

Bhikkhuni Gioi Huong

BODHISATTVA AND ŚŪNYATĀ

IN THE EARLY AND DEVELOPED BUDDHIST
TRADITIONS

- 2006 -



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The two concepts most profound, sublime and influential of all Mahāyāna (*The Developed Buddhist Tradition*) texts are the concepts of *Bodhisattva* and *Śūnyatā*. In fact, both concepts had their seeds first in the Pāli Nikāyas (*The Early Buddhist Tradition*). In other words, while reading this book, the reader can discover the doctrines of Mahāyāna along with those of Pāli Nikāya which are essentially the same in origin, nature and purpose. He can also recognize how the term *Śūnyatā* sounds negative but the true meaning of it made *Bodhisattva* who becomes so positive and affirmative. How both systems of sūtras provide good visions and practical methods to *Bodhisattva* (Pāli: *Bodhisatta*) in balance with the insight of *Śūnyatā* (Pāli: *Suññata*) in order to help people in modern time overcome the current crisis and can play the important role in establishing a world of peace and happiness for the humanity.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO
SECOND EDITION

This is a revised and enlarged edition of '*Bodhisattva and Śūnyatā in the Early and Developed Buddhist Traditions*' which first published two years ago.

In presenting this second edition, I have maintained the contents wrote in the first edition, however, for the sake of greater clarity, a very few changes have been made, minor errors have been corrected and lots of Chinese characters which are equivalent Pāli works have been added.

Thích Nữ Giới Hương
WUS University Hostel,
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THE LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A	AṄGUTTARA NIKĀYA
BB	BODHISATTVABHŪMI
BDBSL	THE BODHISATTVA DOCTRINE IN BUDDHIST SANSKRIT LITERATURE
BGS	THE BOOK OF THE GRADUAL SAYINGS
BIHP	BUDDHIST IMAGES OF HUMAN PERFECT
BKS	THE BOOK OF THE KINDRED SAYINGS
Bs	BUDDHIST SCRIPTURE
CPB	THE CENTRAL PHILOSOPHY OF BUDDHISM
D	DĪGHA NIKĀYA
DB	THE DIALOGUE OF THE BUDDHA
DCBT	A DICTIONARY OF CHINESE BUDDHIST TERMS
DDPN	DICTIONARY OF PĀLI PROPER NAMES
Dha	DHAMMAPADA
EB	ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF BUDDHISM
EE	THE EMPTINESS OF EMPTINESS
EL	THE ETERNAL LEGACY
GBWL	A GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA'S WAY OF LIFE

GD	THE GROUP OF THE DISCOURSES
I	THE ITIVUTTAKA
J	JĀTAKA
LS	THE LOTUS SUTRA
LSPW	THE LARGE SŪTRA ON PERFECT WISDOM
M	MAJJHIMA NIKĀYA
Mhvu	MAHĀVASTU
MK	MĀDHYAMIKA KĀRIKĀS OF NĀGĀRJUNA
MLS	THE MIDDLE LENGTH SAYINGS
PED	PĀLI-ENGLISH DICTIONARY
PP	THE PATH OF PURIFICATION (VISUDDHIMAGGA)
S	SAMĀYUTTA NIKAYA
SBFB	STORIES OF THE BUDDHA'S FORMER BIRTHS
Sn	SUTTA NIPATA
SSPW	SELECTED SAYINGS FROM THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM
Ś	ŚIKṢĀSAMUCCAYA
Vi	VISUDDHIMAGGA

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Why the Topic

Man has forgotten that he has a heart. He forgets that if he treats the world kindly, the world will treat him kindly in return.

Today, the definition of development and growth has to be revised. The society is supposed to be more civilized though everybody has become lonelier, more worried, tensed and afraid of uncertainty. Science has made it possible to produce more in quality and quantity both but more number of people go to bed with empty stomach, more number of people die without medicine, more number of children are working and lesser going to school. Human race is more aware of the consequence of environmental degradation, pollution etc. but the defense investment on nuclear tests have increased, number of vehicles produced and used have increased, the area of jungle is coming down drastically. In one line it can be said that the world is full of contradictions.

In an era of satellite-communication and advanced technology, man having made great strides in the scientific domain can solve many material problems, but has left unsolved those related to sufferings, sickness, poverty, dissention, hatred, jealousy, doubt and war. Trevor Ling in his famous book *Buddha, Marx and God*¹ expressed that the Western people have created enormous material wealth, but

¹ Trevor Ling, *Buddha, Marx and God*, London; 1979, pp. 5-6.

they have also killed off millions of human beings in periodic outbursts of mass violence which they dignified by the name of war, at the same time as well as may be this is the first time in human history, human have to face the threat of extinction of the human race and of all life on this planet by the nuclear-war and others.

And today we have come to believe that our society as a whole finds itself in a great crisis. We can read about its numerous manifestations every day in the newspapers. We face high inflation and unemployment, we have an energy crisis, a crisis in health care, pollution and other environmental disaster, a rising wave of violence and crime, and so on. We are living in a globally interconnected world, in which biological, psychological, social and environmental phenomena are all interdependent. And the present day we find ourselves in a state of profound, world-wide crisis. It is a complex, multi-dimensional crisis whose facets touch every aspect of our lives-our health and livelihood, the quality of our environment and our social relationships, our economy, technology, and politics. Or in other expression, we can be able to say that in this era humanity is primarily faced with problems such as war, increasing population, degrading the environment, collapsing the morals, exchanging the West and East thoughts, for running fast to modern world...

The Crisis of the War

Fritjof Capra, the best-selling author of *The Tao of Physic* and in *The Turning Point*² declared about the crisis of war that men have stockpiled of thousands of nuclear weapons, enough to destroy the entire world several times over and the arms race continues at undiminished speed. In November 1978, while the United States and the Soviet

² Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point*, London, 1982, p.1.

Union were completing their second round of talks on the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties, the Pentagon launched its most ambitious nuclear weapons production program in two decades; two years later this culminated in the biggest military boom in history: a five-year defense budget of 1,000 billion dollars. The costs of this collective nuclear rue are staggering.

In the meantime more than fifteen million people - most of them children - die of starvation each year; another 500 million are seriously undernourished. Almost 40 percent of the world's population has no access to professional health services; yet developing countries spend more than three times as much on armaments as on health care. 35 percent of humanity lacks safe drinking water, while half of its scientists and engineers are engaged in the technology of making weapons.

The threat of nuclear war is the greatest danger humanity is facing today. ...The 360 nuclear reactors now operating worldwide, and the hundreds more planned, have become a major threat to our well being.³

As a matter of fact, nowadays, the world is divided into people of various ideologies; with their power-blocs, who devote most of their minds and energies to the sterile, negative, cruel business of wars. The world cannot have peace till men and nations renounce selfish desires, give up racial arrogance and cleanse themselves of the egotistical lust for possession and power. Ideology divides, it brings about conflict. Ideology takes multifarious forms - political, religious, economic, social and educational. Ideology is an escape from reality. It brutalizes man and holds him in bondage to fanaticism and violence.

³ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

In consequences, the belief that the only way to fight force is by applying more force has led to the arms race between the great powers. And this competition to increase the weapons of war has brought man to the very brink of total self-destruction. If we do nothing about it, the next war will be the end of the world where there will be neither victors nor victims-only dead bodies.

We should be conscious that what harm is there if we settle our problems and bring peace and happiness by adopting this cultured method and by sacrificing our dangerous pride.

When the United Nations was formed after the horrors of the Second World War, the heads of Nations who gathered to sign the charter agreed that it should begin with the following preamble:

“Since it is in the minds of men that wars begin, it is in the minds of men the ramparts of peace should be erected”⁴

The Crisis of Increasing Population

There is really no ground to think that this is the only period in which the population of the world has increased. There is no means of comparison with any period of ancient history. Vast civilizations existed and have disappeared in Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Ancient America. No census figures on these civilizations are even remotely available. Population, as everything else in the universe, is subject to cycles of rise and fall. In cycles of alarming increases of birth rate, one might be consequently tempted to argue against rebirth in this or other worlds. For the last few thousands years, there has been no evidence to prove that

⁴ See Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe*, CBBEF, Taipei, 2000, p. 285.

there were more people in some parts of the world than there are today. The number of beings existing in various world systems is truly infinite.

One of the principal reasons of this crisis is the human's passion as Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda in the book *What Buddhists believe* pointed out the main its cause of increasing population is the sex conduct or sense craving and he has given resolve for this problem that:

“Population can further increase unless sensible people take measures to control it.”⁵

Hence, the credit or responsibility of increasing the population almost must be given to over enjoyment in sex not knowing another knowledge or healthy entertainment available. This credit or responsibility of increasing population cannot be allotted to any particular religion or any external sources, as there is a belief among certain people that human beings are created by God. Thus, those who believe that god created everything, why so much suffering to his own creatures such as poverty, unhappiness, war, hunger, disease, famine...all unfortunate occurrences that destroy human lives are not due to the will of god or to the whim of some devil instead of why cannot he control the population?⁶

The Crisis of Degrading Environment

Another reason of the fact makes the hearts of many shudder that is the disasters suffered by people all over the world in recent past. It is proved that now nature herself is letting her fury against man in self-defense in the form of floods, droughts, earthquakes, volcanoes... this has resulted in the destruction of various kinds of flora and fauna making the

⁵ Loc. cit.

⁶ Loc. cit.

environment polluted and the future of the planet earth itself unsafe.

As we know, the current environmental crisis is owing to environmental pollutions: air, water, earth pollutions which are caused by atomic tests, chemical arms tests, by poisonous gas emitted from engineering factories, and by the fast increase of above world population, etc.

The term pollution is defined by the Environmental Pollution Panel of the President's Science Advisory Committee held in November, 1965 in its report: *Restoring the Quality of Our Environment*, as follows:

“Environmental pollution is the unfavorable alteration of our surroundings, wholly or largely as a by - product of man's actions, through direct or indirect effects of changes in energy patterns, radiation levels, chemical and physical constitution and abundances of organisms. These changes may affect man directly, or through his supplies of water and of agricultural and other biological products, his physical objects or possessions, or his opportunities for recreation and appreciation of nature”.⁷

Mentioning the problem of Nuclear energy, the well-known physicist Fritjof Capra said that:

“The radioactive elements released by nuclear reactors are the same as those making up the fallout of atomic bombs. Thousands of tons of these toxic materials have already been discharged into the environment by nuclear explosions and reactor spills. As they continue to accumulate in the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the water we drink, our risk of developing cancer and genetic diseases continues to increase. The most toxic of these radioactive poisons, plutonium, is itself fissionable, which means that it can be used to build atomic bombs. Thus nuclear power and nuclear weapons are inextricably linked, being but different aspects of the same threat to humankind. With their continued proliferation, the likelihood of global extinction becomes greater every day”.⁸

⁷ Edward J. Kormondy, *Concept of Ecology*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 246.

⁸ Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point*, p. 3.

For water and food pollution, Fritjof Capra added:

“The water we drink and the food we eat, both are contaminated by a wide variety of toxic chemicals. In the United States synthetic food additives, pesticides, plastics and other chemicals are marketed at a rate currently estimated at a thousand new chemical compounds a year. As a result, chemical poisoning has become an increasing part of our affluent life. Moreover, the threats to our health through the pollution of air, water and food are merely the most obvious, direct effects of human technology on the natural environment. Less obvious but possible far more dangerous effects have been recognized only recently and are still not fully understood”.⁹

Moreover, the exorbitant use of petroleum has led to heavy tanker traffic with frequent collisions, in which huge amounts of oil are spilled into the seas. These spilled oils have not only polluted the shores and beaches of Europe, but are also seriously disrupting the marine food cycles and thus creating ecological hazards that are still poorly understood. The generation of electricity from coal is even more hazardous and more polluting than energy production from oil. Underground mining causes severe damage to miners’ health, and strip mining creates conspicuous environmental consequences, since the mines are generally abandoned once the coal is exhausted, with huge areas of land left devastated. The worst damage of all, both to the environment and to human health, comes from the burning of coal. Coal-burning plants emit vast quantities of smoke, ash, gases and various organic compounds, many of which are known to be toxic or carcinogenic. The most dangerous of the gases is sulfur dioxide which can severely impair the lungs. Another pollutant released in the burning of coal is nitrogen oxide, which is also the main ingredient in air pollution from automobiles. A single coal-burning plant can emit as much

⁹ Paul R. Ehrlich, and Anna H. Ehrlich, *Population Resources Environmental*, San Francisco, 1972, p. 147.

nitrogen oxide as several hundred thousands cars...At the heart of the problem, as usual, lies ecological shortsightedness and corporate men's overwhelming greed.

In the Los Angeles, according to a statement by sixty faculty members of the University of California Medical School mentioned that: 'Air pollution has now become a major health hazard to most of this community during much of the year'.¹⁰ This continual pollution of the air not only affects humans but also upsets ecological systems. It injures and kills plants, and these changes in plant life can induce drastic changes in animal populations that depend on the plants.

And they declared that even discounting the threat of a nuclear catastrophe, the global ecosystem and the further evolution of life on earth are seriously endangered and may well end in a large-scale ecological disaster. Over-population and industrial technology have contributed in various ways to a severe degradation of the nature environment upon which we are completely dependant. As a result, our health and well-being are seriously endangered.

This has become clear and firm that our technology is severely disturbing, and may even be destroying, the ecological systems upon which our very existence depends and we can imagine how dangerous the current environmental pollution on earth is! There is neither security nor justice to be universally found. Uncertainty and insecurity have become almost a universal curse. The 'Conquest of nature' has not succeeded in achieving either plenty or peace. And this pollution must be evident result of the modern scientific civilization with its fast and uncontrolled; development of industries and economics. This

¹⁰ Loc.cit.

civilization, in its turn, is the result of a very high development of self- thought, way of thinking and enjoying pleasures. So, the main causes of the great environmental crisis which is being warned are desire and ignorance of man.

The Crisis of Human Moral

One of the controversies which is quite heated in the West, specially in the United State today concerns the collapsing moral.

It is true that the developed countries marched forward fast to satisfy their ambitions to bring the prosperous richness through the advancement of all their computer-space-scientific-technological accomplishments, however these were the societies which claimed to be sane, though well-documented studies have shown that these very societies have been sick and inflicted by extremely high rates of suicide, homicide, gang, gambling, marijuana, cocaine, alcoholism and the forms of debaucheries etc. Increasing affluence was accompanied by increasing numbers of alcoholics, suicides... and breathtaking advantages of science and technology have destroyed the solid moorings of a more stable way of life, which had its own ethical character... Moral education in industrial societies is disregarded. Most of the people only attach great importance on how to acquire more money. They measure individual value by how much money each one has obtained regardless of the means. In socialist countries where arbitrariness, dogmatism, individualism, and factionalism prevail, the welfare of the majority of the population being despotic and in the minority, is discarded; all economic resources are in the hands of those who hold power. Both above tendencies give prominence to materialistic value, transforming men into machines for production and gratification without ideal and moral.

In other words, these countries which are supposed to be ‘the most democratic, peaceful, and prosperous’ are becoming increasingly afflicted with dangerous ailments. Commenting on the book *The Sane Society*, a famous American psychologist, Erich Fromm, he maintains that a plain picture of society related more particularly to the United States than to European countries. But the social trend in the latter was towards the American situation, in reality.¹¹

Erich Fromm has made an important point to confirm it that:

“Control by the intellect over nature, and the production of more and more things, became the paramount aims of life. In this process man has transformed himself into thing, life has become subordinated to property, “to be” is dominated by “to have”. Where the roots of Western culture, both Greek and Hebrew, considered the aim of life the perfection of man, modern man is concerned with the perfection of things, and knowledge of how to make them.”¹²

And Fromm came to conclude that the United States, which is the most prosperous and materially the most advanced, showed the greatest degree of decrepitude.¹³

As far as the human psychology is concerned, in the face of these increasing difficulties, men do feel more and more anxious, skeptical and therefore tend to forget it by hastening to enjoy life and kill themselves in alcoholism, drug, homicide and suicide etc. It is very logical of Eric Fromm that despite increase in production, facilities, technology, science... in West, in fact the happiness of westerners merely leans on the illusion of full of material and money, then day by day men lose themselves and feel too

¹¹ Trevor Ling, *Buddha, Marx and God*, p. 5.

¹² Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism*, p. 79.

¹³ Trevor Ling, *op.cit.*, p.6.

purpose, void, lonely that they lament agonizingly that in the twentieth century, the burning problem is human was dead.¹⁴

It is no doubt that the crisis of war, increasing population, and degrading environment generate the danger for all our living in this earth and make the moral degeneration lead to social crises of various sorts. Terrorists attacks, wars, corruption, crime against children, women and elderly persons have made this world, indeed, a very unhappy and sad place to live and men became indifferent to everything taking place in the world. This indifference, hard and cruel paved the way for a life-style of ruthlessness, unfairness, and violence even how much science progresses but it can not handle as J. Krishnamurti in his well-known *Education and the Signification of Life* has written that:

“Technological progress does solve certain kinds of problems for some people at one level, but it introduces wider and deeper issue too. To live at one level, disregarding the total process of life, is to invite misery and destruction. The greatest need and most pressing problem for every individual is to have an integrated comprehension of life, which will enable him to meet its ever-increasing complexities.

Technical knowledge, however necessary, will in no way resolve our inner, psychological pressures and conflicts; and it is because we have acquired technical knowledge without understanding the total process of life that technology has become a means of destroying ourselves. The man who knows how to split the atom has no love in his heart and becomes a monster.”¹⁵

The Problem of Running Fast to Modern World

The world is moving so fast in modern times, almost with a kaleidoscopic speed. We find a radial transformation

¹⁴ Minh Chi - Ha Thuc Minh, *Dai Cuong Triet Hoc Dong Phuong*, Trung Dai hoc Tong Hop, Tp. HCM, 1993, pp. 32-3.

¹⁵ J. Krishnamurti, *Education and the Signification of Life*, Krishnamurti Foundation India, 1994, p.19.

in all human activity and organizations that matter most in international situations. But there is no denying the fact that the achievements of science and technology have destroyed the solid moorings of a more stable way of life, which had its own ethical character, and cast large masses of men adrift in a strange and difficult world. The world is fast changing out of recognition.

It is true that the advances in civilization have brought emancipation to humanity and added greatly to the enrichment of our culture, such as it has widened our intellectual horizon but they have also made life very much complicated and troublesome at many levels.

The Matter of Exchanging the Western and Northern Thoughts

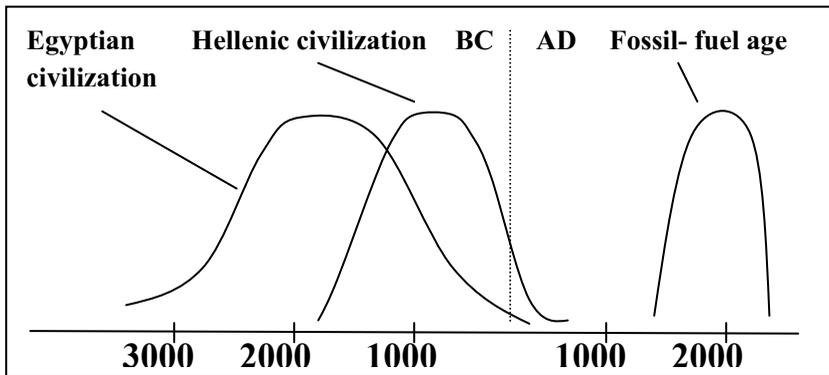
Achievement of the so-called ‘scientific-technological-civilization’ of the 21st century has made societies in the world which have been knitted together closer than ever before and made more responsive to men’s needs and demands. Specially with computer-space-scientific-technological accomplishes, the West and the East, the North and the South can be able to exchange each other about their thoughts, ideas as well at all levels of life in religion, politics, economics, societies, psychology, and culture... They are encountering and intermingling with each other in a scope and depth never experienced before to which in physicist Fritjof Capra’s words now often called a ‘paradigm shift’ - a profound change in the thoughts, perceptions and values that form a particular vision of reality and he has given short note of the history of thought exchange that:

“The paradigm that is now shifting has dominated our culture for several hundreds of years, during which it has shaped our modern Western society and has significantly influenced the rest of the world. This paradigm comprises a number of ideas, values that

have been associated with various streams of Western culture, among them the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution. They include the belief in the scientific method as the only valid approach to knowledge; the view of the universe as a mechanical system composed of elementary material building blocks; existence; and the belief in unlimited material progress to be achieved through economic and technological growth".¹⁶

The sociologist Pitirim Sorokin¹⁷ glosses over the modern paradigm shift as part of a consistent process, a regular fluctuation of value systems traceable in Western society. Sorokin has initiated a discussion on the transvaluation of values that has spared nothing in its orbit of social and cultural dynamism.

Table I



Fossil-fuel age in the context of cultural evolution

However, nowadays while the process of the transformation of mutual understanding one another among cultures is going on in some places, the integration of the

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁷ Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, 4 vols., New York, 1937-41.

world makes the multiplicity of human societies and ideologies more conspicuous, causing unprecedented tensions and antagonisms in all areas of life. The coming global age is producing dissension as well as the quest for a greater, more harmonious unity. The difference, opposition and conflict among various ideologies, value systems and ways of thinking become more and more conspicuous throughout the world. Every civilization or culture is structured round a variety of values, some of which are more primary than other, and proclaims a number of often divergent ideals. These values and ideals may differ even within the same culture at any one time according to the vagaries of geographical location or vary with time according to the predominant Zeitgeist.

Human societies which once maintained their own cultural and intellectual patterns are now being pulled together into one great rushing stream of world history, creating waves which slap and dash one against the other. The synchronization of global space by information and transportation technology requires that all people play their parts on the common stage of world history, and hopefully, come to some awareness of their roles in the drama. Nevertheless, only after divisions and oppositions have been overcome and a new spiritual horizon for humanity has been opened up shall we have a truly united destiny.

A clear, self-conscious realization of one world history will not be produced simply by forces working from without, such as the advancement of scientific technology, but will be the work of an innermost human spirituality.

How can we find a common spiritual basis in this pluralistic world without marring the unique characteristics of each of the cultural and spiritual traditions? This is also one of the urgent tasks humankind is now facing.

THE PROPOSED SOLUTION

The Responsibilities of the World

The crisis of man is so deep and appalling that it has affected all aspects of society in its relationships from the individual in his family and home to the community to which he belongs leaving no space on earth without risk of the irrevocable problems that threaten the very existence of such on earth. This encompasses many new conceptions of relationships and implications in society that permeate through global view of education that alone can curtail the narrowness of nationalism and chauvinism from which emanate the vicious circles spreading rancor, apartheid and biases smother the very best in us and in all the faiths and cultures which form the rich legacies of all the time. If we are to be peaceful to all others and ourselves we must discipline ourselves in a way that brings true happiness and peace.

To understand our multifaceted cultural crisis we need to adopt an extremely broad view and see our situation in the context of human cultural evolution. We have to shift our perspective to the better way.

The Tendency of the Religions

As we see that science and technology though having made great progress cannot transform the human mind. Science may solve immediate problems, it feeds more people so that there are more people to feed, it prolongs life but it also finds more effective means of destroying life. According to Robert F. Spencer in *The Relation of Buddhism to Modern Science*:

“Science, a view today, is nothing more than a method and to make a cult of it, to find in it the answer to problems and questions of the ultimate forms of human destiny, is rank error. It is making a dogma of science where no religious emotion or attitude are ever

intended” .¹⁸

So, the scientific goal is material to satisfy human desire rather than spiritual to improve upon the human ethics and to resolve this obvious imbalance between science, technology, morality and spirit, it is no way more to return the background to philosophy of life as A. J. Toynbee expresses his idea that:

“I believe that a civilization’s style is the expression of its religion and that is, a civilization is decided by the quality of the religion on which it is based.”¹⁹

It means a religion is the application for people’s spiritual needs and basis of a national culture as H. G. Wells has expounded that:

“Religion is the central part of our education that determines our moral conduct.”²⁰

or the famous German philosopher, Kant, stated that:

“Religion is the recognition of our moral principles as laws that must not be transgressed.”²¹

And the Buddha’s message as a religious way of life:

“Not to do any evil, to cultivate good,
to purify one’s mind, this is the advice of the Buddhas”.

(Sabba pāpassa akaraṇam, kusalassa upasampadā
sacittapariyodapanam, etaṃ buddhāna sāsanaṃ).²²

In a further view, we should understand that religion, if it is true religion, must take the whole of man as its province and not merely certain aspects of his life. The good man, i.e.,

¹⁸ Buddhadasa P. Kirthisinghe ed., *Buddhism and Science*, Delhi, 1996, p. 18.

¹⁹ A. Toynbee, *Daisaku-Ikeda, Man Himself Must Choose*, Tokyo, 1976, p. 288-0.

²⁰ Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda, *Buddhism as a Religion*, Malaysia, 2000, p. 7.

²¹ Loc. cit.

²² *Dhammapada*, verse 183, pp. 97-8.

the man who follows his religion, knows that there can be no happiness or peace on earth as long as there is poverty and starvation, injustice and oppression, discriminative legislation, racial segregation, social disabilities and inequalities, corroding fear, mutual distrust and suspicion. Self-respect without war with others is as necessary to happiness as food, and there can be no self-respect among those who do not have the opportunity to achieve the full stature of their manhood.

However, it is an undeniable fact that not all religions are useful and good for men. But a history is a witness when a certain religion succeeds to satisfy to one's belief which may actually lead men to both physical and psychological state, religion exists and lives for long. The religious pluralism is also a remarkable cultural and religious phenomenon in our time and one of the important issues to be addressed by religious thinkers and writers of all traditions. Religious pluralism is an issue commonly challenging all religions in our era, but the degree of its seriousness and the manner of its challenge are not necessarily identical for all religions.

However, as far as the considerable difference between Christianity and Buddhism is concerned, it is worthwhile to mention that although in its early centuries Christianity confronted the problems of religious pluralism it has, in recent centuries, enjoyed a virtual religious monopoly in Europe and America. Only recently, with the collapse of the Europe-centered view of the world and the rapid development of international interaction in various fields of human life, have Christians come again to experience intensely the reality of religious pluralism. In this connection they have come to recognize the existence of non-Christian religions and the integrity of non-Christian systems of belief and values, not only in foreign lands, but in Europe and

America as well. Hence, religious pluralism now appears to many Christians to be a serious challenge to the monotheistic character of Christianity.

On the other hand, Buddhism, throughout its long history, has existed and spread throughout Asia within a religiously pluralistic situation: in India, it coexisted with Brahmanism, Jainism and many diverse forms of Hinduism; in China with Confucianism and Taoism; and in Japan with Shinto and Confucianism. Thus, to most Buddhists the experience of ‘religious pluralism’ has not been the serious shock it has been to most Christians.²³

And in the connection to resolve the problem of above imbalance in religions, societies, economics..., Albert Einstein – the most distinguished scientist in the Relative Theory of the twentieth century- advised that it is quite wise if we know how to combine religion and science that:

“Science can only be created by those who are thoroughly imbued with the aspiration toward truth and understanding. This source of feeling, however, springs from the sphere of religion. To this there also belongs the faith in the possibility that the regulations valid for the world of existence are rational, that is, comprehensible to reason. I cannot conceive of a genuine scientist without that profound faith. The situation may be expressed by an image: science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.”²⁴

While Trevor Ling, Professor of comparative religions at University of Manchester, wondered that “What kind of religion will be most likely to emerge from the encounter?” According to him, it would be very helpful to ask this question with reference to Buddhism, because on the one hand Buddhism was a form of religion which was considered

²³ Masao Abe, *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue*, ed. by Steven Heine, Hong Kong, 1995, pp. 17-8.

²⁴ Albert Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions*, London, 1973, p. 46.

by some to be more compatible with the modern secular climate than most other religions, and on the other hand, the kind of modification of its thought to which Buddhism could be challenged by the encounter with secularism was likely to be of considerable significance to others besides Buddhists.²⁵ Also the same ideas but in other words, Radhakrishnan gave more emphasis to confirm:

“If Buddhism appealed to the modern mind it was because it was scientific, empirical and not based on any dogma”.²⁶

The Concrete Inclinations of Buddhism

It should be thought that what we need to overcome our multifaceted crisis is not more energy but a profound change of values, attitudes and life styles and to responding with the present circumstances, Buddhism (佛 教) especially Mahāyāna (大 乘) or Bodhisattva-yāna (菩 薩 乘) with the doctrines of Śūnyatā (空 性, wisdom) and compassion (慈 悲, *karuṇā*) seems to be able to agree with it.

Give a look in the history of Buddhism we can see there are two concepts of the most profound, sublime, and influential of all Mahāyāna texts (大 乘 經), are the concepts of Bodhisattva (菩 薩) and Śūnyatā (空 性) as according to the Vajrachedikā prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra (金 剛 般 若 波 羅 密 經) the ideal of Bodhisattva is: “*Never to abandon all beings and to see into the truth that all things are empty.*”²⁷ In fact, after Buddha’s pass away, about the second or first century BC, Mahāyāna played a main and important role in giving rise to

²⁵ See detail in Buddha, Marx and God, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

²⁶ Wang Chi Buu, “A Scientist’s Report on Study of Buddhist Scripture”, Corporate Body of the Buddha Education Foundation, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.

²⁷ Edward Conze, Buddhism: Its Essence and Development, Delhi, 1994, p. 130.

the new doctrine of Bodhisattva which succeeded in the Bodhisatta concept in Pāli Nikāya gradually meandering to Northern Asia, Korea, specially in China, Japan and Vietnam... and the standpoint of Bodhisattva's ideal (菩薩理想), a form of Mahāyāna Buddhism was welcome and influenced widely these countries at all levels of life in religion, politics, economics, societies, psychology, and culture from the ancient time to our modern era as Edward Conze has said that the two great contributions which the Mahāyāna had made to human thought were the creation of the Bodhisattva ideal and the elaboration of the doctrine of "Emptiness".²⁸

However, there are many things, which we should confirm to clarify more the purpose of Buddhist teaching as well as the significance and relevance of research on the topic.

The View of no Dogmas

As we know, Christianity is a salvation religion while Buddhism is the religion of enlightenment. It means the liberation of Christianity, which is the salvation from sin through a Savior, based on certain dogmas followers must trust if they hope to be on heaven after their death. In the Apostle's Creed are listed many such beliefs and in the '*Crossing The Threshold of Hope*', John Paul II gave some dogmas and declared that they are ultimate to be obeyed or refused by Christ followers.

And also in the Western religions, God is believed to have the attribute of justice, or righteousness, as the judge, as well as love or mercy as the forgiver. God is the fountain of justice, so everything God does may be relied upon as just.

²⁸ Edward Conze, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, London, 1967, p. 54.

Since God's verdict or dogma is absolutely just, human righteousness may be defined in terms of God's judgment.

The notion of justice or righteousness is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it aids in keeping everything in the right order, but on the other hand, it establishes clear-cut distinctions between the righteous and the unrighteous, promising the former eternal bliss, but condemning the latter to eternal punishment. Further, God in Semitic religions is not merely the One Absolute God in the ontological sense, but a living and personal God who calls humans through his Word and requires that humans respond to his Word.

According to the doctrines of most religions, it is through absolute belief in the Creator or God that the communication between the followers and God or Creator is founded, and that the followers would get luck and happiness by God's favour in the present as well as future.

Buddha did not support the belief that religious rites and rituals were the only means for man to find salvation. According to the Buddha the development of morality, concentration and the purification of mind are important aspects of religious life leading to final salvation. He pointed out that a religious man must lead a harmless, unblamable, respectable, decent, noble and pure life. The mere act of praying or making offerings, or obeying dogmas does not by itself make a man religious or gain his perfection and salvation.

Buddha also advised people to refrain from evil practices. The reason for keeping away from evil must be for the welfare of living beings and not because of the fear of a god or punishment for its dogma commitment. At the same time, He advised us to cultivate the good humane qualities, practice good deeds and help others without any selfish motives.

The Buddha was the only religious teacher who gave due credit to man's intelligence. He advised us not to become slaves to external agencies but to develop our hidden powers with self-confidence.

The View of Knowledge

What we here call knowledge is right understanding and right thought that constitute Wisdom (空性, *Śūnyatā*) or the sublime truth. In Dhammapada, the Buddha perceives the being without knowledge:

“Long is the night to the wakeful, long is the road to him who is weary, long is saṃsāra to the foolish who knows not the Sublime Truth.”

(Dīghā jāgarato ratti, dīghaṃ santassa yojanaṃ,
dīgho bālānaṃ saṃsāro, saddhammaṃ avijānatam).²⁹

This is the agonizing lament of the aspirant for happiness, the sublime truth forever of man. That aspiration is the good mood for the appearance of all the philosophical principles, ethical theories, psychological studies as well as the religious thoughts on the world, is not that?

However, once again we should comprehend the meanings of this knowledge that if to obey the will of God viz. coming to faith was the virtue of other religions, then the Buddha taught that such a belief neither guides Buddhists to the destruction of the states of anxious, skeptical, craving, defilement, and suffering, nor it leads one to true happiness. This belief is only the basis of the knowledge, practice, self-experience and effort by himself that he can be able to get rid of his sufferings and maintain peace, prosperous and happy world for himself and all to live in. That is the reason K.N.

²⁹ Dha, verse 60, p. 33-4.

Jayatillaka, in his well-read book *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* has written that,

“To the intellectual, the Buddha taught that one should not accept the statements of anyone, on ground of authority without first examining it. One should test the consequence of statement in the light of our knowledge and experiences with the idea of verifying their relation to truth, and then accept it. In this teaching, there is no reference to the rejection of authority, and the insistence to reply solely on one’s own experience.”³⁰

The following sentence in *Majjhima Nikāya* is crucial for the whole dialectic of the matter of knowledge that ‘My teaching is not to come to believe, but to come, see and practice’.

It may be said without doubt that the message which is very simple, meaningful and practical, proves that Buddha highly appreciated the perceptions of ‘the knowing and the seeing’ than ‘the bare believing’ and this is one of different point of views between Buddhism and other religions.

There is a saying in Buddhism that:

“The one who is perfect in knowledge and conduct is supreme among gods and men” (*Vijjācaraṇa-sampanno so seṭṭho devamanuse*).³¹

The View of Faith (*Saddhā*, 信心)

In Buddhism, there is no formal act of ‘baptism’ though there is a stereotyped formula used by Buddhists in Buddhist lands to express his act of ‘taking refuge’ which

³⁰ K.N. Jayatillaka, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, London, 1963, p. 391.

³¹ Quoted in Damien Koewn, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, London, 1992, p vii.

merely means that the devotee accepts the Buddha as his Teacher and Guide, the Doctrine as his philosophy and his Way of Life and the Sangha (the Community of Monks) as the ideals of this Way of Life.

The Buddhist quality of faith (*Saddhā*, 信心) means acceptance in the belief and knowledge that these Refuges are worthy of such acceptance. There is no ‘blind faith’ involved, no case at all of ‘believe or be damned’. In fact, there were instances when followers of other teachers repudiated them and wished to transfer their allegiance to the Buddha, He discouraged them and asked them to give the matter further thought. When they further persisted, He advised them to continue their benefactions to their earlier teachers.

There is a well-known passage in the Kālāma Sūta that teaches the following lesson:

“Yes, Kālāmas, you may well doubt, you may well waver. In a doubtful matter wavering does arise. Now look you, Kālāmas. Be ye not misled by report or tradition or hearsay. Be not misled by proficiency in the collections, nor by mere logic or inference, nor after considering reasons, nor after reflection on and approval of some theory, nor because it fits becoming, nor out of respect for a recluse (who holds it). But, Kālāmas, when you know for yourselves:

These things are unprofitable, these things are blameworthy, these things are censured by the intelligent; these things, when performed and undertaken, conduce to loss and sorrow, then indeed do ye reject them, Kalamas.”³²

(Alaṃ hi vo Kālāmā kaṅkhituṃ alaṃ vicikicchituṃ. Kaṅkhāniye va pana vo ṭhāne vicikicchā uppanā. Etha tumhe Kālāmā mā anussavena mā paramparāya mā itikirāya mā piṭakasampadānena mā takkahetu mā nayahetu mā ākāraparivitakkena mā diṭṭhinijjhānakkhantiyā, mā bhavyarūpatāya mā samaṇo no garū ti, yadā tumhe Kālāmā attanā va jāneyyātha—ime dhammā akusalā

³² The Book of Gradual Sayings, I, 171-2.

ime dhammā sāvajjā ime dhammā viññgarahitā ime dhammā samattā samādinā ahitāya dukkhāya sañvattantī ti—atha tumhe Kālāmā pajaheyyātha).³³

It is undisputed evidence that man is of this freedom of choice. It states quite categorically that nothing should be accepted merely on the grounds of tradition or the authority of the teacher, or because it is the view of a large number of people, distinguished or otherwise. Everything should be weighed, examined and judged according to whether it is true or false in the light of one's convictions. If considered wrong, they should not be rejected outright but left for further consideration. Not only is doubt not considered a heinous sin; it is positively encouraged. This is the view of Faith in Buddhism.

The View of Individual (我, Self, I, or Person)

It is true that the world is riddled with racial, political, religious, communal and ideological misunderstandings. To solve these complex problems, the view of individual (我) plays the central and essence role. Human must know himself who possesses the all powerful force — the creator and destroyer of man and the architect of man's fate no other else as is illustrated by the Dhammapada as under:

“Self is the refuge of self: for who else could refuge be?

By a fully controlled self one obtains a refuge which is hard to gain.”

(Attā hi attano nātho, ko hi nātho paro siyā?

attanā‘va sudantena nātham labhati dullabham.)³⁴

Or also the same above idea expressed in different verse:

“By oneself alone is evil done, by oneself is one defiled.

By oneself is evil avoided, by oneself alone is one purified.

³³ Anguttana Nikāya, I, 189.

³⁴ Dha, verse 160, pp. 83-4.

Purity and impurity depend on oneself.
 No one can purify another.”
 (Attanā‘va kataṃ papaṃ attanā saṅkilissati;
 attanā akataṃ papaṃ attanā‘va visujjhati;
 Suddhī asuddhī paccattaṃ;
 nāñño aññaṃ visodhaye).³⁵

Thus, man should be capable of moulding anything if only he knows how to develop and make use of his mind and capability properly in inculcating ethical-moral co-operation for universal good. The misconceptions which had been held for years by followers specially of Brāhmaṇism and Christianity, declared that every thing in this world, whether existent or nonexistent, good or bad, lucky or unlucky, glad or sad...all come from the power of a supreme creator, the only ruler to have power of reward and punishment, or human in this earth as suffering beings who need to be saved by supernatural power.

And it seems that following the theistic religions as Catholicism, Hinduism, Bodhisattvas in Buddhism were considered similarly as gods or devas who can save and deliver to suffering creatures on this earth. This is misunderstood in the Buddha’s teachings which will lead to the decline in Buddhism if it is not corrected in time. The key resolution is emphasized that we must adjust our points and acknowledge confidently that man’s position according to Buddhism is supreme because of the three supreme qualities human: memory, pure behaviour and perseverance. The human memory is stronger than that of any other creature. The control of carnal impulses, the performance of moral acts for the benefit of others, often at the sacrifice of one’s own profit, is distinctive only in human behaviour. Human beings

³⁵ Ibid., verse 165, pp. 87-8.

are capable of withstanding a great deal of suffering and can overcome almost any difficulty that exists in this world. Determination and perseverance to succeed is another supreme quality in him. In other words, man is his own master and there is no higher being or power that sits in judgment over his destiny.

