Liberation Classified into the Forces Associated with the Mind in the *Madhyamakapañcaskandhaka*

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1. Introduction

Candrakīrti’s *Madhyamakapañcaskandha* (MPSk), preserved only in its Tibetan translation, is an unusual Madhyakama treatise; it introduces Buddhist novices to the Sarvāstivāda system of elements (*dharmas*) as fundamental knowledge for the understanding of the theory of non-self. The MPSk considers liberation (*vimukti*) as an element that belongs to forces associated with the mind (*citta-saṃprayukta-saṃskārāḥ*).\(^1\)

In the Sarvāstivāda doctrinal tradition, the forces associated with the mind do not include liberation. Thus, the doctrinal context that caused the author of the MPSk to adopt this element must be investigated. This paper initially presents basic data concerning liberation in the MPSk. Next, it posits hypotheses for the adoption of this element. Subsequently, the Sarvāstivāda theory that views liberation as a part of devotion (*adhimokṣa*) is introduced. Finally, possible explanations are presented on the basis of the understanding of devotion in the MPSk that deviates from Sarvāstivāda theory.

2. Liberation in the MPSk

The MPSk enumerates the following 40 elements as components of the forces associated with mind: (1) volition (*cetanā*), (2) contact (*sparśa*), (3) attention (*manaskāra*), (4) will (*chanda*), (5) devotion (*adhimokṣa*), (6) faith (*śraddhā*), (7) vigor (*vīrya*), (8) memory (*smṛti*), (9) concentration (*samādhi*), (10) understanding (*prajñā*), (11) thinking (*vitarka*), (12) investigation (*vicāra*), (13) non-diligence (*pramāda*), (14) diligence (*apramāda*), (15) disgust (*nirvid*), (16) delight (*praharṣa*), (17) lightness (*prasrabdhi*), (18) non-lightness (*apraśrabdhi*), (19) violence (*vihiṃsā*), (20) non-violence (*avihiṃsā*), (21) shame vis-à-vis oneself (*hrī*), (22) shame vis-à-vis others (*apatrāpya*), (23) equanimity (*upeksā*), (24) liberation (*vimukti*), (25) root of virtuousness (*kuśala-mūla*), (26) root of unvirtuousness...
(akuśala-mūla), (27) root of indeterminateness (avyākṛta-mūla), (28) fetter (saṃyojana), …(38) hindrance (nivaraṇa), (39) knowledge (jñāna), and (40) receptivity (ksānti). The first half of this list (1–24) comprises primarily of two types of elements called “great-grounds” (mahābhūmikāḥ) and “virtuous great-grounds” (kuśala-mahābhūmikāḥ), and these are believed to constantly accompany general and good minds respectively. Citing three kinds of roots (25–27), the list continues to incorporate various groups of defiled elements (28–38). The compilation ends with a couple of elements that are deemed pivotal for the abandonment of the defiled elements (39, 40). Liberation is placed at the end of the first half as the 24th element of the inventory.

The MPSk defines liberation in the following manner:

Liberation is separation of the mind from impurity. Mental element called liberation arises by abandoning the defilements. Due to this [element], the mind is separated from impurity. That is liberation. 2)

This definition illustrates the process of mental purification. First, the defiled elements are abandoned, liberation arises, and second, the mind is separated from impurity. Thus, liberation is an element that separates the mind from impurity.

3. Hypotheses for the Inclusion of Liberation in the MPSk

The arrangement of the elements of the forces associated with the mind suggests a seemingly plausible explanation for liberation in the MPSk. Previous studies have elucidated that the Sarvāstivāda system of elements recorded in the MPSk is based on the compilation found in *Skandhila’s Abhidharmāvatāra (AA). However, the components of the forces associated with the mind are partially different within the aforementioned texts. The AA does not include non-lightness, violence, and liberation. The first half of the list inscribed in the MPSk enumerates several pairs of the elements after understanding; these include thinking and investigation, non-diligence and diligence, and so forth. The arrangement of these elements indicates that the author of the MPSk appended non-lightness and violence with an awareness of the respective associations with lightness and non-violence, respectively. This supplemental treatment in the MPSk makes it plausible to contemplate that liberation was appended to the list because of its relationship with equanimity. Certainly, equanimity is one of the necessary elements for the attainment of
liberation, but the two elements are not conceptually paired. The definition of equanimity in the MPSk also does not present any evidence that relates these two elements.\(^3\) Thus, other possibilities must be considered as the rationale for the inclusion of liberation in the MPSk.

