

## **“True Wisdom” in Satyasiddhi-Sastra: its Concept, Characteristics, Criteria and Methods**

Shiyang Weng<sup>1, a \*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Taoism and Religious Culture, Sichuan University,  
Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China

<sup>a</sup>245275768@qq.com

**Keywords:** Satyasiddhi-sastra; True wisdom; Concept; Characteristic; Criterion; Method

**Abstract.** This article has carried out a preliminary classification of 45 “true wisdom” in Satyasiddhi-Sastra, which will be discussed from their concepts, characteristics, criteria and methods. It is believed that “true wisdom” is “emptiness and no-self wisdom”, and it has the characteristics of the ability to break ignorance, destroy the various karmas and get liberation (SKt.nirvāṇa). The fundamental criterion to get “true wisdom” lies in whether it has a true knowledge of Buddha Dharma, and the fundamental way to acquire “true wisdom” is in the three practices of “precepts (SKt.śīla), meditation (SKt.samādhi) and wisdom (SKt.prajñā)”.

### **Introduction**

It is generally believed that the theory of Satyasiddhi-Sastra is the theory of Hinayana treatise, whose theoretical system was built on the basis of judging the justice of the various parts of Mahayana, Hinayana and other sects, and has the characteristics of transiting from Hinayana to Mahayana. It was written by Harivarman from India, and was translated into Chinese by the famous Indian translator Kumarajiva in his later years, for the purposes of “giving the beginners a hand who study Buddhism” and “breaking the abhidharma” [1]. This treatise was not widely circulated in India, but was widely spread in China, and even formed a “Satyasiddhi Teachers” and “Satyasiddhi School”. But, in fact, it was only a “School of thoughts or theories”, which gave priority to study and preach Satyasiddhi-Sastra. The meaning of “Satyasiddhi” is to establish the “truth” of the four noble truths, “the ‘truth’ means the four noble truths, they are the suffering (duḥkha), the arising of suffering (samudaya), the cessation of suffering (nirodha) and the path to the cessation of suffering (mārga)” [2]. The basic theory of Hinayana scriptures and treatises were basically centered around the four noble truths, Satyasiddhi-Sastra was also the same, which was aimed at establishing the true meaning of the four noble truths. In the theory of Satyasiddhi-Sastra, the concept of “true wisdom” was put forward when discussing the fourth truth in the four noble truths, which was considered to be a way of breaking ignorance, removing afflictions and getting nirvana. In fact, the statement of “true wisdom” is not only appeared in the above-mentioned section, but also appeared in the other three sections. By retrieving the electronic version of CBETA(2018), the word “true wisdom” appeared 45 times (including “true wisdom”, “fruit of true wisdom”, “pleasure of true wisdom”). The concept of “true wisdom” in these 45 places will be explored, classified and analyzed. From this, we can see the meaning of the theory of “true wisdom” in the theory of practices. The following is a brief exposition of the concept, characteristics, criteria and methods of “true wisdom”.

### **What is “True Wisdom”?**

Satyasiddhi-Sastra has not given a definition on the concept of “true wisdom” at first, but has been using it in a descriptive way until it is clearly stated in the “mārga section”(the part to interpret the path to the cessation of suffering).

“True wisdom is wisdom, while, true is emptiness and no-self, the wisdom in it is called true wisdom, and the wisdom in false names is called Thought but not Wisdom. Why? According to the Buddhist scriptures, like the knife can cut, the holy disciples can break many kinds of afflictions

like shackles, bindings, defilements and captures with wisdom knife, do not speak the rest of the doctrine, do not break the trouble with untruth, and therefore know the wisdom is reality.” [3]

The “TRUE” in “true wisdom” means “emptiness and no-self”, all dharmas are empty of characteristics, without the self and the things possessed. The “WISDOM” is “true wisdom”, that is true and real wisdom, the true wisdom in “emptiness and no-self” is called “true wisdom”, and the wisdom in false names is called Thought but not Wisdom. In fact, the so-called “true wisdom” is “emptiness and no-self” wisdom, which can break all kinds of afflictions, so it is compared to the sword of wisdom in the Buddhist scriptures. The purpose of Satyasiddhi-Sastra is to clarify the meaning of the four noble truths, whose final solution is to be implemented in the “mārga”, and the realization of the mārga depends on the “true wisdom”. Then, what are the characteristics of “true wisdom” as a kind of wisdom that can break all the afflictions and what are the criteria for judging whether sentient beings get “true wisdom” or not, and how can we get “true wisdom”? These questions have been described more in Satyasiddhi-Sastra.

### **What are the Characteristics of “True Wisdom”?**

In Satyasiddhi-Sastra, there are about 16 descriptions on features or functions of “true wisdom”. In general, its characteristics or functions are “can break afflictions”, “ignorance breaks”, “all activities(karma) can be destroyed”, “to get liberation finally”, the following examples will be briefly described.

