

A Study of the Mahāyāna and Abhidharma Buddhism [I]

by *Yoshinari Maeda*

INTRODUCTION

Upon Nirvāṇa or the death of the Buddha, the First Council of Elders met to make a collection of the Vinayas and the Sūtras. It is these two “baskets” or piṭakas which make up the greater part of ancient Buddhist literature: the Vinayas which formulate the monastic discipline already in practice, and the Sūtras which were a collection of the teachings of the Buddha. The moral law of the Vinaya, however, is unable to deliver us from suffering, nor are the contemplations of Sūtras always effective or practiceable in the sea of saṃsāra. The reason is that deliverance from suffering requires insight into reality or enlightenment as to the true nature of things.

The Abhidharma provides this insight. It is distinct from the Dharma which was taught by the Buddha. It is rather a special metaphysical discourse brought forward by certain elders at the First Council after Nirvāṇa. It is in fact a special way to teach or reveal the Dharma. This it does by the thorough and careful classification of the contents of reality. The Abhidharma is simply the analytical, logical, and methodological elaboration of traditionally taught material which has its roots in early or original Buddhism: that is to say, it gives structure and coordination to terms and concepts in relationship to the correct Dharma.

The recognition and acceptance of the Abhidharma-piṭaka into the Tripiṭaka as the council of Aśoka (240 B. C.) suggests the Abhidharma was transmitted throughout the time of the First Council. Also, it is not until about this time that the compilation of the Abhidharma takes place. This is followed by exegetical material which, in clarifying Abhidharma thought, gives us an understanding of Theravāda thought of that time as well as perspectives into the sources from which Mahāyāna thought derives.

This paper deals with the Abhidharma-kośa of Vasubandhu. This Abhidharma-kośa is a survey of the theories of the Sarvāstivādin school, and it is by no means the sole Abhidharma discourse as every school had its own Abhidharma-ṭīkā. Different Abhidharma views were held in this active though historically obscure age of Buddhism, and this is reflected in the discussion of Vasubandhu's work which arose upon its dissemination. It is not an unattached work as it occurs in the framework of secular circumstances and historical influences. Thus the following will be covered in this introduction :

- I . The Evolution of the Theravāda School in Relation to Abhidharma Thought
- II . The Literary Background of the Abhidharma-Kośa śāstra
- III . The Author of the Abhidharma-Kośa śāstra—A brief summary of Paramārtha's Life of Vasubandhu

The subject of this paper is the initial three chapters of the Abhidharma-kośa by Vasubandhu. These chapters will be presented by means of elucidating the meaning of important or significant passages, defining special terms or the special use of terms, as well as the relationship of various passages to the main body of the text. The immediate introduction, however, is to present a historical perspective for the writing of the Abhidharma-kośa and of the author Vasubandhu before discussing this work.

I . The Evolution of the Theravāda School in Relation to Abhidharma Thought

At the Third Council of Vaiśālī, the early school or Hīnayāna had separated into two parties when controversy over the nature basic to attaining enlightenment was discussed. The Theravāda (Pali, Thera ; Skt., Sthavira) or the Elder's School felt Buddhahood to be a quality acquired ; the other party, the Mahāsaṅghikas, felt it was an inherent quality in every human being (this thought being a seed of Mahāyāna thought). The Theravāda school was roughly in southern India and the Mahāsaṅghikas were from eastern and western India.

About the time of the Council of Aśoka (240 B. C.), the Abhidharma study had come of age and was blossoming. The inclusion of the Abhidharma-ṭīkā into the Tripiṭaka is evidence toward this flourishing. The original division from the Second Council had now developed twenty schools according to Vasumitra : eleven Therāvāda, nine Mahāsaṅghikas. These schools were many and disputes seem regular as recorded in the Kathāvattu, the record of disputes, compiled about this time.

In northern India, the Sarvāstivādin school (also known as the Vaibhāṣika school) had existed at least from the time of Aśoka—if not before—up until the seventh century as recorded by I-tsing. The Sarvāstivāda school is derived from the orthodox Theravāda and it is said to have been the most influential Theravāda sect. The established position of this school is reflected in the dominance in disputes given it in the Kathāvatthu, the record of disputes. One reason for its strength was that it had refined and developed an extensive commentary on the Abhidharma, the Vaibhāṣika system, the name by which its sect and adherents are known. The principal school was based in Kāśhmīr, but a branch of the Vaibhāṣa or Sarvāstivādin school was later founded in Gandhāra that maintained its own opinion and is not identical in thought to the Kāśhmīr school.

The Sarvāstivādin school peaks in popularity in the first century B.C. The Sautrāntika school then becomes the Buddhist mainstream in the third century. These two schools oppose one another in debate. Independent or not from the Theravāda school from which both spring, the conflict is rhetorical for both held the identical Hīnayāna object of the Arhat.