Because of these characters, the Buddha taught, encouraged and stimulated each person to develop himself to work out his own emancipation. Man has the power to liberate himself from all bondage through his own personal effort and intelligence.

From that foundation, we should bear in mind that Buddhism is not a religion in the sense in which that word is commonly understood, for it is not a system of faith and worship. In Buddhism, there is no such thing as belief in a body of dogmas which have to be taken on faith, such as a belief in a Supreme Being, a creator of the universe, the reality of an immortal soul, a personal savior, or archangels who are supposed to carry out the will of the Supreme Deity. It is true that there are different types of Bodhisattvas (菩薩) mentioned in Buddhism as devas (諸天) or spiritual beings, but they are beings like ourselves, subject to the same natural law of cause and effect. They are not immortal, nor do they control the destiny of mankind. The Buddha does not ask us to accept belief in any supernatural agency or anything that cannot be tested by experience.

The View of Śūnyatā (空性, Emptiness)

Prof. Masao in his perceptive essay on ‘Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue’³⁶ makes a diatribe on the imperfect

³⁶ Prof. Masao, *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue*, ed by Steven Heine, Hong Kong, 1995, p. 6-7.

reasoning of most Western critics who discuss religion in a way of contrast between the ethical and natural theology (C.P. Tile), prophetic and mystical religion (F. Heiler) and monotheistic and pantheistic religion (W. F. Albright A. Lang). In bringing about such contrasts the Western critics generally discuss the broad features of Judes-Christian-Muslim religions and in a way all the other religious faiths that have their origins in the east.

By this method the Western scholars find solace in forming a comparative judgment in evaluating qualities of a religion, little caring if this approach has not only confused them to comprehend the faiths in a genuine spirit in which their founders had them initiated but canonization was preferred in oral transmission. Codification of the scripture started at a later time firstly in the form of the Sutta-piṭaka, the precepts assuming the shape of Vinaya-piṭaka.

The interregnum between the First Council (*Saṅgīti*) and the actual codification of the canon is wholly uncertain as is the relation between the canon as it exists at the present time and when it had been compiled in the beginning. Whatever is the accepted period the Sutta and the Vinaya piṭakas are primary sources of the modern studies of primitive Buddhism.

As a matter of fact, Buddhism does not talk about One Absolute God who is essentially transcendent to human beings. Instead, Buddhism teaches Pratitya-samutpāda (緣起, 因緣生起) or the law of 'Dependent Co-origination' or 'Conditional Co-production' as the Dharma, or the Truth. This teaching emphasizes that everything in and beyond the universe is interdependent, co-arising and co-ceasing (not only temporally, but also ontologically) with everything else. Nothing exists independently, or can be said to be self-existing. Accordingly, in Buddhism everything without

exception is relative, relational, non-substantial and changeable. Even the divine (*Buddha*) does not exist by itself, but is entirely interrelated to humans and nature. This is why Gautama Buddha (釋曇佛), the founder of Buddhism, did not accept the age-old Vedantic notion of Brahman, which is believed to be the only enduring reality underlying the universe. For a similar reason, Buddhism cannot accept the monotheistic notion of One Absolute God as the ultimate reality, but instead advocates Śūnyatā (空性, emptiness) and Tathatā (真如, suchness or as-it-is-ness) as the ultimate reality.

Śūnyatā as the ultimate reality as well as the method is concrete practicing in Buddhism. It literally means ‘emptiness’ or ‘voidness’ and can imply ‘absolute nothingness’. This is because Śūnyatā is entirely unobjectifiable, unconceptualizable, and unattainable by reason and will. It also indicates the absence of enduring self-being and the non-substantiality of everything in the universe. It is beyond all dualities and yet includes them.

In the realization of Śūnyatā not only sentient beings but also the Buddha, not only Saṃsāra (輪迴) but also Nirvāṇa (涅槃), are without substance and are empty. Accordingly, neither Buddha nor Nirvāṇa but the realization of the non-substantiality of everything, that is, the realization of Śūnyatā is ultimate.

This realization of the non-substantial emptiness of everything is inseparably related with the law of dependent co-origination (緣起, 因緣生起). Dependent co-origination as the Dharma (Truth) is possible only when everything in the universe is without enduring substance (although possessing changeable temporal substance) and is open in its relationship with everything else. We human beings have a strong disposition to substantialize objects as well as our own self as if we and they were permanent and unchangeable substances.

This substantialization of, and the accompanying attachment to, all kinds of objects causes human suffering. With respect to the goal of intersubjective understanding, the most serious cases of this problem lie in the substantialization of self (which results in self-centeredness) and the substantialization of one's own religion (which entails a religious imperialism). Buddhism emphasizes awakening to Śūnyatā (空性), to the non-substantiality of everything, including self and Buddha, in order to be emancipated from suffering. Thus it teaches no-self (*anatman*, 無我) and awakening to Dharma (法) rather than faith in the Buddha (佛陀).

With this in mind, we would in what follows like to represent Buddhism under prevailing situation through the book with the title: *Bodhisattva and Śūnyatā in Early and Developed Buddhist Traditions*.

The Proposed Direction

In this part, it had better to confirm one crucial mark which dials in the whole thesis that the concept of Bodhisattva (菩薩) is considered as a human being with his own karmas at his very birth as all other creatures, but he can be able to get rid of all his inner conflicts (bad karmas / 業 and sufferings) and external crises (wars, populations, environments disturbances, calamities, moral, dilemma...), can change this unfortunate situation and can make a peaceful, prosperous and happy world for all to live in together by using his effort and determination in cultivating a realistic and practical way - Śūnyatā (空性, emptiness) rediscovered and guided by Lord Buddha Gotama, without depending on external powers.

To make this comprehensive, we must neither consider Bodhisattvas (菩薩) as heavenly gods or devas (諸天) or permanent entities having the real existences for worship except only as symbolic method of Buddha-dharmas (佛法)

created by intellectual Buddhists after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa to satisfy the religious need of followers and to preserve Buddhism in response of the circumstance of 'polytheism' or 'religious pluralism' of one or many societies in a certain historical point in India and Asian countries.

And the concept of Śūnyatā is the Buddhist traditional method of practicing for a Bodhisattva to realize the reality of life and universe, the individual and environment, spirituality and materiality which all are co-arising and co-ceasing by the Law of Dependent Origination. It has been denied the presence of a Creator or God. They give us a scientific and objective outlook of the present world, related to the law of Conditioning. It means that everything is dependent upon conditions to come into being or survive. Putting it differently, there is nothing that can be self-creating and self-existing, independent from others. All sentient beings, objects, elements etc. in this world are determined by the law of conditioning, under the form of formation, stabilization, deterioration, and annihilation. Man is a small cosmos. He comes into being not by himself but by the activation of the law of transformations.

With the light of Śūnyatā, Bodhisattva who is an individual, can be able to eliminate the clings on wrong views, thoughts relating to languages, political systems, custom, ways of life, religions, beliefs, race, sex, and environment..., can reply the misunderstood perceptions about Buddhism, God, ātmā, man, karma, world ...with some questions as such '*who am I?*', '*where did man go and come from?*', '*why does man get birth, old age, sickness, suffering and death?*', '*where will he go after death?*', '*This world is permanent or impermanent?*' and '*who creates the cosmos?*' etc.; and from that man in all countries can be able to connect

in the close relationship, can sit side by side, sympathy and love each other to together build up a better world.

Following the subject-matter, the arrangement of the different chapters has been done as under:

Chapter One describes the brief Significance and Relevance of Research on this topic. Chapter Two we will give an explanation of the Meaning and the Development of the Concept of Bodhisatta as depicted in Pāli Nikāyas. Chapter Three shall relate the Process of Practice of Bodhisatta Gotama before the Time of his Enlightenment. Chapter Four an attempt has been made to elaborate about the historical situation and the needs for the Development of new Doctrine of Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna sūtras. Chapter Five is a detailed survey of the Meanings of the Concept of Sūññatā as shown in Pāli Nikāyas. Chapter Six will give a critical approach to the Denotations of Śūnyatā through Mahāyāna Sūtras and in this part, it also discusses the Relation between the Concepts of Sūññatā and Śūnyatā as a Buddhist Traditional Method of Practicing. Chapter Seven will try to represent the Role or a Relevant Application of the Śūnyatā Concept in Bodhisattva-caryā in the present time, the Major Characteristics of Bodhisattva as well as the Connection between Pāramitās and Bhūmis. Chapter Eight is an effort to clarify Buddha's Major Characteristics through Buddha Body Perceptions as well as the Way of Right Understanding of Mahāyāna Buddhism. And in the chapter Nine, the discussions pursued in the above chapters shall be summed up. If monotheistic religions such as Brahmanism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam place more emphasis on the self-negating, non-substantial aspect of their God rather than the self-affirmative, authoritative aspect of God, or, in other words, if these religions understand the oneness of the ultimate reality or absolute God in terms of non-dualistic oneness rather than in terms of monotheistic oneness, then

they may overcome serious conflicts with other faiths and may establish a stronger interfaith cooperation among all religions to resolve the crises as well as contribute to world peace and happiness by a deep and expansive human spirituality.



CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPT OF BODHISATTVAHOOD

When, why and how did the concept of Bodhisattvahood (菩薩) originate in India in the context of the long and checkered history of Buddhism are some of the most-debated questions among the Buddhologists world over. Both Theravāda³⁷ and Mahāyāna do, so far as the scriptural testimony is concerned, display their common acquaintance with the concept to the extent that one may easily be led to the belief that the idea was almost inseparable in what is now generally called the original, the earliest or the primitive Buddhism (源始佛教). The idea does not seem to have been alien to the ancient tradition of the Theravādīs, although tracing the concept of Bodhisattvahood from the fifth century AD back to the time of the Nikāya period would indicate, as one may opine, a gradual diminution of its scope.

A categorical answer to the question as to whether the Hinayānists³⁸ borrowed the idea from the Mahāyānists depends much upon how far one is prepared to pursue his research in ancient sources of Buddhism. Emerging from the main trunk of the original teaching of the Master, different branches of the faith grew and flourished side by side, never drifting away from their indisputable heritage of the common tradition.³⁹

³⁷ The earliest split of Buddhism is defined in terms of Theravāda and Mahāsaṅghika. But in later centuries an ideological divide took place, which divided the Buddhists into two camps — Mahāyāna and Hinayāna.

³⁸ The term 'Hinayāna' has been quite often used in retrospectively.

³⁹ Bhikkhu Telwatte Rahula, *A Critical Study of the Mahāvastu*, pp. 49-62.

The development of the Bodhisattva ideal (菩薩理想) goes without reservation to the credit of the Mahāyāna school, in which the Bodhisattva is indeed the characteristic feature. Nonetheless, it seems more likely that the Theravādis inherited the idea from the oldest oral tradition rather than borrowed it from another school. In this context, E.J. Thomas⁴⁰ is of the opinion that no school of Buddhism may be called as the originator of the idea, nor any source can be identified from which the rest have borrowed it.

The conception of Bodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna was a corollary to its Buddhological speculation. The Theravādis believe that only Gotama Buddha was born as Bodhisattva in his previous existences, commencing with his birth as Sumedha Brāhmana up to his last existence in the Tusita heave, just before his advent to the mortal world. As a Bodhisattva he lived the life of an average being acquiring merits and avoiding demerits as far as possible. In some existences he sacrificed everything including his body (*ātmabhāva*) in order to acquire the six (according to *Mahāyāna*) and ten (according to *Hīnayāna / Theravāda*) supreme virtues designated as Pāramitās and Pāramis (波羅密).

According to the Mahāsāṅghika Lokottaravādis, in his last existence as Siddhārtha Gotama, he was not conceived in his mother's womb, nor was he actually born like an ordinary human being in the biological form. He only made a show of being ignorant, leading a family life and making efforts for his so-called emancipation, and so forth.

The Mahāyānists are believed to have enriched and developed the Theravāda concept of Bodhisattva. They argued that there were among the worldly beings such

⁴⁰ E.J. Thomas, *Buddhism*, London, 1934, p. 256.

individuals who are in a position to develop Bodhicitta (菩提心), fulfill the pāramis / pāramitās (波羅密) and become a Buddha. The development of the Bodhicitta requires that the adept must dedicate himself in his several lives to the service of others, and should not desire his own emancipation unless and until all others have attained it, because seeking one's own emancipation before that of others would mean that he has not developed the virtue of self-sacrifice to the fullest extent.

According to the Mahāyānists, the Bodhisattvas are innumerable as sand particles in river Gangā (恆河). In fact, the ontology every human being is a Bodhisattva as he has the potentiality to become a Bodhisattva in this very life or in lives to come. Concrete forms and specific qualities have been given and ascribed to some of the Bodhisattvas. In the earlier Mahāyāna texts, emphasis is more on qualities than on forms, while in the later texts the emphasis is reversed. In the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra and many other texts the powers and virtues of several Bodhisattvas have been described, who on their own accord, decided to continue to remain as such and not become a Buddha, for otherwise, they would have attained the metaphysical state which is beyond merit or demerit, and would not have been in a position to exercise Mettā (慈, Skt. *Maitrī*, love) and Karuṇa (悲, compassion) or it is only the skillful means to serve the suffering beings of the world.

During the course of time, they were given definite forms and insignia for the purposes of worship with elaborate rituals and mythological conceptions which were woven around them much on the same lines as around the Brāhmanical gods and goddesses. Thus, it appears, the Bodhisattva doctrine introduced and strengthened the element

of belief (*bhakti*, 信心) or devotion (rather blind or unalloyed faith) in the field of Buddhism.⁴¹

With this conception of the Bodhisattva, the Mahāyānists have chalked, in detail, the career of a Bodhisattva in which they have laid stress not only on the fulfillment of the pāramitās (spiritual perfections of the human values or qualities), but also on several forms of meditation with a view to training the mind for the realization of dharma-śūnyatā (法空) or tathatā (真如). Therefore, it is obviously the practical method of Bodhisattva.

One may very well realize how difficult it is to determine the period when the Bodhisattva conception essentially originated. For this purpose one has to ascertain the time of the composition of the Jātakas (in Pāli and later on in Mixed Sanskrit as well) and the Avadānas (in Mixed Sanskrit), which contain the Hīnayānist account of the various existences of the Buddha as a Bodhisatta. It must be noted that it might have taken some time after this date that the Mahāyānists developed their conception of Bodhisattva and in due course of time converted it into some sort of a creed known as Bodhisattvayāna (菩薩乘). In fact, Bodhisattva is a wide term, which has been assigned explanations, interpretations and definitions. Consequently the etymology of the term has become controversial and its application is made with varying significance. This may be considered as the explicit phenomenon of the striking historical point that the sense and value of the term Bodhisattva (Bodhisatta in Pāli language) had to undergo various changes more than once in the process of doctrinal development and historical growth.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 351.

Now first of all, it is very necessary that we must come to understand what the Buddhist technical meaning of the term 'Bodhisattva' is.

The Definition of the Term Bodhisatta

As we know the concept of Bodhisattva (菩薩) is one of the most important concepts in the Buddhist tradition. The term is frequently mentioned in early as well as later Buddhism. Etymologically, the term 'Bodhisattva' is derived from the root / budh, originally meaning to be awake. The noun bodhi comes to the meaning: (i) knowledge, (ii) enlightenment, (iii) the knowledge possessed by a Buddha.⁴²

It appears that in the Aṅguttara Nikāya the term bodhi denotes both the means and the end, viz., Aparihānīyā Dhammā and Nibbāna respectively.⁴³

When the term 'Bodhi' is combined with the term 'satta', the Sarvāstivādīs take it to mean the wisdom of the holy man who attains a stage beyond defilement of all kinds.⁴⁴

The term 'Buddhi' is etymologically associated with the term 'Bodhi', though its usage is cited here from the Brahmanic systems of philosophy. In the Sāṅkhya-yoga systems of Philosophy 'Buddhi' means only the first product of the evolution of the Prakṛti. At the psychological level Prakṛti is called 'Buddhi'.⁴⁵

⁴² T.W. Rhys-Davids and Welliam Stede, Pali - English Dictionary, I, 14.

⁴³ A, IV, 23.

⁴⁴ Buddhist Scriptures, 20.

⁴⁵ The Sāṅkhya Sūtra I.71, vide S. Chatterjee and D.M. Datta, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, Calcutta, 1954, p. 272.

Thus it may be surmised that the term ‘Bodhi’ refers not only to that which leads to ‘Nibbāna’, but ‘Nibbāna’ itself, that is, the supreme bliss itself.

According to Encyclopaedia of Buddhism,⁴⁶ etymologically the term can be separated into two parts, bodhi and sattva: bodhi, from the root budh, to be awake, means ‘awakening’ or ‘enlightenment’ and sattva, derived from sant, the present participle of the root as, ‘to be’, means ‘a being’ or, literally, ‘one who is’, a sentient being. Hence, the term is taken to mean ‘one whose essence is Enlightenment’ or ‘enlightened knowledge’. By implication it means a seeker after Enlightenment, a Buddha-to-be. There is also a suggestion that the Pali term may be derived from bodhi and satta, (Skt. *Sakta* from *sañj*) ‘one who is attached to or desires to gain Enlightenment’.

According to the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics⁴⁷ “Bodhisattva is usually translated ‘one whose essence is perfect knowledge’ (*sattva* = ‘essence’, ‘one nature’, ‘svabhavā’). It is possible that this was the original meaning of the word; historical, however, Bodhisattva = ‘one who is on the way to attainment of perfect knowledge’ (Monier – Williams, M., Sanskrit-English Dictionary) i.e. ‘a future Buddha’.

Etymologically, the term ‘Satta’ (Skt. *Sattva*) is derived from Sat + tva. It generally stands for (i) a living being, a creature, a sentient and rational being or a person, (ii) soul, or (iii) substance.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, III, 224.

⁴⁷ Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, op.cit., vol. II, p. 739.

⁴⁸ PED, I, 132.

Har Dayal in his famous work, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*⁴⁹ agreed that *Bodhi* means 'enlightenment', and mentioned a lengthy etymological discussion of 'sattva'⁵⁰ which has been put

⁴⁹ BDBSL, pp. 4-9.

⁵⁰

1. *Sattva* may mean 'Wesen, Charakter', 'essence, nature, true essence' (Skt. Dicy. Pbg. & Skt. Dicy. M.W). The Pāli word *satta* may also mean 'substance' (Pali Dicy.s.v). The great modern lexicographers seem to interpret *sattva* in this sense. Thus, according to Bohtlingk and Roth, *bodhisattva* means: '(adj) dessen Wesen Erkenntnis ist; (mas) der im Besitz des Wesens der *Bodhi* Seiende.' Monier Williams translates: 'one who has *bodhi* or perfect wisdom as his essence' (p. 688b). E. Burnouf seems to interpret the word in the same way as Bohtlingk and Roth: 'celui qui possede l'essence de la *bodhi*.' P. Oltramare follows Monier Williams and translates: 'un etre dont l'essence consiste dans l'veil'. ('Bouddhique,' p. 250). C. F. Koeppen: 'Derjenige, dessen Wesenheit die hochste Weisheit (*bodhi*) geworden' ('Buddha', ii, 18). C. Eliot: 'One whose essence is knowledge' (Eliot, ii, 7). H. Hackmann: 'He whose essence is becoming Enlightenment' ('Buddhism,' p. 52). It may be added that the modern Hindi word '*sat*,' which is derived from Skt. '*sattva*,' means 'essence, extract'.
2. '*Sattva*' (masculine) may mean 'any living or sentient being' (Skt. Dicy. M.W), 'ein lebendes Wesen' (Skt. Dicy. Pbg). The Pali word *satta* may mean 'a living being, creature, a sentient and rational being, person' (Pali Dicy. s.v). Most modern scholars adopt this interpretation. M. Wintermtz: 'Ein Eneuchtungswesen' ('Lit.' ii, 183). L. de la Vallee Poussin: 'On peut le traduire 'creature 'ou' etre vivant' ('Opinions', p. 169, line 8). M. Walleser: 'Weisheitswesen' (*Pr. Pa. tr.*, p. 5). H. Kern: 'A sentient or reasonable being, possessing *bodhi*' ('Manual,' p. 65, line 11). T. W. Khys Davids and W. Stede: 'a *bodhi*-being, i.e. a being destined to attain fullest Enlightenment' (Pali Dicy. s.v). L. D. Barnett: 'Creature of Enlightenment' ('Path', p. 20). S. Lefmann: 'Bodhisattva bedeutet einen, dessen Wesen Erweckung oder Erleuchtung ist' (*La! V. tr.*, p. 50). M. Anesaki: 'A being seeking for *bodhi*' (ERE., v, 450). E. J. Thomas: 'a being of (or destined for) Enlightenment' ('Buddha', p. 2, note 1). P. Masson-Oursel: 'un etre d'illumination' ('Esquisse', P.

127). R. Pischel: 'Ein Wesen, das bestimmt ist, einst ein Buddha zu werden' ('Buddha', p. 50). D. T. Suzuki: 'Intelligence-Being' ('Outlines', p. 277). Csoma de Kors: 'Purified, mighty soul' (Csoma, p. 6). The author of the *Samādhl-rāja-sutra* interprets *sattva* as 'being, creature', but thinks that the word *bodhisattva* means 'one who admonishes or exhorts all beings' (*bodhettisattvan. Sam. Ra. fol. 25a, 4*). P. Ghosa seems to interpret *sattva* as 'living being', but analyses the whole word in a peculiar way: '*bodhih sa casau mahakrp-Sfayena sattv-alambanat sattvaf cet't bodhisattvah.*' This would mean that the person is both *bodhi* and *sattva*.

3. 'Sattva' may mean 'spirit, mind, sense, consciousness', 'Geist' (Skt. Dicy. M.W. and Pbg). The Pāli word *satta* may also mean 'soul' (Pali Dicy. s.v). According to L. de la Vallee Poussin, the Indian lexicographers also explain *sattva* as a synonym for *citta* (thought) or *vyavasaya* (decision, determination). Prajnakaramati says: '*tatra(bodhau) sattvam abhiprayo'syete bodhisattvah.*' P. Ghosa cites an old commentator, who also interprets *sattva* as meaning *abhlpraya* (intention, purpose): '*bodhau sattvam abhiprayo yes am te bodhisattvah*' (Pr. Pa. Qata., p. 2, note 2). Thus the word would mean: 'one whose mind, intentions, thoughts or wishes are fixed on *bodhi*'. P. Oltramare rejects this interpretation as far-fetched and inaccurate; but L. de la Vallee Poussin seems to be inclined to accept it, while he at the same time admits that the original meaning of the word may have been derived from the idea of 'essence, own nature'.
4. *Sattva* may mean 'embryo' (Skt. Dicy. M.W). H. S. Gour translates: 'In whom knowledge is latent and undeveloped' ('Buddhism,' p. XI).
5. *Sattva* may have the same meaning as it has in the *Yoga-sūtras*, where it is opposed to *purusa* and means 'mind, intelligence'. This interpretation is offered by E. Senart, who believes that Buddhism was profoundly influenced by the *Yoga* system. He says: '*Sattva* ne designe pas seulement le premier des trois *gunas*, soit seul, soit complete par *buddhi* ou *citta*; il designe l'esprit, mais en tant que l'esprit resume et exprime la *prakrti* et les *gunas* qui la constituent... l'esprit actif, conscient, qui relevent de la *prakrti*. Explique par cette acception de *sattva* et comme *bahuvrlhi*, *bodhisattva* designerait le futur Buddha, provisoirement retenu dans les liens de l'existence, comme 'possedant le *sattva* de la *bodhi*', c'est-a-dire une illumination encore liee aux conditions inferieures des *gunas*, partant imparfaite.' It is true that *sattva* occurs frequently in the *Yoga-sūtras*, and G. Jha translates it as 'thinking principal or mind': (*Yo.Su. II, 41*,

p. 109, ‘*Sattva-fuddhl-saumanasy-aikagry-endrlya-jay-atma-darfana-yogyatvani ca*’). E. Senart points out that *sattva* is declared to be distinct from *purusa* in the *Yoga-sūtras* (III, 55, ‘*Sattva-purusayoh fuddhi-samye kaivalyam*,’ p. 174). He thus prefers the interpretation cited above, but I must confess that I do not really understand what he means by ‘*le sattva de la bodhi*’. H. Kern is of opinion that the first word *bodhi* may be related to the *buddhi* of the *Yoga* system, especially as the word *bodhisattva* is found in the literature of *Yoga*. A *bodhsattva* would thus be a personification of potential intelligence.

6. *Sattva* may be a wrongly Sanskritized form of the Pali word *satta*, which may correspond to Skt. *sakta*. Thus Pali *bodhisatta*, from which the Sanskrit word is derived, would mean *bodhi-sakta*, ‘one who is devoted or attached to *bodhi*’. *Sakta* (from the root *sanj*) means ‘clung, stuck or attached to, joined or connected with, addicted or devoted to, fond of, intent on’ (Skt. Dicy. M.W). According to the Pali Dictionary, the Pali word *satta* may correspond to several Sanskrit words: *sattva*, *sapta*, *sakta*, and *sapta*. It has been suggested that the Pali word *sutta* is also related to Skt. *sukta*, and not to Skt. *sutra*, as the latter word is a very inappropriate designation for the lengthy and prolix Buddhist discourses. The Buddhists attached great importance to *subhaslta* (good sayings), and the Pāli word *sutt’i* does correspond to Skt. *sukt’i* (Pali Dicy. s.v). However that may be, it may be plausibly argued that Skt. *bodhi-sakta* is a possible equivalent of Pali *bodhisatta*. The opinion of the Buddhist writers, who adopted the rendering *sattva*, need not be considered absolutely decisive in this question, as they have certainly given us other wrongly Sanskritized forms, e.g. *smrty-upasthana* (for Pāli *sati-pa ṭṭhana*), *samyak-prahāna* (for Pāli *sammappadhna*), etc. *Bodhisattva* may also belong to this class of wrongly Sanskritized terms. P. Oltramare rejects this interpretation, as the verb *sanj* is not used to denote attachment to moral and spiritual ideals, and the later writers could not make such ‘a strange mistake’ in translating Pāli into Sanskrit.
7. *Sattva* may mean ‘strength, energy, vigour, power, courage’ (Skt. Dicy. M.W. p. 1052). The word *bodhisattva* would then mean, ‘one whose energy and power is directed towards *bodhi*.’ *Sattva* in this sense occurs frequently in Ksemendra’s *Avadana-kalpa-lata*: ‘*sativ-abdhih*’ (II, p. 713, verse 42), ‘*sattv-ojjvalam bhagavataf caritam nifamyā*’ (II, p.85, verse 74); ‘*kumarah sattva-sagarah*’ (II, p. 723,

forward in different ways from time to time by many dictionaries and scholars in order to get the nearest possible meaning of *sattva* in the compound *Bodhisattva*.

After surveying the authoritative views held by various scholars, Har Dayal says “The safest way is always to go back to the Pāli without attaching much importance to the later lexicographers and philosophers” and he comes to the following conclusion that “*sattva*” (masculine) may mean “any living or sentient being” (Skt. Dicy. M.W) “ein lebendes Wesen” (Skt. Dicy. Pbg). The Pāli word *satta* may mean “a living being, creature, a sentient being, person (Pāli. Dicy. S.v). The most modern scholars adopt this interpretation”⁵¹ He rightly notes that the term ‘*satta*’ in this context does not denote a mere ordinary creature. He further points out that it is no doubt related to the Vedic word ‘*satvan*’ meaning ‘*kelegar*’ “a strong or valiant man, hero, warrior.”⁵²

verse 21), *sattva-nidhir* (II, p. 945, verse 21); ‘*bodhisattvah sattva-vibhusitah* (II, p. 113, verse 8). The word also seems to have the same signification in the *B. Ct.* (IX, 30—‘*bodhisattvah parlpurna-sattvah*’). E. B. Cowell translates, ‘whose perfection was absolute’; but this rendering does not explain the precise meaning of *sattva*. The Tibetan lexicographers translate *bodhisattva* as *byan-chub sems-dpah*. In this compound, *byan-chub* means *bodhi*, *sems* means ‘mind’ or ‘heart’, and *dpah* signifies ‘hero, strong man’ (= Skt. *sura*, *vira*). (Tib. Dicy. Jaschke, 374b and 325b; Tib. Dicy. Das, 883b, 787b and i276b). This interpretation seems to combine two meanings of *saliva.*, viz. ‘mind’ and ‘courage’ (Nos. 3 and 7 above). But it does not make the etymology of the compound word *bodhisattva* in any way clearer or more intelligible. It may be inferred that the Tibetan translators associated the ideas of ‘mind’ and ‘courage’ with the word *sattva*. According to E. J. Eitel, the Chinese interpret *bodhisattva* as ‘he whose essence has become *bodhi*’ (p. 34a).

⁵¹ Loc.cit.

⁵² Loc.cit.

In the Visuddhimagga (IX 53) the meanings of Satta are given as: “Beings (*Satta*): they are held (*Satta*), gripped (*Visatta*) by desire and greed for the aggregates beginning with materiality, thus they are beings (*Satta*). For this is said by the Blessed One, ‘Any desire for matter, Raden, any greed for it, any delight in it, any craving for it, has held (*Satta*) it, has gripped (*Visatta*) it; that is why a being (*Satta*) is said.’”⁵³ The term ‘Sat’ occurs in the Vedantic

Philosophy and it means: (i) the world appearance or (ii) the real quality of the existence of the Ātman.⁵⁴ In the Sāṅkhya-Yoga, the term ‘Sattva’ denotes the element of Prakṛti which is of the nature of bliss, light and illumination.⁵⁵

The term ‘Bodhisattva’ (*Bodhi+sattva*) in general, means a ‘Bodhi being’. It denotes a being who is destined to obtain fullest Enlightenment or Buddhahood.⁵⁶ The Dīgha Nikāya Commentary (II. 427) defines the term thus: “Bodhisatto ti paṇḍitasatto bujjhanasatto; bodhi-saṅkhātesu vā catūsu maggesu āsatto laggamānaso ti bodhisatto.” It literally means that the ‘Bodhisattva’ is (i) one who is an intellectual, or (ii) one who is resolved or attached only to the four paths that lead to Enlightenment.⁵⁷

According to the Sarvāstivādīs, it is defined that the Bodhisattva is a person who is certain to become a Buddha. He is a person who is born of wisdom and protected and

⁵³ Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (Tr.), The Path of Purification (Visuddhi-magga), Sri Lanka, Buddhist Publication Society, 1975, IX, 53, p. 310.

⁵⁴ For details see S.N.Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1963, pp. 445-52.

⁵⁵ S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol.II, London, 1966, pp. 475-85.

⁵⁶ PED, I, 114.

⁵⁷ DPPN, II, 322 ff.

served by the wise.⁵⁸ In the Nāgārjuna's Prajñā-pāramitā Śāstra, the same explanation is given.⁵⁹

In the Bodhicaryāvatāra Pañjikā, Ācārya Prajñākaramati says: Tatra (*bodhau*) Sattvaṃ abhiprāyo'syeti bodhisattvaḥ.⁶⁰ Similarly, in the Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā (p. 2, note 2) it has been said: "bodhau sattvam abhiprāyo yeṣāṃ te bodhisattvāḥ".⁶¹ To them, the Bodhisattva is one whose mind, intentions, thoughts or wishes are fixed on Bodhi.

In the text Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, it is written: "Nothing real is meant by the word Bodhisattva, because a Bodhisattva trains himself in non-attachment to all dharmas. For the Bodhisattva, the great being awakes in non-attachment to full enlightenment in the sense that he understands all the dharmas, because he has enlightenment as his aim, an enlightened being (*Bodhisattva*)."⁶²

According to the Tibetan Lexicographers, the term 'Bodhisattva' means byanchub sems-dpah (byan-chub-sams — mind, and dpah — herd).⁶³ On this Har Dayal rightly points out that this does not make the 'Bodhisattva' clearly in any way. Again, he observes that the translator might have associated the idea of 'mind' and 'courage' with the word 'satta'.⁶⁴ The Chinese on the other hand interpret it as one whose essence has become Bodhi.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Bs, 30.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁰ BDBSL, 6.

⁶¹ Loc. cit.

⁶² Cf. Edward Conze (tr), Astāhasrika Pran.

⁶³ BDBSL, 8.

⁶⁴ Loc.cit.

⁶⁵ Loc.cit.

T.R.V. Murti's observation in this respect says that the Bodhisattva is but the virtuous and good and the source of all goodness in the world.⁶⁶ Charles Elliot says that a Bodhisattva is one whose essence is knowledge.⁶⁷ H.Kern holds that a sentient or reasonable being, possessing bodhi⁶⁸ is a Bodhisattva.

In short, etymologically Bodhisatta (菩薩) means a Bodhi-being (覺有情 or a "Buddha-to-be" or "a being who desires to attain enlightenment". The word can, therefore, be used in reference to all those who seek bodhi (菩提), including Buddhas (諸佛), Pratyeka-Buddhas (緣覺) and disciples of the Buddhas, but it is commonly used only for those beings who seek to become Buddha. As far as this research work is concerned, we are able to understand that Bodhisatta (菩薩) is considered as an ordinary man, a hero or a warrior who with his own karma at his very birth as all other human beings, but with effort and determined mind, he will be able to eliminate all his bad karmas (業) and sufferings, and attain the final liberation by cultivating a realistic and practical way which had been discovered and taught by Lord Buddha Gotama. Even after the concept had been developed in Mahāyāna, the Bodhisattva became the one who seeks for the 'Samyak sambodhi' (正等覺) or Anuttara-Samsak-sambodhi (阿耨多羅三藐三菩提, 無上正等覺),⁶⁹ Insight causing the Enlightenment by one's own supreme virtues and high effort) in which it is neither for oneself nor from someone, but for the welfare of all kinds of sentient beings with the help of his own pāramitās (波羅密). Time and sufferings are not important for

⁶⁶ T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, London, 1960, p. 264.

⁶⁷ Charles Elliot, *Buddhism and Hinduism*, Vol. II, London, 1968, p.1.

⁶⁸ H. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, rpt. 1974, p. 65.

⁶⁹ DCBT, pp. 337.

a Bodhisattva, his main concentration is focussed on the full acquirement of pāramitā and their complete accumulation for the Enlightenment. He has to prepare himself wholeheartedly to undertake it with firm resoluteness and he is the one who for the sake of all sorts of sentient beings, seeks for the ‘Samsak-sambodhi’, plus the ‘Anuttara-Samyak-sambodhi’. However, we should remember the fact that in Mahāyāna Buddhism such Bodhistvas are only symbolic names from the characteristics of the historical Buddha or a description on the saints at other worlds, they are neither ‘historical personalities’, nor heavenly gods for worship and the real nature of all the bodhisattvas has crystallized only as a result of the virtues of the historical Buddha being deified as a kind of god in response to the popular demands influenced by the practice of polytheism.

The Meaning of Other Terms Denoting Saints

Before we actually deal with the concept of Bodhisattva, it is better that we have to understand generally different categories of the saints in Buddhism as gods (諸天), the Arahantas (阿羅漢), the Śrāvakas (聲聞), the Pratyeka-Buddhas (辟支佛), and even the Buddhas (佛陀).

Devas or Gods (諸天)

The concept of gods (諸天), though present in Buddhism, does not either form the part of its central teachings or serve as a basis for its religious practices. Buddhism is a non-theistic religious-philosophy. This means that it does not accept the possibility of a Creator God, either as the Creator of man or as the Creator of the world.

The Aggañña Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya⁷⁰ quite clearly states that both the physical world and the human society are not the products of any creative fiat of a God but merely the products of an evolutionary process.

The Pāli term which describes the gods in the Buddhist tradition is ‘devā’ as defined in the Pāli Text Society’s Pāli-English Dictionary:

“The popular etymology refers it to the root div in the sense of playing, sporting or amusing oneself; a god, divine being, usually in plural devā, the gods. As title attributed to any superhuman being or beings regarded to be in certain respect above the human level...”⁷¹

According to the Buddhist tradition, the concept of the world means the world of beings – the gods and men. Therefore in the Sūtras of both Theravāda (Pāli) and Mahāyāna (Sanskrit and Chinese) literatures the existence of various kinds of gods and goddesses has been accepted. The Mahā Sihanādā Sutta of Majjhima Nikāya (Vol. 1, 73f) gives description of the different spheres or realms of existence of the diverse types of devas. The lengths of life-span of devas also increase to five hundred celestial years (gods of the Cātummahārājika realm) or sixteen thousand celestial years (the gods of Paranimmitavasavatti realm) or... following to their past conducts. The Mahāvastu (II, p. 282) and the Lalitavistara (p. 232 f) quite clearly depict the different stages of gods and goddesses. Goddesses, for example, Gauri, Laksmi, Durgā, Kāli, Sarasvati were of great importance in the Hindu pantheon. This may have prompted the Mahāyānists to create goddesses by deifying objects of natural phenomena, abstract ideas and other objects.

⁷⁰ DB, III, 77f.

⁷¹ See EB, V, 349-350.

However, in Buddhism, the position of gods or goddesses is not as important as in other religions, because all kinds of such gods and devas were regarded by the Buddha as different classes of living beings who have not yet liberated themselves from the law of impermanence, who have still been subject to the cycle of saṃsāra, even though they are superior to man in terms of power and conditions of life and enjoy the bliss in their heaven as it has been said in the Book of Gradual Sayings:

“Upon a time, monks, Sakka, lord of the Devas, was instructing the Devas of the Thirty – Three, and on that occasion uttered this verse:

He who would be like unto me should keep

The fourteenth, fifteenth day and also the eighth

But, monks, this verse was ill sung, not well sung by Sakka, lord of the Devas. It was wrongly, not rightly uttered. How so?

Monks, Sakka, lord of Devas, was not rid of passion, not rid of malice, not rid of delusion: whereas a monk who is an arahanta, one in whom the āsavas are destroyed, who has lived the life, done what was to be done, who has laid down the burden, attained his own welfare, utterly destroyed the fetters of becoming, who is perfectly released by knowledge, by such an one this saying of ‘ He who would be like unto me’ were fitly uttered. Why so? Because that monk is rid of passion, rid of malice, rid of delusion.

Upon a time, monks, Sakka, lord of the Devas...and on that occasion uttered this verse...

But, monks, this verse was ill sung...It was wrongly, not rightly uttered. How so?

Monks, Sakka, lord of the Devas, was not released from birth, old age and death, from sorrow, lamentation and woe. He was not released from despair and tribulation. He was not released from ill. I declared. Whereas the monk who is arahanta... who is perfectly released by knowledge, - by such an one this saying of ‘He who would be like unto me’ were fitly uttered. Why so?

Because that monk is fully released from birth, old age and death, from sorrow, lamentation and woe: he is fully released from despair and tribulation. He is fully released from ill, I declare”.⁷²

⁷² BGD, Vol. I, Chapter Three Dhammas, iv, Sakka, 127.

(Bhūtapubbaṃ bhikkhave Sakko devānaṃ indo deve Tāvātīmse anunayamāno tāyaṃ velāyaṃ imaṃ gātham abhāsi:

Cātuddasi pañcadasi yāva pakkhassa aṭṭhamī

Pāṭihāriyapakkhaṇa ca aṭṭhaṅgasusamāgataṃ

Uposathaṃ upavaseyya yo p'assa madiso naro ti.

