

RAS Institute of Philosophy
Tibetan Culture and Information Center in Moscow

First International Conference
“Buddhism and Phenomenology”

November 7–8, 2016
RAS Institute of Philosophy, Moscow



Supported by:
➤ Save Tibet Foundation



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***Adhimukti and Subjectivity in Cognitive Experience.
The Abhidharma and Yogācāra Perspective
(Abstract)***

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In my presentation, I shall discuss the gradual ascendance of doctrinal importance of the concept of *adhimukti* (following the *sūtra*-s and the *śāstra*-s, I shall use this term interchangeably with *adhimokṣa*) from Early Buddhism, through the Abhidharma doctrines, to Yogācāra, examining in particular the contribution of such a concept to the development of the *viññaptimātratā* doctrine of the Yogācāra. In this way, I hope to bring out the Buddhist understanding of subjectivity in cognitive experience from the Abhidharma and the Early Yogācāra perspectives.

Firstly, we may note a doctrinal development related to *adhimokkha* in the Pāli *Vibhaṅga*. There, we find *adhimokkho* replacing *upādāna* in the twelve-link *paṭicca-samuppāda* formula: *adhimokkha-paccayā bhavo*. The brief explanation thereon indicates that the whole mental domain in the future existence — comprising all the four mental aggregates excluding *adhimokkha* itself — is conditioned by the *adhimokkha* in the present.

In Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, *adhimokṣa* is enumerated as one of the ten *mahābhūmika*-s. That is to say, for them *adhimokṣa* occurs in every instance of consciousness. They effectively claim that all our experiences as ordinary worldlings are essentially conditioned and determined by *adhimokṣa/adhimukti*.

It has been a fundamental Buddhist teaching since Early Buddhism that the way we experience the external world is significantly determined by our inner mental states — our *rāga*, *dveṣa*, *moha*, etc. Such a teaching may be seen as one pertaining to the psychology of experience. But going a step further, the Sarvāstivāda, committed realists as they are, have now pinpointed an ontologically existent force — *adhimokṣa* — that actually conditions the appearance of the world to us in every moment. Moreover, they acknowledge that on the basis of a meditative practice in which the efficacy of *adhimokṣa* predominates, the external world can convincingly be perceived to exist in a drastically determined form “physically”, and not just psychologically. Such a doctrine is undoubtedly one of subjectivity in cognitive experience.

In fact, the early discourses already taught that an *adhimokṣa*-based meditation as well as resolute aspirations condition rebirth. (Cf. *Anuruddha-sutta* and *Sankhārūpapatti-sutta*, respectively). The early Yogācāras in the Basic Section of the *Yogācāra-bhūmi* inherited this doctrine from Early Buddhism. For example, the *Samāhitā bhūmiḥ* teaches that, depending on the manner of the *adhimokṣa* involved in the meditation and on its increasing strength, a correspondingly distinctive form of rebirth results.

In the *Tattvārtha-ṣaṭṣaḥ* exposition of the four types of *tattvārtha*, representing four progressive levels of cognitive reality, the first, *lokaprasiddha-tattvārtha*, is that affirmatively experienced in common by the world:

In brief, it is the cognitive domain of determined *adhimukti* (*niścītādhimukti-gocara*), understanding in the manner: “it is this, not this”; “it is thus, not otherwise” — that object-base (*vastu*), which is universally established with one’s own conceptualization by means of ideation passed down successively among all people in the world [from the beginning], and not comprehended after having thought about, deliberated and closely examined.

According to this exposition, then, the reality — namely, the experiential world of the unenlightened ordinary people — is the cognitive domain of *adhimukti*. This pertains

to both external material things as well as inner sensations (pleasure, displeasure, etc.). This is quite in line with what we have seen before in the texts of Early Buddhism and Abhidharma: *adhimukti* decisively conditions the way we perceive the world, and also our experience of existence! Such a level of reality perceived through *adhimukti* is further described as a perception resulting from conceptualization conditioned by successively perpetuated ideations in the world. This may be said to be the early Yogācāras' doctrine of subjectivity in cognition: Existence as experienced by the ordinary people is necessarily and decisively conditioned by the type of resolute receptivity or affirmative mentality represented by *adhimukti*. For the completely unenlightened, what is perceived is what they have actually already resolutely decided to perceive!

