

## A Study on the Concept of Prapañca in Sarvāstivāda

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The meaning of *papañca/prapañca* in Buddhism is quite complex. Although contemporary academic research has focused on the definition of *papañca* as per Pali Thripitaka, scarce attention has been paid to the existing Chinese literature of Sarvāstivāda that retain a comprehensive understanding of the concept of *prapañca*. Therefore, this paper attempts to clarify the conceptual meaning of *prapañca* based on Chinese literature. The concept of *prapañca* is generally translated as (xílun 戏论) the ‘gaming view’ as per the definition in Sarvāstivāda, where ‘Xi (戏)’ means ‘game’ and ‘Lun (论)’ means ‘speech’ or ‘theory’. Moreover, in modern Chinese Buddhist dictionaries, it is interpreted as a false and meaningless speech or view. However, according to the Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣa, *prapañcas* (xílun 戏论) are defined as ‘defilements’. The treatise juxtaposes *prapañca* with defilement, that is, ‘*prapañca* – defilement’, according to which, overcoming *prapañcas* is overcoming defilements. *Prapañcas* are twofold; ‘love (ai 爱) – *prapañca*’ and ‘view (jian 见) – *prapañca*’, which are all defilements. According to the Abhidharmavatara, the wrong views are *prapañcas*. Further, Abhidharmakośabhāṣya held that the secular words of

*prapañcas* belong to evil views (xielun 邪论) and unanswered questions in Buddhism are *prapañcas* because such questions cause contradictions. Nyāyānusāriṇī, on the other hand, defines *prapañca* as distress (*renao* 热恼/*saṃtāpa*) and considers that the essence of twelve sense spheres is leaking, which in turn is a distress (*renao* 热恼/*saṃtāpa*). Therefore, the twelve sense spheres are considered to possess *prapañcas*. This treatise acknowledged that there must be an extinction of no *prapañca*, that is nirvana – a constant that exists as a real entity. In addition, this treatise recorded a statement that the *prapañca* is contrary to the immeasurables (kindness, compassion, joy and selfless giving). All defilements (huo 惑) such as greed (tan 贪) are called *prapañcas*. This treatise refers to the concept of ‘*prapañca* - words (xilunyun 戏论语)’, which means that *prapañca* can be an utterance. *Prapañcas* are also claimed to generate wrong views that cause contradictions. There are some clear records of the concept of *prapañca* in the existing literature of Sarvāstivāda, which is why it is of vital importance to correctly understand the meaning of this concept and to verify the rationality of the definition of *papañca* as per Theravada commentaries.

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