Madhyamakāvatāra and Prasannapadā

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1. Preamble

The *Madhyamakāvatāra* (MA) and the *Prasannapadā* (Pras), a commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (MMK), are the two most representative treatises by Candrakīrti (ca. 600–650), who recognized himself as a Mādhyamika. The MA predates the Pras since the former is quoted in the latter. Focusing on the MA's final five verses and the Pras's initial four verses, the present paper intends to point out a contrast between these treatises.

2. A Structure of the *Madhyamakāvatāra*

Before quoting the verses in question, a few remarks should be made concerning the structure of the MA.¹⁾

2.1. Ten Resolutions

In the Tibetan MA, we find the chapter colophons corresponding to ten resolutions (*cittotpāda*).²⁾ As far as the four verses from the seventh to the ninth resolution —serially numbered in LVP's Tibetan *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya* (MABh)³⁾ edition— are concerned, the chapter divisions take place in the middle of the first and the fourth verses, respectively.⁴⁾

The first verse reads as follows:

kṣaṇe kṣaṇe caiṣa nirodham asyāṁ dūraṁgamāyāṁ pratipadyamānaḥ |
upāyasatpāramitāptadīptiḥ muhurmuḥuḥ prāk kuśalādhikāptau ||

In the middle of this verse, the seventh resolution ends with 'splendor acquired through the excellent perfection of efficient strategies (*upāyasatpāramitāptadīptiḥ*),' while the eighth begins with 'for the sake of constantly attaining the increase of previous wholesome [deeds] (*muhurmuḥuḥ prāk kuśalādhikāptau*)' and ends within the fourth verse which reads as follows:

niruddhaḥ saṁsāro daśa tu vaśitāḥ prāptim agaman
 svam ātmānaṁ tābhiḥ kathayati vicitraṁ bhavagatau |
 navamyāṁ saṁśuddhiṁ vrajati hi balan tasya sakalaṁ
 tathā saṁviddharmāṁ svaguṇapariśuddhāṁś ca labhate ||

The first half verse, ‘*saṁsāra* has stopped, but having attained the ten powers, by virtue of these he reveals himself variously in the state of existence,’ belongs to the eighth resolution, whereas the latter half verse, ‘at the ninth [stage], all of his powers become fully purified, and likewise, [he = a bodhisattva] obtains [the four] special knowledges purified by [his] own characteristics,’ describes the ninth resolution.

Notably, there are extra verses after the tenth resolution.

2.2. Contents after the Ten Resolutions

After the comments on the tenth resolution, the Sanskrit MABh runs as follows:

idānīm ādyaṁ cittotpādam ārabhya tadguṇasaṁkhyādhigamam adhikṛtyāha ...

‘Now, beginning from the initial resolution, taking as [his] topic the understanding of the number of their qualities, he (= Candrakīrti) says, ...’

The comments on nine verses addressing the numbers of the qualities on the ten [bodhisattva] stages ends as follows:

uktā daśabhūmayo guṇapratilambhataḥ

‘The ten stages have been explained from the point of view of the attainment of qualities.’

The Tibetan text reads differently, as follows:

byang chub sems dpa'i sa'i yon tan bstan pa bshad zin to

‘The qualities of the Bodhisattva stage have been explained.’

The text continues as follows:

ataḥ paraṁ buddhabhūmeḥ kiṁcinmātraḡuṇodbibhāvayaṣayā Buddham Bhagavantam adhikṛtya
 stutyupasaṁhāreṇāha ...

‘Hereafter, with regard to the Buddha, the Exalted One, with the intent to express a small measure of the qualities of the Buddha stage, he (Candrakīrti) says, by way of summarizing praise,’

From the above quotations, it is clear that the contents of the MA after the ten resolutions are shifted to both Bodhisattva and Buddha stages. LVP’s Tibetan MABh edition, moreover, restarts the numbering for the final five verses since they are dedicated to Nāgārjuna.⁵⁾

2.3. On the Chapter Divisions

In terms of contents, the MA comprises thirteen topics, namely, ten resolutions, the qualities on both the Bodhisattva and Buddha stages, and homage to Nāgārjuna. However, it is not always certain whether these topics correspond to the chapters in the MA, since it needs to be explained why the chapter divisions from the seventh to ninth take place in the middle of the verses.

In the Sanskrit MABh, the chapter colophons with the indication ‘in the MA (*madhyamakāvatāre*)’ are found only from the first to the fifth resolution.⁶⁾ The Sanskrit notes on the MABh in the **Lakṣaṇaṭīkā* (**Lakṣ*), moreover, indicates chapters 1–5 only.⁷⁾ These facts suggest that the material in the MA(Bh) from the sixth resolution onwards was not considered to be divided.

