Meaning of the Thirty-Seven Practices to Attain Enlightenment for *Bodhisattvas*:

The Significance of Canonical Citations in the SAVBh ad MSABh XVIII

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0. Introduction

Mahāyānasūtrālamkārabhāṣya (MSABh) is generally attributed to Vasubandhu (ca. 400–480). The original Sanskrit version of the text —important in the Yogācāra School— consists of 21 chapters. In the MSABh, the MSABh ad MSA XVIII explains the thirty-seven practices for *bodhisattvas* to attain enlightenment (*saptatrimśad bodhipakṣadharmā*), a training method which was also practiced by Early Buddhist monks. *Madhyāntavibhāgaṭīkā* (MAVṬ) ad MAV II says that these practices are the same for *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*.¹⁾ Although the MSABh defines these thirty-seven practices as *bodhisattvas*' practices, little attention has been paid to the characteristic content of the training method. Therefore, little research has explicitly examined whether these thirty-seven practices have aided *bodhisattvas* with their enlightenment in the MSABh.

On the other hand, *Sūtrālamkāravṛttibhāṣya* (SAVBh), an MSABh commentary attributed to Sthiramati (ca. 510–570), clearly emphasizes that *bodhisattvas* are superior to *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, owing to these thirty-seven practices they follow for attaining enlightenment. For explaining differences between the *bodhisattvas*' training method and that of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, the SAVBh comments on the MSABh through many canonical citations.

In this article, we investigate how to show the magnificence of *bodhisattvas* by accurately exploring the association between descriptive passages and canonical citations in the SAVBh.

1. Definition of the *Bodhipakṣadharmā* in the SAVBh ad MSABh XVIII

First, Sthiramati reveals his understanding of the definition of the thirty-seven practices of the *bodhisattvas* in the SAVBh ad MSABh XVIII. According to the SAVBh, Sthiramati

regards all contents of the MSABh ad MSA XVIII as practices for *bodhisattvas*, explaining why Vasubandhu notes the four types of meditation (*catuḥ-smṛtyupasthāna*) after two types of accumulations. The thirty-seven practices to attain enlightenment include four types of meditation that form the basis of others of the thirty-seven practices. The passage can be translated as follows:

Analysis of the four types of meditation consists of three stanzas. Why are the thirty-seven practices to attain enlightenment interpreted after explaining two accumulations? [Sthiramati says as follows: *bodhisattvas*] exercise these practices to take away afflictive hindrances and cognitive hindrances by means of two types of accumulations. Therefore, [Vasubandhu] arranges the topic of practices for attaining enlightenment after explaining two types of accumulations.²⁾

Depending on an understanding of Sthiramati, Vasubandhu shows his understanding of the four types of meditation for *bodhisattvas* on the assumption that *bodhisattvas* remove afflictive hindrances and cognitive hindrances by using two types of accumulations: accumulation of merit and accumulation of wisdom. This definition of four types of meditation shows *bodhisattvas*' features because only *bodhisattvas* eliminate the two types of hindrances. In SAVBh, Sthiramati states that the two types of accumulations differ from those of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* using effective canonical citations in.

2. Canonical Citation from the *Kāśyapaparivartakasūtra* in the SAVBh

Through canonical citation from the *Kāśyapaparivartakasūtra* (KP) in the SAVBh, Sthiramati emphasizes that *bodhisattvas*' two types of accumulations are better than those of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*. This citation from the KP distinguishes two types of accumulations between *bodhisattvas* and *śrāvakas*. Therefore, the SAVBh ad MSABh k.38 runs as follows:

Bodhisattvas' two types of accumulations, accumulation of merit and accumulation of wisdom, are more excellent than *śrāvakas*'. This stanza makes known what accumulations are and why [*bodhisattvas*] gather accumulations. In this case, *bodhisattvas*' accumulations are twofold, that is accumulation of merit and accumulation of wisdom. Because accumulation of merit and accumulation of wisdom are gathered by *bodhisattvas* for their own sake and for all sentient beings, [this act by *bodhisattvas*] is distinguished from that by *śrāvakas*'. In short, these two accumulations are not equal in quality to *śrāvakas*' accumulations.

