

Basic Principles in San-lun System

(三論體系의 基本原理)

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I. Brief History of Mādhyamika in Early China

From Ku-cha, one of old silk road countries Kumārajīva (344-413) was forced to come to Chang-an, the capital in early china, in 401 A.A., who translated many Buddhist texts, especially Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka Śāstra with the Commentary by Piṅgala, Dvādaśa-dvāra by Nāgārjuna, Nagarjuna's Mahāprajñāpāramita Śāstra and Śata Śāstra by Āryadeva.

Chinese Mādhyamikd School is called the San-lun tsung(Three Treatise School), because its three main texts are Madhyamaka Śāstra, Dvādaśa-dvāra Śāstra and Śata Śāstra. The Mādhyamika

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regards Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sāstra by Nagarjuna as its basic text as well as is based upon the three main texts. Kumarajiva introduced Madhyamika to China and converted some young scholars to Buddhists. One of Kumarajiva's disciples, Seng-chao (374-414 A. D.) used Chinese terms (especially Taoist terms) to expose Mādhyamika thought so that Mādhyamika system might be easily understood by Chinese.

Seng-chao's Chao-lun(chao Treatise) expounds pratitya-samutpāda, śūnyatā ptajna, the twofold truth and etc. in Chainese philosophical terms. In that period, there was some difficulty to explain pratitya-samutpada, śūnyatā and etc. in terms of Chinese conceptual meaning. But his genius intelligence was able to prepare a basic road for the understanding of Mādhyamika system by utilizing Taoistic terms to expose Buddhist concepts in terms of the mediation of expalnation, which is only mediate means, by no means of the same concept of both systems.

He particularly suggests that the role of śūnyatā aims at the level of awakening to be free from conceptual clingings. Kumārajiva introduced the Madhyamika to China and his disciple, Seng-chao, prepared a new interpretation of the Mādhyamika for the understanding of Chinese intellectuals. Systematic Mādhyamika philosophy as San-lun philosophy in China was established by Seng-lang (Korean monk 494-?), Fa-lang (507-5810 and Chitsang (549-623). A great compiler and master of Chinese Mādhyamika, Chitsang mentioned about his previous master, Seng-lang as follows:

"Twofold truth is the subtle instruction to expose the middle way according to She-ling (Seng-lang) Teacher's sayings."¹⁾

Seng-lang propagated asystematic Chinese Mādhyamika during the period between 450 and 550 A. D. and taught the Mādhyamika to Seng-Chüan(d. 528) who was Fa-lang"s teacher. Fa-lang" disciple was Chih-tsang who was the great master in the history of Chinese Buddhism.

II Truth for the Middle Way

San-lin's main idea for the realixation of truth is based upon the thought of Madhyamaka Sastra, X X IV, 18 as follows:

'yaḥ pratīyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tām pracakṣmahe,
sā prajñaptirupādāya pratipatsaiva madhyamā.'

Here the mādhyamika observed the profound meaning of 4 principal concepts i. e. (1) pratītya samutpāda (dependent origination), (2) śūnyatā (not having its own nature or voidness), (3) prajñapti (assumed name or descriptive assumption) and (4) madhyamā pratipat (middle path). Dependent origination and assumed being (prajñapti) are regarded as being established by the following contextual meaning of śūnyatā.

'sarvaṃ ca yujyate tasya śūnyatā yasya na yujyate,
sarvaṃ na yujyate tasya śūnyaṃ yasya na yujyate."²⁾

1) Erh-ti-yi; Taishō Daizōkyō No. 1854, p. 86b1-3. As regards the twofold truth as an awakening instruction initiated by Seng-lang, see Profound Treatise of Mahāyāna; Taishō D. No. 1853, p. 22c, Erh-ti-yi; Taishō D. No. 90c and Commentary on the Middle Treatise; Taishō D. No. 1824, p. 28c.

2) Madhyamaka Śāstra X X IV, 14.

(Whatever is associated with śūnyatā, all is possible.

Whatever is not associated with śūnyatā, all is not possible.)