Of the Sautrāntika school, it is often said to be derived from the earlier Sarvāstivādin school. The doctrinal differences and philosophies do, however, clearly distinguish them. The Sautrāntika was independent of the Theravāda while the Sarvāstivāda was closely related to the Theravāda. The Sautrāntika philosophy held that external objects were indirectly perceived as images while the Sarvāstivāda held to the direct perception of objects. The Sautrāntika adhered to the Sūtra-piṭaka and the Vinaya-piṭaka and rejected Abhidharma-piṭakas; the Sarvāstivāda school adhered to the Abhidharma-piṭaka and its Vaibhāṣika system. The Sautrāntika thus never called themselves Sarvāstivādins. The Sautrāntika was not diametrically opposed to Sarvāstivādin thought, nor subordinate to it, though classifiers have placed them as such because of similarities. The Sautrāntika was the progressive school and did not reject what it had no reason not to employ or allow; the Sarvāstivādin was closer to the Theravāda and orthodox rather than progressive. These elements form the historical background of Vasubandhu as we shall see later.

II. The Literary Background of the Abhidharma-kośa

Before we discuss the texts of the Abhidharma school, we should allow that for sometime the Abhidharma existed as teaching material, however it had never been

written down. The acceptance of the Abhidharma-piṭaka into the Tripiṭaka, further, only implied the existence of the teaching but not necessarily the existence of texts. The existence of the Abhidharma-piṭaka should not be understood as one teaching accepted by all schools; differences must have been extensive. The lack of historical materials, finally, makes the clear dating of the Abhidharma catholicism difficult.

The eventual composition of an authoritative text on Abhidharma thought is marked by the appearance of the Jñāna-prasthāna (the source of knowledge) written by Kātyāyanīputra. This Abhidharma śāstra of the Sarvāstivādin school appears around the time of the Council of Aśoka. Composed of eight books, it was called the Aṣṭa-grantha. The Sanskrit versions are lost and only the Chinese translation of it remains.

Subsequent exegetical works appear in order to insure the clear transmission of Abhidharma thought. One, the Mahāvibhāṣa śāstra, from which the name Vaibhāṣa school arises, is a collection of opinions and details regarding the Jñāna-prasthāna. Another is the Abhidharma-hṛidaya śāstra (heart of the higher Dharmas) by Dharmottara and a commentary on it by his pupil Dharmatrāta.

The latter śāstra by Dharmottara of Gandhāra discusses the same topics which Vasubandhu includes in his Abhidharma-kośa. The treatment of Vasubandhu, however, differs, for it was not pure Abhidharma thought of the Sarvāstivādin school as one would expect of an author like Vasubandhu who belonged to the Sarvāstivādin school of Gandhāra and had studied the Vaibhāṣika system in Kāśhmīr. Influenced by Sautrāntika thought, the resulting work was not characteristic or complimentary to either Sarvāstivādin school in its objective exposition of orthodox thought. He was "free and thorough in his thinking" notes Takakusu. He was eclectic in his sources and liberally borrowed whenever the Abhidharma reasoning of other schools excelled his own. This progressive approach has therefore classified this Hinayāna śāstra as a Sautrāntika viewpoint of the Vaibhāṣika system. A great storm of discussion was released in and beyond the Sarvāstivādin school upon the appearance of this text.

III. The Author of the Abhidharma-kośa śāstra—A brief summary of Paramārtha's Life of Vasubandhu

Of the many works written on the life of Vasubandhu, the generally accepted version is the one translated by Paramārtha (Chen-ti; 真諦).

A brief summary of his work is as follows:

1. Family Life.

Vasubandhu was born into a Brahmin family of Kauśika in Puruṣapura (富婁沙富羅), the ancient capital of Gandhāra, known today as Peshawar.

He was the second of three sons, namely, Asaṅga (無著) the eldest, Vasubandhu, and Viriñcivasta (比隣持跋婆) the youngest. It is apparent that Vasubandhu had no other distinguishing name.

Early in life he became an adherent of the Sarvāstivāda sect (有部), which the leading sect of some twenty sects within the Theravāda branch of Buddhism. During the time of Vasubandhu, the Sarvāstivādins, located in the northern portion of India, regarded the Vaibhāṣikas (毘婆沙師) as the representatives of orthodox Buddhism and consequently adhered exclusively to the Mahāvibhāṣā.

Vasubandhu is said to have studied the Vaibhāṣika doctrine at the Gandhāra and Kāśmīr schools, both Sarvāstivādin yet independent in thought from one another. By the time he came to write a general survey of Abhidharma thought of the Sarvāstivādin school, he had become influenced by the more progressive thinking of the Sautrāntika school. This survey, somewhat critical in tone toward the Sarvāstivādin, became known as the Abhidharma-kośa.

2. Literary Activity.

a. Paramārtha gives the following incidents leading to the writing of yet another text, the “Paramārtha-saptati” (七十真実論) by Vasubandhu.

During a time when Vasubandhu was away from his residence at Ayodhyā (阿瑜闍), a Sāṃkhya philosopher named Vindhyavāsa (頻闍訶婆沙) visited Ayodhyā in search of a Buddhist Philosopher in order to have a debate. The challenge was accepted by the master of Vasubandhu, Buddamittra by name. Vindhyavāsa was successful in defeating Buddhamittra. Sometime later, when Vasubandhu returned to Ayodhyā, he heard of the shame put upon his master, and went out seeking Vindhyavāsa in the direction of the Vindhya mountains. However, he found that the rival philosopher had passed away, whereupon Vasubandhu composed the “Paramārtha-saptati” which was in opposition to the revised “Sāṃkhya śāstra” of Vindhyavāsa. Due to the merit of this work the King Vikramāditya gave three lacs of gold to Vasubandhu.

b. Paramārtha gives the following incident leading to the writing of the Abhidharma-kośa.

