

Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam

of Vasubandhu



Volume III

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What is the nature of the loathsome? To how many spheres does it belong? What is its object? By whom is it produced?

llc-d. The loathsome is non-desire; it is in ten spheres; it has the visible of Kāmadhātu for its object; it is generated by humans.⁷⁹

Its nature is non-desire.⁸⁰

The ten spheres in which the ascetic can be found in order to produce them are the Four Dhyanas, the four *sāmantakas* (preparatory stages or thresholds of the Four Dhyanas, viii.22), *dhyānāntara* and Kāmadhātu.

Its object is the visibles of the sphere of Kāmadhātu. "Visible" signifies color and shape. This means that it has a "thing" and not a "name" for its object.

Only humans generate it;⁸¹ not beings of the other realms of rebirth, nor much less beings of the higher spheres. Also, among humans, the inhabitants of Utrarakuru do not produce it.

As its name, "the loathsome" (*aśubbhā*), indicates, it is a visualization of a repulsive or unclean thing: thus it has the repulsive for its "aspect". [It does not have the aspect of impermanence, etc.: it contemplates a visible thing as horrible and not as impermanent, etc.]

In the past, it had a past object; in the present, it has a present object; and in the future, it will have a future object: in other words, its object is contemporaneous to it. When it is not destined to arise, its object is tritemporal.

Since it is an act of attention on an imaginary object, it is impure.⁸²

Accordingly as it has been, or not, cultivated in a previous existence, it is obtained through detachment or through cultivation (vii.41d, 44b).

Such are the characteristics of the loathsome.

12a-c. Mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasmṛti*) is *prajñā*, belonging to the five spheres, having wind for its object, and it is cultivated by beings in Kāmadhātu.⁸³

Āna is in-breathing, the entry of wind; *apāna* is out-breathing, the leaving of the wind. The mindfulness (*smṛti*) that bears on both of these is *ānāpānasmṛti*.⁸⁴

[Mindfulness of breathing is by nature *prajñā*, a knowledge bearing on in-breathing and out-breathing.] This *prajñā* is called mindfulness, *smṛti*, the same as the applications of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthānas*), because this knowledge of in-breathing and out-breathing, *ānāpānaprajñā*, is provoked by the force of mindfulness.⁸⁵

It can be cultivated in five spheres, namely the first three *sāmantakas*, *dhyānāntara*, and Kāmadhātu, because it is associated with indifference (see viii.7, 23, etc.).⁸⁶ In fact, says the School, agreeable and painful sensations [in Kāmadhātu] are favorable to imagining: thus mindfulness of breathing, which is the opposite of imagining, cannot be associated with happiness or with suffering. On the other hand, the two agreeable sensations [of the Dhyanas] form an obstacle to the application of the mind to any object, and mindfulness of breathing can only be realized by this application.

But according to the masters who believe that the fundamental Dhyanas include the sensation of indifference (*Vibhāṣā*, TD 27, p. 134bl), mindfulness of breathing can exist in eight spheres, by adding the first three Dhyanas: higher spheres are no longer spheres in which one breathes (see viii.7).

The object of the mindfulness of breathing is wind.

Its support is Kāmadhātu, that is, it is cultivated by humans

and by the gods of Kāmadhātu, because imagination abounds there. It is obtained either by detachment or by cultivation. It is attention bearing on a real thing (*tattvamanasikāra*).⁸⁷ It belongs only to the Buddhists.

12c. Not to outsiders.

In fact, on the one hand, the teaching of mindfulness of breathing is absent among them,⁸⁸ and on the other hand, they are incapable of discovering the subtle *dharma*s by themselves.

12d. It has six aspects, counting, etc.

It is perfect when it is endowed with six operations: counting, following, fixing, observing, modifying, and purifying.⁸⁹

i. Counting. One fixes the mind on in-breathing and out-breathing, without effort or contention; one lets the body and mind be as they are;⁹⁰ and one counts from one to ten only in the mind. One does not count to less than ten, nor to more than ten, for fear of contention and of mental distraction (vii.11).

