

# Distinctions between Similar Elements in the *Madhyamakapañcaskandhaka*

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## 1. Introduction

Preserved only in Tibetan translation, Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakapañcaskandhaka* (MPSk) is a concise treatise explaining the Sarvāstivāda system of the elements (*dharma*s), supplemented and modified based on Madhyamaka thought. As clarified in Yokoyama (2016), the MPSk presents a system of elements as part of introduction to the theory of non-self for beginners in Buddhism. In this paper, I investigate the distinctions between similar elements as a doctrinal point characteristic of this text.

Based on a close Buddhist analysis of human beings and their environment, the Sarvāstivāda system of elements includes elements that seem to have the same functions and are difficult to distinguish at first glance. In order to discern such elements, the MPSk articulates distinctions between them. These distinctions allow us to identify the elements that may have caused misunderstanding or confusion for Buddhists in ancient India. The distinctions in the MPSk also indicate their major interest in the analysis of the elements of human existence, and it is also a significant source for modern scholars seeking to appreciate the difference between similar elements in Sarvāstivāda thought and to come to a precise understanding of the element definition.

The MPSk presents the five cases of distinction between the following elements: (1) representation (*saṃjñā*) and consciousness (*viññāna*); (2) attention (*manaskāra*) and concentration (*samādhi*); (3) will (*chanda*) and thirst (*trṣṇā*); (4) devotion (*adhimokṣa*) and attention; and (5) anger (*krodha*), malice (*vyāpāda*), and violence (*vihiṃsā*). In the following sections, first, I present a translation of the element definitions, including the points of distinction; then I point out the historical background for these distinctions. Finally, on the basis of the distinctions in case (5) and the definition of enmity (*pratigha*), I present a comprehensive classification of the concepts concerning anger in Sarvāstivāda thought.

## 2. The Distinction in the MPSk

In the definitions of representation (D 244b3–7, P 279b8–280a6), attention (D 246a4–7, P 281b6–282a3), will (D 246b4–247a7, P 282b1–283a7), devotion (D 247a7–b2, P 283a7–b1), and anger (D 262b3–5, P 301a3–5), the author of the MPSk distinguishes these traits from other elements. These definitions follow almost the same structure: the description of the nature of the elements, followed by its distinction from other elements. In the English translations below, the parts containing the distinctions between elements are underlined.

### Representation (*saṃjñā*):

[I give] an explanation of an aggregate (*skandha*) of representation. Now, though matter (*rūpa*) that takes the figure of a pot, a cloth, a chariot, or another shape is equal in its nature of being assembled,<sup>1)</sup> there are distinction[s] (*viśeṣa*) for each cause and condition. There is distinction such as [a pot of the] broad [bottom] and so forth on the basis of the distinction in cause[s] and the condition[s]. This distinction is called the characteristic (*nimitta*) because one infers the distinction between the objects by this [characteristic].<sup>2)</sup> One grasps, represents, and discriminates this characteristic of the pot, the cloth, and so forth by the mental element. This element having the nature of grasping the characteristic is called a representation. While representation works relative to characteristic[s] of the object[s], consciousness arises only to grasp the object [itself]. By being associated with the mental element that has the nature of grasping distinctions between object[s], one becomes able to grasp the distinction between the object[s]. Thus, through a mental element associated with consciousness, one can come to discriminate the distinction between the object[s] with nature of the pot, the cloth, the chariot and so forth. That mental element is called representation.<sup>3)</sup>

### Attention (*manaskāra*):

Attention means focusing the mind on an object; it [also] means directing the mind to the object. The mind is essentially mobile like a monkey, therefore it does not remain with the object without becoming associated with another element (i.e., attention). ... Thus, by being associated with [a certain thing], consciousness becomes being directed to a desired object. [This is] called focusing the mind. [When focusing the mind is understood to be] a mental element that is recognized to have the nature of the mental function[, that element] is called attention. ... The effect of this [element] gives consciousness the nature of paying attention to the object. Concentration is the element opposed to destruction (*vikṣepa*). [It is] the cause of mental continuity that has a single [cognitive] object. Attention[, however,] keeps the mind from turning away from the object in that moment.<sup>4)</sup> ...

