

Kamalaśīla's Interpretation of Eight Similes in **Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇīṭīkā*

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1. Introduction

As Kamalaśīla (ca. 740–795) was a thinker of the later Madhyamaka school or *Yogācāra-mādhyamika, he wrote **Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇīṭīkā* (*APrDhT*), a commentary on *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* (*APrDh*). He also quoted *APrDh* in his *Bhāvanākrama* I (*BhKr* I) and *Bhāvanākrama* III (*BhKr* III).¹⁾ Kazunobu Matsuda pointed out the possibility that *APrDh* was one of the canonical authorities about the theory of *nirvikalpajñāna* (non-discriminative knowledge) and *prṣṭhalabdhāśuddhalaṅkārikajñāna* (pure conventional knowledge obtained after *nirvikalpajñāna*) of Bodhisattvas in the early Yogācāra school.²⁾ The later *Madhyamaka* scholars including Kamalaśīla recognized the value of *Yogācāra* theory as a preliminary stage before reaching the *Madhyamaka* theory as the highest stage. In *APrDh*, *nirvikalpajñāna* and *prṣṭhalabdhajñāna* are explained as follows:

[Passage 1] *APrDh* 96, 6–9: avikalpadhātupratīṣṭhito hi bodhisattvo mahāsattvo jñeyanirviśiṣṭeṇa nirvikalpena jñānenākāśasamatalān sarvadharmān paśyati. (*¹ tatprṣṭhalabdhena jñānena māyāmarīci-svapnapratibhāsapratīṣṭhitaṁ bodhakacandranirmitasamān^{*1)} sarvadharmān paśyati.

<note> (*¹...^{*1)} Cf. Matsuda 1996, fn. 36.

According to the above passage, Bodhisattvas obtain *prṣṭhalabdhajñāna* after coming out of the state of meditation in which they attain *nirvikalpajñāna*. Depending on whether *nirvikalpajñāna* or *prṣṭhalabdhajñāna* of Bodhisattvas functions, Bodhisattvas' way of recognizing all entities changes, in other words, all entities are recognized differently. Namely, with *nirvikalpajñāna*, Bodhisattvas recognize all entities (*sarvadharmā*) like space (*ākāśa*). On the other hand, with *prṣṭhalabdhajñāna*, Bodhisattvas recognize all entities like ① “phantoms,” ② “mirages,” ③ “things seen in dreams,” ④ “shadows,” ⑤ “echoes,” ⑥ “reflected images in mirrors,” ⑦ “the moon reflected on the water,” and ⑧ “things cre-

ated by illusionists.” In Passage 1, the difference of functions of these two knowledges is shown by the difference of similes used in each line.

What does each of the eight similes imply? As Étienne Lamotte has shown, these similes were used in numerous Buddhist texts going back to the early Buddhism for explaining that all entities are just uncertain.³⁾ Kamalaśīla also uses these similes in a similar manner. In his *APrDhT*, he gives two sets of interesting interpretations of the eight similes found in the line on *prṣṭhalabdhajñāna* of *APrDh*. In these two sets of interpretations, we can find some influences of some Yogācāra texts. In what follows, I will consider the background of Kamalaśīla's two different interpretations through comparisons with Vasubandhu's interpretations.

2. Kamalaśīla's Interpretations of Eight Similes in *APrDhT*

According to *APrDhT*, Kamalaśīla's two sets of interpretations can be summarized as follows:

Table 1 Interpretations in *APrDhT*

	Similes	Interpretation (A) ⁴⁾	Interpretation (B) ⁵⁾
①	Phantoms	Those subsumed in the world of sentient beings (<i>sems can gyi 'jig rten du bsdus pa nams</i>)	The six internal organs (<i>nang gi kham drug</i>)
②	Mirages	Those subsumed in the receptable world (<i>snod kyi 'jig rten bsdus pa nams</i>)	The six elements of consciousness and all mental functions (<i>nam par shes pa'i kham drug dang sems las byung ba thams cad</i>)
③	Things seen in dreams	Objects and [their] enjoyment (<i>yul dang longs spyod kyi ngo bo nams</i>)	The six external elements (<i>phyi'i kham nams</i>)
④	Shadows	Bodily action (<i>lus kyi las kyi ngo bo nyid nams</i>)	Buddha's bodily actions (<i>sangs rgyas kyi gzugs kyi skur bsdus pa nams</i>)
⑤	Echoes	Verbal action (<i>ngag gi las kyi ngo bo nyid</i>)	Buddha's teachings (<i>bstan pa'i chos nams su bsdus pa dag</i>)
⑥	Reflected images in mirrors	The world of desires (<i>'dod pa na spyod pa nams</i>)	The results of past actions (<i>sgon gyi las kyi 'bras bur bsdus pa nams</i>)
⑦	The moon reflected on the water	The retribution for the action subsumed in the concentration belonging to the realm with form and the realm without form. (<i>gzugs dang gzugs med pa na spyod pa'i ting nge 'dzin du bsdus pa'i las kyi nam par smin pa'i 'bras bur bsdus pa nams</i>)	Things in the pure land of Buddha (<i>sangs rgyas kyi zhing yongs su dag par bsdus pa nams</i>)
⑧	Things created by illusionists	Things in the pure land of Buddha (<i>sangs rgyas kyi zhing yongs su dag pa la sogs pas bsdus pa nams</i>)	All conditioned things (<i>'dus byas kyi chos thams cad</i>)

According to Kamalaśīla's interpretation (A), for example, ① “phantoms” in Passage 1 refers to those in the world of sentient beings. Namely, Bodhisattvas after coming out of the state of meditation with *nirvikalpajñāna* recognize sentient beings as “phantoms” by means

of *prṣṭhalabdhajñāna*, because sentient beings are just like a phantom of elephant created by an illusionist.⁶⁾ In this way, the eight similes refer to something respectively.

In Kamalaśīla's other texts, we can find many examples of the use of these eight similes. In particular, he often uses the similes of ① "phantoms", ③ "things seen in dreams", and ⑧ "things created by an illusionists". These similes are used frequently in the context of *saṃvṛtisatya* (conventional truth of everything).⁷⁾ Namely, by means of these similes, he explains that things on the level of *saṃvṛtisatya* do not have intrinsic nature and are just something accepted by people based on conventional use of language.⁸⁾ On the other hand, to the best of my knowledge, the above Kamalaśīla's interpretations of the eight similes in his *APrDhT* are not found in his other texts. Furthermore, as far as I can see, there are not any Madhyamaka texts in which only the eight similes are used.⁹⁾

3. Comparison with the Interpretations in Some *Yogācāra* Texts

However, we can find the above eight similes in some texts by Yogācāra thinkers. I guess that these *Yogācāra* texts give us clues to the background of Kamalaśīla's two sets of interpretations of the eight similes. I attempt to compare his interpretations with both the interpretation in Vasubandhu's (4–5th cent.) commentary, *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkārabhāṣya* (*MSABh*), on *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (*MSA*) XI v. 30 and also the interpretations in **Mahāyānasamgraha* (*MSg*) II §. 26–27¹⁰⁾ and Vasubandhu's commentary, **Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya* (*MSgBh*), on *MSg*. In *MSA* XI, the *trīsvabhāva* theory is explained by means of the eight similes. Vasubandhu interprets the eight similes in his *MSABh* as follows:

Table 2 Interpretation in *MSABh*

	Similes	Interpretation ¹¹⁾
①	Phantoms	The six internal organs (<i>ṣaṭ ādhyātmikāyatanāni</i>)
③	Things seen in a dream	The six external objects (<i>ṣaṭ bāhyāyatanāni</i>)
④	Mirages	The mind and mental functions (<i>citta, caitasika</i>)
⑤	Reflected images in mirrors	The six internal organs as the results of past actions (<i>ṣaṭ ādhyātmikāyatanāni, pūrvakarmapratibimba</i>)
⑥	Shadows	The six external objects (<i>ṣaṭ eva bāhyāny āyatanāni</i>)
⑦	Echoes	Buddha's teachings (<i>deśanā</i>)
⑧	The moon reflected on the water	<i>dharma</i> s based on meditation (<i>samādhisamṃśrītā dharmāḥ</i>)
⑨	Things created by illusionist	Rebirth into the world at will (<i>saṃcintyabhavopapattiparigraha</i>)

Compared with Kamalaśīla's interpretation (B) in Table 1, we can find some of the same interpretations. ㉑ "phantoms" is interpreted as the six internal organs in both Kamalaśīla's interpretation (B) in *APrDhT* and Vasubandhu's *MSABh*. In addition, I think the correlation between the interpretations of ㉒, ㉓, ㉔, and ㉕ in *MSABh* and the interpretations of ㉖, ㉗, ㉘, and ㉙ in *APrDhT* can be pointed out.