Sā kho pan' esā bhikkhave Sakkena devānaṃ indena gāthā duggītā na sugītā dubbhāsītā na subbhāsītā. Taṃ kissa hetu? Sakko bhikkhave devānaṃ indo avitarāgo avitadoso avitamoho. Yo ca kho so bhikkhave bhikkhu araham khīṇāsavo vusitavā katakaraṇīyo ohitabhāro anuppatta-sadattho parikkhīṇabhavasamyojano sammadaññāvimutto, tassa kho etaṃ bhikkhave bhikkhuno kallaṃ vacanāya.

Cātudilasi pañcadasi yāva pakkhassa aṭṭhamī

Pāṭihāriyapakkhaṇa ca aṭṭhaṅgasusamāgataṃ

Uposathaṃ upavaseyya yo p'assa māsidō naro ti.

Taṃ kissa hetu ? So hi bhikkhave bhikkhu vītarāgo vītadoso vītamoho ti.

Bhūtapubbaṃ bhikkhave Sakko devānaṃ indo deve Tāvātīmse anunayamāno tāyaṃ velāyaṃ imaṃ gātham abhāsi:—

Cātuddasi pañcadasi yāva pakkhassa aṭṭhamī

Pāṭihāriyapakkhaṇa ca atthaṅgasusamāgataṃ

Uposathaṃ upavaseyya yo p'assa mādiso naro ti.

Sā kho pan' esā bhikkhave Sakkena devānaṃ indena gāthā duggītā na sugītā dubbhāsītā na subbhāsītā. Taṃ kissa hetu ? Sakko hi bhikkhave indo devānaṃ aparimutto jātiyā jarāya maraṇena sokehi paridevehi dukkhehi domanassehi upāyāsehi aparimutto dukkhasma ti vadāmi. Yo ca kho so bhikkhave bhikkhu araham khīṇāsavo vusitavā katakaraṇīyo ohitabhāro anuppattasadattho parikkhīṇabhavasamyojano sammadaññāvimutto, tassa kho etaṃ bhikkhave bhikkhuno, kallaṃ vacanāya.

Cātuddasi pañcadasi yāva pakkhassa aṭṭhamī

Pāṭihāriyapakkhaṇa ca aṭṭhaṅgasusamāgataṃ

Uposathaṃ upavaseyya yo p'assa mādiso naro ti.

Taṃ kissa hetu ? So bhikkhave bhikkhu parimutto jātiyā jarāyā maraṇeṇa sokehi paridevehi dukkhehi domanassehi upāyāsehi parimutto dukkhamā ti vadāmi).⁷³

Gods are the living beings who can only enjoy by indulging in various kinds of pleasure to satisfy their senses brought back as the result of their past lives' effort and cultivation, and their pleasure is considered to be better than human's and other suffering realms as the Mahāsīhanāda Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya (Vol. 1, 73f) said beings in heavenly spheres experience feelings which are exclusively pleasant (*ekantasukhā vedanā*) compared with the continued suffering which is sharp and severe (*ekantadukkhā tībā kaṭukā*) of the beings of purgatory, suffering which is sharp and severe (*dukkā tībā kaṭukā*) of the beings of the animal world (*tiracchāna yoni*), feelings which are abundantly painful (*dukkhabahulā vedanā*), and the experience of pleasure in general (*sukhabahulā vedanā*) of the beings of the realm of human beings. However, devas who are unaware of the law of impermanence or the inevitable end of such temporary bliss, then after that they will fall down to the suffering worlds of ghost, animal, and hell and so, the role of gods in Buddhism is somewhat lower than and inferior to that of men.

The heavenly realms are not conceived of as blocks or compartments in a storied structure either above or below the human world, but as categories or types of beings of similar attainments or accomplishments and composition existing in environments parallel and coterminous with the world of human and other beings.

According to the evidence in Pāli Canonical texts the Buddhist gods are not objects of prayer or religious ritual, but

⁷³ A, I, 143-5.

because the path of the spiritual development of man and everything that is associated with the practice thereof was considered dependent solely on man was therefore outside the intervention and supervision of any one else, divine or otherwise. Hence, the gods are irrelevant to the attainment of Nibbāna. Therefore, the gods have no central or important function to perform in Buddhism.

While Bodhisattva was being deified as a kind of god, saint in response to the popular demands influenced by the practice of polytheism, but Bodhisattva makes an attempt in following the path of Buddha for the purpose of liberating themselves as well as using measureless skills to do the same for others in the suffering worlds. Therefore the nature, character and knowledge of Bodhisattva is highly appreciated in Buddhism.

The Arahantas (阿羅漢)

Encyclopaedia of Buddhism⁷⁴ mentions that the word ‘Arahanta’ is derived from the root ‘arh’, to deserve, to be worthy, to be fit, and is used to denote a person who has achieved the goal of religious life (in Theravāda Buddhism).

Arahanta is composed with two parts (word): Ari and hanta. Ari means enemies or defilements. Hanta means killing or destroying. So, an Arahant is a man who killed or destroyed all defilements like lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). I.B. Horner⁷⁵ gives us the following four forms of the nouns: arahā, arahat, arahanta and arahan.

⁷⁴ EB, II, 41.

⁷⁵ Isaline B. Horner, the Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected: A Study of the Arahanta, London: Williams & Northgate Ltd., 1979, p.52.

In early Buddhism, the term denotes a person who has gained insight into the true nature of things (*yathābhūtañāna*) and the Buddha was the first Arahanta.

After the first conversion, five brothers of Kondañña (*pañcavaggiya*) also became Arahantas. The Arahantas are described as buddhānubuddhā, i.e. those who have attained enlightenment after the fully Enlightened One.⁷⁶ Then, as time passed, the conception of arahantaship was gradually widened and elaborated by the Teacher and his successors. Thus, an arahanta who was also supposed to comprehend the formula of the twelve nidānas (Causes), had eradicated the three āsravas,⁷⁷ practiced the seven factors of enlightenment (Pāli: *sambojjhanga*),⁷⁸ got rid of the five nīvaraṇas, freed himself from the three “roots of evil”, ten Fetters (*samyojana*) of belief. He practiced self-restraint and Concentration, and acquired various wonder-working Powers and awakened the nature of the misery of saṃsāra. He practiced the four Meditations, the four ecstatic Attainments and the supreme condition of Trance and obtained the six super-knowledge (*abhiññā*),⁷⁹ threefold knowledge (*tisso vijjā*)... resulted in the liberation in the end. This freedom made him an arahanta who destroyed the fetter of rebirth in the cycle of Saṃsāra (birth, old-age, illness and death) and enjoyed himself in Nibbāna (Skt. *Nirvāṇa*) and was worthy of being revered in this world... which we can see in Pāli

⁷⁶ Theragāthā, ed. H. Bendall, JRAS, 1883, p.111.

⁷⁷ A, III, 376.

⁷⁸ Ibid., loc.cit.

⁷⁹ S, II, 217.

Nikāyas as Saṃyutta Nikāya,⁸⁰ Aṅguttara Nikāya,⁸¹
Majjhima Nikāya...⁸²

And the same with these ideas, in the Pasādika Suttanta belongs to The Dialogues of the Buddha, we find the Buddha offering us the following arahanta formula:

“The brother who is arahanta (is one) in whom the intoxicants (āsava) are destroyed, who has done his task, who has laid down his burden, who has attained salvation, who has utterly destroyed the fetters of rebirth, who is emancipated by true gnosis (sammadaññā)...”⁸³

(Yo so āvuso bhikkhu araham khīṇāsavo vusitavā katakararaṇiyo ahita-bhāro anuppata sedattho pāraikkhīṇa-bhava-saṃyojano sammā-aññā vimutto).⁸⁴

The discipline of a Buddhist monk is aimed at the attainment of arahantship. In other words, Arahanta (阿羅漢) is an ideal man or sage at the highest of spiritual development.

When we compare Arahanta with gods, the elementary point in Buddhism comes out very clearly that arahanta is beyond the range of the gods, māra even together with Brahmā who are relocated into just another sector of saṃsāra (輪迴), albeit a pleasant and more enduring sector. Some Buddhists pray to the gods, but they are quite aware that they pray to them for ‘secular’ wealth, love, successful missions... The gods, according to them, can indeed bestow material benefits, but spiritual fruits are totally a matter of the individual’s control and effort.

⁸⁰ S, I, 12; II, 120-6, IV, 252.

⁸¹ A, IV, 145.

⁸² M, II, 29.

⁸³ DB, III, No. 29 Pasadika Sutta, 125.

⁸⁴ D, III, 138.

The Śrāvakas (聲聞)

Śrāvakas (聲聞) means ‘disciple’⁸⁵ or ‘hearer’ who aspires to become an Arahanta (阿羅漢) usually asks for the guidance of a superior enlightened instructor, after hearing, he realizes the nature of things then gets enlightenment. A slight indication from an experienced and wise teacher would alone be sufficient for a morally advanced aspirant to progress on the upward path of enlightenment. Venerable Śāriputta (舍利弗), for instance, attained the first stage of Sainthood, hearing only half a stanza from Arahanta Assaji. Cula Panthaka, who could not memorize a verse for four months, attained Arahantaship by meditating on the impermanent nature of a clean handkerchief, which he was handling while gazing at the sun...

Arahanta (阿羅漢) is a liberated one from the cycle of saṃsāra (輪迴), and enjoys the state of Nibbāna (涅槃). Śrāvaka is also a realized one from hearing Dhamma and can attain one of four stages of emancipation or all. Four stages of emancipation include:

1. The status of the Stream Entrant (*Sotāpanna*, 入流, 七來),
2. The Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmi*, 一來),
3. The Non-Returner (*Anāgāmi*, 不來),
4. The Liberated One (*Arahanta*, 阿羅漢).

Arahanta or Śrāvaka is the one who is freed from defilements, taints and who is devoting strictly to meditation and liberation. Arahanta represents the example of a virtually pure superhuman teacher. So, he is an object and merit-field which we can follow to cultivate as well as salute.

⁸⁵ BIHP, 259; The Bodhisattva Ideal, Ven. Narada Maha Thera, the Journal ‘The Maha Bodhi’, vol. 80 – Oct. & Nov., Delhi, 1972, p. 481.

There are some scholars who consider Arahanta's ideal as lower, smaller than the Bodhisattva's, but in my opinion both of them are highly appreciated and each ideal has its own special meaning which will be discussed in detail in the Third Chapter.

Pratyeka-Buddha (緣覺, 辟支佛)

The singular ideal of a Pacceka-buddha (Skt. *Pratyeka-buddha*, 緣覺, 辟支佛) was also evolved during this period.

In 'Tu Dien Phat Hoc Han Viet'⁸⁶ explains Pratyeka-buddha who was born in life when no Buddha had come down; non any truth had been given out. Therefore he was regarded to be higher than a Śrāvaka (who had heard Buddha-dhamma then realized). Pratyeka-buddhahood is the independent enlightenment of a highly evolved person who achieves his goal by his own efforts without seeking any external aid, but as a result of personal realization of the doctrine of Dependent Origination; such a holy person is termed a private Buddha, or silent Buddha. He is a 'Buddha' on account of awakening the real nature of phenomena, but 'private' or 'silent' because he lacks the power to purify and serve others by expounding the Dhamma.

There are two kinds of Pratyeka-buddha: firstly, Pratyeka-buddha cultivated alone and secondly, he practised with his accompanies and all realized together.

Such a Buddha - "one enlightened by himself, i.e. one who has attained to the supreme and perfect insight, but dies without proclaiming the truth to the world" (cf. Puggala-

⁸⁶ Tu Dien Phat Hoc Han Viet (A Dictionary of Vietnamese-Chinese Buddhist Terms), Phan vien Phat hoc xuat ban, Viet Nam: Ha Noi, 1992, p. 446.

paññatti, p.14)⁸⁷ is definitely different from Bodhisattva ideal. However, we must recognize how much efforts Pratyeka-buddha did in his situation. To cite an example, while Śrāvaka gets emancipation from hearing dhamma as a liberated guidance, Pratyeka-buddha attains his goal by his own firm resoluteness and evolution. So, it is much worthy for our admiration and respect. Although the Buddha Gotama (瞿曇佛) of the present era has passed away, we are still living in a Buddha cycle, for the teaching still exists in its pristine purity. Therefore no Pratyeka-buddha will arise during this period.

The Buddha (佛 陀)

Encyclopaedia of Buddhism⁸⁸ defines the Buddha as a generic name, an appellative – but not a proper name – given to one who has attained enlightenment. This word is the passive past participle derived from the root budh (to wake, to wake up, to perceive, to learn, to understand).

The use of the word ‘Buddha’ (佛 陀) in its Buddhist sense began with its application to Gotama (Skt. *Gautama*, (瞿曇), known to his contemporaries also as Śākyamuni - the founder of what came to be known as Buddhism. Gotama was born in what is now Nepal, more than 2500 years ago, attained Enlightenment, taught the truth (Pāli: *Dhamma*, Skt: *Dharma*, 法), which he had realized and died at the age of eighty. Gotama generally called him as Tathāgata (如來), Bhagavat (世尊), the Blessed One, Śākyamuni, but later he is stated as Supreme Teacher, Buddha as below:

⁸⁷ BDBSL, 3.

⁸⁸ EB, III, 357.

“I am the one who is worthy of being revered in this world; I am the Supreme Teacher; I am the only one who has attained the most perfect Enlightenment”

(Ahaṃ hi arahā loke, ahaṃ satthā anuttaro, eko’ mhi sammāsambuddho).⁸⁹

“I am not indeed a deva, nor a gāndharva, nor a yakṣya, nor a manuṣya (a human). Know ye that I am the Buddha”.

(Na kho ahaṃ devo bhavissāmi, na kho ahaṃ gandhabbo bhavissāmi... yakkho... manusso... buddho ti maṃ dhārehi).⁹⁰

The Buddha-concept in Theravāda (源始佛教) is a man who has perfected himself by realizing his ‘self’ to the highest degree as is possible for a human being. He is the only discoverer of a lost teaching. His greatness was that he found out what his contemporaries could not discover at all or discovered only incompletely. He was a genius by birth who achieved the highest state possible for a man. A Buddha is said to possess ten Powers (*balāni*, 十力),⁹¹ four Grounds of

⁸⁹ Vinayapitaka, ed. H. Oldenberg, vol. I, London, 1879, p. 8.

⁹⁰ A, II, 38-9.

⁹¹ Ten *balāni*:

1. A Buddha possesses the knowledge of correct and faulty conclusions.
2. He knows fully and truly the consequences of all actions in the past, the present and the future with regard to their causes and circumstances.
3. He is cognisant of the various aspirations or dispositions of the different types of persons.
4. He knows the true nature of the various *dhātus* (elements) in the universe.
5. He understands the higher or lower powers of different creatures.
6. He knows the Way that leads everywhere.
7. He realises the defilement, purification and origination of all the forms of Musing, Deliverances, Concentration and Ecstatic Attainment.
8. He remembers all his previous existences.
9. He discerns the process of the death and rebirth of all beings.

Self-confidence (*vaiśāradyaṇi*, 四信),⁹² the eighteen different characteristics of a Buddha as compared with Bodhisattvas (*Āveṇika-dharmas*, 十八法不共).⁹³ Because of these, he was a

10. He knows that his *āsravas* (Intoxicants: sins and errors) have been destroyed. (See A, V, 33.7 ff.; M, I, 69 ff.; DCBT, 46; BDBSL, 20)

⁹² The Four Vaisāradyas:

1. He knows that he has attained perfect Enlightenment and understands all principles and phenomena (*dharmāḥ*).
2. He knows that he has destroyed all the *āsravas* (Intoxicants).
3. He knows that the obstacles to the higher life, which he has described, really constitute serious hindrances.
4. He knows that the Way, which he teaches for the cessation of Pain and Evil (*duḥkha*), really leads to that goal (see M, I, 71; A, II, 9)

⁹³ The Eighteen Āveṇika-dharmas distinguish a Buddha from all other beings as follows:

1. He is free from errors and faults.
2. He is not noisy or loquacious.
3. He never loses Mindfulness.
4. His mind is always composed and collected.
5. He has no notion of multiplicity (i.e. he considers the universe under its aspect of unity and not with reference to the diversity of phenomena and objects).
6. His equanimity is not due to want of judgment.
7. His Will and Resolution never falter.
8. His Energy is never diminished.
9. His Mindfulness is never relaxed.
10. His Concentration always remains the same.
11. His Wisdom never fails.
12. His Deliverance knows no change.
13. All his actions, performed with the body, are preceded by Knowledge and continue to be in accordance with Knowledge.
14. All his words and utterances are preceded by Knowledge and continue to be in accordance with Knowledge.
15. All his thoughts are preceded by Knowledge and continue to be in accordance with Knowledge.
16. He has absolute and infallible Knowledge and Insight with regard to the past time.
17. He has absolute and infallible Knowledge and Insight with regard to the future.

great man, a superman (*Mahāpurisa*, 大人) in intellect and morally.

Literally, Buddha means ‘Enlightened One’ (覺者). A distinction must be made among an Arahanta (阿羅漢), a Śrāvaka (聲聞), a Pratyeka-buddha (辟支佛), and a Buddha (佛陀), all of whom are the enlightened beings, but a Buddha is referred to as the supreme, perfectly enlightened one” the ‘Anuttara Samyak sambodhi’ (阿耨多羅三藐三菩提, 無上正等覺).⁹⁴ Such a Buddha, every man and woman, every living creature can and must become. This is a Bodhisattva’s goal and ideal. A Bodhisattva should know and comprehend these qualities and characteristics of the Buddha before he can start his career.

The Concept of Bodhisattva as found in the Pāli Nikāyas

Several centuries after Gotama Buddha’s death, Bodhisattva may be regarded as the final outcome of the tendencies that were at work in India and contributed to the rise and growth of the new doctrine of Bodhisattva.

Bodhisattva is one of the most important ideas of Mahāyāna Buddhists. However, it would be a mistake to assure that the concept of Bodhisattva was a creation of the Mahāyāna. The term Bodhisattva had been mentioned in the Pāli Canon and it stems from the original Pāli Buddhism which is used more or less exclusively to designate Gotama Buddha prior to his Enlightenment. Nonetheless, if we go through the Pāli texts such as the Majjhima Nikāya, the Dīgha Nikāya, the Sutta-Nipāta and the Jātaka of Khuddaka

18. He has absolute and infallible Knowledge and Insight with regard to the present (time).

(see Divy-āvadāna, ed. E.B.Cowell & R.A. Neil, Cambridge, 1886, p. 148; DCBT, 45)

⁹⁴ DCBT, pp. 337.

Nikāya, it may be shown out that the concept of Bodhisatta has four shades of meanings as noted below:

From the Time of the Buddha's Renunciation (Mahābhinikkhamaṇa) upto the Time of his Enlightenment

First of all, the term Bodhisatta reflects concretely the life of Gotama Buddha from renunciation upto the time of his Enlightenment when he was prince Siddhattha of the Kingdom Kapilavatthu, who was also suffering in the cycle of birth and death as we are, then there was a day as he went out of the palace to the city to see the world outside, he came in direct contact with the stark realities of life. His observant eyes met the strange sights of a decrepit old man, a diseased person, a corpse and a dignified hermit. The first three sights convincingly proved to him the inexorable nature of life and the universal ailment of humanity. The fourth signified the means to overcome the ill of life and to attain calm and peace. Then he decided to abandon his homely life, and became a wandering ascetic in search of truth.

Leaving his parents, wife, son and luxury palace behind, he stole away with a light heart from the palace at midnight and rode into the dark, attended only by his loyal charioteer. Alone and penniless he set out in search of truth and peace. Thus did he renounce the world? It was not the renunciation of an old man who has had his fill of worldly life. It was not the renunciation of a poor man who had nothing to leave behind. It was the renunciation of a prince in the full bloom of youth and in the plenitude of wealth and prosperity - a renunciation unparalleled in history.

It was in his twenty-ninth year that prince Siddhattha made this historic journey. His extraordinary decision becoming a Bodhisatta in seeking for truth was just blooming

as soon as he comprehended the bondage and imprisonment of the worldly life as Mahāsaccaka Sutta of the Middle Length Sayings depicts:

“Now, Aggivessana, before my Self-awakening while I was still the bodhisatta, not fully awakened, it occurred to me: Narrow is the household life, a path of dust, going forth is the open, nor is it easy while dwelling in a house to lead the Brahma-faring completely fulfilled, utterly purified, polished like a conch-shell. Suppose now that I, having cut off hair and beard, having clothed myself in saffron garments, should go forth from home into homelessness? So I, Aggivessana, after a time, being young, my hair coal-black, possessed of radiant youth, in the prime of my life...So, Aggivessana, sat down just there thinking: indeed this does well for striking”.⁹⁵

(Kim hi no siyā Aggivessana. Idha me Aggivessana pubbe va sambodhā anabhisambuddhassa bodhisattass’ eva sato etad - ahoṣi: Sambādho gharāvāso rajāpatho, abbhokāso pabbajjā, na-y-idaṃ sukaraṃ agāraṃ ajjhāvasatā ekanta-paripuṇṇaṃ ekantaparisuddhaṃ saṅkhalikhitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ carituṃ, yannūnaṃ kesamassuṃ ohāretvā kāsāyani vatthāni acchādetvā agāraṃ anagāriyaṃ pabbajeyyaṃ - ti. So kho ahaṃ Aggivessana aparena samayena daharo va samano susu kāḷakeso... (repeat from p. 163, 1. 28 top. 167, 1. 8; for bhikkhave substitute Aggivessana)... alam-idaṃ padhanayati).⁹⁶

Or in the Ariyapariyesana-sutta recounted as follows:

“And, I too, monks, before Awakening, while I was still the Bodhisatta, not full awakened, being liable to birth, because of self, sought what was likewise liable to birth; being liable to ageing because of self, sought what was likewise liable to ageing; being liable to disease because of self...being liable to dying because of self...being liable to sorrow because of self...being liable to stain

⁹⁵ MLS, I, No. 36 Mahasaccaka Sutta, 295.

⁹⁶ M, I, 240.

because of self, sought what was likewise liable to stain. Then it occurred to me, monks: ‘why do I, liable to birth because of self, seek what is likewise liable to birth; being liable to aging... being liable to stain because of self, seek what is likewise liable to stain? Suppose that I, (although) being liable to birth because of self, having known the peril in what is likewise liable to birth, should seek the unborn, the uttermost security from the bonds-nibbāna? Being liable to decay because of self...should seek the unageing... Being liable to decay because of self...should seek the undecaying... Being liable to dying because of self...should seek the undying... Being liable to sorrow because of self...should seek the unsorrowing... Being liable to stain because of self, having been seeking the stainless, the uttermost security from the bonds-nibbāna?’⁹⁷

(Aham-pi Sudarṇ bhikkhave pubbe va sambodhā anabhi-sambuddho bodhisatto va samāno attanā jātidhammo samāno jātidhammaññeva pariyesāmi, attanā jarādhammo samāno jarādhammaññeva pariyesāmi, attanā byādhidhammo..., attanā maraṇadhammo..., attanā sokadhammo..., attanā saṅkhesadhammo samāno saṅkilesadhammaññeva pariyesāmi.

Tassa mayhaṃ bhikkhave etad - ahosi: Kin - nu kho ahaṃ attanā jātidhammo samāno jātidhamman-neva pariyesāmi, attana jaradhammo samāno - pe - attanā saṅkilesadhammo samāno saṅkilesadhammaññeva pariyesāmi; yan-nūnāhaṃ attanā jātidhammo samāno jātidhamme ādinavaṃ viditvā ajātaṃ anuttaraṃ yogakkhemaṃ nibbānaṃ pariyeseyyaṃ, attanā jarādhammo... ajaraṃ.. pariyeseyyaṃ, attanā byādhi-dhammo... abyādhiṃ... pariyeseyyaṃ, attanā maraṇadhammo... amataṃ pariyeseyyaṃ, attāna sokadhammo... asokaṃ... pariyeseyyaṃ, attanā saṅkilesadhammo samāno saṅkilesa-dhamme ādinavaṃ viditvā asankiliṭṭham anuttaraṃ yogak-khemaṃ nibbānaṃ pariyeseyyan-ti).⁹⁸

⁹⁷ MLS, I, No. 26. Ariyapariyesana Sutta, 207.

⁹⁸ M, I, 163.

The Period from Gotama Siddattha's Conception to Gotama Buddha's Enlightenment

Secondly, Bodhisattva was extended to denote the period from Gotama Siddattha's conception to Gotama Buddha's Enlightenment as depicted below: On the day of his conception, the Bodhisatta's mother takes the vows of fasting and celibacy at the conclusion of a great festival, and when she has retired to rest she dreams that the Four Regent Gods take her with her bed, bathe her in the Anotatta lake, clad her in divine garments, and place her in a golden palace surrounded by all kinds of luxury. As she lies there "the Bodhisatta in the form of a white elephant enters her womb through her right side".⁹⁹ The earth trembles and all the ten thousand world-systems are filled with radiance. *Acchariyabhutadhamma-sutta* which belongs to The Middle Length of Sayings depicts vividly this historical point:

"Face to face with the Lord, revered sir, have I heard this, face to face have learnt: The Bodhisatta deceasing from the Tusita group mindful and clearly conscious, entered his mother's womb, then an illimitable glorious radiance, surpassing even the deva-majesty of devas, appeared in the world with its devas, its Māras, its Bratmās, among the generations recluses and brāhmins, devas and men...cannot make their light surpassing even there there appeared the illimitable glorious radiance, surpassing even the deva-majesty of devas..."¹⁰⁰

(Sammukhā, me taṃ, bhante, Bhagavato sutam sammukhā paṭiggahitaṃ; Sato sampajāno, Ānanda, Bodhisatto Tusitā kāyā cavitvā mātu kucchiṃ okkamīti; yam pi, bhante, sato sampajāno

⁹⁹ **EB, III, 229.**

¹⁰⁰ *MLS, III, No. 123 Acchariyabhutadhamma-sutta*, 165.

Bodhisatto Tusita kāyā cavitvā mātu kucchiṃ okkami, idam p' ahaṃ Bhagavato acchariyaṃ abbhutadhammaṃ dhāremi).¹⁰¹

or in the Mahapadana Sutta belonging to the Dialogues of the Buddha it has been also retold that:

“Now Vipassi, brethren, when, as Bodhisatta, he ceased to belong to the hosts to the heaven of Delight, descended into his mother’s womb mindful and self-possessed. That in such a case is the rule.

It is the rule, brethren, that, when a Bodhisatta issues from his mother’s womb, there is made manifest throughout the universe - including the worlds above the gods, the Maras and the Brahmas, and the world below with its recluses and brahmins, its princes and people - an infinite and splendid radiance passing the glory of the gods. And those beings who happen to be existing there, perceiving each other by that radiance, say: ‘Verily there be other beings living here!’ And the ten thousands worlds of the universe tremble and shudder and quake. And this infinite splendid radiance is made manifest in the world, passing the glory of the gods – that, in such a case, is the rule”.¹⁰²

(Dhammatā eṣā bhikkhave, yadā Bodhisatto Tusitā kāyā cavitvā mātu kucchiṃ okkamati atha sadevake loke samārake sabrahmake sassamaṇa- brāhmaṇiṃ pājāya sadeva-inamissāya anpamāṇo uḷāro obhāso pātubhavati atikkamma devānaṃ devānubhāvaṃ. Ya pi tā lokan-tarikā aghā asaṃvutā andhakārā andhakāra-timisā, yattha pi ‘me candima-suriyā’ evaṃ mahiddhikā evaṃ mahānubhāvā ābhāya nānubhonti, tattha pi appamāno uḷāro obhāso pātubhavati atikkamm’ eva devānaṃ devānubhāvaṃ. Ye pi tattha sattā upapannā, te pi ten’ obhāsenā aññaṃ aññaṃ sañjānanti: “Aññe pi kira bho santi sattā idhūpapannā ti.” Ayaṃ ca dasa-sahassi loka-dhātu saṃkampi sampakampati sampavedhati. Appamāṇo ca uḷāro obhāso loke

¹⁰¹ M, III, 119-120.

¹⁰² DB, II, No. 14 Mahapadana Sutta, 8-9.

pāṭubhavati atikkamm' eva' devānaṃ devānubhāvaṃ. Ayam ettha dhammatā).¹⁰³

Encyclopaedia of Buddhism¹⁰⁴ lay it that the Bodhisatta's last birth is attended by miracles because both in Pāli and Sanskrit sources, an attempt is made to show that at the actual moment of conception there is no physical union of father and mother.¹⁰⁵

Right after the birth, a great ascetic of high spiritual attainments, named Asita, admired Gotama Siddatha's body and declared in general that: there were thirty two special marks on His tiny body which say that He would lead His homeless life as a wandering monk and would become a fully - enlightened Buddha, a teacher of Gods and Men. Asita's words are as follows:

“This prince will reach the summit of perfect enlightenment. He will turn the wheel of the Dhamma, he who sees what is exceedingly pure (i.e. Nibbāna), this prince feels for the welfare of the multitude, and his religion will be widely spread”.¹⁰⁶

(Sambodhiyaggam phusissat' āyam kumāro, so dhammacakkam paramavisuddhadassī vattes' āyam bahujanahitānukampi, vitthārik 'assa bhavissati brahmacariyam).¹⁰⁷

That also may be the reasons on which the concept of Bodhisatta developed with this second meaning i.e. even he was in the womb of Queen Mahāmāyā or a tiny baby, he also has the great figure of great man, of a Bodhisatta.

¹⁰³ D, II, 12.

¹⁰⁴ EB, III, 229.

¹⁰⁵ This seems to be what is meant by a 'virgin birth'. See MLS, the Acchariya-abbhuta-dhamma-sutta, III, 165 ff; Mahāvastu, ed. E. Senart, Paris, 1882-97, II, p.6 and Lalitavistara, ed. P.L.Vaidya, PST, I, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰⁶ GD, Nālaka sutta, verse No. 693, p.125.

¹⁰⁷ Sn, Nālakasuttam Nitthitam, verse No. 693, p.125.

The Period from the Conception of all the Buddhas in their Mother's Wombs to the Attaining of their Respective Enlightenment

Thirdly, Bodhisattva with the meaning was all the Buddhas from the conception in their mother's wombs to the attainment of their respective bodhi or Enlightenment. The earlier and contemporary Indian literature do suggest that the concept of Bodhisattva, along with that of Buddha and cakkavattī / cakravartin (global-ruler, 轉論王) was in vogue in India even before the appearance of Gotama Buddha on the scene. When Siddhattha / Sidhārtha (士達多), who later became Gotama Buddha, took conception in Māyā's womb, a seer is reported to have predicted that Suddhodana's son would be either a global ruler (*Cakkavattī*) or a Buddha.¹⁰⁸ Once while answering a question put up by a Brāhman, the Buddha himself is reported to have admitted that he was neither a god nor a yakkha (a category of divine being), but a Buddha meaning thereby one in a succession of Buddhas. The fact of the succession of the Buddhas is testified by the following gāthā or verse of the Dhammapada:

“Not to do any evil, to cultivate good, to purify one's mind

This is the teaching of the Buddhas.”

(Sabba-pāpassa akaraṇaṃ kusalasse upasampadā,

Sa-citta-pariyodapanam etaṃ Buddhāna Sāsanaṃ).¹⁰⁹

Which states that the teaching it contains is not that of a single Buddha, but of all the Buddhas. A reference to the Āmagandha Sūta¹¹⁰ may be made in this context which is

¹⁰⁸ EB, III, 228.

¹⁰⁹ Dha, Verse No. 183, p. 97-8.

¹¹⁰ DPPN, II, 578.

recorded as a discourse of Kassapa Buddha and not of Gotama Buddha.

By applying the doctrine of karma and of regeneration (or rebirth), which had general acceptance in pre-Buddhist India and its neighbouring countries, the use of the term was further extended to refer to the past lives not only of Gotama Buddha, but also of those rare beings who aspire for Perfect Enlightenment.¹¹¹

The earliest Theravāda tradition, as contained, for instance, in the Mahāpadāna Suttanta belongs to the Dialogues of the Buddha gives the details of six Buddhas who appeared prior to Gotama Buddha. The relevant passage may be reproduced below:

“Ninety-one Kalpas from now, there appeared in the Loka Vipassī Blessed One, Arahanta and Fully-Enlightened One. Thirty-one Kalpas from now, there appeared in the Loka Sikhī Blessed One, Arahanta and Fully-Enlightened One. In that very thirty-first Kalpa, there appeared in the Loka Vessabhū Blessed One, Arahanta and Fully-Enlightened One. In this very Bhadda-kalpa, there appeared in the Loka Kakusandho Blessed One, Arahanta and Fully-Enlightened One. In this very Bhadda-kalpa, there appeared in the Loka Konagamana Blessed One, Arahanta and Fully-Enlightened One. In this very Bhadda-kalpa, there appeared in the Loka Kassapa Blessed One, Arahanta and Fully-Enlightened One.”¹¹²

(Ito so bhikkhave eka-navuto kappo yaṃ Vipassī bhagavā arahāṃ sammā-sambuddho loke udapādi. Ito so bhikkhave eka-tiṃso kappo yaṃ Sikhī bhagavā arahāṃ sammā-sambuddho loke udapādi. Tasmiṃ yeva kho bhikkhave eka-tiṃse kappe Vessabhū bhagavā arahāṃ sammā-sambuddho loke udapādi. Imasmiṃ yeva kho bhikkhave bhadda-kappe Kakusandho bhagavā arahāṃ sammā-sambuddho loke udapādi. Imasmiṃ yeva kho bhikkhave bhadda-kappe Konāgamano bhagavā arahāṃ sammā-sambuddho loke udapādi. Imasmiṃ yeva kho bhikkhave bhadda-kappe Kassapo

¹¹¹ Loc.cit.

¹¹² DB, II, No. 14 Mahapadana Sutta, 5.

bhagavā araham̐ sammā-sambuddho loke udapādi. Imasmim̐ yeva kho bhikkhave bhadda-kappe aham̐ etarahi araham̐ sammā-sambuddho loke uppanno).¹¹³

This discourse, i.e., the Mahāpadāna Sutta is attributed to the Śākyamuni Buddha himself, who gives the time, caste, family, length of life, etc. of these predecessors of his. They were the Buddha Vipassī (毘婆施), the Buddha Sikhī (施氣), the Buddha Vessabhū (毘舍淨), the Buddha Kakusandha (拘留尊), the Buddha Koṇagamana (拘那含牟尼), and the Buddha Kassapa (迦葉). The Dīgha Nikāya refers to the last life of seven Buddhas, including the Gotama Buddha with elements bearing colours of legendary events may be reproduced below:

“How, Vipassī, brothers, when, as Bodhisattva, he ceased to belong to the hosts of the heaven of Delight, descended into his mother’s womb mindful and self-possessed. That, in such a case, is the rule.”¹¹⁴

(Atha kho bhikkhave Vipassī Bodhisatto Tusitā kāyā cavitvā sato Kampajāno mātu-kucchim̐ oldami. Ayam ettha dhammatā).¹¹⁵

In the Buddhavaṃsa, possibly a later work belonging to the Khuddaka Nikāya, the number increases to twenty-five and this number remains fixed in the Theravāda literature. The whole list may be reproduced below:

“1. Dīpaṅkara Buddhavaṃso, 2. Koṇḍañña Buddhavaṃso, 3. Maṅgala Buddhavaṃso, 4. Sumana Buddhavaṃso, 5. Revata Buddhavaṃso, 6. Sobhita Buddhavaṃso, 7. Anomadassī Buddhavaṃso, 8. Paduma Buddhavaṃso, 9. Nārada Buddhavaṃso, 10. Padumuttara Buddhavaṃso, 11. Sumedha Buddhavaṃso, 12. Sujāta Buddhavaṃso, 13. Piyadassī Buddhavaṃso, 14. Atthadassī

¹¹³ D, II, 2.

¹¹⁴ DB, II, No. 14 Mahapadana Sutta, 8 (also see DB, II, No. 17, the Mahasudassana suttanta, 192; No. 19, the MahāGovinda suttanta, 253).

¹¹⁵ D, II, 12.

Buddhavaṃso, 15. Dhammadassī Buddhavaṃso, 16. Siddhattha Buddhavaṃso, 17. Tissa Buddhavaṃso, 18. Phussa Buddhavaṃso, 19. Vipassī Buddhavaṃso, 20. Sikhī Buddhavaṃso, 21. Vessabhū Buddhavaṃso, 22. Kakusandha Buddhavaṃso, 23. Koṇāgamana Buddhavaṃso, 24. Kassapa Buddhavaṃso, 25. Gotama Buddhavaṃso.”¹¹⁶

It may be noted here that the enumerations given above is by no means exhaustive. The proof of this fact lies in the Mahāpadāna Suttanta itself, the Buddha starts the story of the six Buddhas merely by saying that ninety-one kappas ago, there appeared such and such a Buddha implying thereby that such Buddhas were not limited in number. There might have appeared some Buddhas prior to ninety-one kappas and later than ninety-one kappas. In fact, it was this concept that was fully developed and enriched in later Mahāyāna Buddhism. From this it follows that if the number of the Buddhas can be innumerable, the number of Bodhisattvas could also be innumerable. It is indeed, based upon a logical corollary itself as it is the Bodhisattvas alone who in due course of kalpas/kappas (劫 耙)¹¹⁷ turn into Buddhas.

¹¹⁶ The Buddhavaṃsā, ed. R. Morris, vol 38, London: PTS, 1882, pp. 240-1.

¹¹⁷ Kalpa (劫 耙): the period of time between the creation and recreation of a world or universe; also the kalpas of formation, existence, destruction, and non-existence, which four as a complete period are called mahākālpa (大劫). Each great kalpa is subdivided into four asaṅkhyeya (阿增祇劫) i.e. numberless, incalculable):

1. Kalpa of destruction (壞劫) saṃvarta.
2. Kalpa of utter annihilation or empty kalpa (增減劫, 空劫) saṃvartasiddha.
3. Kalpa of formation (成劫) vivar.
4. Kalpa of existence (住劫) vivartasiddha.

Or they may be taken in the order (成住壞空). Each of the four kalpas is subdivided into twenty antarakalpas or small kalpas (小劫), so that a mahākālpa consists of eighty small kalpas. Each small kalpa is divided

In order to understand who a Bodhisattva is, it would be worthwhile to explain more who a Buddha is. The Buddha-concept in Theravāda Buddhism is not a personality cult; nor is the Buddha an object of glorified devotion. He is neither a theoretical metaphysician nor a hard-headed materialist. He is not that sort of religious teacher who demands unquestioned loyalty like a Messiah. He is a man who has perfected himself by realising his 'self' to the highest degree as is possible for a human being. The fact is that the Buddha's teachings are man-centred in the sense that only a man can become a Buddha and none else. There may be other supernatural beings inhabiting perhaps other lokas or realms. But they are not capable of becoming a fully-Enlightened One. Even though there may be such beings who lead happier lives in their non-human spheres, still they are subject to the laws of change and evolution (*aniccā/vaya-dhammā*), and as such not free from birth and death and their attendant conflicts and hence they are not released from dukkha or sufferings. A Buddha is a human being who has realised that there is a happier state than the state obtained in this world of

into a period of increase (增) and decrease (減); the increase period is ruled over by the four cakravartī in succession i.e. the four ages of iron, copper, silver, gold, during which the length of human life increases by one year every century to 84,000 years, and the length of the human body to 8,400 feet. Then comes the kalpa of decrease divided into periods of the three woes, pestilence, war, famine, during which the length of human life is gradually reduced to ten years and the human body to 1 foot in height. There are other distinctions of the kalpas. One small *kalpa* amounts as 16,800,000 years, a *kapal* as 336,000,000 years and a *mahākalpa* as 1,334,000,000 years. There are many ways of illustrating the length of a kalpa, e.g. pass a soft cloth over a solid rock 40 li in size once in a hundred years, when finally the rock has been thus worn away a kalpa will not yet have passed; or a city of 40 li, filled with mustard seeds, one being removed every century till all have gone, a kalpa will not yet have passed; quoted in DBCT, 232.

conditioned phenomena. After a persevering struggle, he realises this unconditioned state (*asaṅkhata*) which is free from duality. This freedom from duality implies the absence of any conflict (*dukkha*).

