



On puṇyapariṇāmanā in Nāgārjuna's works

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An interesting but not much discussed feature in Nāgārjuna's works is the presence of a dedicatory verse (*puṇyapariṇāmanā*) in some works and absence in others. For example, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, *Śūnyatāsaptati*, *Vigrahavyāvartanī* and *Ratnāvalī* do not dedicate merit. However, all four hymns of the *Catuḥstava* – *Nirāpamyā*, *Lokātīta*, *Acintya* and *Paramārtha* – do end with such verses. Yet, one cannot conclude that the issue is related to the genre, that is, that the dialectical works, due to their topic, do not end with dedicatory verse, while hymns do. The *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā*, classified as dialectical work, does end with the dedicatory verse. On the other hand, *Cittavajrastava* and *Dharmadhātustava*, hymns not part of the *Catuḥstava* but attributed to Nāgārjuna and arguably authentic, do not. The question arising from this peculiarity is: Is there a particular criterion by which Nāgārjuna considers some of his works to have generated merit so that he, as practicing bodhisattva, can transfer it? If the answer is affirmative, then, finding it can tell us a lot about the purpose/use of some texts as well as about Nāgārjuna's religious practices. Given that Nāgārjuna is one of the earliest datable Mahāyāna authors of whom number of works survived, the answer may give us information about some principles and practices in the formative period of the movement, at least about the limited area of activity.

After examining the available evidence, this paper determines the factors deciding whether a work can end with the dedication of merit or not. In addition, the paper proposes a hypothesis for reconstructing the social, religious and doctrinal circumstances under which Nāgārjuna would end a particular work with or without the dedicatory verse.