The formula "this being there that arises' (asmin sati idam bhavati) on pratītya samutpāda cannot be on the propositional categories (catuṣkoṭi) of being, non-being, both or neither-being-nor-non-being. Things as such being inexplicable on pratītya samutpada is void of (śūnya) all repercussions of both intellectual and emotional notions (dr̥ṣṭis). Since pratītya samutpada as conditional dependence of things on each other or relativity of things, it is to establish assumed being (prajñapti) that a concept exists because there are other concepts under the mundane condition that all dharmas are relative in the light of the mundane truth (saṁvṛti-satya).

All phenomenal things (dharmas) without their own nature (niḥsvabhāva) are taken to our thought, by which they are regarded as assumed name (prajñapti) being devoid of any ontological commitment. This prajñapti (an assumed name or assumed being) affords to expose that all objects being constructed by our words (prapañca) and mind (vikalpa) are mutually connected each other (paraspara apekṣā) without their essential nature in terms of relativity (śūnyatā). Chinese Mādhyamika utilizes an assumed name as a remedy for awakening way to purify ignorant mind. An assumed name denotes the simple description which does not imply a description about substantival content being pregnant with ontological superimposition (svabhāva-viparyāsa). The simple description can be said to be non-clinging description in the realization of unreality (śūnyatā) of all appearances in order to awake the

middle path separated from dichotomous extremes (dvaya-anta). An assumed name might be termed as an object for upadesa-dharma, by which the Mādhyamika employs this instructional object to be awakened for the middle way by revealing correct way along with the destruction of wrong views (mithyā-dṛṣṭis). When someone realizes the unrealith of kleśa"s content in the level of both intellectual and emotional situations in terms of prajñapti-practice, there is no wandering description to grasp the unreality of illusional realm as a conceptual property (kalpanā-lakṣaṇa) for reminding something in his mind, in which he participates in the purification of all described possessions in terms of sūnyatā of sūnyatā. The spirit of the middle way which underlies in the light of the simple description being unattainable to be theorized (bùkě-dé in Chinese) goes beyond the realm of both unreality and reality in the level of dichotomous knowledge-situation for described commitment, which is ascribed to the property of verbal ideation (prapañca-lakṣaṇa). As regards the simple description being unattainable to be theorized in terms of an assumed name (jiāmíng in Chinese), in the Profound Treatise of Vimalakīrti Chih-tsang has brought out its transcendental function as follows:

"Sine it was termed an assumed existence, how could it be defined as a determinate existence? If it is a determinate existence, it means a determinate nature svabhava), then how could ot be termed an assumed existence?"³⁾

Because of the indeterminate nature of "an assumed being (prajñapti-sūnyatā), the Mādhyamika declares that "an assumed

3) Taisho D. No. 1780, p. 858c16-18.

existence (jīayōu in Chinese) is unattainable to be theorized for a determinate existence, inexistence, both and neither existence nor inexistence, and therefore this assumed existence goes beyond the realm of four extremes (catuskoṭis)."⁴⁾

In the context of prajñapti-function (prajñapti-prayojana) a device of meditative instruction as the subtle instruction for revealing the middle way is given to free oneself from one's mind (vekalpa) and verbal elaboration (prapanca). All ideational attributions (sāmānya-lakṣaṇa) infected with both description of subjectification and objectification is laid down to give up in the light of not testifying śūnyatā and unattainable function of prajñapti. The function of self-purification by help of śūnyatā and prajñapti affords to realize the middle way, in which truth in accordance with an awakening context of śūnyatā and prajñapti has no any determinate stand-point for the sake of its own testimony but revealing the middle way. Thus the Mādhyamika declares that "twofold truth is the subtle instruction to expose the middle way."⁵⁾

III The three Kinds of Two Levels of Truth and Negative Approach

The device of assumed name aiming at the middle way is employed continuously to infinite remedy-situation in order to remove mind's clings for the realization of the middle way. For instance, one who holds his own position as relative of

4) Ibid. p. 858c 14-16.