For the purpose of the present paper, it suffices here to state that a careful examination is required for determining the MA’s chapter divisions.

3. The Final Five Verses in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*

The final five verses in the MA,⁸⁾ dedicated to Nāgārjuna, run as follows:

śāstrān madhyamakād eṣā prakriyodvṛtya varṇitā |

yathāgamaṁ yathāmnāyaṁ bhikṣuṇā Candrakīrtinā || [1]

‘This doctrine (*prakriyā*), having been selected from the *Madhyamaka* Śāstra, is described by the mendicant Candrakīrti, following authoritative testimony (*āgama*) and tradition (*āmnāya*).’

ito ‘nyatra na dharmo ‘yaṁ yathāsti prakriyā tathā |

ihatyānyatra nāstīti vyavasyantu vicakṣaṇāḥ || [2]⁹⁾

‘The clear-sighted ones should be convinced that in the same way that this Dharma does not exist anywhere else than here, the doctrine here (*ihatyā*) does not exist elsewhere.’

Nāgārjunorutaradhīhradavarṇabhītya tyaktāni yāni sumatāni janena dūrāt |

tatkārikākumudakuḍmalabodhatoyair āśāḥ prapūrayati samprati Candrakīrtiḥ || [3]¹⁰⁾

‘Frightened of the color of the lake of Nāgārjuna’s expansive wisdom (*dhī*), people, at a distance, have abandoned the excellent tenet systems (*sumatāni*). Candrakīrti now fulfils [their] wishes with the water that causes the water-lily buds of his verses [of the MA] to bloom.’

prāgabhyāsata eva tattvam uditam bhīmaṁ gabhīraṁ jano

yāyān niścayataḥ śrute ‘pi ca mahaty anyo na yāyād idam |

tasmād anyamate svabuddhiracitā dṛṣṭvāpi tāḥ prakriyāḥ

ātmodbhāsimatesv iva tyaja matād asmāt parasmin matim || [4]¹¹⁾

‘Just on account of previous practice, a person would definitely understand the frightening and

profound truth that has been explained, but others, even though greatly learned, would not understand this [truth]. Therefore, having seen those doctrines that were fabricated by their own understanding (*svabuddhiracitā*) in the doctrines of others, give up, as in the tenet system which illuminates the Self (*Ātman*), [your] esteem (*matī*) in regard to the other [tenet system] over our tenet system.'

prāptāṃ puṇyaṃ sumatakathanād ārya-Nāgārjunasya
prāptāśāntāṃ śaraduṇibhaṃ kleśakṛṣṇe manaḥkhe |
cintāhau vā phaṇamaṇibhaṃ yaṃ mayā tena lokas
tattvaṃ buddhvā tvaritam akhilaṃ saugatim yāntu bhūmim || [5]¹²⁾

'By the merit, which extends to the end of space, that I have obtained from the exposition of the excellent tenet system of the Noble Nāgārjuna, [merit which is], like autumn stars in the sky of the mind darkened by defilements, or like the jewel in the hood of the serpent of the mind, may the world, having realized reality, completely [and] quickly proceed quickly to the stage of the One Well Gone.'

3.1. The Other Occurrences of *Prakriyā* in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*

In the verses quoted above, one of the crucial terms is 'doctrine (*prakriyā*). In the MA, the term is also found in the following verses:

dharmaṃ sa gambhīratarāṇ avaiti yathāgamenāpi ca yuktitaś ca |
tathāryānāgārjunanītitaś tān yathāsthītaprakriyayā bravīmi || [VI.3]¹³⁾

'Just as he (i.e., Nāgārjuna) understands that the elements (*dharma*s) have the extremely profound [natures of dependent arising] by means of authoritative testimony (*āgama*) as well as reasoning (*yukti*), so do I explain them by means of the doctrine as it stands (*yathāsthītaprakriyā*), following the Noble Nāgārjuna.'

evaṃ jñātvā prakriyāṃ āgamasya vyākhyātārthaṃ yac ca neyārtham uktam |
sūtraṃ buddhvā nīyatāṃ yaṃ na tattvaṃ nītārthaṃ ca jñāyatāṃ śūnyatārtham || [VI.97]¹⁴⁾

'Having known the doctrine (*prakriyā*) of the authoritative testimony (*āgama*) in this way and having understood that a scripture which has a meaning that is explained [and] is not truth, is said to have a provisional meaning (*neyārtha*), and should be interpreted; and [scripture] with the meaning of the emptiness should be known as having definitive meaning (*nītārtha*).'