Another incident in which Vasubandhu again receives lacs of gold occurs

when he defeats the brother-in-law of King Bālāditya ; son of King Vikramāditya. The brother-in-law's name was Vasurāta and he was well versed in the Vyākaraṇa treatise. Soon after Vasubandhu had composed the Abhidharma-kośa. Vasurāta severely criticized the work on the authority of the Vyākaraṇa. In return, Vasubandhu composed a treatise utterly refuting the thirty-two chapters of the Vyākaraṇa. Persistent, Vasurāta then invited Saṃghabhadra (衆賢) to Ayodhyā for the express purpose of having him debate with Vasubandhu. When Saṃghabhadra arrived in Ayodhyā, he set about composing two treatises, one of which being the “Nyāyānusara”, which refuted the Abhidharma-kośa. Upon the completion of the two treatises, he openly challenged Vasubandhu to a debate. Hearing about the challenge, Vasubandhu felt that it would be useless to debate since it would have no effect on his Abhidharma-kośa, declined to accept the challenge by saying that he was too old to renew the discussion and that besides, both parties had already written texts against each other.

3. Conversion to Mahāyāna.

The legend of Vasubandhu's conversion to Mahāyāna by the urging of Asaṅga in Paramārtha's writing is explained as follows :

At one time, Vasubandhu is quoted as saying that the doctrine of Mahāyāna is not the true teachings of the Buddha. Upon hearing this, Asaṅga, who at the time was in Gandhāra, became very upset and sent a disciple to Ayodhyā with a message to Vasubandhu relating that Asaṅga was very ill and nearing death. As soon as Vasubandhu received the message, he rushed to Gandhāra to see Asaṅga. Upon arriving and seeing Asaṅga, he inquired as to the nature of Asaṅga's illness. Asaṅga replied that the illness was one of mind and heart, which was brought on by the mere fact that Vasubandhu was a non-believer of the doctrine of Mahāyāna. After saying this he proceeded to expound the doctrine. It is said that upon hearing this that Vasubandhu “saw the light” and converted to that of the Mahāyāna. Gradually Vasubandhu began to realize the faults in the doctrine of Theravāda and tried to bite off his tongue. Seeing this Asaṅga told Vasubandhu that biting off the tongue will not erase the past mistakes, instead Vasubandhu should go forth and propagate the Mahāyāna doctrine. Hence, Vasubandhu proceeded to compose many works based on the Mahāyāna doctrine.

4. Death.

Asaṅga, who passed away soon after this was unable to see the many works

of his brother Vasubandhu in relation to the Mahāyāna doctrine. Vasubandhu himself passed away at the age of eighty in Ayodhyā.

1. Differentiae of the Concepts on Abhidharma

The Abhidharma is the title given to the third (and last) collection, or Piṭaka, of the Buddhist canonical texts; it is also a name for the specific method in which the Dharma, or doctrine, is set forth in those texts, the subject matter thereof and the literature connected with it.

Both historically and logically, the Abhidharma represents a development of the Dharma or the doctrine of the Buddha. It enjoys equal canonical authority with the Dharma and its texts have been compiled into a separate Piṭaka.

Etymologically, the term “Abhidharma” is a prepositional compound formed out of “abhi” and “dharma” and the fact clearly suggests that its origin and emergence are subsequent to that of Dharma. The term has been obviously coined to indicate a difference between what it denotes and the Dharma.¹⁾

The term “abhi” maintains two meanings, which are:

1. to meditate.
2. to go forth.

The term “dharma” maintains two meanings which apply here:

1. the teachings of the Buddha, e. g., The Four Noble Truth.
2. the law or true nature.

When the combination of the “1” meanings is made, the combined meaning becomes clear: “meditate (abhi, superior) upon the Four Noble Truths (dharma).” When the combination of the “2” meanings is made its combined meaning also becomes clear: “go forth (abhi) to the law (dharma, element) of the truth: Nirvāṇa.” From these two definitions, the aspect of practice plays an significant role, especially when studying the Abhidharma-kośa.

Since the Abhidharma is one of the Piṭaka, both branches of Mahāyāna (大乘) and Theravāda (上座部) accept and honor it equally. Both branches have various meanings of the term “Abhidharma.” Vasubandhu concisely defines it in the Abhidharma-Kośa to mean, facing the dharma; “dharma” designates Nirvāṇa and the Fourth Truths as the law of the ideal. That which confronts this dharma is Abhidharma and in its primary sense, it is pure and immaculate wisdom; in its wordly sense,

preliminary wisdom, anterior to pure immaculate wisdom. Thus the abhidharma texts themselves are called Abhidharma.²⁾

On the Mahāyāna side, especially in the Mahāyāna-sūtra-lamkāra³⁾ text, the following four meanings for Abhidharma are revealed :

1. It is a guideline to Nirvāṇa.
2. It is continuous.
3. It is the most excellent dharma.
4. It is to be commented upon.

The term “ Abhidharma-kośa ” is used in the title by Vasubandhu because this work includes the essentials of the important texts of the Abhidharma schools, which also served as the basis of the Sarvāstivāda sect. The Abhidharma-kośa is representative of Vasubandhu’s own opinion, yet his perspective presupposes knowledge of the philosophy of the Mahāvibhāṣas as compiled by Kātyāyaniputra (迦旃延子) and put into literary form by Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴大士). In turn, these works explain the principles which were set previously forth in the Jñānaprasthāna (發智論). Vasubandhu’s Abhidharma-kośa is a systematic exposition of the Hīnayāna philosophy, and its importance is that it is a work for study rather than a compendium for reference. It presents the underlying substances for all things and their methods of analysis in Sarvāstivādin thoughts.