There are three faults to avoid: a. to omit counting, by taking two for one; b. counting too high, by taking one for two; c. counting in a confused manner, by taking in-breathing for out-breathing, and vice versa. The counting that avoids these faults is correct. If, in the course of this cultivation the mind becomes distracted, then one should count anew from the beginning until absorption (*śamādhi*) is attained.

ii. Following. Without contention, follow the progress of the air which enters and leaves until it goes into two senses: does the air breathed in occupy all of the body or does it go into only one part of the body? The ascetic follows the air breathed in into the throat, the heart, the navel, the kidneys, the thigh, and so on to the two feet; the ascetic follows the air breathed out to a distance of a

hand and a cubit.

According to other masters,⁹¹ he follows the air breathed out to the "circle of air" (*vāyumanḍala*)⁹² which holds up the universe and to the Vairambha Winds.⁹³

This opinion is not admissible, for mindfulness of breathing is an attention to things as they really are (*tattvamanasikāra*).

iii. Fixing.⁹⁴ Fix the attention on the tip of the nose, or between the eyebrows, or in another area all the way down to the toes; fix the mind; see the breath held in the body like the thread of a pearl necklace;⁹⁵ state that it is cold or hot, unfavorable or favorable (*Vibhāṣā*, TD 27, p. 135a15).

iv. Observing. Observe that "These breaths are not only air, but the four primary elements, and again physical matter derived from these four; and the mind with its mental *dharma*s rests on them": in this way the ascetic discovers the five *skandha*s through analysis.

v. Modifying. The ascetic modifies the mind that had the air as its object and now directs his mind to better and better *dharma*s [for example, to the *smṛtyupasthāna*s, vi.14, and the *uṣmagata*s, vi.17, etc.] up to and including the transworldly *dharma*s (vi.19b).

vi. Purifying. The ascetic enters the Path of Seeing (vi.26) and the Path of Meditation.

According to some other masters (*Vibhāṣā*, TD 27, p. 135a27), modification is progressive elevation from the foundations of mindfulness (the *smṛtyupasthāna*s) up to Vajropamasamādhi (vi.44c). Purifying is the Knowledge of Extinction (*keśajñāna*), the Knowledge of Non-Arising (*anutpādajñāna*) and the Right Views of the Arhat (*asaikṣī samyagdṛṣṭi*, vi.50c).

There is a summarizing stanza: "One teaches that the mindfulness of breathing has six aspects: counting, following, fixing, observing, modifying, and purifying."

13a. In-breathing and out-breathing are like the body.⁹⁶

The two breaths, being part of the body, belong to the same sphere as does the body.

In-breathing and out-breathing do not exist among beings in Ārūpyadhātu, among embryonic beings, among non-conscious (*acīta*) beings, and among beings who have entered into the Fourth Dhyāna: their existence therefore presupposes a body [and bodies do not exist in Ārūpyadhātu], a certain body [a body has cavities, which embryonic beings do not have], a mind [which is absent among non-conscious beings], and a certain type of mind [which is absent in the Fourth Dhyāna]. When the body has cavities in it, and when the mind belongs to a sphere in which there is breathing, then there is in-breathing and out-breathing (*Vibhāṣā*, TD 27, p. 132b).

There is in-breathing at birth and at the moment when one leaves the Fourth Dhyāna. There is out-breathing at death and at the moment when one enters the Fourth Dhyāna.

13b. It belongs to living beings.

It belongs to living beings, and not to non-living beings (i.10b).

13b. It is not taken up.

It does not form part of any sense organ (i.34c-d).

13c. It is an outflowing.⁹⁷

It diminishes when the body increases; cut off, it recovers: therefore it is not an increase (*auṣpacyikī*, i.37), and it does not arise from retribution. In fact, the physical matter arisen from retribution does not recover after having been cut off (i. English translation note 156).

13c-d. It is not observed by an inferior mind.⁹⁸

In-breathing and out-breathing is observed by a mind of its own sphere or by a mind in a higher sphere; but not by an *airyāpathika* mind, nor by a *nairmāṇika* mind of a lower sphere.

We have spoken of the two teachings, the visualization of loathsome things, and mindfulness of breathing. Having attained absorption (*samāhī*) by these two portals, now, with a view to realizing insight (*vipāśyanā*),

14a-b. Having realized stilling, he will cultivate the foundations of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthānas*).⁹⁹

How is this?

14c-d. By considering the twofold characteristics of the body, sensation, the mind, and the *dharmas*.

By considering the unique characteristics (*svlakṣaṇa*) and the general characteristics (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*)¹⁰⁰ of the body, sensation, the mind, and the *dharmas*.

