On the Penetration of Dharmakāya and Dharmadeśanā

—based on the different ideas of dhāraṇī and tathāgatagarbha—

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We can recognize many developements of the Buddhakāya theory in the evolution of Mahāyāna thought systems which are related to various doctrines such as the Vijñānavāda, etc. In my opinion, the Buddhakāya theory stressed how the Bodhisattvas or any living being can meet the eternal Buddha and enjoy the benefits of instruction on enlightenment from him.

In the Mahāyāna, the concept of truth also developed parallel with the Buddhakāya theory and the most important theme for the Mahāyānist is how to understand the nature of the Buddha who became one with the truth (*dharma-kāya*). That is to say, the problem of how to realize the truth is the same problem of how to meet the eternal Buddha with the joy of uniting oneself with the realm of the Buddha's enlightenment (*dharmadhātu*). In this situation one's faculties are always tested in the effort to encounter and understand the real teaching of the Buddha, because the truth revealed by the Buddha is quite high and deep, going beyond the intellect of ordinary people. The Buddha's teaching is understood only by eminent Bodhisattvas who possess the super power of hearing the subtle voice of the Buddha.

One of the excellent means of the Bodhisattvas for hearing, memorizing, and preaching etc., the teachings of the Buddha is considered to be the dhāraṇī.

Dhāraṇī seemed to appear at first in the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras* or in other Sūtras having close relation to them¹⁾.

The term dhāraṇī, being a derivative from the root *√dhr* has the meaning 'that which sustains or bears something in mind (*dharāṇa*).’ In the *Prajñāpāramitā*, for instance, it means to retain the truth of the insight perfection (*prajñāpāramitā* i.e. śūnyatā). Thus Bodhisattvas who possess the dhāraṇī realize

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the truth of *pratītyasamutpada*, namely śūnyatā, and devote themselves to making their followers understand śūnyatā by preaching (*pratibhāṇa*).

Once dhāraṇī were adopted by the *Prajñāpāramitā* and other Sūtras, it became one of the most important means for retaining the core of the Mahāyāna doctrines and at the same time a way of preaching to others.

The dhāraṇī became recognized as a skillful means of memorization for the eminent Bodhisattvas because this high powered mental function of the dhāraṇī could not be attained by ordinary or inexpert Bodhisattvas.

In the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* theory of the *Avataṃsaka*, the use of the dhāraṇī is considered one of the merits of high-ranked Bodhisattvas in the eighth stage (bhūmi) and above. The dhāraṇī of such Bodhisattvas was continued in the Vijñānavāda. The main works of Maitreya and Asaṅga, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* and *Mahāyānasamgraha*, for instance, regard the dhāraṇī, as one of the good merits of Bodhisattvas in the tenth stage.

When we turn our eyes to the Sūtras or Śāstras in which the term tathāgatarbha is treated as the main subject, dhāraṇī is scarcely mentioned. For example the term dhāraṇī, including the name Dhāraṇīśvararāja Bodhisattva, appears only two times in the *Tathāgatarbha-sūtra*. In the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatva-nirdeśa* and the *Śrīmāladevisiṃhanāda*, the term dhāraṇī cannot be found at all.

The same observation can be made for the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. In the RGV, the term dhāraṇī appears only three times. In its introduction when an outline of its topics is given in seven *vajra-padas* such as, (1) buddha, (2) dharma, (3) saṅgha, to (7) buddhakarma which is based on the *Dhāraṇīśvararāja-sūtra*, it appears in the name of the Bodhisattva Dhāraṇīśvararāja²⁾.

The second example appears also in Chap. I where the dhāraṇī is indicated as one of the knowledges of Bodhisattvas who have accended to the ninth stage of a Bodhisattva called Sādhumati. It runs as follows:³⁾

sadhumatyāṃ bodhisattvabhūmavasaṃkheyaśamādhidhāraṇīmukhasamudrāraparimāṇabuddhadharmaparigrahaññānaśaṃśrayeṇa guṇāprameyatā samudāgacchati/

Here the dhāraṇī is described as the knowledge or ability by which the Bodhisattvas can be endowed with the immeasurable properties of the Buddha and

assume immeasurable Buddhist teachings (*buddhadharma*).