Furthermore, KP runs as follows: Accumulation of wisdom for *bodhisattvas* can be compared to a wide space empty in all directions. Accumulation of wisdom for *śrāvakas* can be compared to a

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space as minute as a hole eaten by a bug in a poppy seed. Accumulation of merit for *bodhisattvas* can be compared to a vast expanse of waters spreading in all directions. In contrast, accumulation of merit for *śrāvakas* can be compared to a drop of water clinging to the tip of a strand of hair.³⁾

This canonical citation from the KP asserts that from point of view of amount the two types of accumulations for *bodhisattvas* are different from those of *śrāvakas*. The body text of this canonical citation also points out a distinctive quantitative difference between *bodhisattvas*' accumulations and those of *śrāvakas*: however, the body text of the KP states that accumulations of merit for *bodhisattvas* are referred to as "a vast expanse of waters covered from fresh butter." According to *Kāśyapaparivartaka-ṭīkā* (KPT_ṭ), commentary on the KP, this simile should be interpreted on the basis of understanding of the *Viniścayasamgrahanī* (Vinś) of the *Yogācārabhūmi*.⁴⁾ In the Vinś, accumulation of merit for *bodhisattvas* is not compared to a vast expanse of waters covered with fresh butter but a vast expanse of waters spread in all directions. The canonical citation from KP in the SAVBh is similar to analysis of accumulation of merit for *bodhisattvas* in the Vinś. Therefore, it is highly likely that Sthiramati, author of the SAVBh, is a learned scholar of KP, KPT_ṭ and Vinś.

3. Canonical Citations from the Akṣ in the SAVBh

In the SAVBh ad MSABh XVIII, canonical citations from the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtra* (Akṣ) are the most numerous. The AKṣ is one of the most popular *Mahāyāna* Buddhist *sūtras* along with the KP. An outstanding feature in the SAVBh is that Sthiramati explains the major part of the thirty-seven practices to attain enlightenment by depending on canonical citations from Akṣ. Vasubandhu shows fourteen viewpoints for explaining the four types of meditation in the MSABh, and Sthiramati further describes fourteen viewpoints in the SAVBh. In this case, according to Braarvig [1993: liv], Sthiramati cites two canonical citations from Akṣ for explaining the four types of meditation for *bodhisattvas*. Within the fourteen viewpoints and from the viewpoint of cognitive objects, the following passage of the SAVBh shows that the four types of meditation for *bodhisattvas* are different from those of *śrāvakas* using a canonical citation from Akṣ.

If anyone asks that [how the four types of meditation for *bodhisattvas* can be distinguished from those of the others] from the viewpoint of their cognitive objects, [we answer as follows]: because [*bodhisattvas*] regard bodies of all sentient beings as their cognitive objects. Also, if anyone asks

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how the [four types of meditation for *bodhisattvas*] can be better [than those of the others] by referring to this sort of cognitive object, [we answer as follows]: *śrāvakas* regard only one's own body and one's own senses etc. as objects for their practices. In contrast, *bodhisattvas* recognize both one's own body and bodies of all sentient beings, as well as one's own senses and the senses of all other sentient beings. For this reason, *bodhisattvas*' cognitive objects are superior to *śrāvakas*' cognitive objects [when they practice the four types of meditation]. Therefore, we should refer to the passages in the Akṣ: if anyone asks how *bodhisattvas* practice observing bodies, [we answer as follows]: he observes both his own body, the bodies of all sentient beings, and so on.⁵⁾

According to the SAVBh, when they practice their four types of meditation, *Bodhisattvas*' cognitive objects include both one's own body and those of the others. Sthiramati intends that *bodhisattvas* themselves are superior to *śrāvakas*, using the explanation of four types of meditation through a canonical citation from the Akṣ. Likewise, Sthiramati explains four types of meditation from the viewpoint of acquisition by using another canonical citation from the Akṣ:

