

The *manomayakāya* of the *Laṅkāvatāra* *Mahāyānasūtra*

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The *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* (**LK**) takes up the concept “*manomayakāya* (the body made of thought)” at two places:

i. The section which deals with a fourfold practice, realization of which is said to qualify practitioners for being great yoga-practitioners (*mahā-yogayoginah*), in the second chapter on “All the Thirty-Six Thousand Teachings Accumulated” (Nanjio text p. 81, lines 6-16);

ii. The first section of the third chapter on “Non-permanence,” which deals with the *manomayakāya* (N136-137).

Here I would like to consider the meaning of this concept (I) in the context of the **LK** and (II) in connection with the concept 壁觀 (“wall-contemplation”) as a specific term ascribed to the founder of Chinese Chan, who was later called 菩提達摩 (Bodhidharma).

I. i. In Section 15 (of all the thirty-six sections according to Tokiwa’s division), Chapter II, the Buddha, asked to teach true approach to self-concentration (*yogābhisamaya*), suggests a fourfold practice in response:

1. Clear ascertainment of the “self-mind being seen as something external;”
2. Getting free from the wrong view of “arising, staying, and ceasing to be;”
3. Perceiving the non-being of external beings; and
4. Delighting in¹⁾ the noble wisdom personally attained respectively.

1. According to the **LK** (N80, 5-10), the threefold world being nothing but self-mind (*svacittamātram idaṃ traidhātukam*) means its being free from a self and what is possessed of a self. Its being nothing but self-mind, again, means its being free from something external. Its being self-mind only, therefore, means its being the formless, true self. It is

this formless, true self that is discriminated and appears as a self and others that constitute the threefold world.

2a. The way to get free from the wrong views of arising, staying, and ceasing to be is as follows (N80, 13-N81, 5):

All beings are likened to forms originated in an illusion or a dream; since there is no self, others, or both, there is no arising of them. When practitioners penetrate “nothing but self-mind,” and thus realize the non-being of external beings, they therefore realize the non-arising of discriminatory faculties... (N81) ...They therefore obtain the realization that nothing that has its own characteristics is of the arising nature. They stand on the eighth stage of practice, where they have their way of being represented by “mind, thought, the thought-discriminatory faculty,” the “five basic human ways of being,” or the “[three] self-natures,” return to their original, authentic ways of being by attaining the twofold “selflessness.” For this reason they obtain the body made of thought.

According to the above passage, the body made of thought is obtained when the mind, thought, and thought-discriminatory faculty return to their original way of being. How should we understand this? Does the “thought (*manas*)” in the term “the body made of thought” mean anything different from the same word mentioned with the other two terms: “mind (*citta*)” and “thought-discriminatory faculty (*manovijñāna*)”?

My understanding goes as follows: The threefold world, in its authentic way of being, is realized as the kind of self-mind which is neither self nor others and which is the formless true self. The term “body” of the “body made of thought” means self that is formless. It is called “thought” while it is the self-mind which is free from mind as the source of delusion, free from the thought of ego, and free from the thought-discriminatory faculty. One of the reasons why the term “thought” was preserved seems to be not only that it could be identified with self-mind but also that it could take the place of thought-discriminatory faculty while retaining its freedom from the other.

2b. Why do we have the term the “body made of thought”? The answer is given as follows:

It is called “made of thought” because the body has the nature of going uninterrupted quickly. For example, thought, uninterrupted by mountains, walls, rivers, trees and others, in the distance of many hundred thousand *yojanas*, recollects objects previously seen or experienced, and at the same time there obtains the uninterrupted motion of the very body of self-mind that continues without disconnection (*svacitta-prabandhāvicchinna-śarīram*). Likewise, through the kind of composure named “Comparable to Illusion,” which is attained simultaneously with the body made of thought, there obtains, like thought, the uninterrupted motion commonly innate to people of the noble way of being, which is furnished with the flowers of Awakened ones’ vigour, self-command, and power of transformation. At the same time there goes recollection of beings as objects of original vows to lead them to existentially ultimate maturity. (N81, 6-15)

The above passage states why the body made of thought is named as such: no obstacles hinder it from working as the body of self-mind that has unawakened beings as objects of its original vow get awakened to their authentic way of being. It also states that the uninterrupted motion of the body made of thought is innate to all the Awakened ones.

For 3 and 4, text expressions are omitted here.