The psychological state under reference is, therefore, described as free from both sorrow and happiness in the ordinary sense. It is the highest happiness (*paramam-sukham*) in the transcendental sense. As such it is not subject to change and is, therefore, imperishable (*akālika* and *amata*). It is a state of changelessness (*avyaya*) and, therefore, permanent (*dhuva*). It is this very state which has been described as the Nibbāna/Nirvāṇa. The Buddha is the person who realised this state for the first time in the whole history of human race, by his own efforts and hence he was designated the Teacher (*Satthā/Śāstā*) and continues to be so for all those who have unquestioned faith on Him (the *Buddha*, 佛 陀), Law (the *Dhamma/Dharma* 法) and the Fraternity (the *Saṅgha*, 僧). Arahantas are His disciples who follow his teachings. Bodhisattvas are, on the other hand, those who aspire to become the Buddhas (the Fully-Enlightened Ones).

The life of the Buddha, strictly speaking, commenced only from the time of His Enlightenment and His life before that event was that of the Bodhisatta (called *Siddhattha*). The Buddha himself used the term in this sense and it is more than probable that Gotama Buddha occasionally referred to his previous existences in His discourses to the people in order to elucidate a particular doctrinal point.

The Various Previous Lives of Gotama Buddha

Fourthly, Bodhisatta means the various previous lives of Gotama Buddha. Jātaka is a part of Khuddaka Nikāya (Minor Work) in Pañca-Nikāya and is the later inscribed Nikāyas as

T.W. Rhys Davids¹¹⁸ has introduced the chronological table of the Pāli literature as follows:

1. The simple statements of Buddhist doctrine now found, in identical words, in paragraphs or verses recurring in all books.
2. Episodes found, in identical words, in two or more of the existing books.
3. The Sīla.
4. The Dīgha, Majjhima, Anguttara, and Samyutta Nikāyas.
5. The Jātaka and the Dhammapada.

This classification seems to have been accepted and used by a number of scholars including Maurice Wintemitz, the author of the work *History of Indian Literature*, H. Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, and others.

Jātaka is a separate compilation of the Nikāya and forms a part of the Khuddaka Nikāya, yet one can find a number of Jātaka - like pieces in the other Nikāyas as well. One such Jātaka can be cited in the Mahāgovinda Sutta of the Dialogues of the Buddha whose relevant passage is reproduced below:

“Once upon a time there was a king named Disampati. And king Disampati’s minister was a brahmin named Govinda (the Steward). And king Disampati had a son named Renu and Govinda had a son named Jotipala. And prince Renu and the young Jotipala and six other young nobles – these eight – were great friends...”¹¹⁹

(Bhūta-pubbaṃ bho rājā Disampatī nāma ahoṣi. Disaropatissa rañño Govindo nāma brāhmaṇo purohito ahoṣi. Disampatissa rañño Reṇu nāma kumāro putto ahoṣi. Govindassa brāhinaṇassa Jotipālo nāma

¹¹⁸ T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, Motilal, rpt.1993, p.188.

¹¹⁹ DB, II, 266 ff.

māṇavo putto ahoṣi. Iti Reṇu ca rājabutto Jotipālo ca māṇavo aññe ca chaldhiattiyā ice ete aṭṭha sahāya ahesuṃ).¹²⁰

The passage cited above clearly bears out the fact under reference. Similarly a passage can be cited from the Makhādeva Sutta which belongs to The Middle Length sayings—

“Upon a time, Ānanda, in this very Mithilā there was a king named Makhādeva, a dhamma-man, a king under dhamma, firm in dhamma, a great king who fared by dhamma among brahmans and householders, townfolk and countryfolk, and who observed the Observance on the fourteenth, fifteenth and eighth days of the half-month.”¹²¹

(Bhūtapubbaṃ, Ānanda, imissā yeva Mithilāyaṃ rājā ahoṣi Makhādevo nāma dhammiko dhammarājā dhamme ṭhito Mahārājā dhammiko carati brāhmaṇagahapatikesu negamesu c’ eva jānapadesu ca, uposathaṅ ca upavasati cātuddasiṃ pañcaddasiṃ aṭṭhamiṅ en pakkhassa).¹²²

The more important change in the doctrinal meaning of Bodhisatta is that which is more clearly visible in the later inscribed Nikayās, especially the Jātaka. Its significance lies in the vivid description of the various previous lives of Gotama Buddha which, in the opinion of Bhikṣu Thich Minh Chau,¹²³ may be summarized under four categories of the previous story, that is,

1. Paccuppanna-Vatthu (the present story of Lord Buddha relating to His past karma);
2. Atitavatthu (the past story connecting with the present

¹²⁰ D, II, 230.

¹²¹ MLS, II, No. 83 Makhādeva Sutta, 268.

¹²² M, II, 74-5.

¹²³ Ty kheo Thich Minh Chau (tr.), Chuyen Tien Than Duc Phat (Jātaka), Vien Nghien Cuu Phat Hoc Viet Nam, 1991, p. 5-6.

characters;

3. Veyyākaraṇa (explanation of some verses or terms attached to the past story); and
4. Samodhana (combining two stories of past and present, then pointing out previous characters and showing relationships of the characters between past and present stories).

Bodhisatta concept in Jātaka was so abundant and diverse in various forms such as deva, ascetic, brahmā, king, prince, millionaire, landlord, merchant, farmer...or there was time Bodhisatta was born as a fish, bird, bull, deer...However, because Bodhisatta played the role of previous lives of the Buddha, then Bodhisattva's character was moral, virtuous, compassionate, intelligent and wise. Some typical stories in Jātakas usually start as below:

“Once on a time in the kingdom of Seri, five aeons ago, the Bodhisatta dealt in pots and pans, and was called ‘the Serivan’. In the company of another dealer in the same wares, a greedy fellow who was also known as ‘the Serivan’, he came across the river Telavāha and entered the city of Andhapura. Apportioning the streets between the two of them, he set about hawking his wares round the streets of his district, and the other did the same in his district...”

(Atīte ito pañcame kappe Bodhisatto Serivaraṭṭhe Serivo nāma kacchapuṭavāṇiḷo ahoṣi. So Serivā nāma ekena lolakacchapuṭavāṇijena saddhiṃ Telavāhaṃ nāma nadiṃ uttaritvā Andhapuraṃ nāma nagaraṃ pavisanto nagaravīthiyo bhājetvā attano pattavīthiyā bhaṇḍaṃ vikkiṇanto caṇ. Itaro attano pattaṃ vīthiṃ gaṇhi).

“Once on a time, when Brahmadata was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born a deer. At his birth he was golden of hue; his eyes were like round jewels; the sheen of his horns was as of silver;

his mouth was red as a bunch of scarlet cloth; his four hoofs were as though lacquered; his tail was like the yak's, and he was as big as a young foal. Attended by five hundred deer, he dwelt in the forest under the name of king Banyan Deer. And hard by him dwelt another deer also with an attendant herd of five hundred deer, who was named Branch Deer, and was as golden of hue as the Bodhisatta..."

(*Atīte Bārānasiyaṃ Brahmadaṭṭe rājjaṃ kārayamāne Bodhisatto migayoniyaṃ paṭisandhiṃ gaṇhi. So mātu kucchito nikkhanto suvaṇṇavaṇṇo ahoṣi, akkhīni c' assa maṇi-guḷasadiṣāni ahesuṃ, siṅgāni rajatavaṇṇaṇi, mukhaṃ ratta-kambalapuṅjavaṇṇaṃ, haṭṭhapādapariyaṅtā lākhā parikammakatā viya, vāladhī camarassa viya ahoṣi, sarīraṃ paṇ' assa mahantaṃ assapotakappamaṇaṃ ahoṣi. So pañcasatamigaparivāro araṇṇe vāsaṃ kappesi nāmena Nigrodhamigarājā nāma. Avidūre paṇ' assa aṅṅo pi pañcasatamigaparivāro Sākhamaṅgo nāma vasatī, so pi suvaṇṇavaṇṇo va ahoṣi).*)

"Once on a time when Brahmadaṭṭa was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into a wealthy family in the kingdom of Kāsi. Having come to years of discretion, he saw how from passion springs pain and how true bliss comes by the abandonment of passion. So he put lusts from him, and going forth to the Himalaya became a hermit, winning by fulfillment of the ordained mystic meditation the five orders of the Higher Knowledge and the eight Attainments. And as he lived his life in the rapture of Insight, he came in after times to have a large following of five hundred hermits, whose teacher he was..."¹²⁴

(*Atīte Bārānasiyaṃ Brahmadaṭṭe rājjaṃ kārente Bodhisatto Kesiraṭṭho mahābhugakulo nibbatta viññūtaṃ patvā kāmesu ādīnavaṃ nekkhama cānisaṃsaṃ disvā kāme pahāya Himavantaṃ pavasiṭvā, isipabbajjaṃ pabbajitvā kasiṇa-parikammaṃ katvā pañca abbiṅga aṭṭha samāpattiyo uppādetvā*

¹²⁴ SBFB, I, Story No. 3, p. 12; No. 12, p. 39; No. 43, p. 114 respectively.

jhānasukhena vītināmento aparabhāge mahāparivāro pañcahi
tāpasasatehi parivuto gaṇassa satthā hutvā vihāsi).¹²⁵

Here is an important thing which we must note that it seems to have been neither a Jātaka collection as such, nor the developed concept of the Bodhisatta practising pāramitās, until a much later period. Hence, it would appear that the concept of the Bodhisatta could be divided into two parts, the original concept and the concept developed by the later Buddhists.

It means that the earliest use of the term Bodhisatta in literature with the first meaning which seems to refer to from the time of the Buddha's renunciation upto the time of his Enlightenment. This seems to be the main concept of Bodhisattva through Pāli Nikāya, then the developed concept with the second, third, and fourth meanings such as the period from Gotama Siddattha's Conception to Gotama Buddha's Enlightenment, from the Conception in their Mother's Wombs to the Attainment of their respective Bodhi or Enlightenment as well as the Various Previous Lives of Gotama Buddha as depicted in the Pāli Suttas inclusive of the fashion of the later Jātaka stories recounted therein.



¹²⁵ J, I, pp. 111, 149, 245 respectively.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BODHISATTA PRACTICE AS DEPICTED IN PĀLI SOURCES

Awakening the Nature of Life

On the full moon day of *Vesākha* (May) in the year 623 B.C.,¹²⁶ there was born in the *Lumbini* park, on the Indian borders of present Nepal, a noble prince *Siddhartha Gotama* (Pāli: *Siddhattha Gotama*, 士達多) of the *Sakya* tribe and the son of King *Suddhodhana* (淨梵) and Queen *Mahāmāya* (摩耶) of the *Kapilavatthu* Kingdom. He grew up and got education under extremely amiable circumstances and environment, both psychological and material.

At first he enjoyed sensual pleasures to the full, but his attitude to such self-indulgence was quite different from that of the ordinary man. Even while enjoying pleasure, he intuitively felt that true and lasting happiness could never be found by giving in to each and every sensual attraction. That would lead to moral and intellectual ruin, resulting in becoming subject to more and more suffering. He was sure of this fact. He married the princess *Bhadda-kaccana* (*Yasodharā*, 耶瑜陀羅) and begot a son-prince *Rāhula* (羅侯羅) and still he felt that that was not the ultimate fulfillment of human life. His inner urge could not stop at anything short of full and complete self-realization, not only for his own

¹²⁶ Unlike the Christian Era, the Buddha Era is reckoned from the death of the Buddha which occurred in 543 B.C. (in his 80th year) and not from his birth.

private release, but also for the good of humanity as a whole. This made him think:

"What is laughter, what is joy when the world is ever burning? Shrouded by darkness, would you not seek a light?"

(Ko nu hāso kimānando? niccaṃ pajjālite sati

Andhakāraṇa onaddhā, paḍīpaṃ kiṃna gavessatha?)¹²⁷

One glorious day as *Siddhattha* made four fateful trips to outside world, to the pleasure park to see the world outside. On the first trip he met an old man; on the second, a sick man; on the third, a corpse being carried away to be cremated on the burning *ghat*; and on the fourth, a wandering holy monk. He did receive a vital shock on the above trips when he came in direct contact with the stark realities of life. Within the narrow confines of the palace he saw only the rosy side of life, but the dark side, the common lot of mankind, was purposely veiled from him. The first three sights convincingly proved to him the inexorable nature of life and the universal ailment of humanity. The prince *Siddattha* realized the worthlessness of sensual pleasures, so highly prized by worldliness that *all things in the universe are transitory, painful and of changing nature. How could something pure, subtle and eternal associate itself with something as impure, gross and impermanent like me body?... Why every one and I are subjected to birth, decay, disease, death and impurities? Thus, there is a need for search after things of like nature? How can I, who is subjected to things of such nature, realize their disadvantages and seek after the unattained, unsurpassed, perfect security which is Nibbāna?* And it might have a way that was the fourth of a dignified hermit who signified the

¹²⁷ Dha, verse 146, pp. 77-8.

means to overcome the ills of life and to attain calm, peace and unconditioned, permanent state...

These awakening thoughts flashed across his mind and increased the urge in him to loathe and renounce the world, so that in the end at the midnight, he decided to leave the palace in search of truth and eternal peace when he was twenty-ninth years old.

He journeyed far and crossing the river *Anomā*, rested on its banks. Here he shaved his hair and beard and handing over his garments and ornaments to *Channa* (沙 匿) with instruction to return to the palace, assumed the simple tawny garb of an ascetic and led a life of voluntary poverty, became a penniless wandering *Bodhisatta*.

Seeking for the Truth

Thus as a wanderer, a seeker after what is good, searching for the unsurpassed peace, *Bodhisatta* wandered from one place to another, met a number of contemporary famous religious leaders, practiced their doctrines, and attained whatever goal they aimed at. During his historical spiritual journey, the three notable periods may be mentioned here:

The first time was that *Bodhisatta* Gotama approached *Ālāra Kālāma* (尉 陀 迦 羅 羅),¹²⁸ one of the most distinguished religious masters at that time. After a short time having accepted him as a master and trained under his guidance, the young ascetic was not satisfied with a discipline and a doctrine which led only to the realm of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*, 無 所 有 處 定) and a high degree of concentration, but did not lead to ‘disgust,

¹²⁸ MLS, Vol. I, London: PTS, 1954, p. 288.

detachment, cessation of suffering, tranquility, intuition, enlightenment, and Nibbāna'. *Bodhisatta* felt as if a blind man leads another blind man or men and hence he politely took leave from Master *Ālāra Kālāma*. During the second period, the intelligent ascetic *Gotama* approached *Uddaka Rāmaputta* (尉陀迦羅摩)¹²⁹ whose reputation and prestige were better and higher than that of *Ālāra Kālāma*, and who was the second spiritual master among the wanderers. Then so on, he grasped this doctrine of *Uddaka Rāmaputta* and attained the final stage of concentration, the realm of neither perception nor non-perception (*n'eva saññā n'āsaññāyatana*, 非想非非想處) (the fourth *arupa jhāna*), but still his ultimate goal was far ahead and this method did not response to the question of dealing with sufferings in life. Dissatisfied with this too, he departed thence, contented therewith no longer he also realized that the highest truth is to be found within oneself and thus he ceased to seek external aid.

During the third period, the ascetic *Gotama* went into the jungle near *Uruvelā* and practised the forms of asceticism with five sages: *Anna Kondanna* (Skt: *Ajnata Kaundinya*, 阿惹橋陳如), *Assaji* (Skt *Asvajit*, 馬勝 / 圮埜), *Bhaddiya* (Skt *Bhadhrika*, 帳提 / 婆提), *Dasabala Kassapa* (Skt. *Dasabala Kasyapa*, 十力迦葉) and *Mahānāma-kuliya*, 摩訶南拘厘). He spent six years in hard penances in forests, slept on beds of thorns, burnt in the heat of midday sun, and suffered cold at night, ate one bean per day... until the day he starved himself into a state of extreme emasculation. He earnestly and seriously trained himself in this way until he remained a body of skeleton. One day, nevertheless, he realized that his fasts and penances had been useless, and failed to bring him to any further knowledge and vision for an absolute emancipation as

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 210.

it has been described in the *Middle Length of Sayings* as cited below:

“It occurred to me, Aggivessana: suppose now that I were to take food little by little, drop by drop, such as bean-soup or vetch-soup or chick-pea-soup or pea-soup? So, I, Aggivessana, took food little by little, drop by drop, such as bean-soup or vetch-soup or chick-pea-soup. While I, Aggivessana, was taking food little by little, drop by drop, such as bean-soup or vetch-soup or chick-pea-soup or pea-soup, my body became exceedingly emaciated. Because I ate so little, all my limbs became like the joints of withered creepers; because I ate so little, my buttocks became like a bullock’s hoof; because I ate so little, my protruding backbone became like a string of balls; because I ate so little, my gaunt ribs became like the crazy rafters of a tumble-down shed; because I ate so little, the pupils of my eyes appeared lying low and deep; because I ate so little, my scalp became shriveled and shrunk by hot wind. If I thought, Aggivessana: ‘I will touch the skin of my belly’, it was my backbone that I took hold of. If I thought: ‘I will touch my backbone’. It was the skin of my belly that I took hold of. For because I ate so little, the skin of my belly, Aggivessana, came to be cleaving to my backbone. If I thought, Aggivessana: ‘I will obey the calls of nature’. I fell down on my face then and there, because I ate so little. If I, Aggivessana, soothing my body, stroked my limbs with my hand, the hairs, rotted at the roots, fell away from my body as I stroked my limbs with my hand, because I ate so little...”¹³⁰

(Tassa mayhaṃ Aggivessana etad - ahoṣi: Yan - nūnāhaṃ thokaṃ thokaṃ āhāraṃ āhāreyyiṃ pasataṃ pasataṃ, yadi vā muggayūsaṃ yadi vā kulatthayūsaṃ yadi vā kaḷayayūsaṃ yadi vā hareṇukayūsaṃ - ti. So kho ahaṃ Aggivessana thokaṃ thokaṃ āhāraṃ āhāresimṃ pasataṃ pasataṃ, yadi vā muggayūsaṃ yadi vā kulatthayūsaṃ yadi vā kalayayūsaṃ yadi vā hareṇukayūsaṃ, Tassa mayhaṃ Aggivessana thokaṃ thokaṃ āhāraṃ āhārayato pasataṃ pasataṃ, yadi vā muggayūsaṃ yadi vā kulattayūsaṃ yadi vā kalayayūsaṃ yadi vā hareṇukayūsaṃ, adhimattakasimānaṃ patto kāyo hoti. Sey-yathā pi nāma

¹³⁰ MLS, I, No. 36 the Mahāsaccakasutta, 300-301.

āsitikapabbāni vā kalapabbāni vā evaṃ-eva-ssu me aṅgapaccañḅāni

bhavanti tāy' ev' appāhāratāya, sey-yathā pi nāma oṭṭhapadaṃ evam - eva - ssu me ānisadaṃ hoti tay' ev' appāhāratāya, seyyathā pi nāma vaṭṭanāvaḷi evam eva-ssu me piṭṭhikaṅṅako unnatāvanato hoti tay' ev' appāhārutāya, seyyathā pi nāma jurasālāya gopānasiyo olugga-viluggā bhavanti evam-eva - ssu me phāsulīyo oluggaviluggā bliavanti tāy' ev' appāhāratāya, seyyathā pi nāma gambhīre udapāne udakatārakā gambhīragatā okkhāyikā dissanti evam-eva-ssu me akkhikūpesu akkhitarākā gambhīragatā okkhāyikā dissanti tāy' ev' appāhāratāya, seyyathā pi nāma titta- kalābu āmakacchinno vātātapena sampuṭito hoti sammilāto evam-eva-ssu me sisacchavi sampuṭitā hoti sammilātā tay'ev' appāhāratāya. So kho ahaṃ Aggivessana: udaracchaviṃ parimasissāmīti piṭṭhikaṅṅakaṃ yeva pariḅañhāmi, piṭṭhi-kaṅṅakaṃ parimasissāmīti udaracchaviṃ yeva pariḅañhāmi. Yāva - ssu me Aggivessana udaracchavi piṭṭhikaṅṅakaṃ allinā hoti tay' ev' appāhāratāya. So kho ahaṃ Aggivessana: vaccaṃ vā muttaṃ vā karissāmīti tathā' eva avakujjo papatāmi tāy' ev' appāhāratāya. So kho ahaṃ Aggivessana imam - eva kāyaṃ assāsento paṅṅinā gattāni anomajjāmi. Tassa mayhaṃ Aggivessana paṅṅina gattāni anomajjato pūtimūlāni lomāni kāyasmā papatanti tāy' ev' appāhāratāya. Api - ssu maṃ Aggivessana manussā disvā evam-āhaṃsu: kāḷo samaṅo Gotamo ti. Ekacce manussā evam - āhaṃsu: na kāḷo samaṅo Gotamo, sāmo samaṅo Gotamo ti. Ekacce manussā evam-āhaṃsu: na kāḷo samaṅo Gotamo na pi sāmo, maṅguracchavi samaṅo Gotamo ti. Yava-ssu me Aggivessana tāva parisuddho chavivaṅṅo pariyodāto upahato hoti tāy' ev' appāhāratāya.)¹³¹

Then the following thought occurred to ascetic *Gotama*:

“This, Aggivessana, occurred to me: Some recluses or brahmins in the past have experienced feelings that were acute, painful, sharp and severe, but this is paramount, nor is there worse than this. And some recluses and brahmins are now

¹³¹ M, I, 245-246.

experiencing feelings that are acute, painful, sharp, severe, but this is paramount, nor is there worse than this. But I, by this severe austerity, do not reach stages of further-men, the excellent knowledge and vision befitting the ariyans. Could there be another way to awakening?"¹³²

(Tassa mayhaṃ Aggivessana etad-ahosi: Ye kho keci atītaṃ - addhānaṃ samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā opakkamikā dukkhā tippā kaṭukā vedanā vedayīṃsu, etāvaparamaṃ na - y - ito bhiyyo; ye pi hi keci anāgatam - addhānaṃ samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā opakkamikā dukkhā tippā kaṭukā vedanā vedayissanti, etāvaparamaṃ ra-y-ito bhiyyo; ye pi hi keci etarahi samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā opakkamikā dukkhā tippā kaṭukā vedanā vediyanti, etāvaparamaṃ na-y-ito bhiyyo. Na kho panāhaṃ imāya kaṭukāya dukkarakārikāya adhigacchāmi uttariā manussadhammā, alamariyariāṇaṇadassana- viśesaṃ, siyā nu kho añño maggo bodhāyāti.)¹³³

From this experience, he realized that he would die before he could find the answer. Therefore he should find another way and the dawn of truth was discovered step by step by him.

The Middle Way

Owing to experiences accumulated by his own knowledge and learnt from different religious masters, both in the earthly life as well as spiritual one, and by strongly patronizing his potentially intellectual power he was awakened that one should avoid the fixed or extreme position of self mortification that weakens one's intellect as he spent six yeas of austerities and the fixed or extreme position of self-indulgence that restarts one's moral progress as he spent his years in all luxuries and pleasant things of life at Kapilavathu kingdom. Both of them are useless for the spiritual progress.

¹³² Ibid. loc.cit.

¹³³ M, I, 246.

Just like a person playing guitar, if he lets the strings too straight (as austerity) or loose (as enjoying pleasure), the sound will be unsatisfactory and bad. In the contrast, the good player makes the sound excellent because he knows how to adjust the string fit and proper (as in the case of the Middle Way).

Following this, he gave up the path of austerities and began to beg for food to regain his health to make a new start of practice. His five fellow ascetics witnessed the change in him and declared, “Gotama has taken the easy course of life!” and kept themselves far away from him.

Siddhattha was then lonely in the midst of the immense ocean of sufferings of birth and death. He started thinking again and again of a Middle Way between the luxurious ways and the austerity-based one that he had practiced. He recalled an incident during a ‘ploughing Festival’ when, as a child of six or seven years, he sat under a rose-apple tree and entered meditative absorption (the first *jhāna*). He pondered over and said to himself, ‘Might that be the way to Enlightenment?’

Siddhattha went on to Uruvela and stopped at a place nowadays called Bodhi Gaya in the modern Indian state of Bihar. He determined to sit under an Assattha-tree¹³⁴ on the bank of Nairanjana river and practiced his own way of meditation until he could find the exact answer to the question of dealing with sufferings in life. The excerpt from the Discourse of Ariyapariyesana may be reproduced below:

“Then I, monks, a quested for whatever is good, searching for the incomparable, matchless path to peace, walking on tour through Magadha in due course arrived at Uruvela, the camp township. There I saw a delightful stretch of land and a lovely woodland grove, and a clear flowing river with a

¹³⁴ Since Bodhisatta Siddhattha has attained Bodhi or Enlightenment under that tree, it is described as Bodhi-tree or Bodhisattva-tree by the faithful disciples of the Buddha. It is still known by the same name.

delightful ford, and a village for support nearby. It occurred to me, monks, “Indeed it is a delightful stretch of land... Indeed this does well for striving of a young man set on striving”. So I, monks, set down just there, thinking, “Indeed, this does well for striving”.¹³⁵

(So kho aham, bhikkhave, kim kusalagavesī anuttaram santiuarapadam pariyesamāno Magadhesu anupubbena-cārikam caramāno yena Uruvelā senānigamo tadavasaram Tatt'addasam ramañīyam bhūmibhāgam pāsādikañ ca vanasandam, nadiñ-ca sandantim setakam supatittham ramañīyam samantā ca gocaragāmam. Tassa mayham, bhikkhave, etadahosi: Ramanīyo vata bhūmibhāgo pāsādiko ca vanasando, nadī ca sandati setakā supatitthā ramañyā, samantā ca gocaragāmo, alam vat'idam kulaputtassa padhānatthikassa padhānāyati. So kho aham, bhikkhave, tatt'eva nisīdim, alam-idam padhānāyati).¹³⁶

Meditation

There is a saying in the *Dhammapada* that teaches the following lesson:

“Easy to do are things that are bad and not beneficial to self;

But very, very hard to do indeed is that which is beneficial and good”.

(Sukarāṇi asādhūni attano ahitāni ca

Yaṃ ve hitaṇ ca sāḍhuṇ ca taṃ ve paramadukkaraṃ).¹³⁷

That is perfectly true. As a matter of fact, to gain the way of liberation, *Bodhisatta Gotama* uninterruptedly struggled for enlightenment for forty-nine days meditating under the *bodhi* tree. There occurred very naturally and psychologically the human instinctive desires which are humanized in the names of *Māra* such as sensual pleasure

¹³⁵ MLS, I, No. 26, Ariyapariyesana Sutta, 210-211.

¹³⁶ M, I, 166-167.

¹³⁷ Dha, Verse No. 163, pp. 85-6.

(*kāma*, 快樂), aversion of the holy life (*arati*, 不如意), thirst and hunger (*khuppipāsā*, 餓渴), craving (*tanhā*, 渴愛), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*, 睡眠), fear (*bhī*, 驚駭), doubt (*vicikiccha*, 疑問), detraction and obstinacy (*makkha-thambha*, 匪謗固執), gain (*lābha*, 成達), praise (*siloka*, 讚歎), honour (*sakkāra*, 名譽), fame (*yasa*, 有名)... and which started to rise and disturb his mind. But with his extraordinary, immovable vow (*pranidhāna*), and determined great mind, *Bodhisatta Gotama* concentrated profoundly on all ways gone through by him for the sake of finding a way leading to complete liberation.

Bodhisatta Gotama was awakened that link of *karma* and the link of becoming as referring to rebirth, both rebirth and *karma* came from mind. This is the main reply for the question of resolving the suffering of life. Therefore, if five hindrances (restlessness, torpor and sloth, sensuous, desire, ill-will and skeptical doubt), desire, envy and ignorance... are transformed, bad *kamma* by doing evil actions will be born in suffering stages must be far away, then we are liberated. This is the truth of existence of men and things which is very subtle, deep and difficult to see as it has been explained in the Discourse of *Ariyapariyesana* and has been confirmed as follows:

“This too was a matter difficult to see, that is to say, the tranquilizing of all the activities, the renunciation of all attachment, the destruction of craving, dispassion, stopping, *nibbāna*”.¹³⁸

(Alayarāmāya kho pana pajāya ālayaratāya
ālayasammuditāya duddasam idam thānam yadidam
idappaccayatā paticcasamuppādo, idam-pi kho thānam
duddasam yadidam sabbasankhārasamatho

¹³⁸ MLS, I, No. 26, Ariyapariyesana Sutta, 211-212.

sabbupadhipatinissaggo tanhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānam.)¹³⁹

To calm down desire and trouble, *Boddhisatta* began to practice meditation under the Bodh-tree on the bank of Niranjana river. After entering deep into concentration (*Samadhi*, 禪定), *Boddhisatta Gotama* cultivated insight meditation (*vipassanā*, 明察慧) and easily developed the first *jhāna* which he gained in his youth. Degrees by degrees, he attained the second, the third... the nine *jhāna* as well. Nine stages of *jhānas* are illustrated as below:

Table II

THE PROCESS OF NINE JHĀNAS IN PĀLI NIKĀYAS¹⁴⁰

	Practice of dhammas	Attainment	Existence of spiritual maturity
1	Aloof from pleasure of senses, unskilled state of mind	The First Meditation	Initial and sustained thought, rapture and joy, one pointedness of mind, impingement, feeling, perception, will, thought, desire, determination, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, attention.
2	Allaying initial and discursive thought	The second Meditation	Inward tranquility, rapture, joy, one point of mind, impingement, feeling, equanimity, attention.
3	Fading out of rapture, dwelling with equanimity	The Third Meditation	Equanimity, joy, mindfulness, clear consciousness ... attention.

¹³⁹ M, I, 167.

¹⁴⁰ MLS, III, No. 111, The Anupada Sutta, 78-80.

4	Getting rid of anguish, pleasure, sorrow...	The Fourth Meditation	Equanimity, feeling that neither painful nor pleasant impassively of mind, purification by mindfulness... determination, energy mindfulness ... attention.
5	Beyond Perception of Material Shapes...	The Plane of Infinite Either	Perception the plane of Infinite Either, one point of mind, impingement, feeling ... equanimity, attention.
6	Beyond the plane of Infinite Either	The plane of Infinite Consciousness	Perception the plane of Infinite Consciousness, one point of mind, impingement, feeling ... equanimity, attention.
7	Beyond the plane of Infinite Consciousness	The plane of Nothing	Perception in the plane of Nothing, one point of mind, impingement, feeling ... equanimity, attention.
8	Beyond the plane of Nothing	The plane of Neither-Perception-nor-Perception-nor-Perception	The plane of Neither-Perception-nor-Perception-nor-Perception, mindfulness, he emerged from the attainment, he regards those things that are past, stopped and changed.
9	Beyond the plane of Neither-Perception-nor - Perception-nor-Perception	Stopping of Perception and Feeling	With intuitive wisdom, all cankers are utterly destroyed... comprehending 'there is no further escape'.

And the Discourse of Anupada stated the degrees of spiritual maturity from one level to another or the process of salvation (transcending) the world in full of formation as follows:

“This monks, is due to Sāriputta’s uninterrupted insight into things: as to this, monks, Sāriputta, aloof from lures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, may enter on and abide in the first meditation which is accompanied by initial thought and discursive thought, is born of aloofness, and is rapturous and joyful. And those things which belong to the first meditation: initial thought and sustained thought and rapture and joy and one-pointedness of mind, impingement, feeling, perception, will, thought, desire, determination, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, attention are uninterrupted set up by him; know to him these things arise, know him persist, know they disappear. He comprehends thus: “Thus indeed things that have not been in me come to be; have been they pass away”. He, not feeling attracted by these things, not feeling repelled, independent, not infatuated, freed, released, dwells with a mind that is unconfined. He comprehends ‘There is a further escape’. There is zealous practice for him concerning that.

(Tatr’ idam, bhikkhave, Sāriputtassa anupadadhammavipassanāya hod. Idha, bhikkhave, Sāriputto vivice’ eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhanunehi savitakkam savicāram vivekajam pītisukham pathamajjhānam upasampajja viharati. Ye ca paṭhamajjhāne dhamma vitakko ca vicāro ca pīti ca sukhañ ca citte-kaggatā ca phasso vedanā sañña cetaṇā cittam chando adhimokkho viriyam sati upekhā manasikāro, tyāssa dhammā anupadavavatthitā honti, tyāssa dhamma viditā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbattham gacchanti. So evam pajānāti: Evarā kira me dhammā, ahutvā sambhonti, hutvā pativedentīti. So tesu dhammesu anupāyo anapāyo amssito apaṭibaddho vippamutto visamyutto vimariyādikatena cetasā viharati; So: Atthi uttarim nissaraṇan ti pajānāti. Tabhahulikārā atthi t’ ev’ assa hoti.)

And again, monks, Sāriputta, by allaying initial and discursive thought, with his mind subjectively tranquilized and fixed on one point, enters on and abides in the second meditation which is devoid of initial thought and discursive thought, is born of concentration, and is rapturous and joyful. And those things which belong to the second meditation: inward tranquillity and rapture and joy and one-pointedness of mind, impingement, feeling... equanimity, attention, are uninterrupted set up by him, know to him these things... disappeared. He

comprehends... 'There is a further escape'. There is zealous practice for him concerning that.

(Puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, Sāriputto vitakkavicārānaṃ vūpasamā ajjhataṃ sampasādanaṃ cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samadhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ dutiyajjhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Ye ca dutiyajjhāne dhammā ajjhata-sampasādo ca pīti ca sukhaṃ ca citte-kaggatā ca phasso vedanā sañña cetanā cittaṃ chando adbhimokkho viriyaṃ sati upekhā manasikāro, tyāssa dhammā anupāṭṭavavatthitā honti, tyāssa dhammā viditā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbattham gacchanti. So evaṃ pajānāti: Evaṃ kira 'me dhammā ahutvā sambhonti, hutvā pativedentīti. So tesu dhammesu anupāyo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho Vipparamutto visarīyutto vimariyādikatena cetasā viharati. So: Atthi uttarim nissaraṇaṃ ti pajānāti. Tabbahulikārā atthi t' ev' assa hoti.)

And again, monks, Sāriputta, by the fading out of rapture, dwells with equanimity, is mindful and clearly conscious, and he experiences in his person that joy of which the ariyans say: 'Joyful lives he who has equanimity and is mindful' and he enters on and abides in the third meditation. And those things which belong to the third meditation: equanimity and joy and mindfulness and clear consciousness... equanimity, attention, are uninterrupted set up by him, know to him these things... disappear. He comprehends... 'There is a further escape'. There is zealous practice for him concerning that.

(Puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, Sāriputto pītiyā ca virāgā upekhako ca viharati sato ca sampajāno sukhaṃ ca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti, yaṃ taṃ ariyā ācikkhanti: Upekhako satimā sukhavihārī ti, tatiyajjhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Ye ca tatiyajjhāne dhammā upekhā ca sukhaṃ ca sati ca sam-pajānaṃ ca citte-kaggatā ca phasso vedanā sañña cetanā cittaṃ chando adbhimokkho viriyaṃ upekhā manasikāro, tyāssa dhammā anupadavavatthitā honti, tyāssa dhammā viditā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbattham gacchanti. So evaṃ pajānāti: Evaṃ kira 'me dhammā ahutvā sambhonti hutvā pativedentīti. So tesu dhammesu anupāyo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho vipparamutto visarīyutto vimariyādikatena cetasā viharati. So: Atthi uttarim nissaraṇaṃ ti pajānāti. Tabbahulikārā atthi t' ev' assa hoti.)

And again, monks, Sāriputta, by getting rid of joy, by getting rid of anguish, by the going down of his former pleasures and sorrows, enters on and abides in the fourth meditation which has neither anguish nor joy, and which is entirely purified by equanimity and mindfulness. And those things which belong to the fourth meditation: equanimity, feeling that neither painful nor pleasant ... impassivity of mind, purification by mindfulness, one-pointedness of mind, and impingement, feeling, perception, will, thought, desire, determination, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, attention, are uninterruptedly, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, attention, are uninterruptedly set up by him; know to him these things arise, know they persist, know they disappear. He comprehends ... 'There is a further escape'. There is zealous practice for him concerning that.

(Puna ca param, bhikkhave, Sāriputto sukhasa ca pahānā dukkhasa ca pahānā pubbe va somanassadomanassānaṃ atthagamā adukkhamasukhaṃ upekkhāsati pārisuddhaṃ catutthājjhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Ye ca catutthājjhāne dhammā upekkhā adukkhamasukhā vedanā passi vedanā cetaso anābhogo sati pārisuddhi citte-kaggatā ca phasso vedanā sañña cetanā cittaṃ chando adhimokkho viriyaṃ sati upekkhā manasikāro, tyassa dhammā anupadavavattitā honti, tyassa dhammā viditā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbatthaṃ gacchanti. So evaṃ pajānāti: Evaṃ kira 'me dhammā ahutvā sambhonti hutvā pativedentīti. So tesu dhammesu anupāyo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho vippamutto visamīyutto vimariyādikatena cetasā viharati. So: Atthi uttariṃ nissaraṇaṃ ti pajānāti. Tabbahulikārā atthi t' ev' assa hoti.)

And again, monks, Sāriputta, by passing quite beyond perceptions of material shapes, by going down of perceptions of sensory reactions, by no attending to perceptions of variety, thinking: 'Ether is unending', enters on and abides in the plane of infinite ether. And those things which belong to the plane of infinite ether. And those things which belong to the plane of infinite ether: perception in the plane of infinite ether and one-pointedness of mind and impingement, feeling... equanimity, attention, are uninterruptedly set up by him; know to him these things... disappear. He comprehends... 'There is a further escape'. There is zealous practice for him concerning that.

(Puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, Sāriputto sabbaso rūpa-saññānaṃ samatikkamā, paṭighasaññānaṃ tthagamā nānattasaññānaṃ amanasikārā: Ananto ākāso ti ākāsañācāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati. Ye ca ākāsañācāyatane 'dhammā ākāsañācāyatanañā ca citte-kaggatā ca phasso ca vedanā sañña cetanā cittaṃ chando adhi-mokkho viriyaṃ sati upekhā manasikāro, tyāssa dhammā anupadavavattitā honti, tyāssa dhammā viditā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbatthaṃ gacchanti. So evaṃ pajānāti: Evaṃ kira 'me dhammā ahutvā sambhonti, hutvā pativedentīti. So tesu dhammesu anupāyo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho vippamutto visamyutto vimariyādikatena cetasā viharati. So: Atthi uttariṃ nissaraṇaṃ ti pajānāti. Tabbahulikārā atthi t' ev' assa hoti.)

And again, monks, Sāriputa, by passing quite beyond the plane of infinite ether, thinking 'Consciousness is unending' enters on and abides in the planes of infinite consciousness. And those things which belong to the plane of infinite consciousness: perception in the plane of infinite consciousness and one-pointedness of mind and impingement, feeling... equanimity, attention, are uninterruptedly set up by him; know to him these things... disappear. He comprehends ... 'There is a further escape'. There is zealous practice for him concerning that.

(Puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, Sāriputto sabbaso ākāsañācāyatanaṃ samatikkamā: Anantaṃ viññāṇaṃ ti viññāṇañācāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati. Ye ca viññāṇañācāyatane dhammā viññāṇañācāyatanañā ca citte-kaggatā phasso vedanā sañña cetanā cittaṃ chando adhimokkho viriyaṃ sati upekhā manasikāro, tyāssa dhammā anupadavavattitā honti, tyāssa dhammā viditā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbatthaṃ gacchanti. So evaṃ pajānāti: Evaṃ kira 'me dhammā ahutvā sambhonti hutvā pativedentīti. So tesu dhammesu anupāyo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho vippamutto visamyutto vimariyādikatena cetasā viharati. So: Atthi uttariṃ nissaraṇaṃ ti pajānāti. Tabbahulikārā atthi t' ev' assa hoti.)

And again, monks, Sāriputta, by passing quite beyond the plane of infinite consciousness, thinking: 'There is not anything' enters on and abides in the plane of nothing. And those things

which belong to the plane of no-thing: perception in the plane of nothing and one-pointedness of mind and impingement, feeling... equanimity, attention, are uninterruptedly set up by him; know to him these things... disappear. He comprehends... 'There is a further escape'. There is a zealous practice for him concerning that.

(Puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, Sāriputto sabbaso viññāṇañcāyatanāṃ samatikkamā: Na 'tthi kiñcīti ākiñcāññāyatanāṃ upasampajja viharati. Ye ca ākiñcāññāyatane dhammā ākiñcāññāyatanasañña ca citte-kaggaṭā ca phasso vedanā Sañña cetanā cittaṃ chando adhimokkho viriyaṃ sati upekhā manasikāro, tyāssa dhammā anupadavavatthitā honti, tyāssa dhammā viditā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbatthaṃ gacchanti. So evaṃ pajānāti: 'Evaṃ kira 'me dhammā ahutvā sambhonti hutvā pativedentīti. So tesu dhammesu anupāyo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho vippamutto visaṃyutto vimariyādikatena cetasā viharati. So: Atthi uttariṃ nissaraṇaṃ ti pajānāti. Tabbahulikārā atthi t' ev' assa hoti.)

And again, monks, Sāriputta, by passing quite beyond the plane of no-thing, enters on and abides in the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. Mindful, he emerged from that attainment. When he has emerged, mindful, from that attainment he regards those things that are past, stopped, changed as: "Thus indeed things that have not been in me come to be; have been they pass away". He, not feeling attracted by these things, not feeling repelled, independent, not infatuated, freed, released, dwells with a mind that is unconfined. He comprehends 'There is a further escape'. There is zealous practice for him concerning that.

(Puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, Sāriputto sabbaso ākiñcāññāyatanāṃ samatikkamā nevasaññānāyatanā upasampajja viharati. So tāya samāpattiyā sato vuṭṭhahati. So tāya samāpattiyā sato vuṭṭhahitva ye dhammā atīta mruddhā vipariṇatā te dhamme samanupassati; Evaṃ kira 'me dhammā ahutvā sambhonti hutvā pativedentīti. So tesu dhammesu anupāyo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho vippamutto visaṃyutto vimnriyādikateha cetasā viharati. So: Atthi uttariṃ nissaraṇaṃ ti pajānāti. Tabbahulikārā atthi t' ev' assa hoti.)

And again, monks, Sāriputta, by passing quite beyond the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, enters on and abides in the stopping of perception and feeling. And having seen by means of intuitive wisdom, his cankers are utterly destroyed. Mindful, he emerges from that attainment. When he has emerged, mindful, from that attainment, he regards those things that are past, stopped, changed as: ‘Thus indeed things that have not been in me come to be; having been they pass away’. He, not feeling attracted by these things, not feeling repelled, independent, not infatuated, freed, released, dwells with a mind that is unconfined. He comprehends: ‘There is no further escape’. There is no zealous practice for him concerning that.¹⁴¹

(Puna ca param, bhikkhave, Sāriputto sabbaso nvasaññānasaññāyatanaṃ sapatikkamā saññavedayitanirodhaṃ upasampajja viharati. Paññaya c’ assa disvā asava parikkhīṇā honti. So tāya samāpattiyā sato vuṭṭhahati. So tāya samāpattiyā sato vuṭṭhahitvā ye te dhammā atīta niruddha vipariṇatā te dhamme samanupassad: Evaṃ kira ‘me dhammā ahutvā sambhonti hutvā pativedentīti. So tesu dhammesu anupāyo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho vippamutto viṣaṃyutto vimariyādikatena cetasā viharati. So: Na ‘tthi uttarim nissaraṇan ti pajānāti. Tabbahulikārā na ‘tthi t’ ev’ assa hoti.)¹⁴²

These are the nine states of *jhānas* which *Bodhisatta* practised to transform all defilements into joy, equanimity, happiness... This is the way of seeing, developing and cultivating mind. Without it, a person cannot understand what really is, and cannot resolve his psychological problems for peace and happiness in the here and now as well as for ending the sufferings of life and become the Buddha – The Enlightened One. That is the reason, the Buddha praised the merits of nine stages of *Jhānas* as under:

“And so long, Ānanda, as I attained not to, emerged not from these nine attainments of gradual abidings, both forwards and backwards, I released not completely, as one wholly awakened, the full perfect awakening, unsurpassed in the world

¹⁴¹ Ibid. loc.cit.

¹⁴² M, III, 25-28.

with its gods, Māras, and Brahmās, on earth with its recluses, godly men, devas and men; but when I attained to and emerged from these abidings such wise, then, wholly awakened, I realized completely the full-perfect awakening unsurpassed. Then knowledge and vision rose up within me: mind's release for me is unshakeable, this birth is final, there is now no becoming again".¹⁴³

(Yānakivañ cāhaṃ Ānanda imā nava anupubbavihārasamāpattiyo na evam anulomapaṭilomaṃ samāpajjīm pi vuṭṭhahim pi, neva tāvāhaṃ Ānanda sadevake loke samā rake sabrahmake sassamaṇabrāmaṇayā pajāya sadevamanussāya anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho paccaññasiṃ. Yato ca kho ahaṃ Ānanda imā nava anupubbavihārasamāpattiyo evam anulomapaṭilomaṃ samāpajjīm pi vuṭṭhahim pi, athāhaṃ Ānanda sade vake loke samārake sabrahmake sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho paccaññasiṃ. Nāṇaṃ ca pana me dassanaṃ udapādi 'akuppā me cetovimutti, ayam antimā jāti, natthi dāni punabbhavo' ti.)¹⁴⁴

With this consequence, we can understand the method of meditation is the main task of the Bodhisatta Way (*Magga*) to liberation in Pāli Nikāyas.

Knowledge

Bodhisatta had enjoyed in the nine states of spiritual mind and with the thoughts tranquilized, purified, cleansed of nine *jhānas*, *Bodhisatta* directed his mind to achieve three special kinds of knowledges (*Tisso vijjā*, 三明) in the last night when he got Enlightenment as the Discourse of the Bhayabheravasutta belonging to the Middle Length

¹⁴³ BGS, IV, Chapter Nine Dhammas, x, 295.

¹⁴⁴ A, IV, 448.

Sayings¹⁴⁵ recounted clearly these three perfect knowledges which appeared in the last night when *Bodhisatta Siddhattha* attained Enlightenment under the Bodhi-tree on the bank of Niranjana river as follows:

“Thus with mind composed, quite purified, quite clarified, without blemish, without defilement grown soft and workable, fixed, immovable, I directed my mind to the knowledge and recollection of former habitations: I remembered a variety of former habitations, thus: one birth, two births, three..., four..., hundred..., a hundred thousand births and many an eon of integration disintegration; such an one was I by name, having such and such a clan, such and such a colour, so was I nourished, such and such pleasant and painful experiences were mine, so did the span of life end...

This brahman, was the first knowledge attained by me in the first watch of the night; ignorance was dispelled, knowledge arose, darkness was dispelled, light arose, even as I abided diligent, ardent, self-solute.

(So evam samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anangane vigatupakkilese mudubhūte kammaniye thite ānejjappatte pubbenivāsā-nussatinānāya cittam abhininnāmesim. So anekavihitam pubbeniudsam anussarāmi, seyyathidam: ekampi jātim dve pijātīyo, ...jātisatasahassampi, anekepi samvattakappe anekepi vivattakappe; amutr' āsim evannāmo evamgotto evam vanno evamahāro evam sukhadukkhapatisamvedī evamāyupariyanto, so tato cuto amutra udapādīm, tatrap' āsim evannāmo evamgotto evamvanno evamahāro evam sukhadukkhapativedī evamāyupariyanto, so tato cuto idhupapanno ti. Iti sākāram sauddesam anekavihitam pubbenivāsam anussarāmi. Ayam kho me, brāhmana rattiyā pathame yāme pathamā vijjā adhigatā. Avijjā vihatā vijjā uppannā. Tamo uihato āloko uppanno. Yāthā tam appamattassa ātāpino pahitattassa viharato.)

¹⁴⁵ MLS, I, No. 4, the Bhayabheravasutta, 28-29.

Then with mind composed quite purified, ...I directed my mind to the knowledge of the passing hence and the arising of beings ...I comprehend that beings are mean, excellent, comely, ugly, well-going, ill-going, according to the consequences of their deeds, and I think: Indeed these worthy beings who were possessed of wrong conduct in body, who were possessed of wrong conduct of speech, who were possessed of wrong conduct of thought, scoffers at the ariyans, holding a wrong view, incurring deeds consequent on a wrong view these, at the break up of the body after dying, have arisen in a sorrowful state, a bad bourn, the abyss, Niraya Hell. But those worthy beings who were possessed of good conduct in body, ...of speech, ...in thought, who did not scoff at the ariyans, holding a right view... at the breaking up of the body after dying, have arisen in a good bourn, a heaven world... This, brahman, was the second knowledge attained by me in the middle watch of the night; ignorance was dispelled, knowledge arose...

(So evam samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anangane vigatupakkilese mudubhūte kammaniye thite ānejjapatte sattānam cutuapapātanañāya cittam abhininnāmesim. So dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkantamānusakena satte passāmi cavamāne upapajjamāne...)

And: “Then with mind composed, quite purified, ... I directed my mind to the destruction of the cankers. I understood as it really is: this is anguish, this is the arising, this is the stopping of anguish, this is the course leading to the stopping of anguish. I understood as it really is: There are the cankers, this is the arising of the cankers, ... this is the course leading to the stopping of the cankers. Knowing this thus, seeing thus, my mind was freed from the canker of sense pleasures, ... from the canker of becoming, ... from the canker of ignorance... This, brahman, was the third knowledge attained by me in the last watch of the night; ignorance was dispelled, knowledge arose, darkness was dispelled, light arose even as I abided diligent, ardent, self-resolute”.

(So evam samāhite citte parisuddhe... abhininnāmesim. So, idam dukkhanti yathābhutam abbhannāsim. Ayam dukkhasamudayo ti yathābhūtam abbhāññāsim. Ayam dukkhanirodhoti yathābhutam abbhāññāsim. Ayam dukkhanirodhagāmini patipadāti yathābhūtam abbhāññāsim...)

Ayam kho me, brāhmana, rattiya pacchime yāme tatiyā vijjā adhigatā, avijjā vihatā vijjā uppanā, tamo vihato āloko uppanno. Yathā tam appamattassa ātāpino pihatattassa viharato.)¹⁴⁶

From here *Bodhisatta* knew that “Delivered am I”, and “Rebirth is ended, fulfilled the holy life, done what was to be done: there is no more of this state again”. This as ignorance was clear wisdom arose; darkness vanished and light arose. In order to grasp easily the process of three kinds of super-wisdom, we can give a look at the diagram III as under:

Table III: THREE SPECIAL KINDS OF KNOWLEDGES
(Tisso Vijjā)¹⁴⁷

The 49 th night	Existence of spiritual feelings	The objects for contemplating	Attainment
The first watch	Mind composing quite purified, clarified, soft, without blemish, without defilement workable, fixed, immovable.	A variety of former habitations, one birth... a hundred thousand births, many a eon of integration disintegration.	Pubbe Nivasānussat- nāna (The Knowledge of Remembering many former existence of himself)
The Middle watch	Mind composing quite purified, clarified, soft, without blemish, without defilement workable, fixed, immovable.	The passing hence and the arising of beings as one possessed of wrong conduct in body, speech, thought; after dying, have arisen in a sorrowful state, a bad bourn, the abyss, Niraya Hell. In the contrast... good bourn, a	Cutūpapāta- nāna (The Knowledge of the Workings of kamma)

¹⁴⁶ M, I, 22-23.

¹⁴⁷ MLS, I, No.4, the Bhayabheravasutta, 28-29.

		heaven world.	
The last watch	Mind composing quite purified, clarified, soft, without blemish, without defilement workable, fixed, immovable.	There are the cankers of sense pleasures, becoming, ignorance. This is the cankers, a arising of cankers, the stopping of the cankers and the course leading to the stopping of cankers.	Āsavakkha- nāna (the Knowledge of the Destruction of the cankers)

After the last watch of the forty-ninth night, the historical event of the marvelous Enlightenment. *Siddhattha Boddhisatta* was extolled as the Buddha, the Enlightened-One, the Blessed-One, the *Tathāgata*, the *Bhagava* and so on... was still in a position of man (not God or saviour), but the Enlightened man or the Perfected man of human history, whose life was beyond all spheres of normal humanly desire, whose work was for the benefit of all living beings through his task of spreading the Enlightened Way, also called the Middle Way, until he passed away.

From the time of becoming the Enlightened-One in Bodhgaya at the age of thirty-five years up to the attainment of *Mahāparinibbāna* at Kusinārā at the age of eighty, the Buddha tirelessly and ceaselessly walked almost the whole of northern and central India to spread the way of practice or his message for the good of many for the welfare of many: bahu jana hitaya ba hujana sukhāya.¹⁴⁸

To conclude the chapter, one may say that the Pāli Nikāyas explain the Middle Way and Meditation as the means of Enlightenment and suggest that *Gotama Buddha* not only sought to help himself – a *Boddhisatta* and lead a peaceful and happy life during his own lifetime, but also after

¹⁴⁸ P.V. Bapat, *2500 Years of Buddhism*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, 1919, p. vii.

his *Mahāparinibbāna*, it became a source of inspiration for the process of spiritual mind wherever the Buddha and disciples could spread the message. Strive on with diligence, were the last words of the Buddha. No emancipation or purification can be without personal striving. As such petitional or intercessory prayers are denounced in Buddhism and in their stead is meditation, which leads to self-control, purification and enlightenment. The object of the Buddha mission was to deliver beings from suffering by eradicating its cause and to teach a way to put an end to both birth and death if one wishes to do so.

The Buddha was the absolute purity and perfect holy *Bodhisatta*. He also was the profoundest of thinkers, the most persuasive of speakers, the most energetic of workers, the most successful of reformers, the most compassionate and tolerant of teachers, the most efficient of administrators. His will, wisdom, compassion, service, renunciation, exemplary personal life, the blameless methods that were employed to propagate the *Dhamma* and his final success—all these factors have contributed to hail the Buddha as the greatest religious Teacher. That is the reason, Pandit Nehru always referred to the Buddha as the greatest son of India. Or S. Radhakrishnan, another Indian leader and a philosopher, in paying a glowing tribute to the Buddha states:

“In Gotama Buddha we have a mastermind from the East second to none as far as the influence on the thought and life of the human race is concerned, and sacred to all as the founder of a religious tradition whose hold is hardly less wide and deep than any other. He belongs to the history of the world’s thought, to the general inheritance of all cultivated men, for judged by

intellectual integrity, moral earnestness and spiritual insight, the Buddha is undoubtedly one of the greatest figures in history”.¹⁴⁹

And also the same ideas, the historian H.G. Wells, in *the Three Greatest Men in History* wrote,

“In the Buddha, you see clearly a man-simple, devout, lonely, battling for light-a vivid human personality, not a myth. He too had a message to mankind universal in character. Many of our best modern ideas are in closest harmony with it. All the miseries and discontents are due. He taught unselfishness. Before a man can become serene he must cease to live for his senses or himself. Then he merges into a great being... In some ways, the Buddha is nearer to us and our needs. He was more lucid upon our individual importance, sacrifice and service than Christ and less ambiguous upon the question of personal immortality.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Ven. Narada Mahathera, *The Buddha*, in ‘Gems of Buddhist Wisdom’, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, Taiwan, 1996, pp.112-3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* loc.cit.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BODHISATTVA DOCTRINE

As it has been seen in Chapter One which introduced Bodhisatta (菩薩) doctrine as integral part of the Nikāya Sūttas with the shades of four meanings, of its doctrinal progress in the history of Pāli Buddhism. Nonetheless, the philosophical development of the Bodhisatta concept in the Nikāyas is not only about the personality of Gotama Buddha or six (twenty-four) other Buddhas, or the various of last lives of Gotama Buddha which seemed not to have been successful in responding to the needs of Buddhists affected by the doctrine of polytheism of other religions or other tendencies at certain times and places and so, Mahāyanists developed and practiced the doctrine of Bodhisattva after several centuries of Gautama Buddha's passing away. There had been many reasons related with Buddhism and other traditions in such contexts. The issues related with them may be discussed under the following heads:

The Origins Leading to the Bodhisattva Doctrine

The Natural Tendencies of Development within Buddhism

Mahāyāna (大乘佛教)

A contention arose in Vesali in the order a century later after the Buddha's great decease. The contending monks offered frame certain new rules in the vinaya which were not

accepted by the conservatives in the West. This gave rise to the convention of the second council (*saṅgīti*, 結集) of seven hundred elder monks in the reign of Kālaśoka.

Thus, regional and doctrinal differences caused a breach in the unity of the saṅgha which was split up into two distinct branches of Buddhism: the conservative Theravāda (Teachings of the Elders, 源始佛教) school, becoming popular in the South and more innovative Mahāsaṅghika (Great Assembly, 大眾部) school in the North. The latter became more popular in time for being closer to the spirit of the masses as liberal and inclined to allow great freedom of interpretation of the Buddha's teachings. Besides, they were deposed to study more seriously the ideal of Bodhisattva and Buddhology.

It is uncertain whether division into sects had actually taken place by 300 B.C., though the spread of the faith into various regions led to divergence that became a major cause of schism. Missionary efforts supported by the great Mauryan emperor Asoka (阿育王) in the third century B.C. contributed to the religion's spread.

It is generally believed that due to Asoka's sponsorship of the faith, the Sarvāstivāda (Holders of the Doctrine That All Is, 一切有部) school of Buddhism took strong root in northwest India after the Third Council and the Theravāda school in the South extending its influence to Sri-Lanka. Knowledge of Buddhism was carried as far west as Greece and the areas under its control. Buddhist teachings may have left a mark on early Christianity, though no clear evidence has survived. During the two or three centuries following Asoka's reign, eighteen, twenty, or perhaps more Buddhist sects came into existence, marking the advent of what is called sectarian Buddhism.

People who heard the Buddha's sermons were apparently able to grasp his meaning, but as time passed and the circumstances under which they had been delivered were forgotten, his sermons became increasingly difficult to be understood fully. It was the task of later Buddhists to define obscure words, draw inferences, and pull everything together into an orderly system of belief. The resulting studies and expositions are called Abhidharma (Pāli: *Abhidhamma*, 阿毘曇論), or that which is 'about the Law'.

The origins of Abhidharma literature may be traced to the few works of explanation or commentary in the sutras of primitive Buddhism. In time, however, such expository writings became more specialized and detailed and diverged too far from the sutras to be included among them.

Ultimately they came to constitute a distinct literary form occupying a separate division, or basket, in the canon, the Abhidharma-piṭaka (論藏). Therefore, now in Buddhism there do exist Tipiṭaka (Skt. *Tripitaka*, 三藏): Sutta Nikāyas (經藏), Vinaya Nikāyas (律藏) and Abhidhamma Nikāyas (論藏, the commentaries on the suttas) which were complete and also called the scriptures of primitive Buddhism.

Sectarian Buddhism concerned itself first and foremost with strict observance of the monastic precepts and study of the scriptures, pursuits that encouraged dogmatism. Emphasis was on literal interpretation of the canon. In contrast, a group of pragmatic reformers, members of the Mahāsāṅghika sect, favoured interpreting the words of the scriptures in accordance with their deeper meanings. And therefore, Mahāyāna Buddhism developed out of this reformist movement within the Mahāsāṅghika sect.

The Mādhyamika assertion is common to both the Abhidharmika Buddhists as well as the Mahāyānists who refute the Sthaviras for overemphasizing the issues of

existence and karma (causality) and thus take recourse to Nirvāṇa, which is without residue (freedom from existence). But these are doctrinal differences in the meaning of technical terms.

The central conception in early Buddhism is interpreted by Th. Stherbatsky as the concept of plurality of ultimate elements (*dharmas*). The central conception of Mahāyāna is their relatively (*Śūnyatā*). The Buddha had reiterated again and again, that one should strive to save the other beings as it is the Bodhisattva ideal. In Mahāyāna we are ordained to accept the Bodhisattva ideal instead of the objective of the Arahāt. For it is in Mahāyāna, indeed, that by following the practices of the Mahāyāna it is possible to transport the entire sentient world to Buddhahood.

Supported by new converts and by many Abhidharma Buddhists to whom the revisionist position appealed, Mahāyāna spread rapidly throughout India. At about the beginning of the first century A.D., scriptures based on Mahāyāna principles began appearing in a swelling stream that included a group of texts of various lengths called the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras (*Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*, 般若波羅密經), the Vimalakīrti Sūtra (*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*, 維摩詰經), the Flower Garland Sūtra (*Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, 華嚴經), the Lotus Sūtra (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra*, 妙法蓮花經), and the Amitabha Sūtra (*Sukhavatīvyūha Sūtra*, 彌陀經)... all destined to become great religious classics. Though these sūtras are presented as having been preached by Śakyamuni (釋迦牟尼佛) himself, the oldest of them could have been written no earlier than about 450 years after his death. It is impossible to know who the authors were, but they were no doubt devout Buddhists convinced that their writings revealed the Buddha's true message. With the Mahāyānists four points were prominent:

1. They were progressive and affirmative.
2. Whereas the Hīnayānists developed with the Order as the centre, the Mahāyānists concentrated rather upon the individual.
3. While the Hīnayānists laid the greatest stress upon the Tripitaka, the Mahāyāna was content to propagate the Buddha's fundamental teaching wherever found. Compared with them, the Hīnayānists were both formal and systematic in their scholastic orthodoxy.
4. Whereas Hīnayāna was a forest or mendicant denunciative way, while Mahāyāna not excluding this feature, wished to make the Buddhist life open to all, priest and layman alike. With it the ideal became not the Arahata bent upon his own salvation but the Bodhisattva to which all may aspire. The Bodhisattva takes a vow to attain perfect knowledge and to save all sentient beings. This was and remains the most important of many important points in Mahāyāna.

The kernel of Mahāyāna is Deliverance for all, for all stand in relationship, which is causation, and Mind is the origin of all causation. Yet Mind, Buddha, and Beings are one. The real object of Mahāyāna Buddhism is to obtain enlightenment, to get rid of delusion, and to benefit others without hope of reward. Bodhi (菩提), Bodhicitta (菩提心), Bodhisattva (菩薩), Pāramitā (波羅密) are the words most frequently met with in Mahāyāna literature (佛教大乘). When these are established, the notion of vow (*praṇidhana*, 願) is inevitable. May be, because of it, Sir. C. Eliot also stated that two conspicuous features of Mahāyāna were the worship of Bodhisattvas and the idealist philosophy.

According to Kogen Mizuno in the ‘Basic Buddhist Concepts’, the history of Indian Buddhism may be divided in detail with five periods as below:

1. The age of primitive Buddhism, which lasted from the time of Śākyamuni (c. 560 - c. 480 B.C) until the division of Buddhism into sects (about 300 B.C),
2. The age of sectarian Buddhism, which lasted from about 300 B.C. until the beginning of the first century A.D,
3. The early period of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which lasted from the beginning of the first century A.D. until about 300,
4. The middle period of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which lasted from about 300 to about 700,
5. The late period of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which lasted from about 700 to the early thirteenth century.

This is the process of Buddhist history which ran from the Buddha’s time to the present day. As a matter of fact, the most important and impelling force directing the progress not only of Buddhism, but also of all real religions for their long-term survival, must be the potential of association with the contemporary knowledge and the need of people at all times, which is invariably in flux as pointed out by the Buddha himself, ‘All is momentary and ever-changing’ (*Sarvaṃ kṣaṇikam*) or ‘Materiality (and the rest) is impermanent, changing, becoming other. Whoever decides about, places his confidence in these dhammas in this way, is called mature in confidence (*saddhānusārī*, 隨信行).

Moreover, the teachings of Lord Buddha should neither be regarded as dogma, nor creed, nor formulated golden words absolutely obeyed and revered, but it had better use as a means ridding of the cycle of birth and death. As a result,

the indispensable and inevitable improvements in due course of Buddhism for the sake of living beings at certain historical times leading to the present reality of the so-called ‘Theravāda (Southern) and Mahāyāna (Northern) Buddhism’ are but the active and living pictures of the only one Buddhism through ages with one aim to awaken all worldly beings and objects are transient (*anitya*, 無常), momentary (*kṣaṇika*, 剎那), perpetual flux (*santāna*, 流) and without any real substance (*anātmakam*, 無我) in order to follow the Buddha’s teaching – the Law of Causation (*Pratītya-samutpāda*, 緣起, 因緣生起), to get rid of attachment (*rāga*, 貪), hatred (*dveṣa*, 瞋) and delusion (*moha*, 癡) and enlightenment. Therefore, here we should have a proper look at what we call the true meanings of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna in order to consider them as brothers in the same family of Buddhism just as Beatrice Lane Suzuki in Mahāyāna Buddhism suggested: “Are we not losing ourselves in a forest of brambles when we spend so much time over the problem of the historicity of Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna? Why not accept both as representations of the same truths, and take that one to ourselves which is best suited to our own minds?”¹⁵¹

And as far as the usage of the Arahanta ideal in Hīnayāna and the Bodhisattva ideal in Mahāyāna is concerned, there are some ideas which we should consider.

D.T Suzuki in this context points out as follows:

“...As Buddhism is a religion and as every religion has its practical and social side, without which it will lose its reason of existence, the Laṅkāvatāra also prepares the Bodhisattva for his mission as one of the members of a co-operative life. In fact, this is what distinguishes the Mahāyāna from the Hīnayāna, for the latter’s object of spiritual discipline does not extend beyond his

¹⁵¹ Beatrice Lane Suzuki, *Mahayana Buddhism*, London, Fourth edition 1980, p. 35.

own interest, attainment of Arhantaship, a solitary saintly life...”¹⁵²

Har Dayal said that or “Arahan too self-centered”, or “They were indifferent to the duty of teaching”, or “The coldness and aloofness of the arhats led to a movement in favour of the old gospel of ‘saving all creatures’. The Bodhisattva ideal can be understood only against this background of a saintly and serene, but inactive and indolent monastic Order.”¹⁵³

Or Isaline B. Horner in *The early Buddhist Theory in Man Perfected* expressed that:

“Arahan has been accused of the selfishness of being intent upon his own welfare, and not giving sufficient attention to enlightenment”¹⁵⁴

Har Dayal also said that the Bodhisattva ideal of the Mahāyāna has been regarded as a protest against the Arahanta ideal of the Hīnayāna. But the charge of selfishness has to be levelled not against the Arahantas but against the Theravāda monks who have portrayed Arahantaship as a selfish ideal by their own behaviour and writings and thereby made a higher religious life (*Brahmacariya*) appear impractical.

In fact, these words are too extreme and prejudicial. How Arahanta (阿羅漢) who did extoll as the highest aim in the Saṅgha (僧伽), in the Buddha’s time, the jewel of emancipation, a virtually purely Superhuman Teacher of the world which has been considered as selfish, limited, lack of

¹⁵² D.T. Suzuki, *Studies in The Laṅkāvatāra Sutra*, Routledge & Kegan Pual Ltd., London, rpt. 1975, p. 214.

¹⁵³ BDSBL, 2-3.

¹⁵⁴ Isaline Blew Horner, *The early Buddhist Theory in Man Perfected: A Study of the Arahanta*, London: Williams & Northgate Ltd., 1936, London, 1979.

true spiritual fervour and altruism, small, lower than Bodhisattva ideal... here it needs to be quoted what somewhat the Buddha taught in the Book of the Kindred Sayings¹⁵⁵ to verify it as below:

“Throughout the seven abodes, brethren, up to the highest becoming, these are the topmost, these are the best in all the world, these Arahantas.

Thus spoke the Exalted One. The Well-farer having so said, the Teacher said this further:

“Ah, happy saints, the Arahantas! In them no craving’s seen. The ‘I’ concept is rooted up: delusion’s net is burst.

Lust-free they have attained; translucent is the heart of them.

These god-like beings, drug-immune, unspotted in the world.

Knowing the fivefold mass, they roam the seven domains of good.¹⁵⁶

Worthy of praise and worthy they – sons of the Wake true-born.

The wearers of the sevenfold gem,¹⁵⁷ the threefold training trained.¹⁵⁸

These mighty heroes follow on, exempt from fear and dread: Lords of the tenfold-potency,¹⁵⁹ great sages tranquilized: Best beings they in all the world; in them no craving’s seen.

¹⁵⁵ BKS, III, 69-70.

¹⁵⁶ Commentary: the fivefold mass consists of *saddhā* (*faith*), *hiri-ottappaṇ* (*Cocentration*), *saccaṇ* (*āradḍha*) *virīya* (*energy*), *sati* (*mindfulness*), *pañña* (*insight*).

¹⁵⁷ Commentary: *Satta-bojjhangā* or the seven factors of enlightenment are mindfulness, Dhamma-testing, energy, zest, calm down, concentration, and poise (see A, VI, 14).

¹⁵⁸ The three *sikkhā*: *adhi-śīla*, *citta*, *pañña*, the higher morals, mind and wisdom.

¹⁵⁹ The tenfold-potency (*Dasa-balani*) of a Tathāgata or an Arahant are:

They've won the knowledge of adept. This compound is their last.

That essence of the holy life that have they made their own. Unshaken by the triple modes, set free from birth to come. The plane of self-control they've won, victorious in the world. Upward or crossways or below – no lure is found in them. They sound aloud their lion's roar 'Supreme are they that wake'".

(Yāvatā bhikkhave sattāvāsā yāvatā bhavaggaṃ ete aggā ete soṭṭā lokasmiṃ yad idam arahahto ti.//

Idaṃ avoca Bhagavā // idaṃ vatvā Sugato athāparam etad avoca sathā Sukhino vata arahanto // taṇhā tesam na vijjati //

Asmimāno samucchino // mohajālaṃ padālitam //

-
1. The power of comprehension as it really is casual occasion as such and what is not causal occasion as such,
 2. The power of comprehension as it really is the acquiring of deeds for oneself, past, future and present, both in their causal occasion and their result,
 3. The power of comprehension as it really is the course leading to all bourns,
 4. The power of comprehension as it really is the world with its various and diverse features,
 5. The power of comprehension as they really are the divers characters of beings,
 6. The power of comprehension as it really is the higher or lower states of faculties of other beings, of other persons,
 7. The power of comprehension as they really are the defilement of, the purification of, the emergence from attainments in meditation,
 8. The power of memory of his manifold former birth habitations
 9. A Tathāgata or an arahant, with his purified deva vision, surpassing that of men, sees beings as they are deceasing and uprising- he comprehends that beings are mean, excellent, comely, ugly, well-going according to the consequences of their deeds, and thinks.
 10. A Tathāgata or an arahanta, by destruction of the cankers, enters on and abides in freedom of mind, freedom through wisdom that are cankerless, having released them here and now through his own super-knowledge...(See MLS, I, 69-70).

Anejanto anuppattā // cittaṃ tesāṃ anāvilaṃ //
loke anupalittā te // brahmabhutā anāsavā //
Pañcakkhandhe pariññaya // sattasaddhammagocarā //
pasamsiyā sappurisā // puttā buddhiassa orasā //
Sattaratanasampannā // tīsu sikkhāsu sikkhitā //
Anuvicaranti mahāvīrā // pahīnabhayabheravā //
Dasahaṅgehi sampannā // mahānāgā samāhitā //
ete kho seṭṭhā lokasmiṃ // taṅhā tesāṃ na vijjati //
Asekhaññaṇaṃ uppannam // antīmo yam samussayo //
Yo sāro brahmacariyassa // tasmim aparapaccayā //
Vidhāsu na vikampanti // vippamuttā punabbhavā //
dantabhūmim anuppattā // te loke vijitāvino //
Uddhaṃ tiriyaṃ apācīnaṃ // nandi tesāṃ na vijjati //
nandanti te sīhanādaṃ // Buddhā loke anuttarāti //).¹⁶⁰

In the Book of Kindred Sayings,¹⁶¹ the Buddha declared that Thera Sāriputta (舍利弗) profoundly realized and understood the doctrine of Pratītyasamutpāda (the Dependent Origination, 緣起, 因緣生起) as He himself did. Even if Lord Buddha could put questions on the matters in seven days and nights, Thera Sāriputta did not have any trouble in his answers. Furthermore, in the other Nikāyas, many theras and therīs such as Mahākassapa (大迦葉), Mogallāna (目犍蓮), Dhammadinna (法那)... possessed capacities equal to the Buddha in terms of preaching, interpreting the Dhamma, or entering different stages of meditation, or performing many kinds of magical powers which proved that hundreds of his noble disciples also attained stages of spirituality equal to

¹⁶⁰ S, III, 83-4.

¹⁶¹ BKS, II, 35-7.

him and even the Buddha defined clearly that he is as an Arahanta:

“Now regarding the venerable Gotama, such is the reputation that has been noised abroad - That Blessed One is an Arahant, a fully awakened one, abounding in wisdom and goodness, happy, with knowledge of the worlds, unsurpassed as a guide to mortals willing to be led, a teacher for gods and men, a Blessed One, a Buddha”.¹⁶²

(Taṃ kho pana Bhagavantaṃ Gotamaṃ evaṃ kalyāṇo kittissado abhuggato: ‘Iti pi so Bhagavā arahantaṃ sammāsambuddho vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno sugato loka-vikū anuttaro purisa-dhamma-sārathī setthā deva-manussānaṃ buddho bhagavā).¹⁶³

The term Arahanta is a standard epithet of the Buddha, we also find that in some places the term ‘Buddha’ is an epithet of the Arahanta. In one gāthā section of the Majjhima Nikāya we find a poetical discussion of what it means to be an Arahanta:

“Who knows his former habitations and sees heaven and the sorrows ways,

Who has attained destruction of births, accomplished by super-knowledge, a sage is he.

Who knows his mind is quite pure, freed from every attachment,

Who has got rid of birth and dying, in the Brahma-faring whole is he.

Who is master of all states of mind, such a one Awake is called”.¹⁶⁴

(Pubbenivāsaṃ yo vedī Atho jātikkhayaṃ patto, Cittaṃ visuddhaṃ jānāti pahīnajātīmaraṇo pāragū sabbadhammānaṃ

¹⁶² DB, I, No. 12, Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta, 145.

¹⁶³ D, I, p. 111.

¹⁶⁴ MLS, II, No. 91 Brahmāyusutta, 330.

saggāpāgaṇ ca passati abhiññā vosito muni muttam rāgehi sabbaso brahmacariyassa kevalī Buddhō tādi pavuccatīti).¹⁶⁵

Or in the Book of the Kindred Sayings the Buddha does not make any statement differentiating between Himself and an Arahanta as follows:

“The Tathāgata, Brethren, who being arahant, is fully enlightened, he it is who doth cause a way to arise which had not arisen before; who doth bring about a way not brought about before; who doth proclaim a way not proclaimed before; who is the knower of a way, who understand a way, who is skilled in a way. And now, brethren, his disciples are wayfarers who follow after him. That, brethren, is the distinction, the specific feature which distinguishes the Tathāgata who, being arahant, is fully enlightened, from the brother who is freed by insight”.¹⁶⁶

(Tathāgato bhikkhave araham sammāsambuddho anuppanna maggassa uppādetā asaṅhatassa maggassa saṅjanetā anakkhātassa maggassa akkhātā maggaññu maggavidū maggakovido // Maggānugā ca bhikkhave etarahi sāvaka viharanti pacchāsamānāgatā //

Ayam kho bhikkhave viseso aya adhippālyoso idam Nānāraṇam Tathāgata arahato sammāsambuddhassa panuavimuttana bhikkhuna ti //).¹⁶⁷

The Buddha and Arahanta are, in every significant sense, identical in terms of spiritual achievement. As a very general rule, this seems to be the position found in the oldest sections of the Sutta piṭaka.

In the book *Buddhist Images of Human Perfection*, Nathan Katz showed out that:

“The pañāvimutto Arahant is said to be equal to the Buddha in terms of spiritual attainment, as they have both completely overcome the āsavā”.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ M, II, Brāhmayusutta, 144.

¹⁶⁶ BKS, III, Chapter i, iv, 58.

¹⁶⁷ S, III, 66.

The Milindapañha¹⁶⁹ speaks of arahans outshining all other bhikkhus (毘丘), overwhelming them in glory and splendour, because they are emancipated in heart. Arahanship is called the jewel of emancipation.

The commentary of Asaṅga (無著) also puts forth the same kind of idea of Theravāda Buddhism where the Bodhisattva after having attained Enlightenment (*bodhi*, 菩提) becomes an Arhant, a Tathāgata (如來), i.e. Buddha, (佛陀).¹⁷⁰ That is to say nobody is beyond the stage of Arahantship, the Arahanta ideal should be the ideal life of Buddhism which has truly originated from the enlightenment of the Buddha and is acknowledged by Him as the highest spiritual stage in His teachings.

And return to Mahāyāna part, we can conclude that to meet the potential of association with the contemporary knowledge and need of people at all times, Mahāyāna was formed and developed out. And it is Mahāyāna played a main and important role in arising the new doctrine of Bodhisattva in Sanskrit and Chinese sources which succeeded in the Bodhisattva concept in Pāli Nikāya, to which Edward Conze has said that the two great contributions which the Mahāyāna had made to human thought were the creation of the Bodhisattva ideal and the elaboration of the doctrine of “Emptiness”.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ BIHP, 96.

¹⁶⁹ Milindapañha, ed. V. Trenckner, PTS, 1962, p. 226.

¹⁷⁰ Walpola Rahula, Zen and The Taming of The Bull, London 1978, p. 74.

¹⁷¹ Edward Conze, Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies, Bruno Cassirer (Publisher) LTD, Oxford, London, 1967, p. 54.

The New Concept of Buddhahood (佛陀)

In the original Buddhist texts, the Buddha is only a human being like us but he realized the real nature, the truth of existence of men and things by his own efforts. But with the passage of time, the Buddha was soon idealized, spiritualized and universalized. The conception of Buddhahood was widened and elaborated under the circumstances in India where was influenced by Hindu theology and metaphysics. The Buddha is now no longer historical, he is the object of religious devotion, he is eternal, multiplied, immortalized, deified, spiritualized, universalized and unified.