Two complete translation of the Abhidharma-kośa are in the Chinese Tripiṭaka. The earlier one is by Paramārtha and the later one by Hiüen Tsang.

The Abhidharma-kośa consists of eight main chapters, and one additional chapter.

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|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Realms | Skt. Dhātu-nirdeśa (界品) |
| 2. Organs | Skt. Indriya-nirdeśa (根品) |
| 3. Worlds | Skt. Loka-nirdeśa (世間品) |
| 4. Actions | Skt. Karma-nirdeśa (業品) |
| 5. Drowsiness (Passions) | Skt. Anuśaya-nirdeśa (隨眠品) |
| 6. Noble Personality and the Path | Skt. Puḍgalamārga-nirdeśa (賢聖品) |
| 7. Knowledge | Skt. Jñāna-nirdeśa (智品) |

8. Meditation Skt. Samadhi-nirdeśa
(定品)
9. Refutation of the Idea of the Self Skt. Pudgala-viniścaya
(破執我品)

The essence of the first eight chapters may be grouped into three categories⁴⁾: one, exposition of the term “Dharma”, “Dharma” signifies the “elements” which constitute the mind, body, as well as all existent things; two, the reasons for beings going astray and becoming subject to continuous rebirth; and three, the path which leads beings out of illusion and into enlightenment. The ninth chapter discusses the problem of non-atman.

This paper will be limited to the first three chapters, namely, the Elements, Organs and Worlds.

The first two chapters deal with *sāsrava* and *anāsrava*, which are the defiled world of *saṃsāra* and the undefiled world of *Nirvāṇa*.

Chapter one is the exposition of the basic nature of the substance underlying all things. It begins with the classification of all dharmas into “*anāsrava*” and “*sāsrava*”, that is, uncreated and created and then enters into the exposition of the *dhātus* which is the basic nature. It is within this basic nature that the undefiled elements or *asaṃskṛta* is found that makes it possible for all dharmas to be capable of deliverance. Vasubandhu states this in the three *kārikās* or stanzas which follow the opening salutation to the true Master. In this chapter then, to present an outline of the Path of Truth, e. g., the way to *Nirvāṇa*, found within the dharmas enumerated, the nature of the substance of all things is expounded.

Chapter two is the function of these dharmas. These dharmas in the static forms of their basic natures are unrelated, however, in reality they are found together. The reason for this phenomena of interrelatedness are expounded in this chapter to explain their function. It is explained that these dharmas work together and that no dharma is the product or effect of but one cause; rather, two causes are required for the production of one cause.

Chapter three is the objective treatment of the defiled world. The outline of the realms and forms of existence of the Common Path which does not contain the Path of Truth is expounded. The bondage to this Common Path is due to the twelve stages of causation which link us from birth until death. The realms and worlds described in this chapter are from the outcome of *sāsrava*.

The nature and function of “*sāsrava*” and “*anāsrava*” are treated in these two

chapters. “Sāsrava” means “defiled” and corresponds to saṃsāra while “anāsrava” means undefiled and corresponds to Nirvāṇa. The consequences of sāsrava treated in the third chapter eventually deal with the reasons for continuous rebirth while the other two outline the elements or dharma.

2. The Elements or Dharma

This chapter divides all dharmas or constituents of being into two classifications: sāsrava (有漏) and anāsrava (無漏). These two are again classified as saṃskṛta-dharma (created-elements; 有為法), and asaṃskṛta-dharma (non-created elements; 無為法).

Then these are followed up by the classification of dharmas as given in the Āgama Sūtra (阿含經):

1. The *Five Aggregates* (pañca-skandhas; 五蘊); which are physical form related to the five senseorgans (rūpa; 色), perception (vedanā; 受), conception (saṃjñā; 想), the function of the mind in its processes regarding like and dislike, good and evil, etc. (saṃskāra; 行) and the mental faculty in regard to perception and cognition (vijñāna 識).
2. The *Twelve Āyatanas* (six senses and six objects; 十二處); eye (cakṣus; 眼), ear (śrotra; 耳), nose (ghrāṇa; 鼻), tongue (jihvā; 舌), body (kāya; 身), mind (manas; 意), form (rūpa; 色), sound (śabda; 聲), smell (gandha; 香), taste (rasa; 味), touch (sparṣa; 觸), and dharma(法).
3. The *Eighteen Dhātus*; which are the twelve āyatanas as mentioned above, together with visual consciousness (cakṣur-vijñāna; 眼識), auditory consciousness (śrotra-vijñāna; 耳識), odor-consciousness (ghrāṇa-vijñāna; 鼻識), taste consciousness (jihvā-vijñāna; 舌識), touch consciousness (kāya-vijñāna; 身識) and the faculty of mind (mano-vijñāna; 意識).

A detailed exposition, especially on the nature and structure of rūpa is then expounded. This is followed by lengthy exposition of the four great elements (mahābhūtam, 四大), namely, earth (pṛthivī; 地), water (āp; 水), fire (tejas; 火), and wind (vāyu; 風). Finally the theory of atom (paramaṇu; 極微) is explained fully.

