

Some problems in the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra (1)

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The teaching of Non-ego is one of the important doctrines in Buddhism. While the Buddha was alive, people could ask of him—"the leading teacher of the Dharma." Before long, after the death of the Buddha, they began to seek after the matter of Non-ego through the analysis the Dharma which the Buddha taught. In the Abhidharma, Mādhyamika or Yogacāra Schools, though they are different in their doctrines, they agree with the analysis of the Dharma; it is the Buddhism centered on the Dharma. Another stream of thought is the Tathāgatagarbha School which seeks after the connection with the Buddha himself; it is the Buddhism centered on the Buddha.

From this point of view I will investigate the relation between the ālayavi-jñāna and the tathāgatagarbha expounded in the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra.

The thought of the ālayavi-jñāna and the tathāgatagarbha expounded in the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra is influenced by the Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda-sūtra, the Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra, the Mahāyānābhidharma-sūtra and others.

In the Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda-sūtra the term "the seven perception" is found¹⁾. Although interpretations vary, it does not seem that the seventh perception in the vijñaptimātra thought (manas) is directly meant. Though the sūtra expounds believing in the Buddha or Tathāgata, one's own subjective nature is lacking. Therefore, I think "the seven perception" intends to compensate for this by implying one's own subjective nature. But it did not make the meaning clear nor offer the logical explanations.

Further, the Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra expounds the sarvabījakacitta-vijñāna, ādāna-, ālaya- or citta and introduces the idea of the bīja²⁾. As the bīja, can

1) Taisho. 12-222b, Śrīmāla (Hotokai) p. 149.

2) Taisho. 16-692a, b.

be the ground of the sāsrava and not of the anāsrava, the connection with the Tathāgata is unclear. In the Mahāyānābhidharma-sūtra the dhātu is the ground of sarvadharma, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. The bīja is the ground of both sāsrava and anāsrava. Namey all beings can gain rebirth in the gatis by the sāsrava-bīja and attain enlightenment by the anāsrava-bīja³).

The concepts of the ālayavijñāna and the tathāgatagarbha developed separately until both of them were united and identified in the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra. Though there are points of similarity with the vijñaptimātra thought, points of difference have not a little:

The meaning of the manas is not yet defined. The idea of the eight vijñānas is not yet systematic. Moreover the sūtra expounds the trisva bhāva, but not the triniḥsvabhāva. It expounds the idea of the arising, abiding and ceasing of the vijñāna, the three modes of the vijñāna and the eightortwo functions of the vijñāna⁴).

Further, the tathāgatagarbha is treated twice in the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra, alone and with the ālayavijñāna. In its separate treatment it is described pure in its essential nature and defiled externally⁵). In the treatment identifying it with the ālayavijñāna, it is not only pure in its essential nature and defiled externally, but also declared to be the ground of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa⁶). Moreover the tathāgatagarbha is expressed as “the tathāgatagarbha named as ālayavijñāna” or “the ālayavijñāna named as tathāgatagarbha.” The vijñaptimātra thought leads both of them to be identified. This “tathāgatagarbha named as ālayavijñāna” becomes the ground of the jāti-maraṇa and nirvāṇa, and also means the realm of Buddha or Tathāgata.

Next, the possibility of attaining Buddhahood will be discussed. Generally speaking, the Tathāgatagarbha School asserts that all sentient beings innately have the Buddha-nature. The Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra also occupies a place in the stream of development in the same School. The Vijñaptimātrasiddhi-nirdeśa

3) ibid. 31-14b, 133b, 839a. Triṃ. (Lévi) p. 72. RGV. (Johnston) p. 37.

4) Laṅk. (Nanjo) p. 37-.

5) ibid. p. 77-.

6) ibid. p. 220-.

adopted the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra as the proof of the five classification of spiritual insight. As far as the vijñaptimātra thought seeks after the analysis of the Dharma, it must prepare the people who cannot accomplish the Buddhist practice.

However the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra in itself does not assert no attaining Buddhahood; there are two classes of the icchantikas, one is the abandoning all the stock of merits, the other is the Bodhisattva-icchantika, yet in the end they too can attain nirvāṇa⁷⁾. So long as there is the abandoning of all the stock of merits, and all beings do not attain nirvāṇa, Bodhisattva-icchantikas will not attain nirvāṇa themselves, but will remain in saṃsāra and practice to benefit others. On the point of Tathāgatagarbha School, even the icchantikas who lack the Buddha-nature are equally saved by the Buddha.

In conclusion, trying to make better and solve the above-mentioned problems in the Tathāgatagarbha or Yogacāra Schools, the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra established the idea of the eight vijñānas and identified the ālayavijñāna and the tathāgatagarbha. Accordingly, the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra expounded "the tathāgatagarbha named as ālayavijñāna".....and "the tathāgatagarbha as Non-ego⁸⁾."

7) *ibid.* p. 63-.

8) *ibid.* p. 79-.

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