In *MSg* II, the objects that should be learned by Bodhisattvas are stated. Then, there are three kinds of objects, that is, **paratantralakṣaṇa*, **parikalpitalakṣaṇa*, and **pariṇiṣpannalakṣaṇa*. These three are also known as *trīṣvabhāva*. We can find the following interpretations of the eight similes in the explanation of **paratantralakṣaṇa*.

Table 3 Interpretations in *MSg*

	Similes	Interpretation ¹²⁾
㉑	Phantoms	Objects (<i>spyod yul</i>)
㉒	Mirages	The mind and mental functions (<i>sems dang sems las byung ba</i>)
㉓	Things seen in dreams	Wished or unwished experiences (<i>'dod pa dang mi 'dod pa'i nye bar spyod pa</i>)
㉔	Reflected images in mirrors	The desirable or undesirable results of good or bad actions (<i>las dge ba dang / mi dge ba nams kyi 'bras bu 'dod pa dang mi 'dod pa</i>)
㉕	Shadows	Manifold consciousness (<i>rnam par shes pa sna tshogs</i>)
㉖	Echoes	Manifold verbal actions (<i>tha snyad brjod pa sna tshogs</i>)
㉗	The moon reflected on the water	Objects of meditation (<i>yang dag par 'dzin pa'i ting nge 'dzin gyi spyod yul</i>)
㉘	Things created by illusionists	Bodhisattvas' rebirth into the world at will (<i>byang chub sems dpa' sems phyin ci ma log pa nams sems can gyi bya ba sgrub pa'i phyir bsams bzhin du ji ltar skye</i>)

As Gadjin Nagao has pointed out, there are two sets of interpretations of the eight similes in Vasubandhu's *MSgBh*.¹³⁾ Vasubandhu's first set in *MSgBh* follows *MSg* itself. On the other hand, his second set in *MSgBh* is different from *MSg*'s interpretation as follows:

Table 4 Vasubandhu's second set of interpretations in *MSgBh*

	Similes	Interpretation ¹⁴⁾
㉑	Phantoms	The six internal organs (<i>nang gi bdag nyid can gyi skye mched drug po mig la sogs pa nams</i>)
㉒	Mirages	Things in the receptacle world (<i>snod kyi 'jig rten</i>)
㉓	Things seen in dreams	Desirable or undesirable experience of unrealistic form and so on (<i>gzugs la sogs pa 'di dag yod pa ma yin na yang de las byung ba'i 'dod pa dang mi 'dod pa'i nye bar spyod pa</i>)
㉔	Reflected images in mirrors	Reflected image of another form as a result of good or bad bodily actions (<i>lus kyi las dge ba dang mi dge ba la brten nas de las gzhan pa'i gzugs kyi gzugs brnyan</i>)

Table 4

	Similes	Interpretation ¹⁴⁾
⑥	Echoes	The result as verbal action based on verbal actions (<i>ngag gi las kyi rgyu nyid las ngag gi las kyi 'bras bu</i>)
④	Shadows	[The mental action] of someone not doing meditation (<i>mnyam par ma bzhaḡ pa'i sa pa gang yin pa'i [yid kyi las]</i>)
⑧	The moon reflected on the water	The mental action of someone in an unconcentrated stage (<i>mnyam par gzhag pa'i sa pa'i yid kyi las</i>)
⑨	Things created by illusionists	The function of mind of someone hearing and following (<i>thos pa'i rjes su 'gro ba'i yid kyi las</i>)

As compared with Kamalaśīla's interpretation (A) in Table 1, we can find several shared interpretations in Table 4. ⑥ “mirages” is interpreted as things in the receptacle world in both Kamalaśīla's *APrDhT* and Vasubandhu's *MSgBh*. In addition, I think the correlation between the interpretations of ⑥, ⑥, and ⑧ in *MSgBh* and the interpretations of ③, ⑤, and ⑦ in *APrDhT* can be pointed out. If the interpretation of ④ replaces the interpretation of ⑥, interpretations of ④ and ⑥ in *MSgBh* are compatible with interpretations of ④ and ⑥ in *APrDhT*. Furthermore, the same phrase “just like a phantom of elephant created by an illusionist” is found in the interpretations of “phantoms” in both *MSgBh* and *APrDhT*.