A. Exposition of the Chapter on Elements

When studying the Abhidharma-kośa, it should be remembered that the aspect of

practice (行) is the basis of this śāstra.

As mentioned previously, this kārikā explains all the dharmas, and of all the dharmas, one in particular is the most abundant ; this is the saṃskṛta-dharma (有為法) or called elements. This dharma, literally means that all phenomena which are produced are the product of causation. The Abhidharma-kośa divides this dharma into three categories :

1. The Five Aggregates
2. The Twelve Sites
3. The Eighteen Realms

The Five Aggregates or skandhas are seen by conventional mind to have noumenal reality. They are composed of the body as well as mind. The Skandhas, however, have no real existence as they are subject to the provisional changes of saṃsāra. This is the basic nature of the Five Aggregates. The manifestations are temporary and this cause others to transmigrate. All composite things are included in the five skandhas and they are the Common Path of the world, they are the object at words, and have a cause. This cause, according to the seventh kārikā in this chapter, is that they possess the capacity for ultimate deliverance.

The Twelve Sites and the Eighteen Realms further evidence the basic nature of the Five Aggregates.

In the Abhidharma-kośa, the stock of mankind falls into three categories⁵⁾ according to their intellectual abilities :

1. The first category consists of the highly intelligent beings and the Five Aggregates are expounded because these beings have the ability to comprehend the true essence of the Five Aggregates.
2. The second category consists of those with medium capacity and the theory of the Twelve Sites are expounded.
3. Lastly, the third category consists of those beings who are of low or dull capacity and thus the Eighteen Realms are expounded.

To this classification, Vasubandhu gives further definition of the above three categories by dividing the three into two classifications,⁶⁾ which are :

1. Reality (実有)……The Five Aggregates
 2. Phenomena (仮相)……The Twelve Sites and Eighteen Realms
1. The Five Aggregates (pañca-skandha ; 五蘊).

All physical, mental, and other elements in this phenomenal world (saṃskṛta-

dharmas) are classified into five kinds of Aggregates :

- a. All Forms of Matter (rūpa-skandha ; 色蘊)
- b. Perception (vedanā-skandha ; 受蘊)
- c. Conception (samjñā-skandha ; 想蘊)
- d. Volition (saṃskāra-skandha ; 行蘊)
- e. Consciousness of Mind (vijñāna-skandha ; 識蘊)

Regarding man, the All Forms of Matter, the first of the Five Aggregates, is his body ; the Consciousness of Mind, fifth of the five is the totality of his mind, and the other three Aggregates are his mental functions.

The Buddha taught the Five Aggregates for the sake of removing the eighty thousand passions (kleśa ; 煩惱), which are maintained by man. It is expounded that the way to practice the Five Aggregates is through one of two forms of meditations :⁷⁾

- a. Meditate upon everything as being impure (不淨觀).
- b. Meditate upon the compassion of the Buddha (慈悲觀).

2. The Twelve Sites (dvādaśāyatanāni ; 十二處).

This classification of the elements or dharmas is an exposition of the relationship of cognitive faculties to their corresponding objects. The sanskrit word āyatana means entrance, i. e., entrance for consciousness. Each cognitive actually grasps its corresponding object, and thus the corresponding consciousness comes into existence. There are six cognitive faculties and six categories of the corresponding objects. Thus they make the Twelve Sites or sense-fields of cognition. According to this, consciousness never arises alone. It is always introduced by two elements, viz., a sense-organ and a corresponding object. These two elements are the supporters of consciousness. For instance, visual consciousness arises when the sense of vision catches some color and form. In the case of the sixth, cognitive faculty, consciousness itself acts as a faculty for the apprehending of non-sensuous objects.⁸⁾ The Twelve Sites are :

- a. eye (cakṣur ; 眼)
- b. ear (śrotra ; 耳)
- c. nose (ghrāṇa ; 鼻)
- d. tongue (jihvā ; 舌)
- e. body (kāya ; 身)
- f. thought (manas ; 意)

- g. form (rūpa ; 色)
- h. sound (śabda ; 声)
- i. smell (gandha ; 香)
- j. taste (rasa ; 味)
- k. touch (sparśa ; 触)
- l. non-sensuous objects (dharma ; 法)

The form of practice on this particular category has been omitted in the Abhidharma-kośa, because by the mere fact of studying this category, it is easy to conceive the aspect of practice.

3. Eighteen Realms (aṣṭādaśa dhātavaḥ ; 十八界).

This classification of the elements of existence is an exposition of the relationship of the cognitive faculties and their objects to their corresponding consciousness. The sanskrit word dhātu means component or elements. The Abhidharma-kośa made an analysis of the separate elements which unite in the production of one stream of events. Viewed as components of such a stream, the elements are called dhātus. Thus the stream of an individual life reveals elements of eighteen different kinds. There are six subjective elements, six objective elements, and six kinds of consciousness, which are :