If anyone inquires if it is possible [to explain four types of meditation for *bodhisattvas*] from the viewpoint of acquisition, we answer as follows: why is the acquisition of *bodhisattvas* superior to that of *śrāvakas*? it is said that *śrāvakas* practice [four types of meditation] for leaving one's own body and one's own perception, etc. In contrast, *bodhisattvas* practice neither for leaving [bodies and perceptions, etc.] nor for clinging to [bodies and perceptions, etc.] Therefore, [*bodhisattvas* are superior to *śrāvakas*] from the viewpoint of acquisition. If anyone inquires how *bodhisattvas* do not leave [bodies and perceptions], we respond to them like this: [*bodhisattvas*] do not leave [bodies and perceptions] because of clinging to three types of bodies associated with *tathāgata*. If anyone inquires that how *bodhisattvas* do not close [bodies and perceptions], we respond to them like this: because *bodhisattvas* do practice leaving their bodies produced by their acts and afflictions, but *bodhisattvas* do not close [bodies and perceptions produced by their acts and afflictions]. Also [this passage being susceptible to another interpretation], *bodhisattvas* do not leave their own bodies for the sake of acquiring three types of bodies, that is, *bodhisattvas* eager to practice acquiring three types of bodies [associated with *tathāgata*] on the basis of their own bodies [produced by their acts and afflictions]. Furthermore, the Akṣ runs as follows: *bodhisattvas* observe their bodies in the past, their bodies in the future, and their bodies at present. . . [*bodhisattvas*] recognize selflessness on the basis of their own bodies and truthful things on the basis of their untruthful bodies. What are truthful things in this passage? For example, it is established that body of *tathāgata*, *dharma-kāya*, *vajrakāya*, etc., which are distinguished from all of the three realms of existence (*trai-dhātuka*) on the basis of being truthful things. *Bodhisattvas* are not attached to a fault called their own bodies. Therefore, *bodhisattvas* acquire the body of *tathāgata* that is apart from all faults. For this reason, *bodhisattvas* practice [four types of meditation] with their power observing their own bodies which are composed of four elements because they experience goodness.⁶⁾

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In this manner, the SAVBh points out that acquisition of *bodhisattvas* means adopting the body of *tathāgata*, etc. by using this canonical citation from the Akṣ. In addition, AkṣṬ, a commentary of the Akṣ attributed to Vasubandhu, gives countenance to two canonical citations from the Akṣ for explaining four types of meditation.⁷⁾ Although Vasubandhu does not explain four types of meditation for *bodhisattvas* by using the technical term of *mahāyāna* buddhist thoughts, such as a body of *tathāgata*, etc. in the MSABh, it is known that Sthiramati intends to emphasize the four types of meditations for *bodhisattvas* by means of canonical citations Akṣ.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we investigated explanations of the thirty-seven practices to attain enlightenment, especially four types of meditations for *bodhisattvas*, which are closely associated with canonical citations from the KP and the Akṣ in the SAVBh. Despite the MAVṬ mentioning that the thirty-seven practices to attain enlightenment of *bodhisattvas* are similar to those of *śrāvakas*, Sthiramati's discussion is the subject of the thirty-seven practices to attain enlightenment as *bodhisattva*'s training method in the SAVBh. The SAVBh explains the thirty-seven practices to attain enlightenment for *bodhisattvas* on the basis of canonical citations such as the KP and the Akṣ. There is little foundation for Sthiramati's interpretations ad MSABh XVIII, except for these canonical citations: however, commentaries of the KP and the Akṣ state that canonical citations from the KP and the Akṣ in the SAVBh play an important part of emphasizing the descriptive passages in the SAVBh depending on *Yogācāra* theory in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. Therefore, the SAVBh is successful in emphasizing *bodhisattvas*' superiority on the basis of these canonical citations. Thus, we recommend that future research on *Mahāyāna* texts and their commentaries, such as the MSABh and SAVBh, focus on relationships with the *Mahāyānasūtra* and their commentaries involving the KP and the Akṣ.