"The unique characteristics" means its self nature (*svabhāva*).

"The general characteristics" signifies the fact that "All conditioned things are impermanent; all impure *dharmas* are suffering; and that all the *dharmas* are empty (*śūnya*) and not-self (*anātmaka*)."

What is the unique nature of the body? The primary elements and physical matter derived from these primary elements (i.12,

ii.65).

"Dharmas" means the *dharmas* which are neither the body, nor sensation, nor the mind. (*Vibhāṣā*, TD 27, p. 937a18).

According to the School, foundation of mindfulness of the body (*kāyasmṛtyupasthāna*) is realized when, being absorbed (*samāhīta*), one sees the atoms and the successive moments (*kṣāṇa*) of the body.

What is the nature of the foundations of mindfulness?

Foundation of mindfulness is threefold: foundation of mindfulness in and of itself (*svabhāva*), foundation of mindfulness through connection, and foundation of mindfulness in the quality of being an object.

Foundation of mindfulness in and of itself is

15a. *Prajñā*.¹⁰¹

What is *prajñā*?

15a. Proceeding from hearing, etc.

Prajñā proceeds from hearing, from reflection, and from meditation. The foundations of mindfulness are likewise threefold, proceeding from hearing, reflection, and meditation.

15b. The others, through connection and as object.

The other *dharmas* which are not *prajñā*, are, when they are *dharmas* coexistent with *prajñā*, foundations of mindfulness

through connection; when they are the object of *prajñā* and of the *dharmas* coexistent with *prajñā* [in other words, when they are the object of the foundation of mindfulness in and of itself and of the foundation of mindfulness through connection], they are a foundation of mindfulness as object.

How do we know that the foundation of mindfulness in and of itself is *prajñā*?

Because it is said in the Sūtra, "His attention is set having the body for its object" (*kāye* [var. *kāme*] *kāyānupāśyanā smṛtyupasthānam*).¹⁰²

What is *anupāśyanā*? It is *prajñā*. In fact, through *prajñā*, one who is endowed with *prajñā* becomes an *anupāśya*.¹⁰³ Therefore the Sūtra further says, "He dwells in attention to the body, the internal body" (*madhyātmam kāye kāyānupāśyī viharati*). The word *kāyānupāśyin* is explained as follows: one who possesses *anupāśya* or *darśana*¹⁰⁴ is called an *anupāśyin*; and one who is an *anupāśyin* with respect to the body is called a *kāyānupāśyin*.

What is *prajñā*?

The Blessed One said that it is the foundation of mindfulness.

[Why give the name of foundation of mindfulness to *prajñā*?]

The Vaiḥāṣīkas say: By reason of the preponderant role of attention, [which presents the object to *prajñā*]; as a wedge (*kīla*) contributes to the splitting of wood;¹⁰⁵ it is due to the force of mindfulness that *prajñā* is active with respect to the object.¹⁰⁶

But the best explanation is the following: Mindfulness is applied (*upatiṣṭhate*)¹⁰⁷ by it; thus the *prajñā* is a foundation of

mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna* = *smṛter upasthānam*); in fact, as the object is seen by the *prajñā*, so too it is expressed, that is to say, grasped by the attention. Therefore the Blessed One said, "He dwells having an exact notion of the body with respect to the body (*kāye kāyānupapāṭī vibharati*): his attention is set and fixed having the body for its object" (*Samyutta*, v.294). And the Blessed One said, "He dwells with his attention fixed having his body for its object; his attention is applied, unexhausted" (see *Samyutta*, v.331).

Objection: Nevertheless the Sūtra says, "Oh monks, how is the origin, how is the disappearance of the foundations of mindfulness? Through the origin of food, there is the origin of the body; through the disappearance of food, there is the disappearance of the body; through the origin of contact, there is the origin of sensation . . . ; through the origin of *nāmarūpa* . . . ; through the origin of *manasikāra* . . ." (*Samyutta*, TD 2, p. 171a27). Therefore foundation of mindfulness is the body, etc.

Answer: In this Sūtra we are not dealing with a foundation of mindfulness in and of itself, but a foundation of mindfulness in the quality of being an object: the attention is applied to it, and therefore it is a foundation of mindfulness. The name differs according to the object.

Each foundation of mindfulness is threefold accordingly as it is considered as oneself, as another, or as oneself and another. [The ascetic has in view his own body, the body of another . . .]