- a. The six internal bases or indriyas : 六根 (sense-organs)
 - i . sense of vision (cakṣur-dhātu ; 眼界)
 - ii . sense of audition (śrotra-dhātu ; 耳界)
 - iii . sense of smell (ghrāṇa-dhātu ; 鼻界)
 - iv . sense of taste (jihvā-dhātu ; 舌界)
 - v . sense of touch (kāya-dhātu ; 身界)
 - vi . faculty of the intellect (mano-dhātu ; 意界)
- b. Six external bases or viśaya : 六境 (objects)
 - i . color and form (rūpa-dhātu ; 色界)
 - ii . sound (śabda-dhātu ; 声界)
 - iii . odor (gandha-dhātu ; 香界)
 - iv . taste (rasa-dhātu ; 味界)
 - v . tangibles (spraṣṭavya-dhātu ; 触界)
 - vi . non-sensuous objects (dharma-dhātu ; 法界)
- c. Six vijñāna : 六識 (consciousness)
 - i . visual consciousness (cakṣur-vijñāna-dhātu ; 眼識界)

- ii . auditory consciousness (śrotra-vijñāna-dhātu ; 耳識界)
- iii . olfactory consciousness (ghrāṇa-vijñāna-dhātu ; 鼻識界)
- iv . gustatory consciousness (jihvā-vijñāna-dhātu ; 舌識界)
- v . tactile consciousness (kāya-vijñāna-dhātu ; 身識界)
- vi . non-sensuous consciousness (mano-vijñāna-dhātu ; 意識界)

The nature of the Eighteen Realms is as follows : all these (Eighteen Realms) of consciousness exist only in the realm of desire (kāma-dhātu ; 欲界). In the realm of color and form (rūpa-dhātu ; 色界) sense-consciousness gradually disappears and in the non-color and form realm (arūpa-dhātu ; 無色界), only a non-sensuous conscious remains.⁹⁾

The practice of the Eighteen Realms is as follows : at first glance, there seems to be no relationship with any form of practice regarding the Eighteen Realms, but upon closer inspection, the aspect of the Discretion of All Gates (諸門分別) is expounded in relation to the Eighteen Realms. The following are just four examples of many Gates :¹⁰⁾

- i . Things that can be seen and not seen of the Eighteen Realms (有見無見門).
- ii . Things that obstruct or do not obstruct (有對無對門).
- iii . Things that are pure and impure (good or evil 善不善門).
- iv . Things that are or sāsrava anāsrava (有漏無漏門).

The practices based upon these many gates are, for example, the practice of good to be developed from all things that can be divided into that of good or evil, etc.

B. Mahāyāna Interpretations of Some of the Important Aspects of the Abhidharma-kośa

1. The first kārikā or stanza with the salutation to the Master (Buddha). All śāstras of both Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna branches use this form of beginning.
2. The second stanza makes reference to Wisdom (prajñā ; 慧). Prajñā is the efficient cause or hetu of anāsrava or Nirvāṇa. Both branches base their teachings on Wisdom, but in Mahāyāna the aspect of practice (行) for others is emphasized, whereas in Hīnayāna, this is not so. Practice differs between the two branches, for in Theravāda, practice is carried out for the enlightenment of oneself, whereas in Mahāyāna it is performed for all of mankind ; hence, the

practice of a Bodhisattva. Also in Mahāyāna, Wisdom is subdivided into nine ranks.¹¹⁾ The nine ranks of Wisdom of Mahāyāna are :

- a. Wisdom that comes with birth. (自性慧)
- b. All Wisdoms. (一切慧)
- c. Wisdom of difficult practice. (難行慧)
- d. Wisdom of all gates. (一切門慧)
- e. Wisdom of the Holyman. (善士慧)
- f. Wisdom of all kinds. (一切種慧)
- g. Wisdom that comes with advancement. (遂求慧)
- h. Wisdom of gathering the pleasures of this world and the next world. (此世他世樂慧)
- i. Pure wisdom. (清淨慧)

These are the Wisdom of a Bodhisattva.

The second stanza states that the Abhidharma is the immaculate or undefiled *prajñā*. All the other *prajñās* and teachings are means to acquire this *prajñā* of *anāsrava*. This Abhidharma, Vasubandhu continues in the third stanza, was taught by the Master in order to quiet the passions or *kleśas* which detain man in the sea of *saṃsāra*. The way to quiet these passions is to discern and analyze the elements or *dharma*s of existence.

3. The third stanza explains that there is a way out of the mud of *saṃsāra*, and of this aim both branches agree, but the method varies.

The fourth stanza is the beginning of the doctrine of this treatise. From this stanza through the proceeding stanzas, the important aspects and terminologies will be explained and/or defined.

4. *Sāsrava* and *anāsrava* are primary terms dealt with in this treatise. The first two chapters will deal with the nature and function of *sāsrava* and *anāsrava*, while the third chapter deals with the outcome of *sāsrava*. The entire treatise deals with finding the Path of Truth in the world of *sāsrava* and *anāsrava*. *Sāsrava* is the defiled world or *saṃsāra* while *anāsrava* is the undefiled world of *Nirvāṇa*. The substance and dynamics of *sāsrava* and *anāsrava* are dealt within order to elucidate the Path of Truth. The efficient cause of *prajñā* is through knowing reality and taking this path which is the cause of *Nirvāṇa*. The exposition of these forms then is with this goal in mind.