“.....heart is like electricity, samadhi is like diamond, the true wisdom can break afflictions, this is spoken in the Buddha’s third power.” [4]

“To know the impermanence of dharma is true wisdom. There is no greed and other afflictions in true wisdom.....” [5]

“.....this ignorance can only be broken by true wisdom.....practice the true wisdom well, then the ignorance breaks.” [6]

The third power of the Buddha’s ten powers is “knowledge of all forms of meditation and liberation samadhi”, that is, the meditation, which is as strong as the diamond, and the “true wisdom” is also the same, so it can break all the afflictions. The emergence of greed and other afflictions is due to the ignorance, and to well know the “impermanence”, then the greediness does not increase, so “to know the impermanence of dharma” is “true wisdom”, of which there is no intrusion of vexation such as greed. Ignorance should be broken, but only “true wisdom” can. Therefore, we should “practice the true wisdom well” to break away from ignorance.

“True wisdom” can not only break away from afflictions and ignorance, but also can destroy karma, it is said as follows in the sastra,

“Get the true wisdom, so all activities(karma) can be destroyed, just like scorched seeds that can not reborn.....Dharmas that are free from outflow take the true wisdom as the causes, and take the karma as the conditions, it is called no fastening for its big power.” [7]

“True wisdom” can destroy all kinds of karma, just like scorched seeds, and they won’t regenerate again, which can be seen that the strength of its disconnection is strong. Because of the existence of “true wisdom”, even if the karma is too large, it can not be “fastened”, it also can be seen that “true wisdom” has the powerful function of eradicating karma. In Satyasiddhi-Sastra, we also discussed the problem of the release of “the collection of old karma”. The answer is: “although the industry has done it, it can not be more complex, for example, the coke can not be reborn.” [8] is a karma that is deliberately created, but because of the existence of “true wisdom”, it will not increase again, just like the reason that coke is not revived. This is also a powerful transformation power of “true wisdom”.

In addition, the “true wisdom” mentioned in Satyasiddhi-Sastra can only be attained by “Buddhas and all the wise men”. Therefore, Arhat, though “cultivating true wisdom”, will still suffer bad karma,

“Question: Arhat, though has cultivated true wisdom completely, will still suffer bad karma? Answer: Deep practices of good deeds will hinder bad deeds, so if a man does good deeds such as

gathering disciplines for thousands of generations, the bad karma won't draw out, like Buddhas and all the wise men, but others can't. Therefore, Arhat, though has cultivated true wisdom completely, will still suffer bad karma which were caused by past actions." [9]

It is generally believed that Arhat is already the highest fruit of Hinayana, but here we can see that Satyasiddhi-Sastra is not confined to Hinayana in fact, it has its own theoretical system. In the view of Satyasiddhi-Sastra, although Arhat "has cultivated true wisdom completely", however, due to its profound karma, it is also rewarded with bad karma. If he wants to achieve such "bad karma won't draw out" as "Buddhas and all the wise men", we can only achieve it after experiencing the practice of the three good karma of precepts, meditation and wisdom for hundreds of thousands of years. Arhat is not the highest fruit position here, but Buddha is the highest, and the person who gains "true wisdom" is the highest fruit position. Therefore, it is also said that "believing in the true wisdom means believing in the dharma, being the wise man, will be the most first among all the people" [10], "the most first among all the people" is just "Buddha", only when we have "true wisdom" "can we be liberated". [11]

### **What are the Criteria for Judging whether "True Wisdom" is Obtained or not?**

"True wisdom" can get rid of worry, ignorance, all kinds of karma and getting liberation. This is from the perspective of having got the "true wisdom", that is, from the perspective of being Buddha. However, from the perspective of all beings who have not become Buddha, what are the criteria for "true wisdom"? There are many explanations in Satyasiddhi-Sastra.

".....practitioners see that all the gods and men in the world are losing their true wisdom, so they are greedy for name and form. We often see delusions, eternity, bliss, pure and so on in the world, this named the loss of true wisdom. If we see truth, emptiness, no-self and so on, it will be called the gain of true wisdom." [12]

If people focuses on only delusions, eternity, bliss, pure and so on, it is called "the loss of true wisdom". If we can see the real nature of the world, that is, the perception of suffering, emptiness, impermanence and no-self, it is "the gain of true wisdom". The criterion of gains and losses is the real and true recognition of the world, which is one of the criteria for judging gains and losses of "true wisdom".