Will (*chanda*):

Will is consciousness's desire to do actions. When [one's consciousness is] associated with a mental element, it thinks that it will do this with respect to [the actions of] eating and going and to [the actions for] a master, a pot, a cloth, and good and evil. The mental element having the characteristic of desiring to do such actions is called will. ... What is the distinction between thirst (*trṣṇā*) and this [element of will]. Just as gum sticks a pair of [pieces of] heated wood together, thirst is the cause of making the mind adhere and cling to the object. Will is not this way. Since it (will) operates through mere thought of things to be done, thirst [must be considered to] be distinct from will, as mentioned above. Furthermore, wishing for the upper realms, one who remains in this [realm of matter] prays in this way: "Ah! How could I reach [the realm of] meditation or [that of] non-matter" and "How could I achieve the exhaustion of the impure [elements] and accomplish the path." Prayers like this are not to be called thirst but represent will for a good thing, because these arise toward the object that is opposed to thirst.<sup>5)</sup>

Devotion (*adhimokṣa*):

The absorption (*adhimukti*) of the mind into an object is devotion (*adhimokṣa*). The [prefixed] word *adhi* indicates the subject. Just like moths [fly] into the flame, preoccupation with its nature of knowledge that is devoted to its object is devotion. Being associated with a mental element, consciousness (*vijñāna*) is not being separated but being assembled. This mental element is [called] devotion. [Its] distinction from attention (*manaskāra*) is as follows: creating an object in the mind (*manasikaraṇa*) has the nature of giving the mind (*manas*) [the role of] the location (*adhikaraṇa*) [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].<sup>6)</sup>

Anger (*krodha*):

Anger is fury (*prakopa*) of the mind. Here, while malice is a [specific] rage (*āghāta*) against sentient beings, anger is a general rage, not only against sentient beings but also against non-sentient beings. Violence is a cause of provoking a person, who becomes angry, to strike others, without consideration, with a slap or a fist. Thus, general fury of the mind that is not malice or violence is anger.<sup>7)</sup>

Based on these definitions, the ways each element is distinguished from other elements can be summarized as follows: (1) Representation is the element that grasps the distinction among objects; consciousness is the mind itself and grasps the object itself; (2) Attention is the element directing the mind toward the object at a certain moment; concentration keeps

the mind continually focused on the object; (3) Will is the mental element that causes the desire to do something and includes, in part, a prayer for good things; thirst is what makes the mind adhere to and cling to an object; (4) Devotion is the mental element that causes someone's mind to be absorbed by the object; attention is what focuses the mind on the object (for devotion, the object is the basis; for attention, the mind is the basis); and (5) Anger is general rage against both sentient and non-sentient beings; malice is a specific rage against sentient beings only; violence is the mental element that causes violent actions.

### 3. Background to the Distinction in the MPSk

These five cases of distinction in the MPSk all concern mental elements (*caitasikas*); more precisely, case (1) distinguishes between the mind and a mental element, and the other cases distinguish between mental elements. It is also notable that in cases from (1) to (4), the distinction is devoted to the specific mental element called “those of great extent” (*mahābhūmikas*), which continually accompany the mind. Then, in case (5), the mental elements concerning anger, which are among the principal causes of suffering, are distinguished. Buddhists in ancient India analyzed the mental activities of human beings closely and found that classification and distinction of elements was not easy, as can be seen by the focus on these definitions in the MPSk on mental elements.

The MPSk was of course not the first text in the history of Indian Buddhism to present a distinction between the mind and mental elements or to distinguish between mental elements. Such distinctions can be found in philosophical texts of the Sarvāstivāda School that predate the MPSk. For example, Yaśomitra presents a distinction among the elements concerning anger, which is identical to case (5) in the MPSk in his commentary to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*.<sup>8)</sup> In these texts of the Sarvāstivāda School, a great effort was made to distinguish the elements of great extent from mind and to demonstrate their real existence. These elements are fundamental to the mental activities of human beings, and, therefore, it is all the more difficult to distinguish them from the mind. Taking this Sarvāstivāda tradition into consideration, it seems more plausible that the distinctions in the MPSk are basically based on traditional Sarvāstivāda understanding of these elements than that they represent the original Madhyamaka

understanding of them.