Sāsrava (有漏): accepted to mean that which has illusion. In the

Abhidharma-kośa it is endowed with the flows of moral impurity, morally impure ; also with the element of consciousness in the impure consciousness, which supports birth. As for the Mahāyāna opinion, it is defined in the Yugashiji-ron (瑜伽師地論)¹²⁾ as having five meanings :

- a. Phenomena (artha ; 事)
- b. Conjunction (saṃprayoga ; 相應)
- c. Disposition to do something evil. (anuśaya ; 隨眠)
- d. Birth and what arises from it. (utpāda ; 生起)
- e. Object of perception : that which is perceived by the mind and consciousness. (ālambana ; 所緣)

Anāsrava (無漏) : defined as without illusion (kleśa), e. g., pure and undefiled. In the Abhidharma-kośa ; without flaws of moral impurity, morally pure and also as the truth of the way and the threefold uncompound dharma are without flaws of moral impurity. In Mahāyāna, it is defined as a small portion of both the Three Worlds (三界) and of the Two Sites (二處). Also, it is defined as the Five Undefiled Skandhas¹³⁾ (無漏五蘊 or 五分法身), which are :

- a. The body or person of Buddha born from the dharma-nature. (法性生身)
 - b. The dharmakāya evolved by Buddha virtue, or achievement. (功德法身)
 - c. The dharmakāya with unlimited powers of transformation. (變化)
 - d. The real dharmakāya. (實相)
 - e. The universal dharmakāya. (虛空)
5. All dharmas are either saṃskṛta or asaṃskṛta, that is, defiled or undefiled. Saṃskṛta (有為) : that which is created ; it also refers to all phenomena which are produced through causation.

In the Abhidharma-kośa, this term appears under five different titles :

- a. Five aggregates ; skandhas, 五蘊
- b. The process of time ; adhvan, 世路
- c. The basis of words ; kathāvastu, 言依
- d. Possession of deliverance ; saniḥsārāḥ, 有離
- e. Possession of source ; savastukāḥ, 有事

In Mahāyāna, it has added the following four meanings:¹⁴⁾

- a. Birth ; jati, 生 Saṃskṛta is the characteristics of birth.
- b. Life ; sthiti, 住 Anything that maintains form, even for a moment.
- c. Change ; jarā, 異 The changing of forms.

d. Death ; anitya, 滅 Everything with form, in the end disappears.

Asaṃskṛta (無為) : that which is not created, also refers to Buddhist ideals, e. g., Nirvāṇa, Bodhi, etc.

In this treatise, three kinds of unconditional existences are enumerated ;

- a. Space or ether ; ākāśa, 虛空
- b. Conscious cessation of the contamination of passions ; pratisaṃkhyā-nirodha, 択滅
- c. Unconscious or effortless cessation ; apratisaṃkhyā-nirodha, 非択滅

In Mahāyāna the above mentioned three unconditional existences are taken and used as a base on which various other unconditional existences have been added. For example, the Six unconditional existences : ¹⁵⁾

- a. ~c.; same as those in the Abhidharma-kośa.
- d. The unvarying or unchanging ; acaḥ, 不動
- e. Thoughts of extinction ; vedanā-saṃjñā-nirodha, 想受滅
- f. The eternal, impersonal, unchangeable reality behind all phenomena ; bhūtatathatā, 真如

In the enumerations of eight and nine unconditional existences, the bhūtatathatā has been sub-divided into further, more numerous portions to make up the figures of eight and nine.

6. The Five Aggregates of sāsrava are composed of rūpa, vedanā, saṃjñā, saṃskāra, and vijñāna. These terms will be defined in the following section.
 - a. Rūpa or Color form (色).

In the Abhidharma-kośa, rūpa consists of three classifications having eleven aspects. The three subclassifications are :

- i . The five Indriya ; 五根
- ii . The five artha (viśaya) ; 五境
- iii . One avijñāpti ; 無表色

The eleven aspects of the three subclassifications of rūpa are :

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------|------|--|
| i . | Five Indriyas | ii . | Five Āyatanas (subject perceives object) |
| | a) Eye | | a) Sees the object |
| | b) Ear | | b) Hears the object |
| | c) Nose | | c) Smells the object |
| | d) Tongue | | d) Tastes the object |
| | e) Body | | e) Touches the object |

iii. Avijñāpti

a) The results of latent causes reverberating.

As for the Mahāyāna opinion, the above mentioned three divisions of rupa are accepted with further details added.

As for the Five Āyatanas, the number of elements of Touch is expanded upon.¹⁶⁾ Touch, as a rule, is accepted on the theory that the subject and the object consist of the Four Elements (四大): Earth, Water, Fire and Wind. However, this is only a fraction of Touch, there being two other aspects to Touch, which are :

- i . When Indriya, Āyatana and Vijñāna come together (有对触).
- ii . The thing (法) that only the mind (心) is able to perceive (增語触).

As for the Five āyatanas, the following is a comparative listing of the two branches :¹⁷⁾

Mahāyāna

- i . Sees twenty-five objects (forms).
- ii . Hears eleven kinds of sounds.
- iii . Has six kinds of smells.
- iv . Has six kinds of taste.
- v . Has eleven kinds of touch.

Theravāda

- i . Sees twenty objects (forms).
- ii . Hears eight kinds of sounds.
- iii . Has four kinds of smells.
- iv . Has six kinds of taste.
- v . Has eleven kinds of touch.

