On the “Three *Jñatās*”

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1 The Three *Jñatās*

The three *jñatās*, the three aspects of wisdom, are *sarva-jñā(tā)*, *mārga-jñatā* and *sarvākāra-jñatā*. These are said in the *Mahā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (abr. MP) and the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (abr. AA). We want to clarify the character of the three *jñatās*, researching their development. The three *jñatās*, in good order, are explained as follows:

薩婆若是一切聲聞辟支佛智，道種智是菩薩摩訶薩智，一切種智是諸佛智¹⁾. (*Sarva-jñatā* is the wisdom of all *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*. *Mārgajñatā* is that of *bodhisattvas*, *mahāsattvas*. And *sarvākārajñatā* is that of all *buddhas*.)

But this definition is not always fixed throughout the MP. For instance, it is said everywhere in the MP that *bodhisattva* attains *sarva-jñatā* and *sarvākārajñatā* also. And the order of the three *jñatās* is unsettled especially in the earlier parts of MP. Even in the MP by which the definition of the three *jñatās* is given, we find this uncertainty and changing process of the three *jñatā*. Therefore, we ought to consider it, tracing back to early Buddhism.

2 The Early Buddhism

In early Buddhism, we can only find *sarvajñā (-tā)* and not find the three *jñatās*. The name of *mārgajñatā* is found but does not mean one of the three. That is the wisdom about four *satyas*.

Sarvajñā is explained as the essence of *Buddha*. When *Tathāgata* en-

1) Taisho Shinshū Daizokyo (abr. T), Ⅷ, 375 b. cf. T Ⅷ, 695 a, 337 b; Ⅷ, 114 a (This *sūtra* is the oldest of the existing texts. So, the three *jñatās* are arranged differently from the others i. e. 薩云若，薩云若事 (*sarvākārajñatā*), 道慧事. This means that *sarvākārajñatā* is abstracted from *sarvajñā* in early times.)

lightenes, he is considered to gain *sarvajña*. To be *Buddha* is to have *sarvajña*. This type of explanation is common there.

In 婆沙論²⁾, *sarvākārajñatā* is explained with *sarva-jña(tā)*. As Dr. Nishi mentions³⁾, with the idea of *Mahāsaṃgīka* and early *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, it is clearly mentioned that *sarvajñatā* belongs to *śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha* and knows general characters of all existence, and *sarvākārajñatā* belongs only to *Buddha* and knows both general and peculiar characters of all existence. *Bodhisattva* is related to *sarvajñatā*⁴⁾ but *mārgajñatā* is not yet found here.

In the *Abhidharma-kośa*, it is said:

……世尊, 一切 (*sarva*) 法中智 (*jña*) 自在故……唯一切智知⁵⁾ (As Buddha's wisdom is free in all existence……only by *sarvajñatā* he knows.)

This shows that *sarvajñatā* is etymologically explained and belonged to *Buddha*. Yaśomitra, the commentator of the *Kośa*, mentions that *a-sarvajña* is *śrāvaka* etc.⁶⁾ This etymological explanation of “*sarva-jña*” is not found in early Buddhism and utters some advance of annotation in those times. Also, in 異部宗輪論, it is explained that …佛……一剎那心⁷⁾ (*jña*) 一切 (*sarva*) 法 (*Buddha*……by the mind in a moment understands all existence.).

3 The Smaller *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*

In the Smaller *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (abr. SP), the three *jñatās* are not found, but only *sarvajña* (一切智, 薩芸若, 薩婆若) meant the supreme wisdom, *Buddha*⁸⁾.

2) T XVII 906 a, 228 a.

3) Dr. Nishi (comp.), *The Study of The Path of Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Book Shop, 1968), p. 29. T XVII, 382 c.

4) T XVII, 780 a.

5) T XXX, 157 c.

6) Unrai Wogihara, *Sphuṭārtha Abhidharmakośa-vyākhyā* (Tokyo: Sanshūsha, 1936), p. 714.

7) T XLX, 15 b.

8) T VII, 463 c, 573 a; VII, 912 a; VII, 572 c (“自然智, 一切智, 如來智.” This signifies that *sarvajñatā* is synonym of Buddha's wisdom).

Judging from the terms translated in Chinese, as 薩芸若 (in 道行般若經, 鈔經), 薩婆若 (in 小品), 一切智 (in 明度, 佛母), the original word of them is considered “*sarvajña*”, perhaps not “*sarvajñatā*”⁹⁾. But that “*sarvajñatā*” is found in Skt. text corresponding to them is thought to be compiled later than the earlier SP. *Sarvajña-tā* is the word used to more abstract essence, wisdom, than *sarvajña* that means *Buddha* in early Buddhism. Also in the later SP as 第四會, 第五會, 佛母 etc., *Buddha* is analyzed into *dharmakāya*, *bhūta-koṭi*, *sarvajña-jñāna* etc.. Throughout the SP, in any case, *sarvajña* or *sarvajñatā* is the basis.