In the later Yogācāra development, we may note that one of the major proofs for doctrine of *vijñaptimātratā* precisely relies on the *adhimukti*-based meditative experience of the *aśubhā*. The **Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*, in arguing for this *vijñaptimātratā* thesis, asserts that a *bodhisattva* endowed with four knowledges can awaken into the fact that no external object (*artha*) exists at all. Of the four, two are particularly relevant in this connection:

- (I) The *viruddhajñānanimitta-jñāna* — knowledge that the same object-entity is the cause of contradictory consciousnesses. E.g.: Water is experienced by humans as that which quenches thirst, etc; by fish experience as a dwelling abode; by *preta*-s as fire; by the gods as being jewel-adorned.
- (II) The *trividhajñānānuvartana-jñāna* — knowledge that arises in conformity with the threefold knowledge: (IIa) Bodhisattvas with mastery of mind and those in the *dhyāna* can cause any object to appear in accordance with their power of *adhimukti*. (IIb) For a meditator who has acquired *śamatha* and who practices contemplation of *dharma*-s, objects appear immediately upon his attentive reflection. (IIc) For those who have acquired the *nirvikalpa-jñāna*, when it arises, no object at all appears.

A major point in the above argument is that a being's experience of his existence is dependent on the particular *gati* of rebirth. Such a notion is also shared by the Śrāvakayāna. Indeed, on the basis of the *Anuruddha-sutta*, the Abhidhamma/Abhidharma and the *Vastu-saṃgrahaṇī*, we may say that there is an essential parity between, on the one hand, the doctrines in those earlier sources that *adhimokṣa*-based meditative praxis conditions rebirth, and on the other, the *gati*-dependence proof of *vijñaptimātratā* as well as the *buddha*-visualization experiences in the **Pratyutpannabuddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*, etc. The fundamentally important difference is that the latter has now doctrinally come to teach that such rebirth and *buddha*- or god-encounter experiences are *cittamātra* or *vijñaptimātra*. But in both cases, it is the *adhimukti*-based praxis that stands out as what effectuates the distinctive experiences. This is, in a gist, the early Yogācāra doctrine of subjectivity in sentient experiences: subjectivity not only in terms of cognitive experiences in the present human existence, but also of the conditioning of rebirth states and the totality of experiences pertaining thereto in the samsaric context.

These early Yogācāras go so far as to declare that phenomenal existence is manifested solely from our own subjective conceptualization (*vikalpa*). In the later period too, the *Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣya* likewise pronounces: “*sarvam idaṃ vikalpamātram*”.

However, as the Viniścaya-saṃgrahaṇī — again invoking the *adhimukti* meditative experience — explains: in spite of all external phenomena having no ontological status outside conceptualization, the totality of phenomenality does not vanish upon a single individual acquiring the non-conceptualizing wisdom.

A *vastu* may be either arisen from an unshared conceptualization as its cause or from a shared conceptualization as its cause. In the former case, for one free from conceptualization, it also ceases accordingly. In the latter, even if one is without conceptualization, it will not cease completely, being sustained by others' conceptualization ... But although it is not ceased, the one possessing purity penetrates into it with proper and pure vision. Just as, numerous meditators (*yogācāra*), exercising *adhimukti* in diverse manners (*sna tshogs su mos par byed pa*) by means of their equipoised knowledge, perceive differently with regard to one and the same thing; likewise is the case here. (Similar position in the **Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*.)

In summary: the later Yogācāras' doctrine, totally denying the ontological status of external phenomena as it does, *ipso facto* denies any objectivity in our cognitive experiences. In substantiating this view, they have importantly relied on the earlier Buddhist teachings related to *adhimukti*. What I further hope to have brought out above is that, significantly, even the teachings in the early discourses, the Abhidharma tradition, as well as the early Yogācāras — all not idealistic in the vein of the *viññaptimātratā* doctrine — likewise hold the position of subjectivity in cognitive experience. For them, one might say that the world we experience is in a significant sense the world of *adhimukti*.