The Lalitavistara (神通遊戲經) speaks of koṭis (*koṭis*)¹⁷² of Buddhas, as does also the Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka Sūtra (妙法蓮花經). The Suvarṇa-prabhāsa Sūtra (金光明經) tells us of ‘thousands’, while the Sukhāvātī Vyūha (無量壽經) estimates their exact number at 81 koṭi-niyuta-śata-sahasrāṇi (81 million *niyutas*)¹⁷³ or “The Buddhas are like the sands on the banks of the Ganges”. Each Buddha has his Buddha-kṣetra (佛刹, field), which he guides and ‘ripens’ in spirituality. A kṣetra (刹)¹⁷⁴ consists of many worlds and universes, with their heavens, purgatories, earths, devas (諸天), pretas (餓鬼), human beings (人) and animals (畜生). A Buddha, who appears on this earth or in any other world, can never cease to exist. Gautama Buddha (釋曇佛) also lives for ever (*sadā sthitaḥ*), the Buddhas are immortal. A Buddha’s

¹⁷²Koṭis: A million. Also explained by 100,000; or 100 laksa, i.e., 10 millions ‘quoted in DCBT’, p. 261.

¹⁷³Lalita Vistara, Ed. S. Lefmann, Halle A.S., 1902-8, 402.10; Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, 228.4; Sukhāvātī Vyūha, p.10; in BDBSL, 25.

¹⁷⁴Kṣetra: land, field, country, place; also a universe consisting of three thousand large chiliocosms; also, a spire or flagstaff on a pagoda, a monastery, but this interprets ‘Caitya’; quoted in DCBT, 250b.

duration of life is unlimited and immeasurable.¹⁷⁵ Buddhas are also superhuman (*lokottara*) and deificated in all their actions, even during their earthly lives. He eats, drinks, and takes medicine in illness only in order to conform to the ways of the world as he is really not subject to hunger, thirst, disease, or any human needs and infirmities. His body is not formed by the physical union of his reputed parents, and he is born as a child merely in order to act like ordinary human beings.

If a Buddha is immortal and superhuman, his physical body cannot represent his real nature. He must therefore be essentially a spiritual Being, who either assumes a human form (incarnation) as an *avatāra* (無量) or shows an unreal physical body to the people for their edification. In his created body (*Rūpa kāya*, 色身) or *Nirmāna kāya* (應身化身),¹⁷⁶ he can appear anywhere in the universe to spread Dharma (法). In contradistinction to the *rūpa-kāya*, the Mahāyanists speak of a Buddha's *dharmakāya* (法身, cosmic, spiritual Body). A Buddha is the embodiment of dharma, which is his real Body. He is also identified with all the constituents of the universe (form, thought, etc). It is the same as the Absolute Reality (*Tathatā*, 真如), which is also one and indivisible for the entire Universe. It is immutable and undifferentiated. If a Buddha's real body is the cosmic Absolute, then it follows that all Buddhas are spiritually united in the *dharmakāya* (法身). "All Buddhas are one," declares the Mahāyāna *Sūtrāṅkāra* (大乘大莊嚴經).¹⁷⁷ Buddhahood, which belongs to the realm of Freedom and Perfection (*anāsrave dhātu*, 無漏界), unites them

¹⁷⁵ *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa*, Manuscript No. 8, Hodgson Collection, Royal Asiatic Society, London, fol.5a. 1 ff.

¹⁷⁶ DCBT, 77b.

¹⁷⁷ Mahāyāna *Sūtrāṅkāra*, edité et traduit par S. Lévi, Paris, 1907, 1911, p. 48, ii, 83. 2.

all, as they have one Wisdom and one Aim. A Buddha also possesses a Body of Bliss or Enjoyment, which is radiant and glorious, and bears thirty-two special marks and eighty minor signs (*sambhoga-kāya*, 報身). It is the result of the Merit, which a Buddha has acquired by his good deeds during many aeons and whatever sermons he gives in the Mahāyāna Sūtras (大乘經) are given in this capacity. The world he sees, the events taking place in connection with his appearance and the language he uses are all radiations from his Sambhogakāya.

Thus, the conception of Buddhahood (佛陀) was developed to its ultimate conclusion in universal pan-Buddhism (as distinct from Pantheism) soon after Gautama Buddha's death.

It was continued and intensified by the Mahāsāṅghikas, the Vetulyakas, the Andhakas and other Buddhist sects. They perhaps also thought and felt that so wise and virtuous a man as Gautama Buddha (瞿曇佛) could not end in blank nothingness. They transformed him into a living, immortal, powerful and gracious deva. They also bestowed on him all the mystical attributes of the impersonal Brahman (梵天) of the Upanisads (幽杷尼色). His humanity, his physical body and his death were therefore denied or thrown into the background, and he was endowed with the *sambhoga-kāya* (報身) and the *dharma-kāya* (法身). The Mahāyānists borrowed and assimilated the entire theology and metaphysics of Hinduism, and then evolved their impressive and comprehensive conception of the Buddha. The life of Gautama was the foundation of the edifice: the other sects supplied the material for the superstructure.

Then as the time passed on, as the Hindus could not love or adore the metaphysical Brahman of the Upanisads but needed deities of flesh and blood for their cult, so the Buddhists too could not approach the idealized and

transcendental Buddha of the Mahāyāna with prayer and worship. Such a concept of Buddha again became an unsuitable and unattractive object for the pious Buddhist's bhakti (信心, devotion, faith, love), because he had become too great, vast, nebulous, impersonal and incomprehensible for such relations. The Mahāyānists turned in their need to the earlier history of Gautama Buddha, when he was not the remote metaphysical Buddha, but only a charitable, patient and wise Bodhisattva, a married citizen and a denizen of this work-day world. As a Bodhisattva, he had helped many men and women with gifts of wealth and knowledge. He was a more humane and lovable figure at that stage of his career. The pious worshippers could pray to a Bodhisattva for health, wealth and mundane blessings, and that was all that they really wanted. The Bodhisattvas were thus chosen for worship and adoration in order to satisfy the needs of the devout and pious Buddhists. The Buddhists invented their class of saints (*Bodhisattvas*) chiefly by personifying the different virtues and attributes of Gautama Buddha's personality. They also took up certain epithets that were applied to Gautama Buddha, and converted them into the names of some Bodhisattvas.

Bhakti or Devotion (信心)

The Encyclopaedia of Buddhism¹⁷⁸ defines the term bhakti from the root bhaj, which originally means, to divide, to share and which later developed to mean, to serve, to adore, and to love.

Scholars, who uphold that bhakti is of Buddhistic origin, consider the term saddhā generally translated as faith, to be the precursor of bhakti. But there is no substantial

¹⁷⁸ EB, II, 678.

evidence to prove that bhakti evolved from saddhā. The term saddhā, in Buddhist scriptures, could mean faith, trust, belief or confidence. Faith in the Buddha is repeatedly declared to be essential for the spiritual development of the monks and the laymen. The disciples of a wise and virtuous teacher must love and revere him personally. It is Personality that secures the triumph of a religious movement, the dogmas and precepts shine in the light reflected from Personality. Bhakti cannot arise without the historical fact of the life and work of a great man. So, bhakti accepted, is not a belief in a system, but a love directed to a great person.¹⁷⁹

For this reason, it could not have originated among the meta-physicians of the Upanisads, as A. B. Keith has assumed.¹⁸⁰ There was no great man like Buddha or Mahāvira among them. Apart from the irresistible influence of Personality, the absence of any other objects of adoration led the Buddhists to concentrate their love and devotion on the Buddha. They did not hold the ancient devas in high esteem. They could not have any devotional feeling for them or pray to them. The devas were regarded by the Buddhists as glorified supermen, who enjoyed bliss and power, but who were subject to the law of death and rebirth and needed wisdom and liberation as much as the human beings on earth. They were far inferior to the Buddha in character and knowledge. As the Buddhists despised the devas, they put the Buddha in their place.

Owing to the change that it underwent, the Buddha's personality lost its human conception and it ceased to attract the attention of the lay devotees. This as well as the intention

¹⁷⁹ EB, II, 680.

¹⁸⁰ Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1906, p. 493; see also BDBSL, 33.

to popularize Buddhism in order to save it from the complete disappearance, made the Mahāyānists evolve and develop the Bodhisattva doctrine which subsequently overshadowed the Buddha-personality. In order to counteract the concept of deities in Hinduism the Mahāyānists attributed divine qualities to Bodhisattva ideal. The belief in the efficacy of the transfer of merits gave an impetus to this new doctrine. With the development of the Bodhisattva, the influence of the bhakti cult (信心) found free access to Buddhism.

In Mahāyāna, the feature of bhakti did never evolve to be a separate, independent school, but remained of one or the other schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Even the worship of Avalokiteśvara (觀世音菩薩) and Amitābha (阿彌陀佛) existed as feature shared by many schools. The real development of this worship into an independent school took place, not in India but in China and Japan.

In short, the deep-rooted feeling of bhakti found an outlet in the invention and adoration of the Bodhisattvas. For that reason, Har Dayal has said that “The Bodhisattva doctrine was the necessary outcome of two movements of thought in early Buddhism, viz. the growth of bhakti (devotion, faith, love) and the idealisation and spiritualisation of the Buddha.”¹⁸¹

The External Influences of Other Traditions

Brāhmanism: the Bhāgavatas and Śaivas

Although the idea of bhakti originated among the Buddhists and was adopted in self-defence by the Hindus, yet the new sects, which arose after the fifth century B.C., exercised a profound influence on the further development of

¹⁸¹ BDBSL, 30.

Buddhism. They established the cults of certain devas and deified heroes, and the Buddhists were compelled to endow their Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with similar attributes and powers.

The Bhāgavata sect, which was probably founded in the second century B.C in the western part of India, inculcated the worship of Bhāgavata (曠伽聽, the Adorable) as the supreme Deity and was almost monotheistic. In course of time, the Bhāgavatas came to identify Vāsudeva (帕子仙) with Bhāgavat and the ancient sun-god Viṣṇu. The existence of a sect of Vāsudeva-worshippers at this period explains certain features of the Bodhisattva doctrine. Historical evidence establishes the existence of the powerful bhakti-cult of the worshippers of Vāsudeva in the centuries that followed the expansion of Buddhism. The Śaiva (濕婆) sect was making progress during the same period. Śiva is also praised in the Mahabharata, but the chronology of that immense poetical encyclopaedia is uncertain.¹⁸² The Śaivas are mentioned along with the Vāsudeva-worshippers in the Milinda-pañha (p. 191, lines 6 ff., “siva vāsudevā ghanikā”). The sect of the Pāśupatas who worshipped Śiva existed in the second century B.C., if not earlier.¹⁸³ Megasthenes wrote that the Indians also worshipped ‘Dionysos’: “The Indians worship the other gods, and Dionysos himself in particular, with cymbals and drums... he instructed the Indians to let their hair grow long in honour of the god.”¹⁸⁴ This ‘Dionysos’ has been identified with Śiva. The cumulative evidence of all these historical data points to the existence of a vigorous sect of Śiva-

¹⁸² Cf. S. Sorensen, *An Index to the Names in the Mahābhārata*, London, 1904, p. 203.

¹⁸³ R.G. Bhandarkar, *Sects, (Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious System)*, Strassburg, 1913, pp. 116-117.

¹⁸⁴ J.M.McCrindle, *India (Ancient India)*, London, 1877, p. 200, II, 5 ff.

worshippers, who had chosen the ancient Rudra and Isāna of the Veda as their deity.

These sects were soon controlled and assimilated by the Brāhmaṇa priests (婆羅門), who were exerting themselves to stem the tide of Buddhism. The great revival of Brāhmanism (婆羅門教) under the Śuṅga dynasty in the second century B.C. after the fall of the Maurya (孔 爵) dynasty in 184 B.C.,¹⁸⁵ obliged the Buddhists to develop new methods of popular propaganda. The family of the Śuṅgas whose principal religion was Brāhmanism, became the principal rulers of India. Under Puṣyamitra (C.187-151 B.C),¹⁸⁶ Buddhism underwent a savage persecution. With the support of the rulers of the Śuṅga dynasty, Brāhmanism started making an attempt to consolidate and spread its strength and power by setting itself on a campaign of great revival.

According to Nalinaksha Dutt,¹⁸⁷ Har Dayal¹⁸⁸ and Charles Eliot,¹⁸⁹ Brāhmanism began a new policy of its doctrinal propagation by presenting itself as a universal religion, instead of having been the religion of a privileged class in a special region, or the one and only religion of India as a whole. As E. W. Hopkins has pointed out, the second century B.C. was a critical period in the history of Buddhism.¹⁹⁰ With the cult of Bhāgavata of Brāhmanism

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 518.

¹⁸⁶ Kanai Lal Hazar, *The Rise and Decline of Buddhism in India*, Munshiram, M.Publishers, 1995, p. 47.

¹⁸⁷ Nalinaksha Dutt, *Mahayana Buddhism*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1978 (Revised Edition), p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ BDBSL, 38.

¹⁸⁹ Sir Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London, rpt. 1971, I, p. xxxiii.

¹⁹⁰ *Cambridge History of India*, I, Cambridge, 1922, p. 225.

patronised by the Śuṅgas,¹⁹¹ the cult of sun-worship,¹⁹² the Bhakti etc... took a chance in making their real revival in Indian society, which actually attracted masses into its fold. Such tendencies must have been the key elements pushing towards the outburst of the worship of heavenly Bodhisattvas as Buddhist counterparts of Brāhmanic deities, their incarnation... in the Buddhist community.

Zoroastrianism: Fire-worship

Zoroastrianism, the religion of ancient Persia, may also have contributed to the rise of the Bodhisattva doctrine in India, because it supplied a great deal of mythology to Judaism. Its fravashis and amesa-spentas bear a certain resemblance to the Bodhisattvas. The six amesa-spentas (immortal, holy or beneficent ones, archangels), who are associated with Ahura-Mazdah, are personified abstractions, and the chief Bodhisattvas are also really personifications of Wisdom and Love... Zoroastrianism influenced the development of Buddhism more directly through the cult of sun-worship, which was introduced into India in the third century B.C.¹⁹³ Sun-worship is referred to in the Dīgha-Nikāya (i, 11, line 21), and it is ridiculed in the Adiccupatthāna-jātaka (Jātaka ii, pp. 72-3). Many familiar names of the Mahāyāna are suggestive of sun-worship, e.g. Amitābha (無量光, Measureless Light), Vairocana (毘盧遮那佛, the Brilliant One)... It is probable that they established an organised sect of sun-worshippers on the basis of Zoroastrianism and the ancient Indian domestic rites of sun-worship. The solar myth penetrated deep into every phase of

¹⁹¹ N.Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, Calcuta, 1973, p. 2.

¹⁹² BDBSL, 39.

¹⁹³ R.G.Bhandarkar, *Sects*, Op.cit., pp.153,157.

Buddhism, and many Bodhisattvas were endowed with solar attributes.

Accent Religion: Nāga-worship

Here, it is important to mention the point made by N. Dutt when he suggests that in spite of all the patronage of Aśoka and the glorious accounts of the popularity of Buddhism in Kashmir, the fact remains that Buddhism had to face a strong opposition in the country from the established beliefs in Nāga-worship being the practice of ancient Indian before the appearance of Buddhism. Without adverting to the antiquity of the Nāga-worship, it may be safe to state that Nāga beliefs were quite common in India when Buddhism made its appearance and that is the reason why the legends of Nāgas and their conversion by Buddha occur occasionally in the Buddhist texts. The Buddhist chronicles also speak of Kashmir as a land of lakes under the control of the Nāgas. They are generally associated with watery and mountainous regions, and so it is quite likely that Kashmir should be called a land of Nāga-worshippers.¹⁹⁴

It is, nevertheless, very important to keep in mind that there could not be any influence of Christianity or Islam in the initial development of the Bodhisattva ideal because the birth of Christianity and advent of Islam into India took place at a later stage. Christianity certainly influenced the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism at a later period and was also influenced by Buddhism to some extent during its early phase because there were several channels of communication between the Buddhist and the Christian countries of Western Asia, Africa and Europe. The Buddhists

¹⁹⁴ Rājat, I, 136, 140-4; see kṣemendra's *Samayamāṭṛkā*, v.61 re. Kṛtyāśama-vihara.

could establish intercourse with the Christians in Alexandria, Southern India and Central Asia. The Gnostics, who were numerous in the Roman Empire in the early centuries of the Christian era, borrowed some ideas from Buddhism. The existence of a Christian community in Southern India during the sixth century is attested by the Egyptian writer, Kosmas' Indikopleustes.¹⁹⁵

Greek art

Kozen Mizuno in 'Basic Buddhist Concepts' agreed with Har Dayal that Greek art played a role in the development of this concept. Before Kanishka's reign,¹⁹⁶ Northwest India had been the birth place of the Gandhāra (犍陀羅) school of Buddhist sculpture which influenced by Greek statuary, revolutionized Indian sculpture. There were such symbols as stylized renderings of the Buddha footprints, the wheel of law, the Bodhi tree under which he attained enlightenment. And the Buddhists invented their pantheon of Bodhisattvas in order to worship half-divine half-human beings such as the Hellenic gods were.¹⁹⁷

Persian Religion and Culture

According to Har Dayal, the Bodhisattva doctrine may well have been influenced by foreign cultures, because, according to him, features of Persian culture¹⁹⁸ have shown their characteristics in the art at the lion-capital of Asoka's pillar at Sarnath (鹿苑), and also in the architecture of the

¹⁹⁵ R.Garbe, *Christenthum, (Indien und das Christenthum)*, Tübingen, 1914, p. 150; A.J.Edmunds, *Gospels, (Buddhist and Christian Gospels)*, Tokyo, 1905, p. 42; also see BDBSL, 41.

¹⁹⁶ Kozen Mizuno, *Basic Buddhist Concepts*, Tokyo, fourth reprint 1994, p. 30.

¹⁹⁷ R.G. Bhandarkar, *Sects*, p. 153.

¹⁹⁸ V.A. Smith, *Ashoka*, pp. 140 ff.

palaces at Pataliputra (華侍成). Persia was a great empire from the time of Cyrus to the invasion of Alexander, and Darius I annexed the valley of the Indus about 518 B.C.¹⁹⁹ Persian culture continued to exercise considerable influence on the nations of Asia during many centuries. Persia and India were close neighbours, and the Persians were in many respects more advanced in civilization than the Indians, so India certainly borrowed much from Persia during this period and Zoroastrianism, the religion of ancient Persia, may also have contributed to the rise of the Bodhisattva doctrine in India.

Propaganda among New Tribes

During the centuries that followed Alexander's invasion of India, the northwestern part of India was repeatedly overrun by foreign invaders like the Pahlavas, the Cakas and the Kusans. It was a real meeting-place of nations. This international atmosphere favoured the introduction of new ideas in Buddhism.

The Buddhists grappled with the task of converting these sturdy and semi-barbarous tribes to their faith. Polytheism had to be tolerated and even rendered attractive. The Bodhisattva doctrine exalted Love and Activity and peopled the heavens with gracious Beings, who could be worshipped. It is likely that some deities of the new tribes were adopted as Bodhisattvas.

The Concept of Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Sūtras

It is very difficult to regard the precise chronological brackets of the Bodhisattva (菩薩) doctrine with many ideas.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 335. P.V.N. Myers, *General History*, Boston, 1919, p. 61.

The Encyclopaedia of Buddhism²⁰⁰ is of opinion that the Bodhisattva doctrine has taken shape around 1st century B.C. with the statement below:

“Round about the first century A.C. the luxuriant fancy of India began to invent and multiply divinities much in the fashion of the Ṛgvedic poets and the Buddhist theologians of the time were no exception. When personalities of Śiva and Viṣṇu were taking shapes in Hinduism, the figures of divine Bodhisattva were taking shape in Mahāyāna Buddhism.”

In the opinion of Har Dayal²⁰¹ the Bodhisattva doctrine probably originated in the 2nd century B.C.: “We may regard the second century B.C. as the chronological starting-point for the development of the Bodhisattva”. N. Dutt²⁰² observes it to be around the 2nd or 1st century B.C. Nakamura²⁰³ and A.K. Warder²⁰⁴ have maintained that Bodhisattvayāna (菩薩乘) might have come into existence probably towards the beginning of the Christian era. The Encyclopaedia of Religion²⁰⁵ holds that the concept of Bodhisattva apparently emerged between the beginning of the first century B.C. and the middle of the first century AD... Such are several representative ideas on the chronology of Bodhisattva doctrine accepted and used by scholars. It may, however, be supposed that these views actually refer to the outburst of the worship of Bodhisattva ideal (菩薩理想)

²⁰⁰ EB, III, 231.

²⁰¹ BDBSL, 43.

²⁰² N. Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, Delhi: Motilal, p. 1.

²⁰³ H. Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, Motilal Banarsidass, rpt. Delhi, 1996, p. 99.

²⁰⁴ A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, Motilal Banarsidass, rpt. Delhi, 1997, p. 352.

²⁰⁵ Mircea Eliade, *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, Vol. 2, Collier Macmillan Publishers, London, 1987, p. 458.

assignable to the development of Bodhisattva philosophy in Mahāyāna (佛教大乘).

The concept of Bodhisattva as depicted in the Majjhima Nikāya was compiled around the fourth and third centuries B.C.²⁰⁶ The admission of Gotama Siddhārtha of being a Bodhisattva before enlightenment should be taken to be a simple statement of the Bodhisattva ideal in the Pāli Nikāya: "...before awakening, while I was still the Bodhisattva ...".²⁰⁷ In this, we meet with the idea of transdevelopment of the Arahāt ideal to the Bodhisattva ideal.

According to Bimala Churn Law, his opinion the chronology of the Pāli canonical literature should be classified as follows:

1. The simple statements of Buddhist doctrine now found, in identical words, in paragraphs or verses recurring in all books.
2. Episodes found, in identical words, in two or more of the existing books.
3. The Sīla, the Pārāyaṇa group of sixteen poems.
4. Dīgha, Vol. I, the Majjhima, the Saṃyutta, the Aṅguttara Nikāyas.
5. The Dīgha, Vol. II and III, ... the collection of 500

²⁰⁶ Prof. Rhys Davids supposed it to be composed some time before the date of Asoka (see "Buddhists India by T.W. Rhys Davids", page. 169). Meanwhile, Bimala Churn Law assigned pre-Asoka's age (see also "A History of Pali Literature by Bimala Churn Law", p. 28). Gombrich considered it to be at least the third century B.C (see "How Buddhism Began by Richard F Gombrich, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1997, p. 9)

²⁰⁷ MLS, I, 207.

Jātakas.²⁰⁸

The subjoined division relating to some transformation of the chronological order of the Dīgha Nikāya, Vol. II and III supposed to be composed after the Majjhima Nikāya, the term ‘Bodhisattva’, which might well have been pressured by the outburst of the new Buddhist Schools, especially the Mahāsāṅghika (大衆部)²⁰⁹ school with its philosophical progress because of disagreements with the Theravāda sect about the Vinaya as well as doctrine, particularly in term of Buddhology,²¹⁰ is now deified in the good omens and extraordinary characteristics when “the Bodhisatta descending from the Tusita group entering his mother’s womb”.²¹¹ The second landmark in the development of the Bodhisattva ideal is the deification of the portrait of seven Buddhas by manifesting the descent of the Bodhisattva from the Tuṣita paradise entering his mother’s womb. The Buddha’s descent on earth is the third step of development in the Buddhist teaching.

The profusely illustrated pictures of the Bodhisattva as found in the Jātakas are assumed to be the fourth phase of the philosophical progress of the doctrine. It is a genuinely strong religious trend reclining towards a mythological scope of Bodhisattva doctrine. It is not easy to analyse the revolution in Buddhism at the time which is often told to be caused by a marked decline in the order and exhaustion of its Arhat ideal for preaching the Dharma. That may be the reason Isaline B

²⁰⁸ Bimala Chum Law, *A History of Pali Literaturere*, Vol. I, Indological Book House, India, 1983, p. 42.

²⁰⁹ N. Dutt, *Buddhist Sects in India*, Motilal Banarsidass, 1978 (Second Edition), pp. 58-9.

²¹⁰ N. Dutt, *Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism in its Relation to Hinayāna Buddhism*, London: Luzac & Co: 1930. s.v. Mahāsanghikā.

²¹¹ MLS, III, 165.

Horner in *The Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected* ²¹² stated that:

“First, there is the original and positive element of the altruism of the arahan in foregoing his meditations in order to give counsel and instruction to other members of the Order and to the laity; and secondly, there is the increasing amount of solitude sought by the later arahants, which was possibly due to the loss of the inspiring presence and example of the Master”.

The compilation of Jātakas has been a unique experiment in the history of Buddhism which took deep root in popular sentiment and evoked great applause among men of all countries of the world to accept the doctrine. It thus did not remain confined to Indian masses. For centuries, the ideal of Bodhisattva manifesting the power of the Buddha has been inspiring men to live up to the ideal of the Buddha in making the life of the beings peaceful and happy. That is to say, during a period of about four centuries from the 6th to the 3rd century B.C, Buddhology of the Pāli Nikāyas with its realistic conception of the Buddha, that of Sarvastivada (一切有部) with its two kinds of Buddhakāya (佛身, viz., Dharmakāya (法身) and Rupakāya (色身) has still centred around and has revered the enlightenment ideal of Buddhism, and has smoothly run among the Buddhist circles without much transformation. In the fifth phase of the doctrinal dissemination a strong commotion had been felt across the world to usher into a permanent stage of philosophical contention and unequivocal growth of the meditative trends and practices based on manifestations of the divine. The preceptors genuinely looked into the affair of men benefiting them by invocations of gods and goddesses that were adored by all.

²¹² Isaline B. Horner, *The Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected*, London, 1979, p. 191.

The double Equipment characteristic of Knowledge (*jñāna-sambhāra*, 智資) and Merit (*puṇya-sambhāra*, 福資) of the Buddha are deified as Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (文殊師利菩薩) and Avalokiteśvara (觀世音菩薩) respectively. In the Mahāyāna, Wisdom is considered to be somewhat more important than Mercy and is invoked in the opening verses of several treatises, and it has been praised in the Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka (妙法蓮花經). The glorification of Wisdom reaches its climax in the writings of the Mādhyamika school (中論) of philosophy, which was founded by Nāgārjuna in the second century A.D. Wisdom (*Prajñā*, 智慧) is extolled ad nauseam, while Mercy (*karuṇā*, 慈悲) is not discussed in detail. But the later Mahāyāna emphasises Mercy more than Wisdom. It is emotional rather than argumentative.

It sometimes seems to ignore and discard Wisdom altogether, as when it declares that *karuṇā* is the one thing needful for a Bodhisattva. As this ideal gains ground, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (觀世音菩薩) increases in importance till he becomes the supreme and unique Bodhisattva. The Mahāyāna slowly passes from the ascendancy of Mañjuśrī (文殊師利菩薩) to the reign of Avalokiteśvara (Lord of Mercy) who is considered as Lord of Compassion (慈悲的王).

The early Mahāyāna teaches that altruistic activity is one of the means of attaining Enlightenment, which is the goal. But the later Mahāyāna seems to forget even that far-off destination and prefers to loiter on the way. A Bodhisattva need not be in a hurry to win Bodhi and become a Buddha, as he can help and succour all living beings more effectively during his mundane career as a Bodhisattva. This idea also resulted in the subordination of the Buddhas to the Bodhisattvas. There is a marked tendency to regard Altruism as an end in itself. Avalokiteśvara does not seem to think

seriously of becoming a Buddha. In the two great Bodhisattvas — Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī, one can very well see the personifications of kindness / compassion and knowledge / wisdom respectively. They invite comparison with the Zoroastrian Amesha Spentas and with the Christian archangels. With such developments in Budhological realm, it is but natural that the number of Bodhisattvas became virtually endless. In fact, the important Mahāyāna scriptural texts like the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra (妙法蓮花經), Avataṃsaka Sūtra (華嚴經) and so on provide a very long list of such Bodhisattvas and in essence, when the Bodhisattvas could not be named or designated, the compilers of those sūtras simply referred to those Bodhisattvas in millions, rather innumerable.²¹³

In addition to Avalokiteśvara (觀世音菩薩) and Mañjuśrī (文殊師利菩薩), there are other important figures like Asita (who has been prophesied by Śākyamuni Buddha (釋迦牟尼佛) to be the Maitreya Buddha (彌勒佛), Samantabhadra (普賢菩薩), Mahāsthāmaprāpta (大勢至菩薩) and Kṣitigarbha (地藏菩薩) and so on and so forth, who have become important not only in India, but also in the Far East. These six Bodhisattvas along with Ākāśagarbha (虛空藏菩薩) and Vajrapāṇī (金剛手菩薩), form a group of eight Bodhisattvas (菩薩) who have become more famous than the others. These and many others are worshipped both in the form of icons and through various methods of spiritual sādhanās (practices) especially by the Mahāyāna Buddhists. However, we should remember the fact that the Bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna Buddhism are not historical figures, but they are the enlightened ones from other worlds. They are also manifestations of the supreme power of the Buddha. It is a known fact that in all religious

²¹³ LS, 14.

systems there are some kinds of symbolic figures which are prayed for granting wishes and are practiced for being awaken.

A Bodhisattva is a person in the school of the elders who is desirous of acquiring the characteristics of a perfect being, the enlightened-one. It appears as such in the Pāli Nikāyas. The accomplishment of such a state makes him content. But the ideal of Mahāyāna induces him to greater effort based on dynamic activity to help the other beings attain ultimate bliss; before that he does not lay ore to save beings from the state of suffering. Not satisfied with his own mitigation of desire some actions that make him subjected to malice and all kinds of cravings, he strives up on helping all other beings to come over the affray.

The Meaning and Status of Mahāsattva (摩訶薩)

It will be in the fitness of things if a special mention is made to Mahāyāna Sūtras (大乘經) in order to show the meaning and status of Mahāsattva, because the term Bodhisattva (菩薩) is often coupled with Mahāsattva (大人, Great Being).

‘Mahā’ (大) means ‘great’ and ‘sattva’ (情) means either ‘being’ or ‘courage’. Nāgārjuna (龍樹) gives a number of reasons why Bodhisattvas are called ‘great beings’. It is because they achieve a great work, stand at the head of a great many beings, activate great friendliness and great compassion, save a great number of beings. The Tibetans translate Mahāsattvas (摩訶薩) as ‘great spiritual hero’ and their aspirations are truly on a heroic scale. They desire to discipline all beings everywhere, to serve and honour all the Buddhas everywhere, and to purify all the Buddha-fields everywhere. They want to retain firmly in their minds all the teachings of all the Buddhas, to have a detailed knowledge of

all the Buddha-fields to comprehend all the assemblies which anywhere gather around a Buddha, to plunge into the thoughts of all beings, to remove their defilements and to fathom their potentialities.²¹⁴

In the beginning of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñā pāramitā (八天頌若波羅密經), the Lord Buddha explained the meaning of great being (*Mahāsattva*, 摩訶薩), when Subhūti (須菩提) asked about it. The Lord says that a Bodhisattva (菩薩) is called ‘a great being’ in the sense that he will demonstrate Dharma so that the great errors should be forsaken — such erroneous views as the assumption of a self, a being, a living soul, a person, of becoming, of not becoming of annihilation, of eternity, of individuality, etc.²¹⁵ The Saddharmapuṇḍarika (妙法蓮花經) and the Vajracchedikā prajñāpāramitā Sūtras (金剛般若波羅密經) say that Mahāsattvas also have good qualities and method of practice pāramitā (波羅密) as Bodhisattvas (菩薩) and “...who under many hundred thousands of Buddhas had planted the roots of goodness.”²¹⁶

In other words, Mahāsattva is like Bodhisattva who will be able to eliminate all his bad karmas (業) and sufferings and will show the emancipation way to all beings with all skills by his deep compassion. However, in Pāli Nikāyas, we do not find the word Mahāsattva, but in some Mahāyāna sūtras this term is used quite frequently like Bodhisattva and also often both terms appear together as in the Saddharmapuṇḍarika Sūtra (妙法蓮花經), Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra (大般涅槃經)... for example the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Mañjuśrī (文殊師利菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva

²¹⁴ Edward Conze (tr.), *The Diamond Sūtra and The Heart Sūtra*, London, 1957, p. 23.

²¹⁵ Edward Conze (tr.), *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñā-pāramitā*, p. 7.

²¹⁶ LS, 221.

Avalokiteśvara (觀世音菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Mahāsthāma-prāpta (大勢至菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Nityodyukta (常精進菩薩摩訶薩), the Sadāparibhūta Bodhisattva (常不輕菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Anikṣiptadhura (不休息菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Ratnapāṇi (寶掌菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Bhaiṣajyarāja (藥王菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Pralānaśūra (勇施菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Ratnacandra (寶月菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Ratnaprabha (寶光菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Pūrṇacandra (滿月菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Mahāvīkrāmin (大力菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Anantavīkrāmin (無量力菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Trailokyavīkrāmin (越三界菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Bhadrāpāla (賢首菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Maitreya (彌勒菩薩摩訶薩), the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Ratnākara (寶積菩薩摩訶薩)... and so on.²¹⁷

The Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra shows the special status of Bodhisattvas who not only attempt search of Bodhi for the sake of themselves, but also devote their energy to saving all living beings. For that reason, they are named Mahāsattvas, great beings.



²¹⁷ LS, 4 & also see L. Hurvitz, *Scripture of The Lotus Blossom of the Five Dharma*, New York, 1976, pp.1-2.

CHAPTER FIVE

**THE CONCEPT OF SUÑÑATĀ
AS DEPICTED IN PĀLI NIKĀYAS**

According to the Vajrachedikā-prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra (金剛般若波羅密經), there are two things which are most needful to the Bodhisattva, and to his practice of wisdom: “Never to abandon all beings and to see into the truth that all things are empty”,²¹⁸ are the ones of the most profound, sublime, and influential of all Mahāyāna texts (大乘經).

Suññatā, i.e., ‘emptiness’ or ‘voidness’ of all phenomena is stressed in many Mahāyāna scriptures, beginning with the Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtras (般若波羅密經), and from that becomes of paramount importance, not only to the Mādhyamika (中論) and Yogācāra (瑜伽論) school in India (including all of their respective subdivisions), but to all the Mahāyāna schools across the geographic landscape, ancient and modern. Śūnyatā (空性) also plays a critical role in all the Vajrayāna (金剛乘) schools as well. Consequently, it is probably not unreasonable to cite its concept as the single most important Mahāyāna (大乘) innovation. However, just like Bodhisattva (菩薩), the concept of Śūnyatā (空性) has also its seeds in the Pāli Nikāyas. By analytical and empirical approach how the concept of Suññatā (空) made impress on the scriptures of Pāli, we will found there are some shades of meanings illustrated as below:

²¹⁸ Edward Conze, Buddhism: Its Essence and Development, Delhi, 1994, p. 130.

Suññatā as Non-Substantiality

At first, we must give a look in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary²¹⁹ where 'empty' means:

1. (a) having nothing inside
(b) with nobody in it
2. (a) empty of something, without or lacking in (a quality)
(b) without sense or purpose: empty threats, words, promises, dreams
3. hungry

And the verb of 'empty' means:

1. make something empty
2. (a) empty something out (into/onto) remove the contents of something and put them somewhere else.
(b) empty (from/out) of something (into/onto something)

This is the original or first meaning of *Suñña* (Skt. *Śūnya*, 空) which expresses non-philosophic content and has the sense of 'empty', 'uninhabited' and 'useless'.

Following these significations which we understand *suñña* is non-substantiality as opposite of substantiality, full, material, appearance...In fact, the meaning of empty in Buddhism is very profound and sublime and it is rather difficult to cognize because not only neither something, nor figure, nor sound, nor... is empty, but also all living beings, phenomena come to existence by 'dependent co-arising' (*Pratītyasamutpāda*, 緣起, 因緣生起) is all so-called 'emptiness'. Here, the emptiness means the true reality that

²¹⁹ Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, A.P. Cowie (Ed.), Oxford University Press, Great Britain, 4th rpt. 1991, pp. 394-5.

has left the false thoughts or wrong beliefs. That is the reason many times the Buddha has made this statement as follows:

“I, Ānanda, through abiding in (the concept of) emptiness, am now abiding in the fulness thereof”.²²⁰

(Suññatāvihārenāham, Ānanda, etarahi bahulam viharāmiti).²²¹

However, in the evolution of the concept of emptiness in Pāli Nikāyas, the first meaning of empty - ‘non-substantiality’ also can be found as below:

“He sees an empty village and whatever house he may enter he finds it empty, deserted and void”.²²²

(So passeyya suññam gāmam yaññad eve gharam paviseyya rittakaññeva paviseyya tucchakaññeva paviseyya suññakaññeva paviseyya).²²³

or in the Dialogue of the Buddha also expressed in the same idea:

“Now there comes also a time, brethren, when, sooner or later, this world-system begins to re-evolve. When this happens the Palace of Brahma appears, but it is empty. And some being or other, either because his span of years has passed or his merit is exhausted, falls from that World of Radiance, and comes to life in the Palace of Brahma. And there also he lives made of mind, feeding on joy, radiating light from himself, traversing the air, continuing in glory; and thus does he remain-for a long period of time.”²²⁴

(Hoti kho so, bhikkhave, samayo yaṃ kadāci karahaci dīghassa addhuno accayena ayaṃ loko vivaṭṭati. Vivaṭṭamāne loke suññam Brahma-vimānaṃ pātu-bhavati. Ath’ aññataro

²²⁰ MLS, III, No. 121 Cūlasunnata Sutta, 147.

²²¹ M, III, 104.

²²² BGS, IV, 108.

²²³ S, IV, 173.

²²⁴ DB, I, No.1 Brāhmajala Sutta, 30-1.

satto āyukkhayā vā puññakkhayā vā Ābhassarakāyā cavitvā suññaṃ Brahma-vimānaṃ upapajjati. So tatha hoti manomayo pīti-bhakkho sayāṃ-pabho antalikkha-carō subhaṭṭhāyī, cīraṃ dīghaṃ addhānaṃ tiṭṭhati).²²⁵

or in the Sutta-nīpāta occurs as the following lines:

“Look upon the world as being non-substantial, O Mogharaja, being ever so mindful. One surpasses death by uprooting belief in substantiality. Death does not get hold of him who regards the world in this way.”

(Sunnato lokam avekkhassu

Mogharja sadd sato,

attānudiṭṭhim uhacca

evam maccutaro siyā

evam lokam avekkhantam

maccurājā na passati).²²⁶

As suñña means ‘empty’ and ‘void’ it is frequently used in the sense of ‘devoid of’ (this or that quality of character):

“This being so, good Gotama, that fold of the sects is empty even in regard to attaining heaven.

This being the case, O Vaccha; the institution of heretics is devoid of even a person who goes to heaven”.²²⁷

(Evaṃ sante bho Gotama suññaṃ adun tithāyatanāṃ antamaso saggūpāgena pīti.

Evam sante Vaccha suññaṃ adun tithāyatanam antamaso saggupāgena).²²⁸

²²⁵ D, I, 17.

²²⁶ Sutta-nīpatā, Verse 1119.

²²⁷ MLS, II, No. 71 Tevijjavacchagotta Sutta, 162.

²²⁸ M, I, No. 46 Mahāvedalla Sutta, 483.