As for avijñāpti, which means: forms included in dharma-āyatana; dharma-āyatanikāni-rūpāni (法処所攝色), is divided into five rūpas: ¹⁸⁾

- i . A substantial form analyzed to the utmost, smallest atom (極略色).
- ii . An insubstantial form such as aerial space or color analyzed to the utmost, the remotest atom (極迥色).
- iii . A perceived form conceived of at ordination; the innermost impression (受所引色).
- iv . A monetary illusive form (遍計所在色).
- v . A form produced by meditation (定所生自在色).

b. Vedanā ; perception (受).

In the Abhidharma-kośa, it states that the results of joy, sorrow, and neutral touch from the combinations of Indriya, āyatana and vijñāna are Vedanā (領納隨觸). The Mahāyāna definition is the same,¹⁹⁾ but it also adds that these three elements are replaced by pure and impure which are grasped. It should be noted, that the meaning of touch maintains the aspect of grasping²⁰⁾.

c. Saṃjñā ; conception (想).

The difference between the two branches on this term is that the Abhidharma-kośa defines it as to “grasp forms,” whereas in Mahāyāna it means “to express the form that is perceived mentally²¹⁾”.

d. Saṃskāra ; volition (行).

In the Abhidharma-kośa, this element takes in the remaining saṃskṛta-dharma, which the other four skandhas exclude. (See diagram on following page).

Mahāyāna interprets saṃskāra as to mean that the mind functions within the realms of Good, Evil and Neutral, accordingly. Actually, there are no great differences between the two branches as to the essence of this term. The differences occurs in the way it is explained.

e. Vijñāna ; consciousness (識).

In the Abhidharma-kośa, Vijñāna is taken to mean the six consciousness, which are the bases for the actions of the mind. A seventh consciousness is also expounded, which means it retains all objects perceived ; manodhātu, (意界). It perceives all objects in its wholeness while Perception and Conception subdivides the whole into small portions, but at the same time, the whole object is understood. A clear definition as to the function that takes place between consciousness and Perception-Conception is not given.

In Mahāyāna, it is expounded that besides the six consciousness, there are two more, which are²²⁾ ;

- i . Mano-vijñāna ; faculty of mind (意識). This is similar to that of the seventh vijñāna of the Abhidharma-kośa.
- ii . Ālaya-vijñāna ; store-consciousness (阿賴耶識). It is said that these two additions were expounded only in the Mahāyāna branch.

A Study of the Mahāyāna and Abhidharma Buddhism [I]

| | | Five Categories (五位) | Five Aggregates (五蘊) |
|--------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| All Dharmas | Samskṛta (有為) ... 72 | a. Form (色) 11 | Form (色) 11 |
| | | b. Mind (心) 1 | Consciousness (識) 1 |
| | | c. Mental Condition (心所) 46 | Perception (受) 1 |
| | | d. Non-interrelated Mind (心不相応) 14 | Conception (想) 1 |
| | Asamskṛta (無為) ... 3 | e. Non-Created (無為) ... 3 | VOLITION (行) ... [14 / 44] 58 |
| 75 | | | |

Notes

- 1) "The Characteristics of Abhidhamma," *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Fascicule : A-Aca. p. 43.
- 2) "Abhidhamma-Verbal definition," *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Fascicule : A-Aca. pp. 39-40.
- 3) "Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra" Vol. 4, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* Vol. 31.
- 4) "Contents of Abhidharma-kośa." *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Fascicule : A-Aca. pp. 59-60.
- 5) Fukuhara, Ryogon, *Ubu Abhidhatsuma Ronsho no Hatatsu* (Kyoto : Nagata Bunshodo, 1965) p. 441.
- 6) "Kusha-ron" Vol. 1, *T. S. D.* Vol. 29, p. 5-a.
- 7) "Kusha-ron" Vol. 1, *T. S. D.* Vol. 29, p. 6-b.
- 8) "Jūni-sho," *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary* (Tokyo : Daitō-Shuppansha, 1965) p. 151.
- 9) "Jūhachi-kai," *Ibid.*, p. 147.
- 10) Fukuhara, *op. cit.*, p. 443.
- 11) "Yugashiji-ron" Vol. 43, *T. S. D.* Vol. 30, p. 528-c.
- 12) "Yugashiji-ron" Vol. 86, *T. S. D.* Vol. 30, p. 661-b.
- 13) "Abhidhatsuma-zōju-ron" Vol. 3, *T. S. D.* Vol. 31, p. 706-c.
- 14) "Abhidhatsuma-zōju-ron" Vol. 3, *T. S. D.* Vol. 31, p. 707-a.
- 15) "Hyappō-myōmon-ron" *T. S. D.* Vol. 31, p. 855-c.
- 16) "Goun-ron" *T. S. D.* Vol. 31, p. 696-b.
- 17) "Abhidhatsuma-zōju-ron" Vol. 1, *T. S. D.* Vol. 31, p. 696-b.
- 18) "Abhidhatsuma-zōju-ron" Vol. 1, *T. S. D.* Vol. 31, p. 696-a.
- 19) Takakusu, Junjiro. *Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, (Honolulu : Office Appliance Co. Ltd.), p. 94a.
- 20) "Abhidhatsuma-zōju-ron" Vol. 1, *T. S. D.* Vol. 31, p. 695-c.
- 21) "Abhidhatsuma-zōju-ron" Vol. 1, *T. S. D.* Vol. 31, p. 695-c.

22) "Jōyūishiki-ron" Vol. 4, *T. S. D.* Vol. 31, p. 20-c.

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