In another chapter, ".....practitioners who give aid to others to achieve emptiness and no-self wisdom, that is truly gaining the supernatural power of the complete extinction of afflictions.....non-Buddhists only know Five supernatural powers, which is all because we didn't get true wisdom." [13]

The sixth power is "the supernatural power of the complete extinction of afflictions", that is "emptiness and no-self wisdom", which is also known as "true wisdom". It is the wisdom that can reach the same level as Buddha in Satyasiddhi-Sastra, while non-Buddhists only talk about the first five powers. Therefore, it has become one of the criteria for judging whether the "true wisdom" can be obtained, that is, whether the six supernatural powers are sufficient or not.

There are some other criteria for judging whether "true wisdom" can be obtained, but in a word, the basic criterion is whether the four elements of bitterness (bitterness, emptiness, impermanence, selflessness) can be correctly, truthfully and accurately recognized. True knowledge leads to "the gain of true wisdom" and whereas, to "the loss of true wisdom".

### **How to Get "True Wisdom"?**

Whether or not the four elements have true knowledge is the fundamental criterion for gains and losses of "true wisdom". Then, if you have true knowledge, you will gain "true wisdom", and otherwise, you will not get it. This seems to have solved the problem, but in fact it is not the case. The key to the problem lies in how to get a true view of the four elements, which is also given in Satyasiddhi-Sastra, such as:

"Gods can't get... true wisdom, if I get it, i will abandon that profits. And then as Shariputra said, keep the samādhi of emptiness, look at everything outside, and see it as a spittle." [14]

“... there is no saying that in a scattered mind, true wisdom can be produced, all say that holding down the mind can produce true wisdom accurately.” [15]

“Practitioners had a revulsion against sufferings of the past, future and present, this revulsion can produce true wisdom.” [16]

Abandon good reputation and profits, just like Shariputra “keep the samādhi of emptiness, look at everything outside, and see it as a spittle”, only in this way can we get the joy of “true wisdom” as Buddha has. It is impossible to get “true wisdom” in a scattered mind, only by holding down the scattered mind can we “produce true wisdom accurately”, that is, “true wisdom”. If you had a revulsion against sufferings of the past, future and present, you will be able to “produce true wisdom”.

In addition, there are some other “methods” in the Satyasiddhi-Sastra, for example, “Buddha Dharma can produce correct wisdom” [17], “correct wisdom” is “true wisdom”. By learning Buddha Dharma and Buddha's knowledge, we can get “true wisdom”. “Meditation can produce true wisdom” [18], practicing pure meditation can also obtain “true wisdom”. “Knowing skandhas, realms and loci[19] is also known as true wisdom”, being fully aware of “three categories” can break through the insistence of ordinary people to be self-centered, that is to say, to achieve the knowledge of “no self”, and thus to acquire “true wisdom”. There are many ways to acquire “true wisdom” provided by Satyasiddhi-Sastra, but in fact, they are all “different ways come to the same end”, “holding down the mind”, “revulsion”, “meditation”, “knowing skandhas, realms and loci” and so on, they are nothing more than three practices of “precepts, meditation and wisdom”, which are fundamental reasons.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the “truth” of the “Four Noble Truths” in Satyasiddhi-Sastra is, in fact, the “true wisdom”, which was emphasized throughout the whole text. The “true wisdom” can break away afflictions, ignorance, all kinds of karma, and finally get liberated. To judge whether an ordinary man has acquired “true wisdom” or not depends fundamentally on whether he has a truthful knowledge of Buddhism Dharma. Finally, it comes down to the practice theory, that is, how to obtain it, there are many ways, “three categories”, “The thirty-seven aids to enlightenment” and so on, but fundamentally, there is nothing beyond three practices of “precepts, meditation and wisdom”. The concept, characteristics, criteria and methods of “true wisdom” are important parts of theoretical system in Satyasiddhi-Sastra, which is synchronized with the theoretical construction of the “truth” of the “Four Noble Truths”, which is essentially consistent. At the same time, it is worth noting that this narrative is somewhat different from the discussion of “Four Noble Truths”, that is, the shadow of “Mahayana” can be seen in the construction of “true wisdom” system, which needs to be discussed in details in a separate article.

## References

- [1] Y.T. Tang, *hanwei liangjin nanbeichao fojiaoshi*, Beijing:Peking University Press,1988,pp.515.
- [2] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.260,c29-p.261,a1.
- [3] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.360,b10-15.
- [4] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.339,c20-21.
- [5] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.347,c21-22.
- [6] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.313,b29-c1,c27.
- [7] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.296,c19-20,p.297,a8-9.
- [8] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.290,c19-20.
- [9] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.290,c25-29.
- [10] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.253,a6-7.
- [11] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.359,c9.
- [12] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.360,b28-29,c1.
- [13] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.370,b23-26.

- [14] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.353,c1-4.
- [15] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.368,b1-2.
- [16] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.372,a18-19.
- [17] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.244,a4.
- [18] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.245,b20-21.
- [19] Harivarman, Satyasiddhi-Sastra, CBETA(2018),T32,no.1646,p.313,c27-28.