The third example is found among the similes of the cloud in Chap. IV in which the acts of the merciful Buddha are implied. It says as follows:⁴⁾

bhaveṣu saṃvitkaruṇāvabhṛtkāḥ kṣārākṣarāsaṅganabhastalasthaḥ/
samādhidhāraṇyamalāmbugarbho munīndrameghaḥ śubhasasya hetuḥ//

In this case, the rain of the highest doctrine from the cloud of compassion of the Buddha is replaced by samādhi and dhāraṇī. This is because the latter is considered, as it were, the storehouse (of water) which contains fully the Buddha's teaching. That is why the cloud-like Buddha is said to be the king of sages (munīndra) who bears the pure water of dhāraṇī and generates pure crops among living beings.

Of these three examples, we may omit the first one, the name of the Bodhisattva, because no characteristic or doctrine of the dhāraṇī can be learned from this. In the second instance, the dhāraṇī is recognized as an excellent knowledge or power of Bodhisattvas who are endowed with the immeasurable properties of the Buddha. The third example describes dhāraṇī as the merciful capacity or compassion of the Buddha himself. These two examples of the dhāraṇī demonstrate a new function of dhāraṇī in texts of the tathāgatagarbha lineage.

If we compare the dhāraṇī and the tathāgatagarbha theory, we can clearly understand the difference between the two. The former is the excellent power of hearing the Buddha's teaching while the latter is the inherent virtue of the Buddha possessed equally by the Bodhisattvas and every living being.

The reason why Sūtras or Śāstras of the tathāgatagarbha lineage intentionally seem to avert the dhāraṇī, is that the dhāraṇī as a distinctive trait of Bodhisattvas was the result of the search for the differences between the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna, while the tathāgatagarbha tradition supported the identification of the two. It asserts that every living being is the embryo of the Tathāgata or contains the embryo of the Tathāgata within.

This theory of the tathāgatagarbha is closely connected with the concept of Buddha Knowledge (*buddhajñāna*). Its penetration into every living being is often explained by various similes such as light or cloud, etc.

As we described above these smiles of the *buddhajñāna* are related to those

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of the dhāraṇī. But the present case the dhāraṇī is not recognized as the knowledge or power of hearing which belongs to the Bodhisattvas. It means the knowledge or compassion of the Buddha by which he recognizes every state of sentient beings and the means to turn them to the light of enlightenment.

Here let us examine further the Sūtras which are part of the tathāgatagarbha lineage. First, in the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra*, the term dhāraṇī appears twice. It appears initially in the name of a Bodhisattva who joins the assembly of Bodhisattvas attending the discourse of the Buddha in the beginning of the Sūtra⁵⁾.

It also appears in the description of Nityaraśmipramukta Tathāgata that comes when the personal history of Vajramati one of the hearers of the Buddha's discourse, is explained. One part of this runs as follows (summary):⁶⁾

It was when the Tathāgata was in the womb of his mother that all living beings in his world comprehended the truth that all phenomena have no origination (*anutpattikadharmakṣanti*) and the dhāraṇī called '*Pañcaguṇaśataparivarta*' immediately after touching the light of Nityaraśmipramukta which radiated from the womb of his mother.

Then a Bodhisattva named Anantaraśmi questioned Nityaraśmipramukta about the teaching of tathāgatagarbha. This Anantaraśmi is proved later by the Buddha to be this very Vajramati in his past life. But the relation of the dhāraṇī and the *buddhajñāna*, namely the light of the Tathāgata, is not clearly indicated in the present Sūtra. So we must examine another illustration in the *Avataṃsaka*.

In the *Tathāgatotpattisaṃbhavanirdeśa* of the *Avataṃsaka*, there are several expressions for the *buddhajñāna* mainly suggested by similes. In one there is an analogy with the whole universe which is created from the rain of a big cloud and four kinds of wheels of wind (*vāyumaṇḍala*). Just so the appearance of a Tathāgata is dependent on the rain from the cloud-like teaching and four knowledges of a Tathāgata depicted as four kinds of the wheels of wind.