15b-c. The order is that of their production.

Why are they produced in this order? According to the Vaibhāṣikas, because one first sees that which is the coarsest. Or rather: the body (1) is the support of sensual attachment which has its origin in the desire for sensation (2); this desire takes place because (3) the mind is not calmed; and the mind is not calmed because (4) the defilements are not abandoned.

15c-d. Four, oppositions to errors.¹⁰⁸

The foundations of mindfulness are taught in this order as oppositions to the four errors, belief in purity, happiness, permanence, and self (v.9). They are therefore four, no more and no less.

Of the four foundations of mindfulness, three have an unmixed object; the fourth is of two types: when it bears only on the *dharmas*, its object is not mixed; when it bears on two, or three, or four things at one and the same time, its object is mixed [or universal, *samasāra*].

Having thus cultivated the foundations of mindfulness having the body, etc., for their objects

16. Placed in the foundation of mindfulness having the *dharmas* as its universal object, he sees that the *dharmas* are impermanent, suffering, empty, and not-self.¹⁰⁹

Placed in the foundation of mindfulness having the *dharmas* as its mixed object, placing together the body, sensation, etc., he sees them under the fourfold aspect of impermanence, suffering, empty, and not-self.

17a. From this there arises the Heat.¹¹⁰

From this cultivation of the foundation of mindfulness having the *dharmas* as its object, there finally¹¹¹ arises a root of good called *Uṣmagata* ("Heat attained"), because it is similar to heat (*uṣma*), being the first indication or the anticipation of the Noble Path, a fire which burns the fuel which are the defilements.

17b. Which has the Four Truths for its object.

Since it is prolonged for a certain period of time, *Uṣmagata*, the Heat, has the Four Truths for its object.

17c. Which has sixteen aspects.

The seeing of suffering as suffering, impermanent, empty, and not-self; seeing arising or origin as arising, appearance, cause, and condition; seeing extinction as extinction, calm, excellent, and definitive salvation; and the seeing of the Path as path, truth, obtaining, and definitive release. We shall define these different aspects later (see vii.13).

17c-d. From Heat, the Summits.

The Heat develops, weak, medium, and strong; there finally arises the Summits (*mūrdhan*).

17d. Which are similar to it.

Like Heat, the Summits have the Four Truths for their object and include the sixteen aspects: they receive another name by reason of their excellence.

They are called Summits (or "Heads"), because they are the most elevated or the head of the unfixed roots of good, that is, those from which one can fall away; or one can fall away from the Summits; or one goes beyond them by penetrating into a Patience (*ksānti*).¹¹²

18a. It is through *dharmas* that these two imprint.¹¹³

It is through the foundation of mindfulness that has the *dharmas* for its object that Heat and the Summits imprint. What does "imprint" mean? This refers to the first application of the different aspects of the Truths.¹¹⁴

18b. They grow through the others also.¹¹⁵

Heat and the Summits grow by means of the four foundations of mindfulness together. The progressing ascetic does not manifest the previously acquired roots of good, because he does not esteem them very much.

The Summits have grown by passing through weak, medium, and strong states:

18c. From that, Patience.¹¹⁶

Patience (*ksānti*) is so-called because in this stage, the Truths please (*ksāmate*) extremely much. In the Heat they please weakly,

and in the Summits, medium,--as one sees from the fact that one cannot fall away from Patience, but can from the first two stages.

Patience is threefold, weak, medium, strong:

18c. Two are as above.

Weak and medium Patience (*Divya*, 271) are like the Heads, in that they imprint first, like the Heads, by the foundation of mindfulness having the *dharmas* as its object. But they differ from the Heads in respect to their increase.

18d. Three grow totally through the *dharmas*.

Weak, medium, strong, they grow only through the foundation of mindfulness which has the *dharmas* for its object; not by the other foundations of mindfulness.¹¹⁷

19a-b. Strong, it has the suffering of Kāmadhātu for its object.

Strong Patience, contiguous with the highest *dharmas*, has only the suffering of Kāmadhātu for its object.

A similar restriction is not formulated concerning the preceding stages; thus they have the suffering, arising, etc., of the three spheres for their objects.¹¹⁸

Medium Patience lasts from the moment when the ascetic ceases to consider the sixteenth aspect [=definitive release] bearing on the two higher spheres, but continues to successively eliminate the higher aspects and spheres, until the moment when, in two moments of thought, he is impressed with only two aspects [=impermanence and suffering] of the suffering of Kāmadhātu.