In the SP there are not three *jñatās* even in the chapters which develop into the MP where the three *jñatās* are mentioned in detail. This is because the *jñatā*, wisdom, in the SP, is mentioned by the term, *prajñāpāramitā* which is *Buddha*, *bodhisattva*’s wisdom and *sarvajña*. And this is analyzed in the next MP into three *jñatās*.

4 The *Mahā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*

In the Chap. 1 of the MP, we notice the next facts:

(1) *Mārgajñatā*, the characteristic wisdom of *bodhisattva*, is newly added to the two, till then, *sarvajña(tā)* and *sarvākārajñatā*. So, three *jñatās* are completed. *Mārgajñatā* is accompanied with the theory of *bodhisattva*. Thus it is noticeable that the 放光 MP says¹⁰⁾ 菩薩慧, *bodhisattva*’s wisdom, instead of *mārgajñatā* in the corresponding other texts.

(2) The order of explanation of the three *jñatās*, in the earlier MP, is *mārgajñatā*, *sarvajñatā* and *sarvākārajñatā*. This signifies its serious consideration of the MP about *mārgajñatā* of *bodhisattva*. In the later MP, are arranged *sarvajñatā*, *mārgajñatā* and *sarvākārajñatā* according to the classes, from the lower to the higher.

About above mention ((1)(2)), we find following passages corresponding to each other:

(a) 覺知一切菩薩慧者當學般若波羅蜜……菩薩摩訶薩欲具足薩云若……

9) T VII, 435 c. cf. The Aṣṭasāhasrikā, p. 96.

10) T VII, 2 c (as quoted next).

(放光, T Ⅷ, 2 c, trans. 291 A. D.)

(b)道 慧.....了慧.....道慧

(光讚, T Ⅷ, 149 b, trans. 286 A. D.)

(c)道 慧.....道慧.....道種慧.....一切智.....一切種智

(摩訶, T Ⅷ, 219 a, trans. 404 A. D.)

(d)一切智智.....一切智.....道相智.....一切相智

(大般若, T Ⅷ, 7 c, trans. 660-663 A. D.)

(e)*sarvajñatām mārgajñatām*.....*sarvākārajñatām*

(*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* ed. Dutt, p. 21)

Further comparing above sentences, the agents of wisdom are said one by one for every wisdom in (a) (b) (c). But the agent in (d) (e) translated in later times is one through three *jñatās*. We could say that in the earlier MP *bodhisattva* acts mainly one *mārgajñatā* and in the later MP he learns and depends on all three *jñatās* systematically.

Now, what is the *mārgajñatā*? In the Chap. 74, 遍學品 of 摩訶般若波羅蜜經¹¹⁾, it is explained as follows:

(1) It is named *sarvamārgākārajñatāviśuddhi*¹²⁾, the clear wisdom of all path's aspects.

(2) Accordingly, it is the intuition of *akāra* or the aspects, *nimitta* or the characteristic and *liṅga* or the mark, of all existence. And it is the knowledge of all the paths of *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, *bodhisattva* and *Buddha*.

(3) *Bodhisattva* who attains *mārgajñatā* should lead all mankind to salvation and preach buddhism all over the world as echo¹³⁾.

(4) *Bodhisattva* should understand the mind of all mankind and all beings in transmigration and lead to the teaching of *Buddha*¹⁴⁾.

As metioned above, in the MP which, absorbing the doctrine of *Abhidharma* buddhism, especially the virtues of *Hīna-yāna*, are enlarged and developed, it is needed to say that *bodhisattva* should not deny them and rather ought to act them in the view of *Mahāyāna*. And, by the etymology of *mārga-*

11) T Ⅷ, 381 c.

12) *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* (Tokyo Univ.), p. 395 b₃.

13) *ibid.*,

14) *ibid.*,

akāra (every kinds of Path containing *Hina yāna* and *Mahā yāna*) and by the *bodhisattva*'s spirit to benefit others, *mārgajñatā* is defined as the above passages.

5 The *Mahā Prajñāpāramitā Śāstra*

In this commentary of the MP, *mārgajñatā* is defined as the knowledge of all the paths, including both the paths (*mārgas*) to enlightenment and the six ways (*gatis*) of transmigration (*samsāra*). Further, *bodhisattva*, learning *mārgajñatā*, recognizes all the living beings' souls in transmigration and leads them to *prajñāpāramitā*¹⁵⁾.

About the relation between *sarvajñatā* and *sarvākārajñatā*, it is said that "Some one says without making distinction of the two" (有人言無差別)¹⁶⁾ and that *sarvajñatā* is whole feature of wisdom (總相, *sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*) and *sarvākāra-jñatā* is particular feature making the whole (別相, *viśeṣa-lakṣaṇa*). This shows that the two words are used indistinguishably then.