The first knowledge of a Tathāgata illustrated as a wheel of wind is called 'to retain well (the teaching) by *smṛti* and not to forget it by the dhāraṇī'. It is said to arise by retaining well the rain from the cloud-like great teaching

of the Tathāgatas⁷⁾.

The dhāraṇī here too is considered as keeping the teaching of the Buddha in mind at all times. But the treatment of the dhāraṇī in this text indicates that this Sūtra based its position on the tathāgatagarbha theory of the *ekayāna*. If we compare the dhāraṇī of the *Daśabhūmika* or *Gaṇḍavyūha* with the dhāraṇī of the *Tathāgatopattisaṃbhavanirdeśa*, this modified character of the dhāraṇī will become clearer⁸⁾.

The dhāraṇīs of the *Daśabhūmika* or *Gaṇḍavyūha* seem to be essential to the Sūtras because they arose when the consciousness of a Mahāyāna exclusive of the other two vehicles of Śrāvaka and Pratyeka-buddha occurred. In contrast, the tathāgatagarbha theory arose from a movement which embraced the one vehicle of the Buddha (*ekayāna*) in which the Mahāyāna was inclusive of the other two and which admitted the nirvāṇa of only the Buddha or those who believe in the *buddhayāna*⁹⁾. There is no élite consciousness of those who believe equally in the Buddha, because every living being is a real child of the Buddha, that is, all are true Bodhisattvas.

The theory of the tathāgatagarbha or the Buddha nature (*buddhadhātu*) is entirely dependent on the concept of the interpenetration of the dharmakāya. This is described in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* as '*sarvasattveṣu tathāgatadharmakāya-parispharaṇa (arthena)*' which is the first of three meanings of the tathāgatagarbha in Chap. I¹⁰⁾.

Comparing the meaning of tathāgatagarbha and dhāraṇī, the former means the unilateral approach of a Tathāgata to living beings which is a Buddha's affair (*buddhakarma*). The latter means to take part subjectively in the Tathāgata from the side of humanity (Bodhisattva).

The beneficial deeds of the Buddha are based on compassion (*karuṇā*) which is considered to be the preaching of the dharma, just as in the case of the dhāraṇī. But in the tathāgatagarbha theory, the preaching of the dharma (*dharma-deśanā*) to living beings takes place directly without any mediation of Bodhisattvas as preachers.

The concept of the penetration of the dharmakāya and the undifferentiated thought of the tathatā pervades the Mahāyāna sūtras at a time when the idea

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of a universal Buddha such as Buddha Vairocana was accepted as an ideal Buddha by Mahāyāna Buddhists.

The tathāgatagarbha theory which is treated in Mahāyāna sūtras seems to establish its doctrine by emphasizing that eternal light or jñāna of the universal Buddha conforms to every living being.

But the tathāgatagarbha could not be adapted by the Vijñānavāda which recognized a difference between the Tathāgata and an ordinary man. It regards the impression of the doctrine from the Tathāgata (*śrutavāsana*) one important factor of the meditation practices (*yogacāra*) necessary for the dissolution of the *ālayavijñāna*.

In relation to this, the same kind of dhāraṇī in the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* were adapted by the Vijñānavāda in its authorized texts. For instance, in the *Sūtrā-lampkāra* of Maitreya, the completion of samādhi and dhāraṇī is interpreted as the supreme result of the tenth stage Bodhisattva and so the tenth stage is called 'dharmamegha', being pervaded by the two like the cloud in the sky⁽¹¹⁾.

Moreover, we can point out another example. Verse 16 of Chap. 20-21 and its commentary say that a Bodhisattva completes the dharmakāya in the tenth stage of Bodhisattvas because he is illumined with the mastery of the immeasurable samādhi and dhāraṇī⁽¹²⁾. Commenting on this, Sthiramati says as follows:⁽¹³⁾

sa bcu paḥi thse chos kyi skuḥi rgyu tiḥ ne ḥdsin gyi sgo dpag tu med pa dañ
gzuḥs kyi sgo dpag tu med pa thob pas na byaḥ chub sems dpaḥ chos kyi sku yoḥs
su rdsogs pa shes rnam par bshag go/

In the tenth stage (of Bodhisattvas), it is established that the Bodhisattva accomplishes the dharmakāya by obtaining the immeasurable samādhi and the immeasurable dhāraṇī which are the cause of the dharmakāya.