Also in the same text of Majjhima Nikāya but different volume, the Buddha teaches the following valuable that:

“And what, your reverence, is the freedom of mind that is signless? As to this, your reverence, a monk, by paying no attention to any signs, entering on the concentration of mind that is signless, abides therein. This, your reverence, is called the freedom of mind that is signless. This, your reverence, is the method according to which these states are different in connotation as well as differing in denotation. And what, your reverence, is the method according to which these states are identical in connotation while being different in denotation? Attachment, your reverence, is productive of the measurable, hatred is productive of the measurable, confusion is productive of the measurable. For a monk whose cankers are destroyed, these are got rid of, cut off at the roots, made like a palm-tree stump so that they can come to no further existence in the future. To the extent, your reverence, that freedoms of mind are immeasurable, unshakable freedom of mind is shown to be their chief, for that unshakable freedom of mind is void of attachment, void of hatred, void of confusion. Attachment, your reverence, is something (obstructive), hatred is something (obstructive), confusion is something (obstructive). For a monk whose cankers are destroyed, these are got rid of, cut off at the roots, made like a palm-tree stump so that they can come to no further existence in the future. To the extent, your reverence, that freedoms of mind are naught, unshakable freedom of mind is shown to be their chief, for that unshakable freedom of mind is void of attachment, void of hatred, void of confusion. Attachment, your reverence, is productive of signs, hatred is productive of signs, confusion is productive of signs. For a monk whose cankers are destroyed these are got rid of, cut off at the roots, made like a palm-tree stump so that they can come to no further existence in the future. To the extent, your reverence, that freedoms of mind are immeasurable, unshakable freedom of mind is shown to be their chief, for that unshakable freedom of mind is void of attachment, void of hatred, void of confusion. This, your reverence, is the method according to which these states are identical in connotation while being different in denotation.”

Thus spoke the venerable Sāriputta. Delighted, the venerable Koṭṭhita the Great rejoiced in what the venerable Sāriputta had said.²²⁹

(Ayaṃ vuccat' āvuso suññatā cetovimutti. Katamā c' āvuso animittā cetovimutti: Idh' āviiso hikkhu sabbanimittānaṃ amanasikārā animittānaṃ cetosamādhiṃ upasampajja viharati. Ayaṃ vuccat' āvuso animittā cetovimutti. Ayaṃ kho āvuso pariyāyo yaṃ pariyāyaṃ āgamma ime dhammā nānaṭṭhā c' eva nānābyañjanā ca. Katamo c' āvuso pariyāyo yaṃ pariyāyaṃ āgamma ime dhammā ekaṭṭhā, byañjanam – eva nanam: E, ago kho avuso pamanakarano, doso pamāṇakaraṇo, moho pamāṇakaraṇo; te khīṇāsavassa bhikkhuno pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālavatthukatā anabhāvakatā āyatīṃ anuppādadhammā. Yāvata kho āvuo appamāṇā cetovimuttiyo akuppā tāsāṃ cetovimutti aggam - akkhāyati, sā kho panakuppā cetovimutti suñña rāgena suñña dosena suñña mohena. Rāgo kho āvuso kiñcano, doso kiñcano. Moho kiñcano, te khīṇāsavassa bhikkhuno pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālavatthukatā anabhāvakatā āyatīṃ anuppādadhammā. Yāvata kho āvuso ākiñcañña cetovimuttiyo akuppā tāsāṃ cetovimutti aggam - akkhāyati, sā kho panakuppā cetovimutti suñña rāgena suñña dosena suñña mohena. Rāgo kho āvuso nimittakaraṇo, doso nimittakaraṇo, moho nimittakaraṇo. te khīṇāsavassa bhikkhuno pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālavatthukatā anabhāvakatā āyatīṃ anuppādadhammā. Yāvata kho āvuso animittā cetovimuttiyo akuppā tāsāṃ cetovimutti aggam akkhāyati, sā kho panakuppā cetovimutti suñña rāgena suñña dosena suñña mohena. Ayaṃ kho āvuso pariyāyo yaṃ pariyāyaṃ āgamma ime dhammā ekaṭṭhā, byañjanam eva nānāna ti.)²³⁰

In accordance with this usage, the word *Suññatā* is then employed to express the fact that there is no permanent, adjacent entity underlying the phenomena of the world of experience:

²²⁹ MLS, I, 359-360.

²³⁰ M, I, 298.

“Suññam idam attena va attaniyena vā ti”.²³¹

The specific philosophic sense of the term *Suñña* has its beginnings here. At first the term was used in its literal adjectival sense of ‘devoid’ (of substance or anything substantial) when used with ‘atta’ or ‘attaniya’. Later the term came to be used without the other two words, namely, *atta* and *attaniya*, to convey the meaning of non-substantiality. As a result of this absolute usage *suñña*, which otherwise is an ordinary word, now emerges as a technical term having a philosophic import and connotation.

In brief, the first meaning of emptiness – ‘non substantiality’ in the non-philosophy which is very concrete, easy and without abstract or general, then gradually the Buddha starts to express the emptiness in the philosophical signification.

Suññatā as the Reality

As we know, Buddhism is the way to live and liberation and Buddhists come to it by knowledge, intellectual or wisdom except belief or superstition. To advance wisdom, the Buddha has shown the four fundamental characteristics of individual existence established as *anicca* (Skt. *Anitya*, 無常), or impermanence, *dukkha* (Skt. *Duhkha*, 苦) or suffering, *anatta* (Skt. *anātman*, 無我) or no-selfness, i.e., non-substantiality and *Suññatā* (Skt. *Śūnyatā*, 空) or emptiness. The four marks are philosophically relevant to guide us to insight the reality except the themes for moral speculation or conclusion that life is the root of suffering, radical transience, impermanence, we must not desire and phenomena around us is empty. Such a thought

²³¹ Culla Niddesa, II, Patisambhidāmagga I, Para, 45, 91; 11 Para, 36, 48, 177.

not only harms all of us on the way to enlightenment, but also misconstrues Buddha's teaching purpose.

We must often reflect on the reality of ourselves and phenomena round us and look at it by our insight to attach no any bonds. The basic principle of Buddha is to be free by wisdom through the method of contemplation and cultivation.

In Pāli Nikāyas, Majjhima Nikāya devoted two suttas for specific consideration of the way of contemplation of Suññatā: Cūlla Suññata Sutta and Mahā Suññata Sutta.

In the Cūla-Suññatā Sutta, the Buddha defined the meaning of emptiness on two characters i.e. emptiness on the dwelt place and attaining of the stages of jhānas. In other word, the reflection on Suññatā from the simple, concrete material, to deep, sublime essence. First of all the Buddha explained emptiness as under:

“As this palace of Migāra's mother is empty of elephants, cows, horses and mares, empty of gold and silver, empty of assemblages of men and women, and there is only this that is not emptiness, that is to say the solitude grounded on the Order of monks”²³².

(Seyyathāpi ayaṃ Migāramātu pāsādo suñño hatthigavāssavaḷavana, suñño jātarūparajātana, suñño itthipurisasannipātana; atthi c'ev' idaṃ asuññataṃ yadidaṃ bhikkhusaṅghaṃ paṭicca ekattaṃ.)²³³

Thus, a monk reflects the perception of village as emptiness and attending to the perception of human beings as existence. Here, Buddha clarifies that the emptiness on the dwelt place has the meaning that when a Bhikkhu enters a village which has nothing, no elephant, cow, horse, mare, gold and silver... then he should comprehend them as emptiness. In the contrast, in the palace of Migāra's mother

²³² MLS, III, No. 121 Culasunnata Sutta, 147.

²³³ M, II, 104.

has something, the lecture-hall, the Order of Monks... then he should awaken exactly as its existence. This means there presents the perception of human beings except the perception of village.

The next meaning is without the perception of human beings and village except attending to solitude grounded on the perception of forest as under:

“The disturbances there might be resulting from the perception of village do not exist here, the disturbances there might be resulting from the perception of human beings do not exist here. There is only this degree of disturbance, that is to say solitude grounded on the perception of forest”.²³⁴

(Ye assu darathā gāmasaññaṃ paṭicca, te ‘dha na santi; ye assu darathā manussasaññaṃ paṭicca, te ‘dha na santi; atthi c’ evāyaṃ darathamattā yadidaṃ araññasaññaṃ paṭicca ekattan ti.)²³⁵

Likewise, he has done with the perception of the earth.

The second point of Suññatā in Cūlla Suññata Sutta relates to the stage of jhānas. There are five stages of jhānas which a monk should attain to enliven the emptiness and enjoy Nibbāna as illustrated under:

“The disturbances there might be resulting from the perception of forest do not exist here, the disturbances there might be resulting from the perception of earth do not exist here. There is only this degree of disturbance, that is to say solitude grounded on (the perception of) the plane of infinite ākāsa”.²³⁶

(Ye assu darathā araññasaññaṃ paṭicca te ‘dha na santi; ye assu darathā paṭhavisaññaṃ paṭicca te ‘dha na santi; atthi c’

²³⁴ Ibid. 148.

²³⁵ M, III, 104.

²³⁶ Ibid. 149.

evāyaṃ darahamattā yadidaṃ ākāśānañcāyatanāṃ paṭicca ekattan ti.)²³⁷

Like that, he contemplates (the perception of) the plane of infinite consciousness, the plane of no-thing, the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, the concentration of mind.

And in Mahā Suññatā Sutta, the Buddha taught a monk who has desired to enter on an inward (concept of) Mahā Suññatā, must be:

“Aloof from pleasure of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, entering on it abides in the first meditation...the second...the third...the fourth meditation. Even so, Ānanda, does a monk steady, calm, make one-point and concentrate his mind precisely on what is inward”.²³⁸

(vivec’ eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajaṃ pītisukham paṭhamajjhānaṃ upasampajja viharati; vitakkavicārānaṃ vūpasamā ajjhattaṃ sampasādanaṃ cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ dutiyajjhānaṃ — tatiyajjhānaṃ — catutthajjhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Evaṃ kho, Ānanda, bhikkhu ajjhattam eva cittaṃ saṅṭhapeti sannisādeti ekodikaroti samādahati. So ajjhattaṃ suññataṃ manasikaroti; tassa ajjhattaṃ suññataṃ manasikaroto ajjhattaṃ suññatāya cittaṃ na patkkhandati nappasīdati na santiṭṭhati na vimuccati. Evaṃ santam etaṃ, Ānanda, bhikkhu evaṃ pajānāti: Ajjnittaṃ suññataṃ kho me manasikaroto ajjhattaṃ suññatāya cittaṃ na pakkhandati nappasīdati na santiṭṭhati na vimuccatīti. Itiha tattha sampajāno hoti. So bahiddhā suññataṃ manasikaroti; so ajjhatabahiddhā suññataṃ manasikaroti; so āṇājaṃ manasikaroti; tassa āṇājaṃ manasikaroto āṇāje cittaṃ na pakkhandati nappasīdati na santiṭṭhati na vimuccatīti. Evaṃ santam etaṃ, Ānanda, bhikkhu evam pajānāti: Āṇājaṃ kho me manasikaroto āṇāje cittaṃ na pakkhandati nappasīdati na

²³⁷ M, III, 105-6.

²³⁸ Ibid, 155.

santiṭṭhāti na vimuccatīti. Itiha tattha sampajāno hoti. Ten', Ānanda, bhikkhunā tasmim̄ yeva purimasim̄ samādhinimitte ajjhattam eva cittaṃ saṅghapetābbaṃ sannisādetabbaṃ ekodikātabbaṃ samādahātabbaṃ. So ajjhattaṃ suññataṃ manasikaroti; tassa ajjhattaṃ suññataṃ manaaikaroto ajjhattaṃ suññatāya cittaṃ pakkhandati pasīdati santiṭṭhāti vimuccati. Evaṃ santam etaṃ, Ānanda, bhikkhu evam pajānāti: Ajjhattaṃ suññataṃ kho me manasikaroto ajjhattam suññatāya cittaṃ pakkhandati pasīdati santiṭṭhāti vimuccatīti. Itiha tattha sampajāno hoti. So bahiddhā suññataṃ manasikaroti; bo ajjhatabhiddhā suññataṃ manasikaroti; so āṇājaṃ manasikaroti; tassa āṇājaṃ manasikaroto āṇāje cittaṃ pakkhandati pasīdati santiṭṭhāti vimuccati. Evaṃ santam etaṃ, Ānanda, bhikkhu evam pajānāti: Āṇājaṃ kho me manasikaroto āṇāje cittaṃ pakkhandati pasīdati santiṭṭhāti vimuccatīti. Itiha tattha sampajāno hoti.)²³⁹

Then from attending to an inward (concept of) emptiness, he proceeds to attend an external (concept of) emptiness, and to imperturbability. And when he attains this level he knows it very well:

“This being so, Ānanda, the monk comprehends thus: ‘while I was attending to imperturbability my mind was satisfied with, pleased with, set on and freed in imperturbability’. So he is clearly conscious in regard to it.”²⁴⁰

(Evaṃ maṃ sayantaṃ nābhijjhādomanassā pāpakā akusalā dhammā anvāsavissantīti; —itiha tattha sampajāno hoti.)²⁴¹

or in the Kindred Sayings about the Unrevealed is expressed the same idea that:

“Now what think you, Anurādha! Is body permanent or impermanent?

Impermanent, Lord.’

²³⁹ M, III, 111-2.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 156.

²⁴¹ M, III, 113.

‘What is impermanet, is that weal or woe?’

‘Woe, Lord’

‘Now what is impermanent, what is woe, what is woe, what is of a nature to change, - is it proper to regard that thus: ‘This is mine. This am I. This is my self?’

‘Surely not, Lord’

‘Is feeling permanet or impermanent?’

‘Impermanent, Lord’

Is perception ...are the activities...is consciousness permanent or impermanent’

‘Impermanent, Lord’

‘Now what is impermanent...is it proper to regard that thus: ‘This is mine. This am I. This is my self?’

‘Surely not, Lord’

‘Therefore, Anurādha, whatsoever body, be it past, future, or present, inward or outward, subtle or gross, low or high, far or near, every body should be regarded, as it really is, by perfect insight, thus: ‘This is not mine. This am not I. This is not my self.’ Whatsoever feelings...whatsoever perception... whatsoever activities... whatsoever consciousness, be it past, future or present, inward or outward... should be so regarded, as it really is, by right insight”.²⁴²

(Taṃ kim maññasi Anurādha rūpaṃ niccaṃ vā aniccaṃ vā aniccaṃ vā ti. Aniccaṃ bhante, Yam paṇāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vā taṃ sukkaṃ vā ti Dukkhaṃ bhante. Yam paṇāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vipariṇāmadhammam kallaṃ nu taṃ samanupassituṃ Etam mama eso ham asmi eso me attā ti .No hetani bhante. Vedanā niccā vā aniccā vā ti, Saññā, Saṅkhārā, Viññāṇaṃ niccaṃ vā aniccaṃ vā ti Aniccāṃ bhante Yam paṇāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vā taṃ sukkaṃ vā ti. Dukkhaṃ bhante. Yam paṇāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vipariṇāmadhammaṃ kallaṃ nu taṃ samanupassituṃ Etam mama eso ham asmi eso me attā ti No hetam bhante. Tasmā ti ha Anurādha yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ

²⁴² BKS, IV, Chaper x, ii, Anurada, 271.

atitānāgata paccuppannam ajjhattam va bahiddha va olarīkam va sukhumaṃ va h'nam va paṇitam va yaṃ dure eantike va sabbaṃ rūpaṃ Netam mama neso ham asmi na meso attā ti evam etaṃ yaṭhābhūtaṃ sammappaññaya daṭṭhabba. Yā kāci vedanā atitānāgatapaccuppannā pe. Yā kāci saññā Ye keci saṅkhārā Yaṃ kiñci viññāṇaṃ atitānāgatapaccuppannam ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā, yaṃ dure santike vā sabbaṃ viññāṇaṃ Netam mama neso ham asmi na me so attā, ti evam etaṃ yaṭhābhūtaṃ sammappaññaya daṭṭhabbaṃ)²⁴³

From these points, we can see *Suññatā* (空) does not mean that all phenomena or all stages of *jhānas* (禪定) are emptiness, nothing, but whatever has appeared or attained, clearly exists. And in the contrast, whatever disappears, does not achieve we must understand it is empty as it is. Here, ‘the negation’ or ‘the affirmation’ are of something specific. From this, the Buddha guides us reality. Therefore, *Suññatā* is also considered as reality.

***Suññatā* as *Anattā* (無我)**

Suññatā also is understood as *anattā* (無我, no-self). First of all, we keep in mind that in scriptures of *Nikāyas*, the Buddha always expounds the doctrine of no-self (*anattā*) the scheme of emptiness (*Suññatā*, 空). Because the term of *Suññatā* is very abstract and difficult to grasp. But when we study more and more in the meaning of *Suññatā*, we recognize that *Suññatā* also bears the idea of *anattā*.

In the *Cūlla Suññatā* and *Mahā Suññatā Suttanta*, the Buddha once told *Ānanda* that he often dwelt in the liberation of the void, *Suññatā-vihāra* when requested by *Ānanda*, he explained liberation of the void meant liberation through

²⁴³ S, IV, 382-3.

insight that discerns voidness of self and the Buddha addressed Venerable Ānanda:

“Certainly, Ānanda, you heard this properly, leant it properly, attended to it properly and understood it properly. Formerly I, Ānanda, as well as now, through abiding in (the concept of) emptiness, abide in the fulness thereof. As this palace of Migāra’s mother is empty of elephants, cows, horses and mares, empty of gold and silver, empty of assemblages of men and women, and there is only this that is not emptiness, that is to say the solitude grounded on the Order of monks; even so, Ānanda, a monk, not attending to the perception of village, not attending to the perception of human beings, attends to solitude grounded on the perception of forest. His mind is satisfied with, pleased with, set on and freed in the perception of forest. He comprehends thus: ‘The disturbances there might be resulting from the perception of village do not exist here; the disturbances there might be resulting from the perception of human beings do not exist here. There is only this degree of disturbance, that is to say solitude grounded on the perception of forest.’ He comprehends, ‘This perceiving is empty of the perception of village.’ He comprehends, ‘This perceiving is empty of the perception of human beings. And there is only this that is not emptiness, that is to say solitude grounded on the perception of forest.’ He regards that which is not there as empty of it. But in regard to what remains there he comprehends, ‘That being, this is.’ Thus, Ānanda, this comes to be for him a true, not a mistaken, utterly punned realisation of (the concept of) emptiness.”²⁴⁴

(Taggha te etaṃ, Ānanda, sussutaṃ suggahītaṃ
sumanasikataṃ sūpadhāritaṃ. Pubbe cāhaṃ, Ānanda, etarahi ca
suññatāvihārena bahulaṃ viharāmi. Seyyathāpi ayam

²⁴⁴ MLS, III, No. 121 Culasunnata Sutta, 147-8.

Migāramātu pāsādo suñño hatthigavāssavaḷavena, suñño jātarūparajatena, suñño itthipurisasannipātena; atthi c' ev' idaṃ asuññataṃ yadidaṃ bhikkhusaṅghaṃ paṭicca ekattaṃ; evam eva kho, Ānanda, bhikkhu amanasikarivā gāmasaṅghaṃ amanasikarivā manussasaṅghaṃ araṅghasaṅghaṃ paṭicca manasikaroti ekattaṃ. Tassa araṅghasaṅghāya cittaṃ pakkhandatī pasīdati santiṭṭhati vimuccati. So evaṃ pajānāti: Ye assu darathā gāmasaṅghaṃ paṭicca, te 'dha na santi; ye assu darathā manussasaṅghaṃ paṭicca, te 'dha na santi; atthi c' evāyaṃ darathamattā yadidaṃ araṅghasaṅghaṃ paṭicca ekattan ti. So: Suññaṃ idaṃ saṅghataṃ gāmasaṅghāyāti pajānāti; Suññaṃ idaṃ saṅghataṃ manussasaṅghāyāti pajānāti. Atthi c' ev' idaṃ asuññataṃ yadidaṃ araṅghasaṅghaṃ paṭicca ekattan ti. Iti yaṃ hi kho tattha na hoti, tena taṃ suññaṃ samanupassati; yaṃ pana tattha avasiṭṭhaṃ hoti, Taṃ santaṃ idaṃ atthīti pajānāti. Evam pi 'ssa esā, Ānanda, yathābhuccā avipallathā parisuddhā suññatāvakkāna ti bhavati).²⁴⁵

When colloquially or non-philosophically used, *Suñña* applies most often to a change of situation or a change of perception, e.g., a palace of Migāra's mother has the Order of monks and at the next moment void of it; or there are now monastery, monks and nuns to be seen in the window, while after a change of the viewer's position, only the sky is seen through the empty window. These are instances of void and emptying which are mind change in reference to the perceptual contents; they have nothing to do with the principle of *Suññatā* as an experience of the fundamental truth in the absolute canonical sense.

Nevertheless, intellectual grasping of perceptual changes, or, in other words, understanding the changes of consciousness which are based merely on emptying the contents of perception, can also be employed didactically in instructions for meditation, as is actually done by the Buddha in his discourse, the *Cūla-Suññatā Sutta*.

²⁴⁵ M, III, 104-5.

Unlike the science of psychology, Buddhist methods analyze the changes of mind, of its subjective side, and develop the skill of changing the mind at will. For this training and analysis, there is a necessary precondition to be fulfilled: the discovery of hitherto unnoticed inner phenomena by means of bare attention. This discovery works through mindful noticing which discerns the sense experience, the feeling, the state of consciousness, and the contents of consciousness as these come and go without any interventions.

Scientific theories elicit their truth from the conspicuous phenomena, making thus the extremes, criteria for the outcomes; the Buddhist practice promotes the middle way aiming at equanimity and peace. However, there are some extreme experiences encountered by long term meditators which may be very spectacular, intense, and unusual. Some very advanced meditators experience supreme bliss, free from any emotional changes and void of conceptualizations and images. Such states of mind are sometimes connected with an intense experience of clear light. In the original tradition of practical insight meditation, these extreme experiences are called ‘imperfections of insight’ (*vipassanā-upakkilesā*).

The Buddha’s discourse is addressed to listeners who are familiar with certain features of his teaching, in particular with the doctrine of anattā. Thus, for the sake of better understanding, we also have to grasp, at least roughly, the principle of anattā and some other technical terms in the Pāli Nikāyas (or Theravāda Canon). As a doctrinal term, Suññatā refers exclusively to the Anattā doctrine.

In meditation practice, Suññatā and Anattā are inseparable:

“Contemplation of not-self and contemplation of voidness are one in meaning and only the letter is different.” states Buddhaghosa.²⁴⁶

In enlightened experience of reality, anattā (無我) is the wise knowledge (*vijjā*, 明) that there is no self; *vijjā* is wisdom which is void of ignorance (*avijjā*, 無明) splitting reality into I and not-I, mine and not-mine. Unenlightened persons identify various parts of reality with the self, cling to them, and consequently, suffer due to the frustration of such delusional identifications. The enlightened view of reality, which is characterized by anattā, pierces all things which may be conventionally (*Sammuti*, Skt. *Samvṛti-satya*, 俗諦) conceived as identities and sees them ultimately (*Paramāttha*, Skt. *Paramārtha-satya*, 真諦) as an interplay of conditions, as an interaction of different aspects, as a change of context, as a dynamic evolution of arising and ceasing — all this as originating in profound interdependence and void of any persisting core. The enlightened view of reality is void (*suñña*) of any identity clings triggered by conventional concepts. There are no longer delusional percepts of stable identities; whatever exists is clearly seen as void of self (*suññaṃ attena*) and as dependently arisen *paticcasamuppānam* (*Pratītyasamutpāda*, 緣起, 因緣生起).

Anattā (無我) means that there is no self, no core, no unchangeable identity to be found in anything. Such a self (*attā*) is a pure construct which has a justification within the system of language. However, such a construct is misleading, for as soon as it is taken for real, it produces false thoughts and wrong beliefs which are divorced from reality and sustained only by concepts. Buddhist meditation principally uses three approaches as means for overcoming the delusion

²⁴⁶ Vi, II, p. 628.

of self.²⁴⁷

1. Mindful analysis (*satipatthāna*, 四念處) of components of seemingly compact things and events, the most important;
2. Clear view or insight (*vipassanā*, 明察慧) that whatever exists arises dependent on impermanent conditions and has to dissolve and pass away;
3. Direct experience of one's powerlessness to master (*avasavattana*, 空被支誤) the passing phenomena.

The insightful realization of Suññatā (空) and Anattā (無我) is not only a remedy for the frustration of wrong belief, it is also a prophylaxis and emancipation from any suffering which would arise due to possible self-identification in the future. The delusion of self is apt to arise in any person who is exposed to difficult life situations, unless the enlightened wisdom of anattā has been cultivated and firmly established.

The emotional identification with whatever we perceive as supporting essentials (*upādhi*, 貪生)²⁴⁸ of our life is not necessarily at a conscious level so as to allow an explicit formulation of the self-view (*attānuditthi*, 我見) as a rational belief. This self-delusion causes us to identify with our body, our habits, our titles, our bank account, our preferences, etc. in a pre-rational experience of the conceit 'I am' (*asmi-māna*: 我慢, māna is a product of perception which tendentiously conceives: *maññati*).

For ignorant beings enslaved by the delusion of self, the struggle to maintain a selfidentity is only all too real. Those wrongs believing in identities cannot perceive reality as it is; they can react only to the concepts, which purport to represent the identities of things, and of the self. They are

²⁴⁷ Journal of Buddhist Studies, IV: 10.

²⁴⁸ Upādhi: a condition, peculiar, limited, special; quoted in DCBT, 330a.

victims of ignorance (*avijjā*, 無明) as they cannot see reality as it is. This has pathological consequences on several psychological and social levels, which grow from wrong views and prejudices.

The experience of Anattā (無我) and Suññatā (空) within the context of emancipatory mind training does not exclude the use of concepts as designations for the ultimate realities (*Paramāṭṭha-dhammā*, Skt.*Paramārtha-satya* 真諦) seen during that very experience. Nevertheless, any concept carried by a verbal or a visual symbol is nothing more than a sign (*nimitta*, 相) which represents a mind-object. Signs as such are not ultimate realities; while the ultimate realities are designated by a *lakkhana*²⁴⁹ (characteristic) and not by a *nimitta*. Sign can be an object of *samatha* meditation (觀), whereas *vipassanā* (明察慧) uses the ultimate realities as its objects and is therefore characterized as *animitta*.

As a part of the mind-training, one learns to structure the meditative experience in terms of discerning the ultimate realities of sensory bases (*āyatana*, 處) such as visual object and the visual sense organ, sound and the acoustic sense-base, odour and the olfactory sense, taste and the gustatory sense, tactile object and the bodily sense of touch, and the two bases of ideation which are represented by the mind organ and the mind object (percept, idea, etc.). All these bases are directly, introspectively observable. Their existence is evident to any person who has normal sensory equipment. Therefore no epistemological question regarding the inter-subjective validity of ultimate realities such as the sensory bases would be really meaningful for any normal

²⁴⁹ *Lakṣaṇa* (相) also, *nimitta*. A 'distinctive mark, sign' 'indication, characteristic', 'designation'. Eteranal appearance; the appearance of things; form; a phenomenon in the sense of appearance, mutual; to regard; quoted in DCBT, 309a.

person. However, some training is needed to sustain concentration upon any one of the āyatanas — we had a first-hand experience to support this statement as we experimented with the figure and background within the field of ‘visual object’. Then it was even more difficult for us to concentrate for some time upon its subjective counterpart, the āyatana ‘visual sense’. Only a mind well-trained in satipatthāna meditation (四念處) can sustain the attention upon any of these twelve sense bases so as to experience directly that they are impermanent and void of any self.

The meditative analysis of phenomena in Buddhism is counterbalanced by methods of synthesis which reveal the relations between things and their general characteristics (*lakkhana*) such as impermanence, conditionality, voidness, etc. Moreover, this synthetic approach unifies the multitude of phenomena and opens up the coherence of the world to a holistic view.

The world can be transcended only by one who experiences its unity and wholeness (*manasikaroti ekattam*, 同作意) as the Cūla Suññatā Sutta shows. It should be stressed here that all doctrinal concepts of the Pāli Canon — thus also the synthetic ones — are experientially anchored in the ultimate realities; this means they always refer to some specific experiential ground (*yathābhūta*, 如實). In contrast to Western science, Buddhist thought employs no hypothetical variables, no speculative constructs and no a priori assumptions. For Buddhism, the wholeness of the world is neither a product of theoretical thinking, nor a belief deduced from some dogma. Such experiential anchorage holds true for the voidness of the world as well, for the Buddha says:

“Void is the world! Void is the world! ...Because it is void of a self. Ānanda, or of what belongs to a self, therefore is it said ‘Void is the world!’”²⁵⁰

(Suñño loko suñño loko ti...Yasmā ca kho Ānanda suññam attena vā attaniyena vā tasmā Suñño loko ti vuccati).²⁵¹

The same text of Saṃyutta Nikāya in the third volume expresses this idea again:

“Body, brethren, is impermanent. What is impermanent that is suffering. What is suffering, that is void of the self. What is void of the self, that is not mine, I am not it, it is not my self. That is how it is to be regarded by perfect insight of what it really is. Feeling is impermanent...likewise perception...the activities...

Consciousness is impermanent. What is impermanent is suffering. What is suffering, that is void of the self. What is void of the self, that is not mine, I am not it, it is not my self. That is how it is to be regarded by perfect insight of what it really is.

Thus seeing (the well-taught Ariyan disciple is repelled and realized)... ‘for life in these conditions there is no hereafter’”²⁵²

(Rūpam bhikkhave aniccaṃ, yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ yaṃ dukkhaṃ tadanattā, yad anattā taṃ netam mama neso ham asmi na meso attā ti. Evam etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ. Vedanā, aniccā yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ yaṃ dukkhaṃ tad anattā Yad anattā taṃ netam mama neso ham asmi na meso attāti Evam etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ Saññā aniccā, Saṅkhārā aniccā Viññāṇam aniccaṃ yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhaṃ tad anattā, Yad anattā taṃ netam mama nesoham asmi na me so attā ti. Evam etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ. Evam passaṃ, la, nāparam itthattāyāti pajānāti).²⁵³

²⁵⁰ BKS, IV, Chapter 1, 85. ii, 29.

²⁵¹ S, IV, 54.

²⁵² BKS, III, Chapter 1, i. Nakulapita, iv, 21.

²⁵³ S, III, 22.

Similar statements are recorded at several places in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* and the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, followed by elaborations of analysis in regard to various sets of ultimate realities designated by such concepts as *dhātu* (界, elements of experience), *khandhā* (Skt. *Skandhas*, 蘊 : groups of materiality, perception, feeling, formation, and consciousness), *āyatana* (處) and so on.

In the *Salāyatana Saṃyutta*, the Buddha specifies this voidness for each of the outer and inner six sense-bases (*āyatana*, 處) as well as for their contact (*phassa*, 觸) and whatever pleasant (受樂), unpleasant (受苦), or neutral experiencing (受不樂不苦) (*vedanā*, 受) which arises dependent upon these conditions.

“Eye is void of self and anything belonging to self, form is void..., visual consciousness is void..., mind is void..., mind-states are void..., consciousness is void..., contact is void..., whatsoever pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral experiencing which arises dependent upon them is void of self and everything belonging to self. That is why, Ānanda, is said: “Void is the world”.²⁵⁴

(Cakkhum suññam attena vā attaniyena vā, rūpā suñña... cakkhuvīññanam suññam cakkhu-samphasso suñño yam pidam cakkhusamphassa-paccayā uppajjati vedayitam sukham vā dukkham vā adukkhamasukham va tam pi suññam attena va attaniyena va. Yasmā ca kho Ānanda suññam attena vā attaniyena vā tasmā suñño loko ti vuccatī ti.)²⁵⁵

This is obviously the Buddha’s key instruction for highest insight (*mahā vipassanā*) without previous advanced concentration (*samatha*) instructions. The *Salāyatana Saṃyutta* begins with detailed *vipassanā* instructions for noticing the impermanence (*anicca*, 無常), unsatisfactoriness

²⁵⁴ BKS, IV, Chapter 1, 85 ii, 29.

²⁵⁵ S, IV, 54.

(*dukkha*, 苦), and non-self (*anattā*, 無我) of all phenomena. These instructions are systematically applied to various sets of ultimate realities and elaborated so as to lead the meditator to the highest goal. As the name of this Saṃyutta suggests, the mindfulness directed to the sense bases plays the central role. This instruction for mindfulness disclosing the emptiness (*Suññatā*, 空) and Dependent Origination (*Pratītyasamutpāda*, 緣起, 因緣生起) when directed to the sense-bases is also the culmination of the Buddha's instruction given in the Cūla Suññatā Sutta.

There are specific techniques of insight meditation (*vipassanā*) for the scrutiny of the phenomena labelled as āyatana (處), khandha (蘊), dhātu (界), etc. which are the ultimate realities (*paramatthā dhammā*, 真諦) directly perceptible to the mind void of concepts and steadied through samatha (concentrative meditation, 觀). The meditative analysis of the apparently solid identities is an experiential scrutiny which resolves the compact (*ghana-vinibbhoga*) into its elements, in order to make the absence of any self clearly visible.

To realize this, the meditator has to go through changes of perception such as experientially discerning the ultimate realities and their accessories (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda*, 心法分別); getting their conditional structure (*paccaya-pariggaha*) into view; then comprehending them as suffering in order to get free from desire (*appanihita*, 無願) for them; getting tuned to the stream of everchanging reality (*anicca*, 無常) which destroys their only apparent stability supported by signs and opens the experience for the signless (*animitta*, 無相).

The analytical approach of vipassanā insight meditation resolves thus the seemingly compact identities and exposes them as void of self. Wrong views are absent, the mind is

empty. And this very emptiness makes possible the full experience of reality as it is. And the mind has to be well balanced in equipoise developed through methods of samatha. Then the purified and non-distracted mind encompasses the dynamic wholeness of the reality and becomes filled with intense joy (*pīti*, 喜). Only a joyful, pacified, and concentrated mind can reach complete liberation and enlightenment. The path towards emancipation leads through three different ‘gateways to liberation’ (*vimokkha-mukhā*):

1. The realization of the desireless (*appanīhita*, 無貪)
2. The realization of the signless (*animitta*, 無相)
3. The third gate to liberation is the realization of voidness (*Suññatā*, 空).²⁵⁶

And with the same ideas, in Majjhima Sutta occurs:

“That emancipation of the heart is devoid of attachment, devoid of animosity and devoid of ignorance”.

(Sa kho panakuppa cetovimutti suffid ragenā suffid doserta suffid mohena).²⁵⁷

In accordance with this usage the word *Suñña* is then employed to express the fact that there is no permanent, subjacent entity underlying the phenomena of the world of sense-experience by the following passage:

“Your reverence, whatever is immeasurable freedom of mind and whatever is the freedom of mind that is naught and whatever is freedom of mind that is void and whatever is freedom of mind that is signless—there is a method according to which these states are different in connotation as well as being different in denotation; and, your reverence, there is a method according to which these states are identical in connotation while

²⁵⁶ Patisambhidāmagga, II, 48.

²⁵⁷ M, I, 298.

being different in denotation. And what, your reverence, is the method according to which these states are different in connotation as well as being different in denotation? As to this, your reverence, a monk abides having suffused the first quarter with a mind of friendliness, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; just so above, below, across; he dwells having suffused the whole world everywhere, in every way with a mind of friendliness, that is far-reaching, wide-spread, immeasurable, without enmity, without malevolence. He dwells having suffused the first quarter with a mind of compassion . . . with a mind of sympathetic joy. . . with a mind of equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; just so above, below, across; he dwells having suffused the whole world, everywhere, in every way with a mind of equanimity that is far-reaching, wide-spread, immeasurable, without enmity, without malevolence. This, your reverence, is called immeasurable freedom of mind. And what, your reverence, is the freedom of mind that is naught?

As to this, your reverence, a monk passing quite beyond the plane of infinite consciousness, thinking, 'There is not anything,' enters on I and abides in the plane of no-thing. This, your reverence, is called the freedom of mind that is naught.

And what, your reverence, is the freedom of mind that is void. As to this, your reverence, a monk forest-gone or gone to the root of a tree or gone to an empty place, reflects thus: 'This is void of self or of what pertains to self. This, your reverence, is called the freedom of mind that is void.'²⁵⁸

(Yā cāyaṃ āvuso appamāṇā cetovimutti yā ca ākiñcaṇṇā cetovimutti yā ca suññatā cetovimutti yā ca animittā cetovimutti, ime dhammā nānaṭṭhā c' eva nānābyañjanā ca udāhu ekaṭṭhā, byañjanam eva nānaṃ ti. — Yā cāyaṃ āvuso appamāṇā cetovimutti yā ca ākiñcaṇṇā cetovimutti yā ca suññatā cetovimutti yā ca animittā cetovimutti, atthi kho āvuso pariyāyo yaṃ pariyāyaṃ āgamma ime dhammā nānaṭṭhā c' eva nānābyañjanā ca, atthi ca kho āvuso pariyāyo yaṃ pariyāyaṃ āgamma ime dhammā ekaṭṭhā, byañjanam eva nānaṃ. Katamo c' āvuso pariyāyo yaṃ pariyāyaṃ āgamma ime dhammā

²⁵⁸ MLS, I, No. 43 Mahavedalla Sutta, 358.

nānaṭṭhā c’ eva nānābyañjanā ca: Idh’ āvuso bhikkhu mettāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharivā viharati, tathā dutiyaṃ tathā tatiyaṃ tathā catutthiṃ, iti uddham - adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantaṃ lokaṃ mettāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamāṇena averena abyābajjhena pharivā viharati. Karuṇāsahagatena cetasā — pi— muditāsahagatena cetasā — upekhāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharivā viharati, tathā dutiyaṃ tathā tatiyaṃ tathā catutthiṃ, iti uddham - adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantaṃ lokam upekhāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamāṇena averena abyābajjhena pharivā viharati. Ayaṃ vuccat’ āvuso appamāṇā cetovimutti. Katamā c’ āvuso ākiñcaṇṇā cetovimutti: Idh’ āvuso bhikkhu sabbaso viññāṇañcāyatanaṃ samatikkamma na tthi kiñciti ākiñcaṇṇāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati. Ayaṃ vuccat’ āvuso ākiñcaṇṇā cetovimutti. Katamā c’ āvuso suññatā cetovimutti: Idh’ āvuso hikkhu araṇṇagato vā rukkhamūlagato vā suññāgaragato vā iti paṭisañcikkhati: suññam idaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā ti.)²⁵⁹

There is a saying which taught in the Dhammapada concludes that whoever comprehends with the insight the phenomena of the world of sense-experience as no-self, that is to say he is practising and walking the purified way of the Buddhas as under:

“Soul-less is everything that is when this with wisdom
one discerns,

Disgusted then is one with ill. This is the Path to Purity.”

(sabbe dhammā anattā ti yadā paññāya passati

atha nibbindatī dukkhe, esa maggo visuddhiyā.)²⁶⁰

From that we can see that in the psychology, whoever experiences the ideal of the no-self is the great and brave hero, but no-self is the nature of all phenomena even man admit it

²⁵⁹ M, I, 297.

²⁶⁰ Dha, verse 279, pp.145-6.

or not. No-self (無我) means without any permanent nature, without absolute subject, without permanent soul or creator. Everything exists or unexists by co-dependance. Our bodies combined from five aggregations form existence in the Dependent-Origination. Thus, the existence of living beings is no-self. The way of destroying suffering is the way to realize the idea of no-self. No-self is the nature of the reality for extinguishment of suffering to attain Nibbāna (涅槃).