4. Summary

In this paper, I have attempted to compare Kamalaśīla's interpretations in *APrDhT* with Vasubandhu's interpretations in *MSABh* and *MSgBh*, for searching the background of Kamalaśīla's two sets of interpretations of the eight similes in *APrDhT*. In conclusion, I would like to point out the following findings:

- 1) A correlation between Vasubandhu's second interpretation in *MSgBh* (Table 4) and Kamalaśīla's interpretation (A) (Table 1) can be pointed out.
- 2) A correlation between Vasubandhu's interpretation in *MSABh* (Table 2) and Kamalaśīla's interpretation (B) (Table 1) can be pointed out.

However, I have not been able to demonstrate that Vasubandhu's interpretations directly affected Kamalaśīla's interpretations in this paper. In the future, I would like to examine the exact relationship between them.

Notes

1) See *BhKr* I 212, 10–12, *BhKr* III 11, 8–11.

2) Cf. Matsuda 1981; 1996.

3) Cf. Lamotte

- 1981, 357, fn. 1. 4) See *APrDhT* D 139b2–139b7, P 166b8–167a8. 5) See *APrDhT* D 139b7–140a5, P 167a8–167b6. 6) See *APrDhT* D 139b2–3, P 166b8–167a2. 7) Cf. *Māl* D 171b1–2, P 187a3–4; D 179a7–179b1, P 196a5–6; D 223b7–224a1, P 248a8–248b1. 8) Cf. *Māl* D 170a1–3, P 185a7–185b1; D 174b6–7, P 191a2–4. 9) In Nāgārjuna's *Da zhi du lun* 大智度論, there are ten similes including the eight similes seen in *APrDh*. In Āryadeva's (ca. 3rd c.) *Catuhśataka* XIII.25, there are nine similes and Candrakīrti (ca. 600–650 or 530–600) interprets them in his commentary *Catuhśatakavṛtti*. 10) See also *Bodhisattvabhūmi* and Sthiramati's *Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣya*. Cf. Lamotte 1981; Matsuda 1981; 1996. 11) See *MSABh* 62, 10–17. 12) See *MSg* 88, 6–26. 13) Nagao 1982. 14) See *MSgBh* D 152b1–7, P 182a7–182b8.

Abbreviations

- APrDh* *Avikalpapraśadhāraṇī*. See Matsuda 1996.
APrDhT **Avikalpapraśadhāraṇīṭīkā* (Kamalaśīla). D no. 4000, P no. 5501.
BhKr I *Bhāvanākrama I* (Kamalaśīla). *First Bhāvanākrama of Kamalaśīla: Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts with Introduction and English Summary*. Ed. Giuseppe Tucci. Serie Orientale Roma 9, Minor Buddhist texts 2. Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958.
BhKr III *Bhāvanākrama III* (Kamalaśīla). *Third Bhāvanākrama*. Ed. Giuseppe Tucci. Serie Orientale Roma 43, Minor Buddhist texts 3. Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1971.
Māl **Madhyamakāloka* (Kamalaśīla). D no. 3887, P no. 5287.
MSA *Mahāyānasūtrālamkārabhāṣya* (Maitreya). *Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra: Exposé de la doctrine du Grand Véhicule*. Ed. Sylvain Lévi. Rinsen Buddhist text series 4/1-2. Kyoto: Rinsen, 1983.
MSABh **Mahāyānasūtrālamkārabhāṣya* (Vasubandhu). D no. 4026, P no. 5527.
MSg **Mahāyānasamgraha* (Maitreya or Asaṅga). See Nagao 1982.
MSgBh **Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya* (Vasubandhu). D, no. 4050, P, no. 5551.

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