The dhāraṇī above seems to be characterized as the memory of the real teaching of the Buddha as Sthiramati explained in other passages⁽¹⁴⁾. Thus it means that the Bodhisattvas should practice listening to the doctrine continuously up to the tenth stage of Bodhisattvas. This doctrine flows from the pure realm of the truth (*dharmadhātu*).

It is noticeable that the dhāraṇī is posited as the cause of the dharmakāya in contrast to the tathāgatagarbha which is considered 'the result of the dhar-

makāya that is the cause'.¹⁵⁾

Both inevitably are expected to perfect the reward of tathāgatahood, but in case of the dhāraṇī, the ability to understand the merciful teaching which is coming from the realm of the dharmakāya, namely the *dharmadhātu*, is called into question.

In the case of the tathāgatagarbha, the dharmakāya, being a universal entity, penetrates every living being. That is, the nature of the Buddha exists in everyone. No one exists outside the dharmakāya¹⁶⁾. Therefore, in the case of the tathāgatagarbha theory there is no reason to distinguish the ability of every living being.

In conclusion, we may say, in the case of the dhāraṇī, the preaching of the dharma is the cause of perfecting the dharmakāya, but it is the result or proof of the penetration of the dharmakāya in the tathāgatagarbha theory.

1) About the development of the dhāraṇī, see my articles: On the Dhāraṇa-dhāraṇī, JIBS, vol. 23-2, 1975, pp. 53-63; On the doctrine of Dhāraṇī as the power to retain all the teaching one hears, *Koyasan Daigaku Ronso*, vol. 14, 1979, pp. 1-24; From Buddhānusmṛti to dhāraṇī, *ibid.*, vol. 17, 1982 pp. 57-79. 2) See *Ratnagotravibhāga*, ed. by Johnston, 1950, p. 1. 3) *Ibid.*, p. 58. Cf. J. Takasaki, *The Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, 1966, p. 265. 4) *Ibid.*, p. 105. 5) This Bodhisattva is named Dhāraṇīśvararāja. The fact that this name is equal to the hero of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta-sūtra* (*Dhāraṇīśvararāja B. -parivarta*) shows some relation between both Sūtras. Cf. J. Takasaki, *Nyoraizo shiso no keisei*, 1974, p. 60. 6) Peking Ed. Reprint, vol. 36, p. 244-4. '*Pañcagūṇasataparivarta*' seems to be the name of a chapter of some other Sūtra. But it is difficult to discover this chap. in a Mahāyāna Sūtra which coincides with it. About the virtues of the dhāraṇī they remind us of the 20 virtues which are explained in the '*Dhāraṇī saṃbhāraḥ*' (tib. gZuñs gyi sgor hjug pa) of the *Aṣṭādaśaśahasrika*. Cf. my article in *KDR*, vol. 14, p. 5f. 7) Peking Ed. vol. 26, p. 34-5-2. 8) About the character of the dhāraṇī in the *Daśabhūmika* and *Gaṇḍavyūha*, see my articles: *Nihon Bukkyōgakukaihō*, vol. 46, 1980, p. 141; *Bukkyō to Bunka*, presented in Honor of prof. Z. Nakagawa, 1983, p. 500. 9) Cf. J. Takasaki, *Study*, op. cit., p. 38. 10) Cf. *Ratnagotravibhāga*, op. cit., p. 26. It reads 'the Absolute Body of the Tathāgata penetrates all living beings'. See Takasaki, *Study*, op. cit., p. 198. 11) Ed. by S. Lévi, p. 179, 183 (v. 21 and 38 of Chap. 20-21). 12) *Ibid.*, p. 178. 13) Peking Ed. vol. 109, p. 119-2-7. 14) *Ibid.*, vol. p. 115-4-1. 15) See J. Takasaki's article in the *Kegon shiso*, 1960, p. 327. 16) Cf. J. Takasaki, JIBS, vol. 14-2, p. 907.

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