In the Sarvāstivāda system of elements, the conception of the forces associated with the mind is included in the category of conditioned factors (saṃskṛtāḥ dharmāḥ). Thus, liberation classified into the forces associated with the mind signifies liberation as a conditioned factor. As context to this conditioned liberation in the MPSk, Uryūzu (1978) suggested the conception of an aggregate of liberation (vimuktī-skandha), which forms one of five aggregates without leaks of defilements (anāsravāḥ pañcaskandhāḥ). These aggregates signify five significant dispositions of arhats. To iterate the conclusion in advance, this understanding of the inclusion of liberation in the MPSk seems to be the most plausible. However, a more detailed investigation into the doctrinal deviation of the MPSk from the Sarvāstivāda system of elements that does not include liberation is required for the adoption of the hypothesized theory.

4. Understanding of Liberation in Sarvāstivāda thought

The Sarvāstivādas regard liberation as an aspect of devotion (adhimokṣa). To cite an example, the nature of liberation is elucidated at the end of Chapter 6 of the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya (AKBh). First, the concept of liberation is classified into two groups: conditioned and unconditioned. Unconditioned liberation (asaṃskṛtā vimukti) is identified with suppression through deliberation (pratisaṃkhyā-nirodha). Conditioned liberation (saṃskṛtā vimukti) is identified with the devotion of those beyond training (aśaikṣa), or arhats.\(^4\) In Sarvāstivāda tradition, devotion is considered to be a component of the forces associated with the mind. Thus, the conditioned liberation in question is not regarded as an independent element in this system.

According to Yaśomitra’s commentary on the AKBh, liberation (vimukti) is included in devotion (adhimokṣa) because these two terms are derived from same verb root muc, which signifies the action of releasing something.\(^5\) In the case of liberation, prefix, vi, which means separation from something, is attached to muc, denoting the mental action of setting the mind free from defilements. Conversely, the prefix, adhi, which means above or on something, is attached in the case of devotion, indicating a mental action to release or to cast the mind on an object. As Yaśomitra explains, liberation and devotion certainly exhibit
similar characteristics in terms of the mental action of releasing something; however, the directions of their actions are opposite. It is noteworthy that the Sarvāstivāda conception of devotion traditionally includes contradictory mental functions within itself. The doctrinal factor that prevents the author of the MPSk from ascribing liberation to devotion must be investigated in light of this Sarvāstivāda understanding of liberation.

5. Devotion in the MPSk

Devotion is the 5th element of the forces associated with the mind in the MPSk, which defines it as follows:

Devotion (adhimokṣa) is absorption (adhimukti) of the mind into an object. The [prefixed] word adhi indicates the subject (*adhikāra). Devotion is [an mental element that] has the nature (*svarūpa) of knowledge (*jñāna) that is devoted to its object, and [it is also] being preoccupied [with its object] like moths [fly] into the flame. Being associated with this mental element, consciousness (vijñāna) is not being separated but being assembled. That mental element is [called] devotion. [Its] distinction from attention (manaskāra) is [as follows:] creating an object in the mind (manasikaraṇa, or attention) has the nature of giving the mentation (manas) [the role of] the location (adhikarana) [for its establishment], [but] devotion has the nature of giving the object (viṣaya) [the role of] the location. This is the distinction [between these two elements].

This definition is notable in that the author of the MPSk considered knowledge (jñāna) to be the nature of devotion. This understanding of devotion obviously deviates from the Sarvāstivāda theory, which deemed devotion to be an independent entity that possessed its own nature. The MPSk further limits the nature of devotion to the knowledge that is devoted to its object. The definition inscribed in the MPSk also emphasizes the relationship between devotion and its object by insisting that the subject of devotion, or the location of its establishment, is an object.