5) See n. 1).

mundane truth is on one side, while another one who holds his own position as absolute or saint's truth is on the other side. The two kinds of truth clinged by the persons of two levels need to be prescribed by the device of assumed name for self-purification. The Nadhyamika prescribes the twofold truth as the three kinds of two levels of truth for the sake of gradual renouncement as follows:

'The three kinds of two levels expose the meaning of gradual renouncement like constructing a framework from ground. The reason: Ordinary people say that dharama, as a matter of description, possess being (bhāva), but they don't know that dharmas have nothing to possess. Therefore the Buddhas declare that all dharmas are ultimately void (of their own nature) and have nothing to possess."⁶⁾

Because of the meaning of the twofold truth in correspondence with an wakening sprit of śūnyatā and prajñapti for revealing the middle way, the Mādhyamika does not accept the determinate values of two truths for the sake of knowledge to possess. The Mādhyamika prescribes the Buddha's awakening instruction in order to enable ordinary people to see what is conditioned through conventional truth and specially aims at the remedy to enable people to advance from the worldly to the absolute, by which the meaning of the absolute truth by Nāgārjuna might be realized. We can figure the San-lun's the three kinds of two levels of truth transmitted by two precursors, Seng-lang and Fa-lang as follows:⁷⁾

6) Taishō D. No. 1854, P. 90c26-29

7) Erh-ti-yi; Taishō D. No. 1854, p. 90c1-8.

I. First Kind of Two Levels:

The Worldly: Being

The Absolute: Not-(Being)

II. Second Kind of Two Levels:

The Worldly: Being-and-Non-being i.e. Duality

The Absolute: Not-(Being-and-Non-being) i. e.
Non-duality

III. Third Kind of Two Levels:

The Worldly: Being-and-Non-being (i. e. duality)

-and-Non-(Being-and-Non-being) (i. e. Non-duality)

The Absolute: Not-(Duality-and Non duality)"

As regards the above figure, we can bring out three points; first, there is a negative approach underlying Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika system. Second, it exposes truth (satya) as an instrument or instruction (upāya or upadeśa) for the realization of reality (tattva) underlying the Buddha's teachings. Third, it aims at the realization of the middle way in the light of prapañca-upaśama and also the distinction (vibhaga) between the two truths through the method of inclusive realization i. e. the renouncement of both being and non-being or both duality and non-duality at once. So far as we are concerned with the situation of these three points, we may suggest that the awakening context of the San-lun's truth system is in correspondence with an awakening spirit of śūnyatā and prajñapti for revealing the middle way. In order to make clear the San -lun's negative approach we may need to examine its negative way. In the Profound Meaning of the Three treatise it is said:

"Objection: To negate Both an affirmation and a negation

is to fall into a double negation instead. How can you free from negation?

Answer: A double affirmation produces a drean tiger, and a double negaviews a flower in the air (kga-puṣpa). Thus understand that originally there is nothing to affirm and also now nothing to negate."⁸⁾

In the consideration of above discussion, the apponent realize that the Mādhyamika does not cling to a propositional truth by help of the intellectual limitation of negation or affirmation. As regards a propositional statement of underlying conceptual property (sāmānya-lakṣaṇa) by help of both subjectification and objectification, it does not concerned with an awakening instruction or truth to purify klésa-karma personality for the realization of the middle way. As a static statement is composed of the conceptual contents constructed by connotative and denotative property, the statement can cot be in correspondence with a purified spirit endowed with the realization of the middle way and a factual situation which reveals "all things as they really are" without any views superimposed with dichotomous attributes. For an object described with intellectual property (buddhi-laksana) in the conceptual definition, to say that an object exists is to say that it is not other than itself, and it stands on a view of denying the contrary. There is no negative fact in correspondence with negative description but only the abstract law that we follow for the sake of knowledge-possession. Thus a negation is implied in every affirmative proposition. As regards the negative way in the Madhyamika, there is a mere denial of the possibility to specify

8) Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises; Taisho D. No. 1852, p.73-5.

something by conceptual testimony for the sake of knowledge-possession, which is not receiving the functional negation with some implied affirmation of the contrary. In the *Madgyamakavrtti* by Candrakirti it is said : "If thing's reality has never been experienced, how can a thing be imagined as existent or as not existent."⁹⁾ The *Mādhyamika* simply expresses his non-acceptance without any implied affirmation of the contrary for the sake of a propositional statement in the context of the opponent's stand-point, where his simple negation is in accord with the meaning of 'removing the wrong view and revealing the correct one' instead of having his own view of stand-point being pregnant with a propositional operation. His statement as a remedy for disease is only with reference to the statement of the opponent. By understanding a continuous regression of the conceptual commitment in the bondage of a propositional operation-realm the *Mādhyamika* suggests the unreality of the opponent's view like 'a dream tiger' or 'a flower in the air' in order to enable the latter to realize his wrong view, Object constructed by conceptual property (*buddhi-laksana*) receives a guarantee for its own stand-point from the realm of categorical conformity like that of identity (*ekārtha*), differentiation (*nānārtha*) and so on, whereas the *Mādhyamika* analyses a concept of object itself to determine whether it contains some real element for a sufficient condition of its own guarantee, and does not establish any possessive knowledge in terms of non-attaining *śūnyatā* (*anupalambha-śūnyatā*) or unattainable *śūnyatā* (*bukē-dé-k'ung* in Chinese). In the realm of conceptual operation knowledge is not possible without an object and the existence of an object cannot

