

Controversy on the *arupyadhātu* in the *Abhidharma* Tradition

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In Abhidharma Buddhism there are many controversies that promulgated different understandings of the Buddha's teaching. One of them is whether there is *rupa* (matter) or not in the *arupyadhātu*. This controversy appeared as early as the time of *Abhidharma-maha-vibhāsa-sāstra* (=MVS), compiled in the middle of the 2nd century A.D. There, it is given as a disagreement between the Vibhajyavāda and the Yuktivāda, “some like the Vibhajyavādins claim that there is *rupa* in the *arupyadhātu* and some, like the Yuktivādins say that there is no *rupa* in the *arupyadhātu*.”

Later on, in *Abhidharmakosabhasya* of Vasubandhu (=AKB), this same topic constituted one of the arguments between the Sarvastivāda on the one hand and the Mahasanghika etc on the other. The Yuktivāda is another name of the Sarvastivāda, its theory is a correspondence with the Pali tradition on this topic, while the Vibhajyavāda belonged to the Sthaviravāda lineage and yet was doctrinally closer to the Mahasanghikas.

The Buddha taught in the *sūtras* that life and warmth are interconnected (*ayuh-usmanohsamsrstavacanat*) and mind and matter are mutually dependent (*nama-rupayoh anyonya-nisrita-vacanat*). How do we understand these statements with reference to the *arupya*? Is it that these statements belong to *neyartha* that we have to understand in a different way? If philosophically speaking, there is definitely no *rupa* in the *arupyadhātu*, there will be various problems such as where does one's mind depend on in the *arupyadhātu*? How can one whose body has been abandoned for a long time, be reborn from the *arupyadhātu* into the *rupadhātu* or the *kamadhātu* without a body?

Therefore the Vibhajyavādins etc. do not accept the Yuktivādins' theory and come to argue against them. The Yuktivādins etc. have to however defend their own theory with great effort. Both schools, in order to establish their theories invoke scripture authority (*agama*) and apply logical reasoning (*yukti*). On this topic I shall give some of the major points of the controversy between the Yuktivādins and the Vibhajyavādins etc based on MVS and the **Nyāyanusāra* which are extant only in Chinese besides AKB.