ātmā tīrthyaṃ kalpyate nityarūpo 'kartā bhoktā nirguṇo niṣkriyāś ca |
kañcit kañcid bhedam āśritya tasya bhedam yātāḥ prakriyāś tīrthikānāṃ || [VI.121]¹⁵⁾

'The Self (*Ātman*) is imagined by the outsiders as having a permanent nature, a non-agent, the enjoyer, without characteristics, and without activity. The doctrines of the outsiders concerning it (= the Self) have been differentiated in reliance on trivial differences.'

In the MA, it is noticed that the denotation of *prakriyā* is not limited to the Madhyamaka but also to other philosophical schools. Therefore, it can be concluded that doctrines

other than the Madhyamaka are taken into consideration when this term is used in the MA.

4. The Initial Four Verses in the *Prasannapadā*

Like the final five verses in the MA, the initial four verses in the Pras are also dedicated to Nāgārjuna. They run as follows:

yo 'ntadvayāvāsavidhūtavāsaḥ sambuddhadhīśāgaralabdhanmā |
saddharmatoyasya gabhīrabhāvaṃ yathānubuddhaṃ kṛpayā jagāda || [1]
yasya darśanatejāṃsi paravādimatendhanam |
dahanty adyāpi lokasya mānasāni tamāṃsi ca || [2]
yasyāsamajñānavacaḥśaraughā nighnanti niḥśeṣabhavarisenām |
tridhāturājaśriyam ādadhānā vineyalokasya sadevakasya || [3]
Nāgārjunāya prāṇipatyā tasmai tatkārikāṇāṃ vivṛtiṃ kariṣye |
uttānasatprakriyavākyanaddhām tarkānilāvyaḥkulitām prasannām || [4]¹⁶⁾

'Having bowed respectfully to Nāgārjuna, whose abode is removed from the dwelling of the two extremes, who attained his birth in the ocean of wisdom for the completely awakened one, who speaks, out of compassion, the profoundness of the water of correct Dharma just as he conceived [it], whose flames of the view consume even today the fuel of others' tenet system and the mental darkness of the world, whose words from unequal knowledge like showers of arrows destroy existence like the entire hostile army, [and] establish sovereignty in the three realms for living beings to be guided and the gods, I shall compose a commentary to his verses, which is inlaid with understandable sentences in which the correct doctrine [is exposed], undisturbed by the winds of logics, and of clarity.'¹⁷⁾

Although the Pras reads °*prakriyā*°, *Lakṣ glosses with *prakriyā*.¹⁸⁾ The terms such as 'wisdom (*dhī*),' 'water (*toya*),' 'profound (*gabhīra*),' '(the) other (*para*),' 'tenet system (*mata*),' 'living beings (*loka*),' 'Nāgārjuna,' and 'doctrine (*prakriyā*)' are also found in the final five verses in the MA. The figurative expressions such as 'the mental darkness (*mānasāni tamāṃsi*)' remind us of the MA's final verse. Based on this close relationship, one could imagine that Candrakīrti might have composed the Pras immediately after the MA.

In the Pras, notably, no occurrence of the term *prakriyā* is found except for the above homage verse and the quotation of MA VI.121. Taking the usages of the term *prakriyā* in the MA into consideration, it can be presumed that the MA is intended for general readers whereas the main targets of the Pras are the followers of the Madhyamaka doctrine.

4.1. *Prakriyā* in the *Madhyamakaśāstrastuti*

Incidentally, the term *prakriyā* is found in the *Madhyamakaśāstrastuti* (MŚS) consisted of

fourteen verses found at the end of the Pras.¹⁹⁾ The verse in question runs as follows:

kṛtvā vṛttim imām anākulapadām satprakriyām ādarāt
 śrāddhānām sudhiyām ca niścayavidhau yuktyāgamāpāśrayām |
 yat puṇyaṁ mama śūnyateva vipulaṁ tenaiva loko 'kḥilas
 tyaktvā dṛṣṭigaṇam prayātu padavīm sarvaprapañcacchidām || MŚS 13²⁰⁾

'Having composed this commentary zealously, which has understandable phrases and the correct doctrine, within the way of ascertainment for the sake of the faithful and wise persons on the basis of reasoning and authoritative testimony, may living beings, by means of my broad merits like emptiness, having abandoned the group of [wrong] views, proceed to the path in which all manifoldness has ceased.'

This usage of the term *prakriyā* seems to follow the third pada of the fourth verse in the Pras, i.e., 'which is inlaid with understandable sentences in which the correct doctrine [is exposed] (*uttānasatprakriyavākyaṇaddhām*)' quoted above.