9) kutah yoksyate? MV. p.528.

be validated without its knowledge. Thus there is no the horizon of all things as they really are for the realization of indeterminateness (nirvikalpa and nisprapañca) in the realm of conceptual function. The Mādhyamika removes any extreme views for propositional truth and reveals the horizon of non-duality or the middle way in order to transform people into spiritual awakening in the light of unattainable śūnyatā by negative prescription. It expresses further that there is neither mundane truth nor saint's one in the light of awakening middle spirit. By realizing the meaning of neither mundane truth nor saint's one the middle way is illuminated inclusively. The Mādhyamika employs the unlimited negative prescription which goes on to infinite levels until one is free from the descriptive chain-wheeling of conceptual function. This negative prescription might be based upon the philosophical spirit by Nagarjuna as follows:

'I salute the buddha, the foremost of teachers, who taught the dependent origination, the cessation of verbal description.'
(yah pratitya samutpādaṃ prapancopasāmam śivam,
desāyāmāsa sanbuddhastām vande vadatam varam.)¹⁰⁾

The horizon of all things as they really are is due to the realization of the dependent origination (pratitya-samutpāda) which goes beyond the realm of categorical conformity like that of ceasing and arising, destruction and permanence, identity and differentiation, motion of appearance and disappearance, which is in correspondence with the cessation of verbal description (prapañca-upāsama).

10) Mādhyamaka Śāstra I, 2.

IV Conditioned Assumed – Name and Śūnyatā

For the Mādhyamika dependent origination or conditioned being is regarded as phenomenal existent (yu) as well as śūnyatā as essentially not existent (of its own nature) (wu). The meaning of conditioned being and śūnyatā is corresponded with that of rūpa and śūnyatāin Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya Sūtra. Conditioned being (yu) does not mean substantial existent, while conditioned non-existent (wu) does not denote determinate non-existent as an ontological commitment. Both conditioned existent (yu) and non-existent (wu) in terms of an awakening device or assumed name (prajñapti) are separated from any extreme views, which are in accordance with the middle path (madhyamā pratipad). Conditioned existent (yu) and inexistent (wu) in terms of the twofold truth, as an adapted instruction is employed in the Mādhyamika, which expose that people have to understand the value-voided truth about relatives as a high level in order to realize the middle way. Thus Chihtsang has brought out its meaning as follows:

"We expose that the twofold truth is the door of instruction. There is no existent as what can be determined as existent and also there is existent in dependence upon inexistent. When there is no inexistent as what can be determined as inexistent, there is inexistent in dependence upon existent. Since there is existent in dependence upon inexistent, existent is not self-existent (svabhāva). Since there is inexistent in dependence upon existent, inexistent is not self-inexistent (sva-abhāva). Existent without self-existent means to be inexistent of existent. Existent of inexistent is not determined

as existent, and inexistent of existent is not determined as inexistent. These existent and inexistent reveal not-existent and not-inexistent. Therefore it is said to be the door of instruction."¹¹⁾

As regards the above mention, the Mādhyamida suggests that the existent in dependence upon inexistent as well as inexistent in dependent upon existent denotes the instructional doctrine of dependent origination, which offers the purifying function of śūnyatā to operational minds in order to realize the quiescence of all substantial views (svabhāva-drstis) and also to reveal a thing as it really is (yathābhūta-dārsana). Conditioned existent and inexistent of for awakening device are not determined as self-existent and self-inexistent, which are not applicable to any attainable function for seeking knowledge. Thus the śūnyatā-function (śūnyatā-prayojana) with the observation of mutual dependence without seeding for possessive knowledge affords to observe the cessation of all imagination-net (sarva-kalpanā-jala). As regards attainable or unattainable knowledge, there is the distinction between the description of abstract property (sāmānyalaksana) scratching out holes in the pure horizon-face of things as such and the description without any possessive commitment seeking for knowledge. Description about something by help of abstract scratching-operation is wandered far from the horizon of all things as they really are, and undertakes to produce the superimposed picture (laksya and laksana of viparyaya) of all the things as they are painted. Contrarily, the description without any possessive knowledge is deserved to be a prescription in the