This kind of distinction cannot be found in Skandhila's *Abhidharmāvatāra* and Vasubandhu's *Pañcaskandhaka*, both of which explain the system of elements in the Sarvāstivāda School and the Yogācāra School respectively by presenting central definitions of elements. On comparing with these texts, the MPSk is more sensitive on the distinction between elements. This characteristic of the MPSk makes itself more informative for beginners in Buddhism.

#### 4. Comprehensive Classification of the Elements Concerning Anger

The distinction between elements in the MPSk provides a basis for the comprehensive classification of similar ideas in Sarvāstivāda thought. When the distinction of case (5) is synthesized with the definition of enmity (*pratigha*), for example, it clarifies the relationship between the many different conceptions of anger in Sarvāstivāda thought. The MPSk (D 256b6–7, P 294b4) defines enmity as follows:

Enmity is malice, and [it is] hatred (*dveṣa*) [as well]. A [specific] rage against sentient beings is [called] the fetter (*saṃyojana*) of enmity.<sup>9)</sup>

The definitions of anger and enmity in the MPSk lead us to the following classification of conceptions of anger: (i) a general rage (*āghāta*) against both sentient and non-sentient beings that does not include malice (*vyāpāda*) and violence (*vihiṃsā*) = anger (*krodha*) = fury of the mind (*citta-prakopa*); (ii) a specific rage against sentient beings = malice = enmity (*pratigha*) = hatred (*dveṣa*); and (iii) the cause of violent actions = violence.

#### 5. Conclusion

The distinction between similar elements in the MPSk should have effectively helped beginners in Buddhism to understand the slight but significant differences among those elements. That mental elements with similar functions are minutely distinguished in this text indicates that, historically, Buddhists in ancient India traditionally analyzed human mental activities in detail and their system was not simple to explain. The distinction between mind and the fundamental elements of mental activities that must accompany

mind was especially complicated. The distinction made in the MPSk, which plays an important role in supporting the development of beginners in Buddhism in ancient India, can also aid modern scholars to understand the fine detail of the definitions of mental elements. For example, by synthesizing the distinctions among the elements concerning anger and the definition of enmity, we can understand the comprehensive classification of several ideas of anger in Sarvāstivāda thought. Now, I continue investigating details of element definitions and their relations in the MPSk. Based on the results of these investigations, I am planning to present a possible explanation for the element of deliverance (*vimukti*) that is an unfamiliar element in the Sarvāstivāda tradition and is inserted into the list of the mental elements in the MPSk as an exception.

### Notes

- 1) A parallel passage in the *Munimatālaṃkāra* (MMA) indicates that the Sanskrit for 'dus pa ñid du may be *saṃskṛtatve*. Taking the possibility of this emendation into consideration, translation here is nevertheless of Tibetan version, without emendation. 2) The corresponding passage in the MMA varies slightly: *tenārthānām viśeṣato 'numīyamānatvāt*. 3) The critical Tibetan text of the MPSk and the parallel passages in the MMA can be found in Miyazaki *et al.* (2017), 74–81 (cf. *ibid.* 56–61). 4) See Miyazaki *et al.* (2017), 103–106 and 111–113. 5) See Miyazaki *et al.* (2017), 86–90; in the MPSk (D 253b4–5, P 294b3–4, cf. *ibid.* 217–218), thirst is called a synonym for lust (*anunaya*). 6) See Miyazaki *et al.* (2017), 107–110. 7) See Miyazaki *et al.* (2017), 172–174 and 188–191. 8) See AKVy, 494, 13–18. 9) See Miyazaki *et al.* (2017), 219–221.

### Abbreviations and Primary Sources

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

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

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