On the Terms Vijñaptimātra and vijñaptitathatā as Found in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* (Chap. VI)

Kojiro KATO

[Note]

(1) This article makes use of the paragraph numbers given in Lamotte [1935]. Ex. L1, L2, L3, ···

(2) All Sanskrit, except for that which is quoted or is a well-known technical term, is marked with an asterisk.


I. In Chap. VI of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, the word tathatā is often used in several different ways. Furthermore, the term vijñaptitathatā is explained as being one of the seven tathatās in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*. This term has important implications in respect to the goals or intentions behind the design of the concept of cognition-only (vijñaptimātra). In this paper, I am concerned with clarifying the meanings of and relationship between vijñaptimātra and vijñaptitathatā in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*.

II. In Chap. VI of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, vijñaptimātra is understood based on observations gained through śamatha and vipaśyanā. In this chapter, a main subject of concern is that the various objects of the phenomenal world are seen as being nothing more than reflective images (pratibimba) of the mind, and that these objects should be removed in the process of performing śamatha and vipaśyanā. In the process of performing śamatha and vipaśyanā, vijñaptimātra refines and adds a level of sophistication to the theory of śamatha and vipaśyanā. The fact that reflective images (pratibimba) of the mind are applicable up to objects that we can see with our own eyes is related to ideas which I have discussed in a previous paper.¹)
III. In the same way, in the middle of this chapter, the word *vijnaptitathatā* is used in connection with the seven *tathāgats*. In the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, as seen below, we come across the following references:

L20  *rnam par rig pa'i de bzhin nyid ni 'du byed rnam par rig pa nyid gang yin pa'o*//
    (P ngu 33a5)

L20  *byams pa de la mtshan nyid kyi de bzhin nyid gang yin pa de dang/ rnam par rig pa'i de bzhin nyid gang yin pa des ni chos thams cad dang mtshungs shing mnyam mo*//
    (P ngu 33a8)

L28  *rnam par rig pa'i de bzhin nyid las dgongs te yongs su bstan pa yin no*//  (P ngu 36b2-3)

L37  *ji ltar na gnas pa la mkhas pa yin zhes na/ gal te rnam par rig pa'i de bzhin nyid yang dag pa ji lta ba bzhin rab tu shes pa'o*//  (P ngu 41a6-7)

The prefix "vīñapti-"*, such as *vīñaptitathatā*, *vīñaptyarthathatā*, *vīñaptimīmitta*, is often used in this chapter. Many of these ideas concern objects that we can perceive with our own eyes, but *vijnaptitathatā* is used only in the context of the seven *tathāgats*. As seen in the quote above, *vīñaptitathatā* is a truth-type concerned with *vīñaptimātra*.

Let us examine the seven *tathāgats* in more detail.

1. *'byung ba'i de bzhin nyid ni 'du byed rnam kyi thog ma dang tha ma med pa nyid gang yin pa'o*//
2. *mtshan nyid kyi de bzhin nyid ni chos thams cad kyi gang zag bdag med pa dang/ chod bdag med pa gang yin pa'o*//
3. *rnam par rig pa'i de bzhin nyid ni 'du byed rnam par rig pa nyid gang yin pa'o*//
4. *gnas pa'i de bzhin nyid ni ngas sdug bsngal gyi bden pa bstan pa gang yin pa'o*//
5. *log par sgrub pa'i de bzhin nyid ni ngas kun 'byung ba'i bden pa bstan pa gang yin pa'o*//
6. *rnam par dag pa'i de bzhin nyid ni ngas 'gog pa'i bden pa bstan pa gang yin pa'o*//
7. *yang dag par sgrub pa'i de bzhin nyid ni ngas lam gyi bden pa bstan pa gang yin pa'o*//

These seven truth-types make an appearance in the last half of this chapter and, along with the *vīñaptimātra* theory, are the main topics discussed here. These truth-types correspond to the *vīñaptimātra* theory in that they become objects in
the process of performing śamatha and vipaśyanā and both theories complement each other. However, some doubt remains about the conclusion that the seven truth-types, viññaptitathatā and so on, are actually objects. This is because tathatā is essentially the ultimate nature of things, or emptiness, and is beyond the range of conceptual thought. Nonetheless, as seen in the above quotations, these seven truth-types represent traditional Buddhist concepts concerning existence.

IV. In this respect, a commentary on this subject written by the monk Wonchuk (円測) is helpful. In his commentary, Wonchuk interprets viññaptitathatā in two ways: one being “an ultimate theory of viññaptimātra” (勝義唯識觀) and the other “a conventional theory of viññaptimātra” (世俗唯識觀)3). Here, Wonchuk argues for the dual nature of viññaptitathatā. Of course, there are limits to relying on this commentary, as it is written in Chinese. However, this commentary offers an important key to understanding viññaptitathatā.

V. There are two main topics discussed in Chap. VI of the Samdhinirmocanasūtra, the viññaptimātra theory and the seven truth-types. It is not known exactly which theory is the primary concept under discussion, but both theories are consistent with one another. This consistency or relationship is especially emphasized in the use of the word tathatā. Tathatā is the final, or fundamental, nature of all things. However, in regard to the seven truth-types, tathatā is also concerned with all objects (that is, skandha, āyatana, and dhātu). From this, we can conclude that in the Samdhinirmocanasūtra the word tathatā has two aspects or meanings.

2) Cf. P ngu 32b8-33a8.
3) “Gejinmikkyo-sho” Dainihonmanjizokuzokyo, 1-34-4~5.

(Key Words) Samdhinirmocanasūtra, viññaptimātra, viññaptitathatā, Wonchuk
(Graduate Student, Tokyo University)