I. ii The first section of the third chapter on “Non-permanence” gives an explanation about the kinds and contents of the body made of thought as follows (N136, 7-10):

The three kinds of the body made of thought are:

(1) That which has come to be the delight of composure (*kāyaḥ samādhi-sukhasamāpatti-manomayaḥ*);

(2) That which is awakened to the self-nature of all that have their own characteristics (*kāyo dharma-svabhāva-avabodha-manomayaḥ*);

(3) That whose activities are unintentional and commonly innate to all the Awakened ones (*kāyo nikāya-sahaja-asamṣkāra*²⁾ *kriyā-manomayaḥ*).

Their respective contents explained in the text (N136, 10-N137, 10) are omitted here, but we know that explanations of the body made of thought given in this part well matches those given in the second chapter. The only difference seems to be that in the third chapter the first two of the three kinds of the body are attained before the eighth

stage. This latter explanation sounds precise. Nevertheless, the three kinds should not be considered related in order from the lower level to the higher; they should rather be regarded as clarifying the character of the body made of thought with more precision.

These are what we know about the body made of thought from the *LK*. We learn it has its origin in the practice of self-concentration, that it helps clarifying the meaning of the term “dharmakāya”, and that it refers to the Awakened one’s original vow which is innate to all the other Awakened ones.

The obstacles from which the body made of thought is free are the mind as the source of delusion, the ego-self, and the thought-discriminatory faculty. They are compared to walls and other things. Walls, in this sense, can mean our unawakened way of being as the existential obstacles whereas the body made of thought stands for freedom from such obstacles.

II. The earliest Chinese Chan record of the teachings by the founder from India was made by one of his Chinese disciples named Tanlin. In 1969 Professor Seizan Yanagida had the text published as the *Daruma-no-Goroku—Ninyūshigyoron* (“The Record of Bodhidharma’s Words—Twofold Entrance with Four Practices”), the first volume of his series of *Zen-no-Goroku* (“Chan Records”).

Tanlin refers to his master as a dharma-master without mentioning his name. He mentions two names as fellow disciples to the same master: Daoyu and Huike. It is a century later that this dharma-master began to be called with the name Bodhidharma by Daoxuan, A.D. 596–667, compiler of the *Continued Biographies of Eminent Buddhist Priests*, T50.

Attaining Awakening by the principle (理入), according to Tanlin’s master, is as follows:

It means this: Through the Awakened one’s teachings one understands their core, gets deeply confident that all living beings, no matter whether they are unawakened or awakened, are of one and the same true nature which, because of accidental dusts, is falsely covered and cannot be manifest as it is, and that

for abandoning what is false and returning to what is true one concentrates upon the wall-contemplation that one and others as well as the unawakened and the awakened are equally one, wherein one firmly abides without shifting from it, and, what is more, one does not follow literal teachings. This will promptly have one accord deeply with the principle, have no discrimination, and be calm and free from being artificial. This is called attaining Awakening by the principle.

The term “wall” usually means something that obstructs our movement because it exists outside of us and we look at it from outside. When it is taken to mean something internal, it means our existential obstruction, that is, our ordinary manner of being, which does not realize that it is based on our discriminatory faculty due to our respective ego consciousness. When we stop looking at a wall outside and begin looking at it as ourselves, we realize that what has been outside cease to be outside, and that what has been inside may cease to be just inside. Likewise, when we realize that our ordinary manner of life is based on our discriminatory faculty which works by following our respective ego consciousness, we realize that the ordinary life itself has been absolutely negative. At the same time we cease to regard other beings and things just as external and stop considering ourselves as internal. This immediately turns out to be in accord with the principle. I think this is what is meant by the wall-contemplation (*biguān*). It is quite a concrete naming of the contemplation, typically characteristic of Chinese Chan expressions. The term “wall-contemplation,” can be said to represent the **LK** term, the “body made of thought.”

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- 1) N80, 2 : *svapratyātmāryajñānādhigamābhiḥlakṣaṇatayā* corrected to ...-*abhirat-aṇatayā*. Cf. Guṇabhadra's version (T16, 489bc): 得自覺聖智善樂
2) N136, 8 : *nikāyasahajasamskāra-kriyā*- corrected to *nikāyasahaja-asamskāra-kriyā*-. Cf. Guṇabhadra version (T16, 497c): 種類俱生無行作意生身

〈Key Words〉 *manomayakāyaḥ*, *mahāyogayogināḥ*, *biguān*.

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