The verses of the MŚS are also dedicated to Nāgārjuna just as the final five verses in the MA and the initial four verses in the Pras. In the MŚS, moreover, it is noted that not only the treatises attributed to Nāgārjuna (v.10) are enumerated but also the names of the Madhyamaka masters (v.6 and 11) are referred to. These references might support a hypothesis that the Pras is intended for Madhyamaka followers.

5. A Conclusion

First, the present paper poses a question about the chapter divisions in the MA. Although the MA has thirteen topics, namely, ten resolutions, the merits in both Bodhisattva and Buddha stages, and the homage verses to Nāgārjuna, it is necessary to examine whether these topics correspond to the chapter division of MA or not. Besides the division from the seventh to ninth resolution, the chapter colophons in the Sanskrit MABh should be carefully examined to determine this.

Next, the final five verses in the MA and the initial four verses in the Pras, both of which are dedicated to Nāgārjuna, are quoted together with tentative translations. The fact that the same terms, namely, 'wisdom (*dhī*),' 'water (*toya*),' 'profound (*gabhīra*),' '(the) other (*para*),' 'tenet system (*mata*),' 'living beings (*loka*),' 'Nāgārjuna,' and 'doctrine (*prakriyā*)' are found therein shows a close relationship between both treatises. As far as the term *prakriyā* is concerned, however, there are no occurrences in the Pras except for the homage verse and the quotation from MA VI.121. This usage might imply that the MA is intended

for the general readers, whereas the Pras is limited to the Mādhyamikas. This hypothesis might be supported by the MŚS.

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Notes

- 1) See also Matsumoto 2010, (28)–(32).
- 2) See D 3861: 202b1, 203a1, 203b4–5, 203b6, 203b7, 215a5, 215a6, 215b1, 2152, 215b3–4.
- 3) The MA's Sanskrit text is based on the Sanskrit manuscript of the MABh, preserved at the Potala Palace in Lhasa. Concerning the manuscript, see Li 2015, 2; Yonezawa 2019, 46–47.
- 4) See also LVP 1907–1912 [1970], 343.15 and 348.13.
- 5) These five verses in Tibetan (LVP. 1907–1912 [1970], 406–409) are translated as 'Epilogue' by Huntington 1989, 196. See also Ogawa 1975 and Uryūzu and Nakazawa 2012, 340–344.
- 6) MABh MS 9a1–2, 12b1, 16b3, 17b5, and 18b4.
- 7) The Sanskrit notes on the Pras and the *Catuhśatakaṭikā* in the *Lakṣ give the chapter numbers 1–27 and 1–16 respectively. Concerning the chapter numbers in the Sanskrit notes on the MABh, see Yonezawa 2019, 199, 205, 210, 212, and 213.
- 8) The verse numbers follow those of LVP's Tibetan MABh.
- 9) b: *ihatyā* for MS. *ihartyā*.
- 10) Concerning the Sanskrit notes in the *Lakṣ, see Yonezawa 2019, 287 (§289).
- 11) a: *°abhyāsata* for MS. *°abhyasata*. Concerning the Sanskrit notes in the *Lakṣ, see Yonezawa 2019, 288 (§290).
- 12) The reading of the pada b is tentative. b: *prāptāśāntaṃ* for MS. *prāptaṃ śāntaṃ*; *śaraduḥunibhaṃ* for MS. *śaraduḥu.u+++taṃ*. c: *cintāhau* for MS. *cittāhau*. Concerning the Sanskrit notes in the *Lakṣ, see Yonezawa 2019, 288 (§292).
- 13) Li 2015, 4.
- 14) Li 2015, 16.
- 15) This verse is quoted in the Pras. See Niisaku 2016, 112. Cf. LVP 1903–1913 [1970], 344, 5–8 and Li 2015, 19.
- 16) Cf. MacDonald 2015b, 7–9.
- 17) MacDonald 2015a, 115–116. The verse numbers are given provisionally.
- 18) See Yonezawa 2019, 77 (§2).
- 19) See de Jong 1979. Notably, Sanskrit notes on the Pras in the *Lakṣ deals with the MŚS as a part of the Pras. See Yonezawa 2019, 170–172 (§328–339).
- 20) See de Jong 1979, 545.

Abbreviations

*Lakṣ **Lakṣaṇaṭikā*. See Yonezawa 2019.

- LVP de la Vallée Poussin, Louis.
 MA *Madhyamakāvatāra*. See below.
 MABh *Madhyamakāvarāra-Bhāṣya*. See LVP 1907–1912 [1970], Li 2015, and Yonezawa 2019.
 MŚS *Madhyamakasastrastuti*. See de Jong 1979.
 Pras *Prasannapadā*. See LVP 1903–1913 [1970], MacDonald 2015ab, Niisaku 2016, and Yonezawa 2019.

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