In the rear part of the MP¹⁷⁾, *sarvajñatā* belongs to *śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha*, and *mārgajñatā* belongs to *bodhisattva*, the higher rank than the former. But in the first part (說但用道種智得一切智, Using *mārgajñatā*, man should attain *sarvajñatā*.), *mārgajñatā* is seemed to belong to the lower rank than *sarvajñatā*. This passage denotes that *mārgajñatā* is lower wisdom than *sarvajñatā*. About this, it explains that *mārga* is the six *pāramitās* that you say, and after knowing and realizing it, man attains *sarvajñatā*, and so there is no doubt (汝所說六波羅蜜等即是道, 知是已行是道得一切智, 何所疑¹⁸⁾). But this shows that the contents of the front parts of MP is not yet so developed as the rear and the rear is compiled in the later period and more developed in the doctrine than the front parts.

6 The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*

Now, in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, the analysis of the MP in verse, and its commentary, the three *jñatās* are used as the titles of the chapters of them.

15) T XV, 257 c~. 16) *ibid.*, 258 c~. 17) *ibid.*, 259 a. 18) *ibid.*, 259 b.

The Chap. 1, that analyses the Chap. 1—26 of the MP, is named "*sarvākārajñatā*". The Chap. 2, that analyses the Chap. 27—42 of the MP, is named *mārgajñatā*. The Chap. 3, that analyses the Chap. 42—43 of the MP, is named *sarvajñatā*. But, the contents of the three chapters are not so distinguished as the titles. They are rather mixed with each other. And the three *jñatās* are explained repeatedly in every chapter. Thus, all the virtues of the three *jñatās* belonged to *śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha*, *bodhisattva* and *buddha*, are included in *bodhisattva* as we mentioned above.

The fundamental principle of the three is *Prajñāpāramitā*, on which by *sarvajñatā*, two *yānas* recognize *śānti* and *śūnya*, by *mārgajñatā*, *bodhisattva* should lead the others to the truth, and by *sarvākārajñatā*, *Buddha* enlightens the whole modes¹⁹.

7 The Commentary of *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*

The explanation of the three *jñatā* are more clearly and fully done in the commentaries of Vimuktisena and Haribhadra. In the summary explanation of them, grounding on the MP, *sarvākārajñatā* is buddha-hood, the aim for the *bodhisattva* to attain. *Mārgajñatā* is the wisdom by which he recognizes all paths. *Sarvākārajñatā* is gained by two *yānas* through full understanding of all entity.

The relation between the three wisdoms and defilement (*kleśa*, *āsrava*) is as follows²⁰:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{sarvajñatā} \text{---} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{anāsrava} \text{---} \textit{śrāvaka} \\ \textit{s'āsrava} \end{array} \right\} \\ \textit{mārgajñatā} \text{---} \textit{s'āsrava} \end{array} \right\} \textit{bodhisattva}$$

sarvākārajñatā—*anāsrava*—*samyak-sambuddha*

This indicates that the later idea of the MP, as in this commentary, lays stress rather on affirmation of real existence through denial more than on

19) Unrai Wogihara, *Abhisamayālaṃkāra' aloka Prajñāpāramitāvyaḥya* (Tokyo, 1932—1935), p. 1. C. Pensa, *L'Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛtti di Ārya-Vimuktisena* (Roma: 1967), p. 11.

20) *ibid.* (Wogihara), p. 456, 408.

śūnyatā only as in the early *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*.

In this commentary, *sarvajñatā*, in the *aṣṭasāhasrikā*, is explained as *sarvākārajñatā*, *buddhatva*. This shows that *sarvajñatā* in the time of *aṣṭasāhasrikā* belongs to Buddha and equals to *sarvākārajñatā* in the MP.

The content of the Chap. 1. of the AA named *sarvākārajñatā*, corresponds to the Chap. 1. 善現品 of *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*. The latter, that is considered the original *prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, explains *acitta* (freedom of mind), *bodhisattva* and *mahāsattva*. Namely, this chapter tells about *bodhisattva* who acts *prajñāpāramitā*, and becomes enlarged into the MP, that is again systematically arranged by the AA in a chapter “*sarvākārajñatā*” which should be belonged to buddha. This fact signifies *sarvākārajñatā*, at this point, becomes the aim and the essence of *bodhisattva* or *prajñāpāramitā*, rather than the Buddha’s wisdom. And *mārgajñatā* signifies the act of *bodhisattva*.

8 Conclusion

Now we may conclude as follows :

- (1) In the three *jñatās*, at first *sarvajña(tā)* is used as the essence of Buddha or the essence of enlightenment.
- (2) Next, *sarvākārajñatā* is used synonymous with *sarvajñatā* and *sarvajñatā* that has been used in the meaning of *Buddha’s* wisdom is considered to belong to two *yānas*.
- (3) This change is remarkable in *mahāyāna* buddhism, especially in the MP. By the development of idea of *prajñāpāramitā* and *bodhisattva* in *sūtras*, *mārgajñatā* is extracted as the original character of *bodhisattva*.
- (4) *Mārgajñatā* of *bodhisattva* is considered to connote *sarvākārajñatā* meant originally Buddha’s wisdom.
- (5) In a word, the three *jñatās* are the wisdom of *bodhisattva*. *Sarvajñatā* is the wisdom of lower and primary step, *mārgajñatā* is the wisdom of act and leading others and *sarvākārajñatā* is its effect and its essence.

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