Strong Patience exists when the ascetic considers, in a single

thought, only one aspect [=impermanence] applied to the sufferings of Kāmadhātu. Such is the explanation of the Vaibhāṣikas.

19b. It is of a moment.

It is momentary; it does not form a series.

19c. So too, the Supreme Dharmas.

These, exactly like strong Patience, bear on the suffering of Kāmadhātu and are momentary.

They are termed Supreme Worldly Dharmas (*laukika agradharmanas*): because they are worldly, being impure; because they are supreme *dharmas*; and because they are supreme among the worldly *dharmas*. They are Supreme Worldly Dharmas because, in the absence of any similar cause (*sabhāgahetu*), by their own power, they manifest the Path of Seeing the Truths.¹¹⁹

The four roots of good, Heat, etc., are by their nature foundations of mindfulness; they are thus *prejñā*. However

19c. All include the five *skandhas*.¹²⁰

Considering the root of good, Heat, etc., with their attendants, they include the five *skandhas*.

19d. With the exclusion of the possessions.¹²¹

The possessions (*prāptis*),--that is to say, the *prāptis* of Heat, etc.,--are not included within Heat, etc., for it is inadmissible for Āryans to manifest Heat, etc., anew, which would be the case if they were to manifest its *prāptis*.

i. When the Heat begins and when it has three Truths for its object, a foundation of mindfulness that has the *dharma*s for its object is present; the four foundations of mindfulness of the future, are possessed [One of the aspects is presently seen; four of the future are possessed]. When it has the Truth of Extinction for its object, the same foundation of mindfulness which has the *dharma* for its object which is present is also the only one which is possessed in the future. The aspects, in all cases, are those of the Truth presently considered [One does not acquire, in the future, the aspects of the Truths which are not present].

In the period of increase, when the Heat has the three Truths for its object, any of the foundations of mindfulness may be present; the four of the future are possessed. When it has the Truth of Extinction for its object, the fourth foundation of mindfulness is present; four of the future are possessed. All the aspects of the future are possessed, because the *gotras* have been acquired.¹²²

ii. In the Summits, having for their object the Four Truths at their beginning, and having for their object extinction in the period of growth, the last foundation of mindfulness is present; four of the future are possessed; all the aspects of the future are possessed. Having for its object the three other Truths in the period of increase, any of the foundations of mindfulness are present; four of the future are possessed; and so too all of the aspects.

iii. In Patience, in the beginning and in the period of increase whichever of the Truths is considered, the last foundation of

mindfulness is present; four of the future are possessed; and so too all of the aspects.

iv. In the Supreme Worldly Dharmas, the last foundation of mindfulness is present; four of the future are possessed--those which are not destined to arise; four aspects only, those of the Truth of Suffering--for the aspects of the other Truths do not belong to the Supreme Worldly Dharmas; for the Supreme Worldly Dharmas are similar to the Path of Seeing,¹²³ in which one acquires only in the future the four aspects of the Truth that one considers under one aspect.

20a-b. This is the fourfold *nirvedhabbhāgīya*.¹²⁴

These four--Heat, Summits, Patience, and the Supreme Worldly *Dharma*s--are the roots of good called *nirvedhabbhāgīyas* ("parts pertaining to the Path").

The first two, being non-fixed since one can fall away from them, are weak *nirvedhabbhāgīyas*; the Patiences are medium *nirvedhabbhāgīyas*; and the Supreme Worldly Dharmas are strong *nirvedhabbhāgīyas*.

What does *nirvedhabbhāgīya* mean? 1. *Nirvedha* signifies *niścita vedha* ("definitely known"), the Noble Path. Through it doubt is abandoned: it is thus *niścita* ("definitive"), and the Truths are distinguished (*vedha*):¹²⁵ "This is suffering..., this is the Path"; 2. the Path of Seeing is one part (*bhāga*) of the Path; thus *nirvedhabbhāga*.

The *dharma*s useful to one part of the Path are *nirvedhabbhāgīya* (with the suffix *chaṇ*) because they lead to it.

All these four *nirvedhabbhāgīyas*

20b. Arise from absorption.