11) Erh-ti-yi ; Taishō D. No. 1854, p.89b19-24.

realization of unreality (*śūnyatā*) of all appearances, that is to say, it has the non-clinging context which is in correspondence with *śūnyatā*. In this connection Nagarjuna says:

"Those who have inferior knowledge see only the existent and non-existent of things, and they would not observe the blissful quiescence of the view of things."¹²⁾

Those who are ignorant have a dichotomous predication as "is" and "is not" and commit their stand-point to the realm of "is" or "is not" exclusively so that they abide in the extreme guarantee of possessive knowledge by help of either existent or non-existent, but they do not realize the fact that their view deludes themselves, while things are appeared conditionally without any extreme view for determinate nature. *Śūnyayā* can be said to be the guarantee that the quiescence of the view of things or the unreality of all descriptive characters is not turned into a stand-point of knowledge in terms of unattainable *śūnyatā*.

Conditioned existent and in-existent for a awakening device mean to reveal a correct observation for the middle way. In this connection the *Mādhyamika* has brought out the meaning of conditioned being as follows:

"Being which can produced by causes and conditions i. e. assumed existent (*jia-yu*) is regarded as worldly. It can not be said to be either determinate existent or determinate in-existent. This assumed existent is far from the two extremes, thus it is described as correctness."¹³⁾

12) *astitvam ye tu paśyanti nāstitvam cālpabuddhayah, bhāvanām te na paśyanti drastavyopaśamam śivam. Madhyamaka Śāstra V, 8.*

13) *Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises; Taisho D. No. 1852, p. 7b*

The function of assumed existent (i. e. conditioned being) plays śūnyatā's role in the disclosing context of nihsvabhava as well as that of middle path so that it may return to the horizon of the reality of all things as such through prapañca-śūnyatā (the cessation of all descriptive commitments in terms of the context of function-substance (tī-yòng)).

Assumed inexistent as absolute for correctness in function "can not be said to be either determinate inexistent or determinate existent. It is far from the two extremes, thus it is described as correctness."¹⁴

Be the absolute and worldly in the context of assumption (prajñapti-dharma) and relativity (śūnyatā) do not have any determinate truth-value for the sake of knowledge to possess but aiming at the realization of all the things as such.

In this connection, the Mādhyamika has brought out the meaning of correctness of function-substance as follows :

"Correctness in substance is termed as neither absolute nor worldly, whereas Correctness in function is comprehended as both absolute and worldly. The reason for this is that the reality of all the things as such is absolutely the cessation of language and beyond thought. Since it has never been either absolute or worldly, it is termed substance. What is called correctness in function lies in the reason that since substance is absolutely freed from names and words, things cannot be realized. Even if it is neither existent nor inexistent, we are forced to say that it is absolute as well as worldly. Therefore we call it function. Because these absolute and worldly are not one-sided and wrong, it is comprehended as correctness.

16-19.

14) Ibid, p.7 b19-20.

Therefore we call it correctness in function."¹⁵⁾

Function and substance in the context of śūnyatā in mutual dependence and śūnyatā in the cessation of all descriptive commitments (prapañca-upaśama) are one and the same contextual term in terms of non-duality.

Since "the reality of all the things as such is absolutely the cessation of language and beyond thought," there is no way to make an attempt to realize it through positive approach. The Mādhyamika aims on awakening people for the correct understanding of twofold truth in relativity (śūnyatā) in order to let them realize the truth as an assumed instrument (prajñapti) for the realization of reality (tattva). As regards the Mādhyamika's saying that "it is the worldly truth," or "it is the absolute truth", his saying does not mean a statement which involves truth-value. But it is all-inclusive illumination in terms of the twofold truth in relativity (śūnyatā) in order to realize the Middle Way of inclusive illumination through the twofold truth as an adapted instruction or assumed instrument (prajñapti).

15) Ibid. , p.7b 9-15.