〈Notes〉

1) See MAVṬ 89, 12–90, 13.

2) **dran pa nye bar gzhaḡ pa rnam par dbye ba'i tshigs su bcad pa gsum ste** zhes bya ba la / tshogs kyi skabs bshad pa'i rjes la byang chub kyi phyogs kyi chos sum cu rtsa bdun bshad par 'brel pa ci yod snyam na de ltar tshogs bsags pa des nyon mongs pa dang shes bya'i sgrib pa spang ba'i phyir byang chub kyi phyogs la sgom (P.: bsgom) par byed de de bas na tshogs kyi rjes la byang chub

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kyi phyogs kyi skabs bshad par 'brel to /(P.://) de la yang dran pa nye bar gzhag pa bzhi bsgom pa ni tshigs su bcad pa gsum gyis bstan to //(SAVBh D.Tsi 103a2–3)

3) **byang chub sems dpa'i tshogs dag ni // mi mnyam bsod nams ye shes so //(18-38ab)** zhes bya ba'i tshigs su bcad pa gcig gis tshogs gang yin pa dang / gang gi phyir tshogs su gyur pa de ston te / de la byang chub sems dpa'i tshogs ni rnam pa gnyis te / bsod nams kyi tshogs dang ye shes kyi tshogs so // byang chub sems dpa'i bsod nams dang ye shes kyi tshogs ni bdag dang sems can thams cad kyi don du bsags pas ni nyan thos la sogs pa'i tshogs las 'phags pa'i phyir mi mnyam pa zhes bya'o // de bas na dkon mchog brtsegs pa'i mdo las kyang / byang chub sems dpa' rnam kyi ye shes kyi tshogs ni phyogs bcu'i nam mkha' lta bur blta'o // nyan thos rnam kyi ye shes kyi tshogs ni yungs 'bru srin bus zos pa'i nang gi nam mkha' khyon tsam du blta'o // byang chub sems dpa'i bsod nams kyi tshogs ni phyogs bzhi'i rgya mtsho'i chu lta bur blta'o // nyan thos kyi bsod nams kyi tshogs ni ba'i rmig rjes kyi chu lta bur blta'o zhes gsungs so // 'dis ni tshogs gang yin pa bstan to // (SAVBh D. Tsi 101a3–6)

4) See Ōtake [2008: 242–243] .

5) **ji ltar dmigs she na / sems can rnam kyi lus la sogs pa la dmigs pa'i phyir ro** zhes bya ba la / ji ltar dmigs pa'i rnam pas khyad zhugs she na / nyan thos la sogs pa ni bdag gi lus dang tshor ba la sogs pa tsam zhig la dmigs shing sgom par byed kyi / byang chub sems dpa' rnam ni bdag dang sems can thams cad kyi lus dang / tshor ba la sogs pa la dmigs par byed do // de bas na dmigs pa khyad zhugs so // de bas na 'phags pa blo gros mi zad pa'i mdo las kyang / ji ltar na byang chub sems dpa' lus la lus kyi rjes su lta zhing gnas she na/ de bdag gi lus dang gzhan gyi lus la lus kyi rjes su lta zhing gnas te zhes bya ba la sogs pa gsungs so // (SAVBh D.: 104b5–7)

