸比丘聞佛所説.歡喜奉行.
2) AKBh p. 465, ll. 9–17.
3) TS T vol. 32, 277b7–10; AKBh p. 146, ll. 10–12; NyA T vol. 29, 384b12–13.
4) AA D322a1–323a2, P415b5–b6:
(Definition: ) so sor brtags pas 'gog pa ni sdug bsнал spon ba'o //... (Synonyms: ) de'i rnam grans ni zad pa dan / 'dod chags dan bral ba dan / 'gog pa dan / mya n'an las 'das pa' ba la sogs pa'o // (Citation of the MS: ) de skad du mi'i mdo las kyañ / 〈Step 1〉dge slo'n dag ... rten cin 'brel bar 'byün ba dag ste / 〈Step 2〉mi rtag pa nas ... 'byün ba yañ sdug bsñal te / 〈Step 3〉sdug bsñal 'di ma lus par spāns pa dan / nes par spāns pa dan / byañ bar gyur pa dan / zad pa dan / 'dod chags dan bral ba dan / 'gog pa dan / rnam par ži ba dan / nub pa dan / sdug bsñal gzan gyi mthams mi sbyor ba dan / len pa med pa dan / mi 'byün ba gañ yin pa de ži ba / de gya nom pa ste / 'di lta ste / phuñ po thams cad nes par spāns pa dan / sred pa zad pa dan / 'dod chags dan bral ba dan / 'gog pa dan / mya n'an las 'das pa'o žes gsums so // (Commentary on the citation: ) de la ... 'di mthoñ žam / thos nas sred pa zad par 'gyur bas sred pa zad pa'o // 'di thob nas 'dod chags med par 'gyur bas 'dod chags dan bral ba'o // 'di mthun sum du byas na sdug bsñal 'gag pas 'gog pa'o // 'di thob na gnod pa thams cad dañ / 'tshe ba thams cad dañ / žon moñs pa thams cad las 'das pas / mya n'an las 'das pa'o //
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5）AKBh p. 93, l. 23–p. 94, l. 6.

**Abbreviations and Primary Sources**


**Secondary Source**


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〈Key words〉 *Abhidharmavatāra*, 入阿毘達磨論, *Mānusyakasūtra*, 人経, *pratisamkhyānirodha*, 択滅, real existence, 実在

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