Ideological Characteristics of Dhammapāla’s Writings:
Focusing on relations with Northern Buddhism

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Introduction
Dhammapāla, 10th century, is a renowned Theravāda commentator who authored many writings. In recent years, however, with the spread of electronic texts making it easy to compare the literature, verified quotations of Northern Buddhist texts have been repeatedly identified in Dhammapāla’s writings.

These identifications began with Katsumoto’s research. On the basis of the Carīyāpiṭaka-aṭṭhakathā quoting descriptions from the Bodhisattvabhūmi, Katsumoto identifies Dhammapāla as a Theravāda figure in the Mahāyāna Buddhism. Yet, as Hayashi later reported that Dhammapāla had ideological commonalities with Sarvāstivāda literature, it became clear that certain points in Katsumoto’s theory do not hold. In this way, explanation of Dhammapāla’s personal ideology is still a work in progress.

In this current state of research, after considering texts authored by Dhammapāla, I have pointed out that he was familiar with the Northern Buddhist school of thought. In this paper, I identify citations from the Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣyā (AKBh.) in the antarābhava theory developed in Dhammapāla’s Kathāvatthu-anuṭīkā (KVṭ.), as well as points where its counter-theory appears.

1. Discussion of the antarābhava

Buddhist thinkers sometimes claim that after death and before being reborn, one takes the form of existence called antarābhava. However, since antarābhava was not explicitly stated in Early Buddhism, every school has a different opinion about whether to recognize it. Sarvāstivāda Buddhism recognizes this existence, while Theravāda Buddhism does not.

Theravāda Buddhism’s theory denying the existence of antarābhava is explained in Dhammapāla’s Kathāvatthu-anuṭīkā in the most systematic way. Previous to that, the only verified description is a simple denial of the existence of antarābhava in Buddhaghosa’s
writing. The *Kathāvatthu-anuṭīkā*, while quoting the antarābhava-affirmative position explained in the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, takes a counter-argumentative stance. Although this counter-argument is fascinating, it is also complex and contains comprehensive content, because of which, in this paper, I cannot demonstrate it in its entirety. Consequently, in this paper, I would like to introduce four sections of the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* quoted in the *Kathāvatthu-anuṭīkā* and suggest it as a foundation for future research.

### 2. the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* quoted in the *Kathāvatthu-anuṭīkā*

1. **KvAṬ. (p. 123.16–18):** santānavasena pavattamānānaṃ dhammānaṃ avicchedena desantaresu pāṭubhāvo diṭṭho. yathā tam vihīdāviṇīṇaṃkasantāne, evaṃ saviṇīṇaṃkasantāne pi avicchedena desantare pāṭubhāvena bhavitabbaṃ.

≈ **AKBh. (p. 120.16–17):** santānavarttinnāṁ hi dharmāṇām avicchedena deśāntaresu prādurabhāvo dhṛṣṭas, tadyathā vrīḥisantānasya, tasmād asyāpi sattvasantānasyāvicchedena deśāntaresu prādurbhāvo bhavisṇuḥ.

2. **KvAṬ. (p. 124.1–4):** paṭibimbaṃ tāva asiddhattā asadisattā ca na nidassanam. patibimbaṇ hi nāma añṇad eva rūpantaram uppajjatī ti asiddham etam. siddhiyam pi asadisattā na nidassanam siyā. ekasmiṃ thāne dvinnam sahathānabhāvato. yathā eva hi ādāsarūpaṃ patibimbarūpaṇ ca dissati.

≈ **AKBh. (p. 120.19–23):** pratibimbaṃ asiddhatvād asāmyāc cānidarśanam (AKK. 3, 11cd). pratibimbaṃ nāmāya evotpadyate varṇāntaram ity asiddham etat. siddhāv api ca satyām asāmyād anidarāsānam bhavati. katham tāvad asiddham. sahaikatra dvayābhāvāt (AKK. 3, 12a). tatraiva hi deśe ādāsarūpaṃ drṣṭe pratibimbaṃ ca.

3. **KvAṬ. (p. 124.7–8):** paṭibimbaṃ nāma añṇad eva rūpantaram uppajjatī ti asiddham. ekasmiṃ thāne dvinnam sahathānabhāvato.

≈ **AKBh. (p. 121.4–5):** sāmagryās tu sa tād ṛśaḥ prabhāvo yat tathā darśanaṃ bhavati. acintyo hi dharmāṇāṃ śaktibhedaḥ.

### Conclusion

Finally, I would like to identify ideological aspects of Dhammapāla’s commentary using various results from previous studies and identifications made in this paper. The relation—
ship between Dhammapāla’s writings and Northern Buddhism is summarized as follows:

| Points of Agreement | Ideological Characteristics |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| The definitions of triyāna, cittotpāda, and dāna are borrowed from Vasubandhu’s writings. | Agrees with the Yogacāra doctrine.⁴) |
| The definition of pratītyasamutpāda is borrowed from Vasubandhu’s writings. | Ideological affinity with Vasubandhu’s writings.⁵) |
| The definition of sādhrāna-karman is borrowed from Vasubandhu’s writings. | Agrees with the Sarvāstivāda doctrine.⁶) |
| The theory of samtatiparīnāmaviśeṣa is borrowed from Buddhist literature. | Agrees with the Sautrāntika doctrine; conflicts with the Sarvāstivāda and the Sammatīya (Vātsīputriya) doctrine.⁷) |
| The definition of satyadvaya is borrowed from Buddhist literature. | Agrees with the Sarvāstivāda doctrine.⁸) |
| The definition of vedanā is borrowed from Buddhist literature. | Agrees with the Sarvāstivāda doctrine; conflicts with the Sautrāntika doctrine.⁹) |
| The antarābhava theory, which it argues against, is quoted from Northern Buddhist literature. | Agrees with the Sautrāntika doctrine; conflicts with the Sarvāstivāda doctrine. |

These points seem to have no ideological cohesion. However, the important point is that “Even if Dhammapāla quoted a description from Northern Buddhist writings, he did not destroy the systematic doctrine of Theravāda that Buddhaghosa accomplished.”¹⁰) Accordingly, if Dhammapāla actively introduces a theory from Northern Buddhist writings to advocate for the Theravāda theory, and if those Northern Buddhist writings contain descriptions violating the Theravāda theory, and regardless of whether he quoted it, he was criticizing it from the standpoint of the Theravāda theory.

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**Notes**

1) Shimizu (2015).
2) Katsumoto (2006).
3) Hayashi (2011).
4) Katsumoto (2006).
5) Kusumoto (2010).
6) Hayashi (2011).
7) Shimizu (2017: 219–232).
8) Shimizu (2016).
9) Shimizu (2017b).
10) Hayashi (2011: 227).
Abbreviations

AKBh. Abhidharmakośa-Bhāṣya, P. Pradhan (ed.), Abhidharmakośabhāṣya of Vasubandhu, Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1967.

AKK. Abhidharmakośa-Kārikā - Cf. Chap. 1–9: AKBh.

KvAṬ. Kathāvatthu-Anuṭīkā (Pañcapakarana-Anuṭīkā) - Dhammagiri-Pāli-ganthamālā edition, vol. 129, Abhidhammapiṭake Pañcapakarana-anuṭīkā, Igatapurī: Vipaśyanā Viśodhana Vinyāsa, 1998.

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