6) **ji ltar thob pa zhe na / lus la sogs pa dang bral ba yang ma yin ma bral ba yang ma yin pa'i phyir ro** zhes bya ba la / ji ltar thob par khyad zhugs she na / nyan thos la sogs pa ni lus dang tshor ba la sogs pa dang bral bar bya ba'i phyir sgom gyi / byang chub sems dpa' rnam ni bral bar bya ba'i phyir sgom pa yang ma yin te / mi 'bral bar bya ba'i phyir sgom pa yang ma yin pas thob pa'i rnam pas khyad zhugs so // ji ltar 'bral ba yang ma yin zhe na / de bzhin gshegs pa'i sku gsum dang mi 'bral zhing de thob par bya ba'i phyir bsgoms pas 'bral ba yang ma yin no // ji ltar mi 'bral ba yang ma yin zhe na / las dang nyon mongs pas bskyed pa'i lus dang bral bar bya ba'i phyir bsgoms pas mi 'bral ba yang ma yin no // yang na sku gsum thob par bya ba'i phyir lus 'di dang yang bral bar mi byed de / lus la brten nas sku gsum dgos pas na'o zhes bya ba la mi 'bral ba yang ma yin te / lus dang nyon mongs pas bskyed pa'i lus sdug bsngal ba'i rang bzhin dbu ba'i gong bu lta bu 'di la chags par byas na so so'i skye bo bzhin du rtag tu 'khor bar gnas par 'gyur ba'i phyir / lus 'di ni 'di dang 'bral bar yang byed do // de bas na 'phags pa blo gros mi zad pa'i mdo las kyang / lus kyi sngon gyi mtha' la yang rtog / lus kyi phyi ma'i mtha' la yang rtog ces bya ba nas / lus 'di la bdag gir mi bya'i bdag lus snying po med pa 'di la snying po mngon par 'tshang rgya bar bya'o // 'di lta ste / snying po gang zhe na / gang 'di de bzhin gshegs pa'i sku / chos kyi sku / rdo rje'i sku / mi shigs pa'i sku / brtan pa'i sku / khams gsum thams cad las bye brag tu 'phags pa'i sku de bdag gis bsgub par bya'o // bdag gi lus nyes pa du ma'i skyon chags mod kyi / de bzhin gshegs pa'i sku nyes pa thams cad dang bral ba rab tu thob par bya'o // des legs pa mthong bas na so sor rtog pa'i stobs kyis 'byung ba chen po'i gnas kyi lus la spyod do

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zhes bya ba la sog pa gsungs so // (SAVBh D. 104b2–105b2)

7) Cf. Akṣṭ D.231a2–4, Akṣṭ D.231a4–6 and Akṣṭ D.232a3–7.

〈Abbreviations〉

- Akṣ 'phags pa blo gros mi zad pas bstan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po 'i mdo (*Aryākṣayamatinirdeśanāmamahāyānasūtra*). D. No. 175, P. No. 842 .
- Akṣṭ Vasubandhu, *Āryākṣayamatinirdeśasūtraṭīkā*. D. No. 3994, P. No. 5495.
- KP *Kāśyapaparivarta*. Baron A. von Staël-Holstein, ed. *The Kāśyapaparivarta: A Mahāyānasūtra of the Ratnakūṭa Class, Edited in the Original Sanskrit in Tibetan and in Chinese*, 1926. Reprint, Tokyo: Meicho Fukyūkai, 1977.
- KPṭ 'phags pa dkon mchog brtsegs pa chen po chos kyi rnam grangs le'u stong phrag brgya pa las 'od srungs kyi le'u 'i rgya cher 'grel pa (*Āryamahāratnakūṭa-dharmaparyāyaśatasāhasrika-parivarta kāśyapaparivarta-ṭīkā*). D. No. 4009, P. No. 5510.
- MAVṭ Sthiramati, *Madhyāntavibhāgaṭīkā*. Yamaguchi S., ed. *Exposition Systématique du Yogācāra-vijñaptivāda*, Nagoya: Hajinkaku, 1934.
- MSA See MSABh.
- MSABh Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkārabhāṣya. Levi, Sylvain ed., *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra-Exposé de la Doctrine du Grand Véhicule selon le Système Yogācāra*. Tome I; Texte, Paris, 1907.
- MAV See MAVBh.
- MAVBh Vasubandhu, *Madhyāntaribhāga-bhāṣya*. Nago, G ed., Tokyo, 1964.
- SAVBh Sthiramati, *Sūtrālaṃkāravṛttibhāṣya*. D No. 4034, P No. 5531.
- Vinśg *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*. D No. 4038, P No. 5539.

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〈Key words〉 *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkārabhāṣya*, *Sūtrālaṃkāravṛttibhāṣya*, Sthiramati, *saptatrimśad bodhipakṣadharmā*, *Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra*

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