6. Possible Explanations for the Inclusion of Liberation in the MPSk

The definition of devotion that regards specific knowledge as its nature is thought to be the principal cause preventing the author of the MPSk from ascribing liberation to devotion. The distinction between liberation and knowledge should be confirmed at this juncture. The main part of the MPSk is devoted to the exhibition of the Sarvāstivāda system of elements, although it includes doctrinal precepts that deviate from their thought in some parts. The
definition of devotion is one example of the aforementioned deviation. In the context of its textual purpose, the author of the MPSk is thought to have adapted the Sarvāstivāda definition of liberation and have understood devotion of arhats as its nature. As for knowledge, in the Sarvāstivāda conception, knowledge is an aspect of understanding (prajñā). Further, devotion and understanding are individual and independent elements that have different natures. Owing to the associations of these elements, the author of the MPSk could not ascribe liberation to devotion. Thus, he appended it to the groups of the forces that are associated with the mind. Consequently, the system of elements ascribed in the MPSk includes conditioned and unconditioned liberation. Uryūzu (1978) suggests that the influence of the aggregate of liberation should be considered in the context of the adaption of conditioned liberation. However, the non-Sarvāstivāda understanding of devotion in the MPSk must be considered while explaining the separation of liberation from devotion. In terms of its position in the list of the forces associated with the mind, liberation is thought to be placed at the end of the first half. This is the segment in which the elements that constantly accompany general or good minds are enumerated, and liberation finds its place here due to its disposition of absolute virtuousness. The associations between liberation, devotion, and knowledge in Sarvāstivāda thought and in the MPSk are illustrated as follows.

7. Conclusion

This paper investigated doctrinal background that caused the author of the MPSk to append liberation to the list of the forces associated with the mind. The result of this exploration can be summarized into following three points: (1) it is difficult to explain the adoption of liberation in the MPSk in terms of its relationship with equanimity; (2) the
Sarvāstivādas did not regard conditioned liberation to be an independent element in the forces associated with the mind because they consider it to be an aspect of devotion; and (3) the author of the MPSk could not ascribe liberation to devotion because he thought the nature of devotion was knowledge. The deviation of the understanding of devotion in the MPSk from Sarvāstivāda thought requires further investigation. In particular, a similar understanding or definition of devotion should be sought in other treatises of Candrakīrti.

**Notes**

1) Sarvāstivāda theories of elements presented in Abhayākaragupta’s *Munimatālamkāra* and Daśabalaśrimitra’s *Samśkrāsamskṛtaviniścaya*, which belong to the latest stage in the history of Indian Buddhism (11–12 century), depended on the theory of the MPSk. Liberation was regarded as a component of the forces associated with the mind also in those texts.

2) MPSk, D 256a2–3, P 293b5–6. See Miyazaki *et al.* 2019, 40–42.

3) For the definition of equanimity, see MPSk, D 255b7–256a2, P 293b2–5 and Miyazaki *et al.* 2017, 122–125.

4) AKBh, 388.1–14.

5) AKVy, 607.5–6.

6) MPSk, D 247a7–b2, P 283a7–b1. See Miyazaki *et al.* 2017, 107–110.

7) Cf. NyA, r. 10, T. 390a12–17. The understanding of devotion in the MPSk corresponds to Sthavira’s objection presented in the *Nyāyānusāra* that denies the real existence of devotion by insisting that the essence of it is knowledge.

**Abbreviations and Primary Sources**

AKBh *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya of Vasubandhu*. Ed. P. Pradhan. Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1976.

AKVy *Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā by Yaśomitra*. Ed. Wogihara Unrai. Tokyo: Publishing Association of Abhidharmakośavyākhyā, 1932–1936.

MPSk *Phuṅ po lṅa`i rab tu byed pa (Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa)*. D no. 3866 ya 239b1–266b7, P no. 5267 ya 273b6–305b5.

NyA *Apidamo Shunzhengli lun* 阿毘達磨順正理論 (*Nyāyānusāra*). T, vol. 29, no. 1562.

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**Key words** Candrakīrti チャンドラキルティ, *Madhyamakapāñcaskandhaka* 中観五識論, Mādhyamika 中観, Sarvāstivāda 説一切有部, *cittasamprayuktasamkāra* 心相応行, *vimukti* 解脱, *adhimoksa* 勝解, *jīvana* 智

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