As far as the three characteristics of existence, we can find Suñña (空) defined as anattā (無我) which is always combined with two other marks such as the transient (*anicca*, 無常) and suffering (*dukkha*, 苦). In other word, *anicca* (無常), *dukkha* (苦), *Anattā* (無我), and *Suñña* (空) are four ways in which the early Buddhists looked at Dhammas. Four marks are the nature of all phenomena of the world.

In the Pāli canon, the Buddha tells us that:

“All formations (of dharma-elements which constitute the individual stream of existence) are transient (*anicca*); all such formations are subject to suffering (*dukkha*); all things are without a self-substance (*anattā*) . . . that which is transient is subject to suffering; and of that which is transient and subject to suffering and change one can rightly say: This am I; this is my Ego.”²⁶¹

Thus, the three fundamental characteristics of individual existence according to Buddhism are established as *anicca* (Skt. *Anitya*, 無常) or impermanence, *dukkha* (Skt. *dukkha*, 苦) or suffering, and *anatta* (Skt. *anātman*, 無我) or no-selfness, i.e., non-substantiality. The three marks are philosophically relevant in that they already point to the very root of suffering, namely, to the fact of radical transience and impermanence. Impermanence is expressed by the two marks

²⁶¹ S, 21-2; quoted in *Early Buddhist Philosophy*, Alfonso Verdu, Delhi: Motilal, 1995, p. 11.

which constitute the bipolar axis of the wheel of suffering. Anicca and anattā are these two ‘polar’ marks. Anicca represents the transiency and impermanence of all ‘objective’ manifestations of being in the realm of relative existence, including all the corporeal reality which constitutes the embodiment and support (*asraya*) of all.

There are numerous instances of the use of Suñña (空) in this special sense in the Pāli Nikāyas:

“Void is the world! Void is the world!” is the saying, lord. Pyy, lord, how far does this saying go?”

“Because the world is void of the self, Ānanda, or of what belongs to the self, therefore is it said “Void is the world”.²⁶²

(Suñño loko suñño loko ti bhante vuccati. Kittāvata nu kho bhante suñño loko ti vuccati?)

Yasmā ca kho Ānanda suññam attena vā attaniyena vā. Tasmā suñño loko ti vuccati).²⁶³

In accordance with this usage, the word Suññatā is then employed to express the fact that there is no permanent, adjacent entity underlying the phenomena of the world of experience:

“Suññam idam attena va attaniyena vā ti”.²⁶⁴

Anattā (無我), however, represents the ‘subjective’ side of impermanence as this mark points to the insubstantiality of what appears to be an absolute and permanent Ego: thus, it signifies the total absence of a commonly postulated ontological basis. In point of fact anicca (無常, impermanence) and anatta (無我, non-substantiality) convert into one another

²⁶² S, IV, Chapter 1, 85 ii, 28.

²⁶³ S, IV, 54.

²⁶⁴ Culla Niddesa, II, Patisambhidāmagga I, Para, 45, 91; 11 Para, 36, 48, 177.

in that the same impermanence afflicts both the flux of subjective consciousness which appears as the Ego and the external objects of our perceptions, feelings and volitive addictions. And by the same token, the same insubstantiality affects both the apparent, permanent Ego that seems to underly our conscious states as well as all the objects of the external appearing world that become the source for desire and action. The wheel of ‘Suffering’ (*dukkha*, 苦) turns around this bipolar axis of world-impermanence (*anicca*, 無常) and Ego-insubstantiality (*anattā*, 無我).

And not only four characteristics of *anicca* (無常), *dukkha* (苦), *anattā* (無我) and *suñña* (空), the Pāli Canon knows of more ways of looking at the world than does any other Mahāyāna text or group of texts. At numerous places in the Nikāyās mention is made of as many as eleven ways of looking at the nature of phenomena.

“It should be properly considered that the grasping of the five aggregates is of impermanence, sufferings, illness, boil, affliction, emptiness, and non-self”.

(Pancupadānakkhandhā *aniccato dukkhato, rogato, gandato, sallato, aghato, ābādhato, parato, palokato, suññato, anattato yonosomansikā-tabbā*).²⁶⁵

This shows very clearly that *Ānicca*, *Dukkha*, *Anatta*, and *Suñña* are four of eleven ways in which the early Buddhists looked at Dhammas and *Suñña* is found in its philosophical signification of Non-Substantiality.

Overall, four main characteristics of the world such as *anicca* (無常), *dukkha* (苦), *anattā* (無我) and *suñña* (空) taught by the Lord Buddha points out the truth of human being’s existence as well as phenomenal world. He himself knew it, then practiced it and realized as the best way to lead human

²⁶⁵ Sn, xxv, 334.

being entering the best peaceful states that is the deep aspiration for men.

Suññatā as Paṭiccasamuppāda (緣起, 因緣生起) or Middle Way (中道)

Dependent Origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*, 緣起, 因緣生起) is considered as the basic doctrine in both Northern and Southern Buddhism. The truth of Paṭiccasamuppāda at which the Buddha got enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and from it, he became the Awakened one.

This doctrine of universal causation and interdependence (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*) is embodied and formulated in the numerical list of the twelve nidānas (因, bases, grounds, causes), which has been devised to explain how the law of causality operates by the Book of Kindred Sayings as under:

“Conditioned by Ignorance (*avidyā*) activities (*saṃskāras*) come to pass; conditioned by activities Consciousness (*viññāna*); conditioned by consciousness Name-and-shape (*nāma-rūpa*); conditioned by Name-and-shape Sense (*sad-ayatana*); conditioned by Sense Contact (*sparsa*); conditioned by Contact Feeling (*vedanā*); conditioned by Feeling Craving (*trṣṇā*); conditioned by Grasping (clinging, *upādāna*); conditioned by Grasping Becoming (*bhava*); conditioned by Birth old age-and-death (*jāti*), grief, lamentation, suffering, sorrow, despair come to pass. Such is the uprising of this entire mass of ill. This brethren, is called (causal) happening”.²⁶⁶

(*Avijjāpaccayā bhikkhave saṅkhārā, saṅkhārāpaccayā viññānaṃ, viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ, nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanāṃ, saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhapaccayā upādānaṃ, upādānpaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṃ soka-parideva-dukkabadoiuanassupāyasā sambhavanti. Evam etassa*

²⁶⁶ BKS, II, p. 2; IV, 53-4; DB, II, 52.

kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti. Ayaṃ vuccati bbikkhave samuppādo.)²⁶⁷

In the fomulation of twelve nidānas, the ignorance is put in the first position which means the Buddha desires to emphasise the importance of the wisdom and encourage us cultivating it to attain the enlightenment. The ignorance which is the dark, does not see the truth of Dharma, and clings to self. In the fomulation of twelve nidānas. If we hope to end the existence of suffering, then we only destroy one part of it, then naturally all the round of twelve nidānas will be extinguished.

In the Pāli canon, the root-idea of the twelve nidānas is summed up in short formulation by the Buddha as under:

“This being, that becomes; from the arising of this, that arises; this not becoming, that does not become; from the ceasing of this, that ceases.”²⁶⁸

(Iti imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjatill imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati.)²⁶⁹

It means twelve nidānas (因) is the cause for the arising of human beings and the world, but it also is the destruction of living beings and the phenomena which is expounded specificity by the Buddha as follows:

“I will teach you, brethren, the arising and the destruction of the world. And what is that?”

Owing to eye and objects arises eye-consciousness. The coming together of the three is contact. Dependent on contact is feeling. Dependent on feeling is craving. Dependent on craving is grasping. Dependent on grasping is coming to be. Dependent on coming to be is rebirth. Dependent on rebirth, decay and

²⁶⁷ S, II, 1.

²⁶⁸ BKS, II, 23.

²⁶⁹ S, II, 28.

death, sorrow and grief, woe, lamentation and despair come into being. This is the arising of the world.

Owing to ear and sounds...nose and scents...tongue and savours...body and tangibles...owing to mind and mind-states arises mind-consciousness. The coming together of the three is contact. Dependent on contact is feeling... This is the arising of the world.

And what, brethren, is the going to destruction of the world?

Owing to eye and objects...dependent on feeling is craving. But by the utter passionless cessation of craving is the ceasing of grasping...Thus is the ceasing of this whole mass of ill.

This, brethren, is the going to destruction of the world".²⁷⁰

(Lokassa bhikkhave samudayañca atthagamañ ca desissāmi, tañ suññatha, Katamo ca bhikkhave lokassa samudayo. Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānañ, tiñṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā tañhā, tañhāpaccayā upādānañ, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti ayam lokassa samudayo. Sotañ ca paṭicca. Ghānañ ca paṭicca. Jivhañ ca paṭicca|. Kāyañ ca paṭicca. Manañ ca paṭicca dhamme ca uppajjati manovīññānañ, tiñṇaṃ saṅgatiphasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā tañhā, tañhāpaccayā upādānañ upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti jātipaccayā jarāmaṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti, ayam kho bhikkhave lokaesa samudayo. Katamo ca bhikkhave lokassa atthagamo.)²⁷¹

Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānañ tiñṇaṃ saṅgatiphasso|| phassapaccayā vedanā vedanāpaccayā tañhā tassāyeva tañhāya asesavirāgañirodhā upādānañirodho pe.

²⁷⁰ BKS, IV, Chapter 1 (d), 107. iv, The World, 53-4.

²⁷¹ S, IV, 87.

Evam etassa kevalasaa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti. Ayaṃ kho bhikkhave lokassa atthagamotill).

Thus, it proves firmly that ‘all things arise or cease by a reason’ or ‘that being, this is’²⁷² in which no any seft is true or is created by God. If one realizes it, he will get emancipation. That was the reason when Venerable Ānanda had praised the Paṭiccasamuppāda, and the Lord Buddha said that:

“Deep is this doctrine of events as arising from causes, and it looks deep too. It is through not understanding this doctrine, through not penetrating it, that this generation has become a tangled skein, a matted ball of thread, like munja-grass and rushes, unable to overpass the doom of Waste, the Woeful Way, the Downfall, the Constant Round (of transmigration)”²⁷³

(Gambhīro cayaṃ Ānanda paticca-samuppādo gainbhīrāvabhāso ca. Etassa Ānanda dhammassa ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evam ayaṃ pajā tantākulaka-jātā gulā-guṇṭhika-jātā muñja-babbaja-bhūtā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ saṃsāraṃ nativattati).²⁷⁴

As far as the relation between the concepts of Suññatā (空) and Paṭiccasamuppāda (因緣生起) is concerned, we find in the Cūla-Niddesa of the Khuddaka Nikāya, how the visual object and the sense-base of the eye meet and eye-consciousness arises is explained. Sound and the sense-base of the ear, etc., are also analyzed. Thus attention is guided to the dependent arising of all phenomena. Similarly, dependent on the sensory bases (*āyatana*, 處), sensory contact (*phassa*, 觸) arises; dependent on contact feeling (*vedanā*, 受) arises; and so on.

These observations are qualified by the statement: “Empty is the eye-consciousness, etc.” in regard to all

²⁷² MLS, III, 151-2.

²⁷³ DB, II, No. 15 Mahanidana Sutta, 50-1.

²⁷⁴ D, II, 55.

phenomena up to the highest meditation experiences. Dependent Origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda) becomes visible and Suññatā is experienced in regard to all these phenomena:

“...They are void of a self, void of permanency, they are coreless, without a core of permanency, core of happiness, or core of self.”

That Suññatā (空) is the truth of the universe is the fundamental conclusion yielded by the theory of Paṭiccasamuppāda. The insight into Suññatā is the insight into non-substantiality: ‘Suññatānupassanā ti anattānupassanā va’.²⁷⁵

This comes about as a logical development of the application of the idea of Suññatā (空) that we have already considered. Each of the twelve Paccayas or Paccaya-dhammas that constitute the formula of the Paṭiccasamuppāda is, by virtue of being a paccaya, devoid of any independent existence. Hence each of them is of the nature of Suññatā. If all the terms that go to make up the formula are devoid of substantiality then the formula itself is of the nature of Suññatā. The formula is but the statement of the nature of the Paṭiccasamuppāda. This nature then is identical with the nature of the Paṭiccasamuppāda; this nature then is identical with the nature of Suññatā itself. Buddhaghosa (佛音) represents the formula of the Paṭiccasamuppāda as a circle, inasmuch as the twelve terms comprehend, according to his interpretation, all the stages of the cycle of births and death. Hence the whole of the wheel of becoming (*bhavaccakka*), which illustrates the Paṭiccasamuppāda becomes itself Suññatā:

(Yasmā panettha avijjā udayabbavadhammakatti
dhuvabhavena, sankiliṭṭhattā saṅkilesikattā ca ubhabhāvena,
udayctbbavapīlitattā sukhābhāvena, paccayāttavuttittā

²⁷⁵ Vi, II, 695.

vasavattanabhūtena attabhāvena ca suñña: tathā samkhārādīni pi angāni, tasmā dvādasavidhaSuññatā suññam etaṃ bhavacakkanti vedilabbam).²⁷⁶

This passage then is eloquent proof that the identification of Śūnyatā (空) and Pratīvasamutpāda (因緣生起) is not a development unique in the Mādhyamika (中論) but this conception that has always been implicit in Buddhism, that is, before Buddhaghosa (佛音) expressed it in so many words.

It aids in disabusing one's mind of the belief in substance: "tāya atthi attā ti abhinivesassa pahanam hoti..."²⁷⁷ The highest intuition (*adhipaññā vipassanā*) is possible only after establishing the Suññatā of things.²⁷⁸ This precisely is the purpose of the understanding of causality too, that is, as taught by the Buddha in the Paṭiccasamuppāda.

There are various ways in which Paṭiccasamuppāda (因緣生起) and Suññatā (空) are identical. They both express the same truth. The first is the premise of which the second is the conclusion. In the ultimate analysis all the truths which express a feeler, a doer, a released (person), a goer, a sufferer... all these are comprehended by Suññatā, which is unreality and non-substantiality:

(... ettha suññato tāva paramatthena sabban' eva saccāni vedakakāra nibbuta gamakabhava'to suññanīti veditabbāni ...,

Dukkham eva lti na koci dukkāito kāra ko na kiriyāva vijjati atthi nibbuti, na nibbuto pumā, maggam atthi, gamako na vijjati...)²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 578.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 695.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 695.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 512-3.

To assert the truth of dukkha (苦), nibbuti (解脫) and magga (道) is not to assert substance, permanence, stability and happiness, for these are all unreal and untrue.

(Dhuva-subha-sukhatta-suññam purimadvayam
attasuññam amatapadaṃ; dhuva-sukha-attavirahito maggo iti
Suññatā tesu).²⁸⁰

It is worthwhile to mention in this part that the Middle way is also considered as emptiness as in the record of the Buddha's first sermon at the Deer Park, the Blessed One addressed the group of five religious mendicants:

“Mendicants, there are two extremes which should not be practiced by any person who has left society to find salvation. What are these extremes?

On the one hand there is the realm of desire and the pursuit of pleasure which is in accord with desire—it is a base pursuit, boorish, profane crude and without profit. On the other hand, there is the pursuit of self-mortification which is sheer misery, as well as crude and without profit.

Mendicants, passing through these two extremes and avoiding them both is the Middle Way, object of the Tathāgata's perfect awakening, opening the eyes and the mind, leading to peace, to omniscience, to complete awakening, and to nirvāṇa.”²⁸¹

The Middle Way (中道) is very clearly defined here as a practical approach to the religious life, a prescription for the sort of behavior that will eventually lead to release from fear and suffering. Elsewhere we find evidence of a different conception of the Middle Way, a much more abstract application of the concept to ontological categories. The Buddha is in this instance explaining the nature of ‘right view’ to a wandering ascetic named Kātyāyana:

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 513.

²⁸¹ Vinaya, Tr. by I.B. Horner, I, 10-17.

“Kātyāyana, everyday experience relies on the duality of “it is” and “it is not.” But for one who relies on the Dharma and on wisdom, and thereby directly perceives how the things of the world arise and pass away, for him, there is no “it is” and no “it is not.” “Everything exists” is simply one extreme, Kātyāyana, and “nothing exists” is the other extreme. The Tathāgata relies on neither of these two extremes, Kātyāyana; he teaches the Dharma as a Middle Way”.²⁸²

The concept of Middle Way (中道) obviously proved to be a very fruitful heuristic in early Buddhist literature, a device that could seemingly be exploited as an aid toward the explanation of virtually any important point of doctrine. One of the most crucial doctrinal issues for all Buddhists is, of course, the concept of selflessness (*nairātmya*, 無我), and here as elsewhere we encounter the all-pervasive influence of the Middle Way. The avoidance of reified concepts of being and nonbeing, that is, the Middle Way. The middle way as emptiness is often presented as a provisional name for the fact that all things are dependent upon each other. The Buddha used Paṭiccasamuppāda (緣起, 因緣生起) to refute extreme views and to prove the emptiness of all things. Therefore, in Buddhism, the Emptiness, the Middle way and Dependent Origination have the relation together.

In short, with the contents of Paṭiccasamuppāda and the Middle way above, we are able to conclude that the doctrine of emptiness is the essential consequence of Paṭiccasamuppāda and the Middle way. In other word, when Paṭiccasamuppāda or the middle way develops to the transcendental level which will lead to the door of emptiness. ‘Emptiness’ means paṭiccasamuppāda as the

²⁸² Sn, III, 134. 30-135.19 and Sn, II, 17.8-30.

Buddha expounded, “This being, that becomes, from the arising of this, that arises. This not becoming, that does not become, from the ceasing of this, that ceases”.²⁸³ Therefore, ‘emptiness’ in the meaning of paṭiccasamuppāda is considered as the fundamental and vital doctrine in Buddhism. Whoever is awakened of emptiness (空), he also enlightens the nature of Paṭiccasamuppāda (緣起, 因緣生起) or the Middle way (中道).

Suññatā as Nibbāna (涅槃)

The feature in the Cūlla Suññatā Sutta affirms the statement of the Buddha:

“I, Ānanda, through abiding in (the concept of) emptiness, am now abiding in the fulness thereof”.²⁸⁴

(Suññatāvihārenāhaṃ, Ānanda, etarahi bahulam viharāmiti.)²⁸⁵

And it is said that once when Sāriputta approached the Buddha after an afternoon of meditation, the latter commented on his calm expression and his pure and clear complexion. Sāriputta gave this explanation:

“Sir, I am now completely absorbed in the state of emptiness.”

(Suññatāvihārena kho ahaṃ, bhante, etarahi bahulam viharāmiti.)²⁸⁶

Thus, what the emptiness is, from that the Buddha abides in the fulness of transcendence and Sāriputta was completely absorbed in it? It is Nibbanā (涅槃), empty of all

²⁸³ BKS, II, 23.

²⁸⁴ MLS, III, No. 121 Cūlasunnata Sutta, 147.

²⁸⁵ M, III, 104.

²⁸⁶ M, III, 293 ff.

canker of sense-pleasure, becoming and ignorance, is not it? This got the approval of the Buddha who called emptiness the state of great men (*mahāpuri-savihāra*). Now, what is meant by ‘state of emptiness’?

In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Sāriputta makes exactly the same comment to Anuruddha about his calm expression, etc. But he gets a different explanation:

“My mind is well established in the four states of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).”²⁸⁷

This parallel indicates at least that exercises in mindfulness could give the same visible result as emptiness. In the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* there is question asked: what is the path that goes to the uncompounded i.e. *Nibbāna*. The answer is:

“The concentration that is empty, signless and undirected.”

(*Suññato samādhi animitto samādhi appaṇihito samādhi*).²⁸⁸

Hence, the general trend of these meditation levels is to reduce the amount of conscious contents, until the mind is completely motionless and empty: one of the levels is called *ākīñcaññāyatana*, (無所有處定)²⁸⁹ ‘the dimension of nothingness’. And in *Majjhima Nikāya* III, the Buddha says:

“But, Ānanda, Tathāgata has completely understood this state, namely how to attain and stay in the inward emptiness, by leaving all signs unnoticed.”

²⁸⁷ A, V, 301.

²⁸⁸ S, IV, 360.

²⁸⁹ *Ākiñcaññāyatana*: the contemplation of the state of nothingness, or the immaterial, in which ecstasy gives place to serenity; quoted in DCBT, 379a.

(Ayaṃ kho paṇḍita, Ānanda, vihāro Tathāgatena abhisambuddho, yadidaṃ sabbani-mittānaṃ amanasikārā ajjhūtaṃ suññatāṃ napaṃpajja viharituṃ.)

It is evident from these examples, that the word emptiness was used with reference to a psychological state attainable through meditation. That is to say, the perfect purified state - nibbāna (涅槃).

As we mentioned above, the Cūḷa-Suññatā Sutta belonging to Majjhima Nikāya described all the levels of concentration as levels of progressing emptiness.

At first, a monk starts to meditate in a forest, and then he sees only the forest, no village and no people:

“He regards that which is not there as empty of it.”²⁹⁰

(Iti yaṃ hi kho tattha na hoti, tena taṃ suññaṃ samanupassati).²⁹¹

Then he passes through the eight first levels and attains.

“The concentration of mind that is signless”.²⁹²

(animittaṃ cetosamādhim).²⁹³

And the text continues:

“He comprehends thus, ‘This concentration of mind that is signless is effected and thought out. But whatever is effected and thought out, that is impermanent, it is liable to stopping’. When he knows this thus, sees this thus, his mind is freed from the canker of becoming and his mind is freed from the canker of ignorance.”²⁹⁴

(So evaṃ pajānāti: Ayam pi kho animitto cetosamādhī abhisankhato abhiśāñcetaṃ. Yaṃ kho paṇḍita kiñci

²⁹⁰ MLS, III, No. 121 Cūlasunnata Sutta, 149.

²⁹¹ M, III, 105.

²⁹² MLS, III, No. 121 Cūlasunnata Sutta, 150.

²⁹³ M, III, 107.

²⁹⁴ MLS, III, No. 121 Cūlasunnata Sutta, 151.

abhisankhataṃ abhisāñce-tayitaṃ, tad aniccaṃ nirodhadhamman ti pajānāti. Tassa evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato kāmāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati, bhavāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati, avijjāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati.)²⁹⁵

Then comes the Arahanta-formula, so it is clear that this is a description of the attainment of Nibbāna. This is finally expressed in terms of emptiness:

“He comprehends: ‘This perceiving is empty of the canker of sense-pleasures’. He comprehends: ‘This perceiving is empty of the canker of becoming’. He comprehends: ‘This perceiving is empty of the canker of ignorance. And there is only this that is not emptiness, that is to say the six sensory fields that, conditioned by life, are grounded on this body itself’.”²⁹⁶

(So: suññam idaṃ saññāgataṃ kāmāsavenāti pajānāti; suññam idaṃ saññāgataṃ bhavāsavenāti pajānāti; suññam idaṃ saññāgataṃ avijjāsavenāti pajānāti. Atthi c’ev ‘idaṃ asuññataṃ, yadidaṃ imam eva kāyam paṭicca saḷāyatanikaṃ jīvitapaccayā ti).²⁹⁷

Very often we get the impression that Suññatā as a conscious state is a very important aspect of Nibbāna itself. When the Arahanta Uttama calls herself ‘winner of the emptiness and signless’, (*suññatassānimittassa lābhini*, 空與無相定)²⁹⁸ i.e., she seems to attain Nibbāna. One of the synonym: for Nibbāna in the long list, is ‘without attributes’ (*anidasscananam*, 無屬性).²⁹⁹ Or it is said: ‘all conscious processes have nibbāna as their end’ (*nibbānapariyosānā sabbe dhanamā*, 有情的究竟涅槃),³⁰⁰ or Nibbāna is called ‘the signless state’ (*animittā dhātu*, 法無相).³⁰¹

²⁹⁵ M, III, 107-8.

²⁹⁶ MLS, III, No. 121 Cūlasunnata Sutta, 151.

²⁹⁷ M, III, 108.

²⁹⁸ Theri-gatha, ed. R. Pischel, London: PTS, 1883, p. 46.

²⁹⁹ S, IV, p. 368 ff.

³⁰⁰ A, V, 107.

The most probable explanation of this is that the highest level of meditation ‘the ceasing of ideation and feeling’ (*saññāvedayitanirodha*, 滅受想定), was used so frequently as a steppingstone to the realization of Nibbāna, that some of its characteristics were transferred to nibbāna itself, especially the experience of undifferentiated wholeness that is called Suññatā (空). The attainment of Nibbāna is namely also called ‘the cessation of consciousness’ (*viññāṇassa nirodho*, 識的滅盡).³⁰² And Nibbāna (涅槃) had to be exactly that, since rebirth is effected through the medium of viññāṇa (識) and Nibbāna is the cessation of rebirth, the reality of no-self. In the stream of conscious processes, of which viññāṇa consists, is stopped and emptied, usually by means of the meditational exercises to insight (*paññā*, 智慧) exist.

Hence, we should keep in mind that Suññatā is emphasized by the Buddha not as ideal, a method, but here it is enlightenment as the truth, the reality of no-self which also means Nibbāna, because Nibbāna is the final bliss, state of no-self. This is essential thing in Buddhism. Although the Buddha expounded many methods of Dhammas (法) but the aim is merely to guide people to return oneself _ the nature of no-self.

Buddhism had always maintained that the state of Nibbāna cannot be expressed in words by a lot of negation, say:

“There is the not-born, the not-become, the not-created, the not-compounded. ...If there were not this not-born etc... there could be no escape from this world of compounded things.”

⁸⁴ Ibid., 148.

³⁰² Sn, 734.

“There is the realm where there is neither earth nor water... neither the boundless realm of space nor boundless consciousness... This I call neither coming nor going nor standing, neither origination nor annihilation. Without support, without beginning, without foundation is this. The same is the end of suffering.”³⁰³

It is even spoken of in positive terms as:

“A reality beyond all suffering and change, as unfading, still, undecaying, taintless, as peace and blissful. It is an island, the shelter, the refuge and the goal.”

(asankhatam ca vo bhikkhave desissāmi
asāṅkhatagāmiṇca maggani. . . anāsavanca. . . saccam. . . param.
. . . nipuṇam. . . ajajjaram. . . dhuvam.. sāntam . . . amatam . . .
paṇītam . . . sivam . . . khemam . . . abbhūtam... antikadhamma . .
. nibbānam . . . dīpam tāṇam . . . saraṇam . . .)³⁰⁴

Buddha after his enlightenment is a representative example of Nibbāna. Nirupadhiśeṣa Nibbāna (無餘涅槃) is the state of final release where even the skandhas (蘊), which constitute empirical existence, have totally ceased.

Consider the importance of this below passage that Suññatā refers to the transcendental truth of the universe - Nibbāna.

“Herein, monks, in whatsoever, company the monks listen not to the discourses uttered by the Tathagāta, discourses deep and deep in meaning, transcendental, dealing with the Void, when they are recited: where they lend not a ready ear to them, apply not to them a mind bent on understanding, consider not that those teachings are something to be learned by heart and mastered: but when those discourses made by poets, trickled out with fair-sounding phrases, discourses external to Dhamma uttered by their followers”.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Udāna viii, 3 and 2 cf. also Itivuttaka, p. 37 (43).

³⁰⁴ S, IV, p. 368 ff.

³⁰⁵ BGS, I, Chapter 2, v, 6, 68-9.

(Idha bhikkhave yassam parisayaṃ bhikkhu ye te suttantā Tathāgatahbāsītā gambhirā gambhiratthā lokuttarā Suññatāpaṭisaṃyuttā tesu bhaññāmanesu na sussusanti na sotam odahanti na añña cittam upaṭṭhāpenti na ca te dhamme uggahetabham pariyāpuni tabbam maññanti, ye pana ie suttantā kavikatā kaveyyā cittakkharā cittavyañjanā bahirakā sāvakabhāsītā tesu bhaññāmdnesu sussusanti sotam odahanti añña cittam upaṭṭhāpenti to ca dhamme uggahetabban pariyāpunitabbam maññanti, to tam dhammam pariyāpunitvā na c’eva ānamannan paṭipucchanti na paṭivitaranti idam katham imassa kvattho ti.)³⁰⁶

In verses 92 and 93 of Dhammapada, Suññatā (空) is identified with Vimokkha (解脫), which is another term for Nibbāna (涅槃):

“They for whom there is no accumulation who reflect well over their food, who have Deliverance, which is Void and Signless as their object, their course cannot be traced, like that of birds in air.”

(yesaṃ sannicayo n’ atthi ye pariññatabhojanā
suññato animitto ca vimokho yesaṃ gocaro
ākāse va sakuntānaṃ gati tesaṃ durannayā.)³⁰⁷

“He whose corruptions are destroyed, he who is not attached to food, he who has Deliverance, which is Void and Signless, as his object, his path cannot be traced, like that of birds in air.”

(yassāsavā parikkhīṇā āhāre ca anissito
suññato animitto ca vimokho yassa gocaro
ākāse va sakuntānaṃ padaṃ tassa durannayaṃ)³⁰⁸

The term of the Nibbāna which was described in the literature of Pāli Nikāyas, clearly refers to a unity eternally

³⁰⁶ A, I, 72-73.

³⁰⁷ Dha, verses 92, pp. 49-50.

³⁰⁸ Loc.cit.

existing beyond the three worlds (*kāma dhātu*: 欲界, *rūpa dhātu*: 色界 and *arūpa dhātu*: 無色界). It is infinite, inexpressible, unborn, undecaying and empty. It is homogeneous (*ekarasa*) and knows no individuality. In it, all discriminations or dichotomy cease.

Every being is a conglomeration of elements, which can be classified under five heads: *rūpa* (色), *vedana* (受), *sanna* (想), *sankhara* (行) and *viññāṇa* (識) hence one being is not essentially different from another, an ordinary man is not different from a perfected saint. But if the nature and proportion of each of the five constituents existing in an individual be taken into account, then one being is different from another, an ordinary man is different from a perfected saint. The combination of elements is the outcome of Karma (業, past deeds) and is happening every moment (*kṣaṇika*, 剎那), implying that the disintegration of elements always precedes it. The elements in a combined state pass as an individual, and from time immemorial he labours under the misconception of a self (我) and of things relating to a self (我所). His vision being distorted or obscured by ignorance of the truth he cannot perceive the momentary combination and disintegration of elements. On the other hand, he is subject to an inclination for them. A perfect man with his vision cleared by the Buddhist practices and culture realises the real state of things viz. that an individual consists of the five elements and does not possess a permanent and unchanging entity called soul.

In short, with the above characteristics of emptiness our knowledge opened out: the incomparably highest concept of emptiness which the Buddha utterance to in the Pāli Nikāyas is the reality of no-self, or utterly purified Nibbāna and we should attain it, because not only at present, but also

in the past or future, those Bodhisattas all practised it as the Buddha confirmed in the Cūla Suññatā Sutta that:

“And those recluses or brahmins, Ānanda, who in the distant past, entering on the utterly purified and incomparably highest (concept of) emptiness, abided therein – all these, entering on precisely this utterly purified and incomparably highest (concept of) emptiness, abided therein. And those recluses or brahmins, Ānanda who in the distant future, entering on the utterly purified and incomparably highest (concept of) emptiness, abided therein – all these, entering on precisely this utterly purified and incomparably highest (concept of) emptiness, abided therein. And those recluses or brahmins, Ānanda, who at present, entering on the utterly purified and incomparably highest (concept of) emptiness, are abiding in it – all these, entering on precisely this utterly purified and incomparably highest (concept of) emptiness, abided therein. Wherefore, Ānanda, thinking: ‘Entering on the utterly purified and incomparably highest (concept of) emptiness, I will abide therein’ – this is how you must train yourself, Ānanda.”³⁰⁹

(Ye hi keci, Ānanda, atītamaddhānaṃ samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā parisuddhaṃ paramānuttaraṃ suññataṃ upasampajja vihariṃsu, sabbe te imaṃ yeva parisuddhaṃ paramānuttaraṃ suññataṃ upasampajja vihariṃsu. Ye hi keci, Ānanda, anāgataiuddhānaṃ samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā parisuddhaṃ paramānuttaraṃ suññataṃ upasampajja viharissanti, sabbe te imaṃ yeva parisuddhaṃ paramānuttaraṃ suññataṃ upasampajja viharissanti. Ye hi keci, Ānanda, etarahi samṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā parisuddhaṃ paramānuttaraṃ suññataṃ upasampajja viharanti, sabbe te imaṃ yeva parisuddhaṃ paramānuttaraṃ suññataṃ upasampajja viharanti. Tasmātiha, Ānanda, Parisuddhaṃ paramānuttaraṃ suññataṃ upasampajja viharissuṃmīti, — evaṃ hi vo, Ānanda, sikkhitabban ti).³¹⁰

Or in the Book of the Gradual Sayings also is found the same idea that:

³⁰⁹ MLS, III, No. 121 Cūlasunnata Sutta, 152.

³¹⁰ M, III, 109.

“And-what, monks, is the company trained in bluster, not inquiry?

Herein, monks, in whatsoever, company the monks listen not to the discourses uttered by the Tathagāta, discourses deep and deep in meaning, transcendental, dealing with the Void, when they are recited: where they lend not a ready ear to them, apply not to them a mind bent on understanding, consider not that those teachings are something to be learned by heart and mastered: but when those discourses made by poets, trickled out with fair-sounding phrases, discourses external to Dhamma uttered by their followers,—when such are recited they listen thereto, lend a ready ear to them, apply to them a mind bent on understanding and consider that those teachings are something to be learnt by heart and mastered, and when they have mastered that teaching they do not open up a discussion thus: “what is this? What is the meaning of this?”—when they neither open up the unrevealed nor explain the unexplained, nor dispel doubts on divers doubtful points of doctrine, - such a company, monks, is called “trained in bluster, not in inquiry”.³¹¹

(*Idha bhikkhave yassaṃ parisāyaṃ bhikkhū ye te suttantā Tathāgatabhāsītā gambhīrā gambhīratthā lokuttarā suññatāpatisaṅnuttā tesu bhaññamānesu nñ sussūsanti na sotaṃ odahanti ṇa aññācittaṃ upaṭṭhāpentī na ca te dhanune uggahetabbaṃ pariyāpuṇitabbaṃ maññanti, ye pana te suttantā kavikatā kāveyyā cittakkharā cittavyañjanā bāhirakā sāvakabhāsītā tesu bhaññamānesu sussūsanti sotaṃ odahanti aññācittaṃ upaṭṭhāpentī te ca dhamme uggahetabbaṃ pariyāpuṇitabbaṃ maññanti, te taṃ dhammaṃ pariyāpuṇitvā na c’eva aññamaññaṃ paṭipucchantī na paṭivivaranti idaṃ kathaṃ imassa kvattho ti. Te avivaṭaṇ c’eva na vivaranti anuttāni-kataṇ ca na uttāni-karonti anekavīhitesu ca kankhāṭhāṇīyesu dhammesu kakkhaṃ na paṭivinodenti. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave ukkācīta-vinītā parisā no paṭipucchā-vinītā).*³¹²

In the above passages the Buddha refers to the fact that the Suttās he has expounded deal with the deep,

³¹¹ BGS, I, Chapter 2, v, 6, 68-9.

³¹² A, I, 14.

profound and transcendental truth of Suññatā and says that those monks who do not grasp the meaning contained in them, fail to unravel the hidden truth.

“In which abiding are you, Sariputta, now abiding in the fulness thereof?”

“Abiding in (the concept of) emptiness do I, revered sir, now abide in the fulness thereof.”

“It is good, Sariputta, it is good. You, Sariputta, are now indeed abiding in fulness in the abiding of great men. For this is the abiding of great men, Sariputta, that is to say (the concept of) emptiness. Wherefore, Sariputta, if a monk should desire: ‘ May I now abide in fulness in the abiding in (the concept of) emptiness,’ that monk should consider thus, Sariputta: ‘ On the road by which I entered the village for almsfood or in the part in which I walked for almsfood or on the road by which I left the village after (walking for) almsfood—did I have there in my mind desire or attachment or aversion or confusion or sensory reaction in regard to material shapes cognisable by the eye?’”³¹³

(Katamena tvam Sāriputta, vihārena etarahi bahulam viharasī ti. Suññatā-vihārena kho aham bhante, etarahi bahulam viharāmi. Sādhu sādhu, Sāriputta. Mahāpurisa-vihārena kira tvam Sāriputta, etarahi bahulam viharasī. Mahāpurisa-vihāro hesa Sāriputta, yadidam Suññatā. Tasinātiha, Sāriputta, bhikkhu sace ākaṅkheyya: Suññatāvihārena etarahi bahulaṃ vihareyyan ti, tena, Sāriputta, bhikkhunā iti paṭisañcikkhitabbaṃ: Yena cahaṃ maggena gāmaṃ piṇḍāya pāvisiṃ, yasmiṃ ca padese piṇḍāya acariṃ, yena ca maggena gānato piṇḍāya paṭikkamiṃ, ritthi nu kho me tattha cakkhuvīññeyyesu rūpesu chando vā rāgo vā doso va moho vā paṭighaṃ vā pi cetaso ti?)³¹⁴



³¹³ MLS, III, No. 151 Pindapataparissuddhi Sutta, 343.

³¹⁴ M, III, 294.

CHAPTER SIX

**THE CONCEPT OF ŚŪNYATĀ IN
MAHĀYĀNA SŪTRAS**

The Survey of Mahāyāna Sūtras

As we have known the Buddha did not express his religious doctrine in terms of Śūnyatā (空性), but rather by Dependent Origination (*Pratītyasamutpāda*, 緣起, 因緣生起) and Middle Path (*Madhya-mārga / Madhyamā-pratipad*, 中論). Several centuries later, a group of Mahāyāna texts such as the Vajrachedikā-prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra (金剛般若波羅密經) and the Hṛdaya Sūtra (心經) or Prajñā Hṛdaya Sūtra (心經般若) belonging to the Prajñā-pāramitā literature (般若波羅密經), introduced strongly the doctrine of Śūnyatā. That is the reason, we may select them to analyze for the purpose of this chapter.

Let us first of all run to the information of the sources of these sūtras.

The Prajñā-pāramitā Literature (般若波羅密經)

Issues of the origins of the Prajñāpāramitā and those of the Mahāyāna are closely connected, since at the present stage of our knowledge the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras are probably Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtras (般若波羅密經). The Prajñā-pāramitā or 'Perfection of Wisdom', which represents the Dharma-Jewel, is not so much a sūtra as a family of sūtras or even a dynasty. Dr. Edward Conze, who devoted the greater part of his life to studying, translating and explaining these documents, collates from Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan and Khotanese sources, a list of forty Prajñā-pāramitā texts, not all of them sūtras or canonical, the composition of which began about 100 B.C.E., and continued steadily until the time

of the virtual disappearance of Buddhism from India in the thirteenth century C.E. Edward Conze³¹⁵ has said that the time of the composition of the Prajñā-pāramitā texts can be roughly stretching over more than a thousand years from 100 B.C.-1200 A.D and he distinguished four phases in the development of the Prajñā-pāramitā literature as under:

1. The elaboration of a basic text (100 B.C.-100 A.D.) which constitutes the original impulse,
2. The expansion of that text (100-300 A.D.),
3. The re-statement of the doctrine in the short sūtras and in versified summaries (300-500 A.D.),
4. The period of Tantric influence and of absorption into magic (600-1200 A.D.).

The traditional classification is simply in terms of length. Taking the sloka or verse of thirty-two syllables as the unit of measurement, there are 'Large' sūtras consisting of 18,000, 25,000 and 100,000 'lines', all of which made their appearance during the second of Conze's four phases of development, and 'Small' ones consisting of anything from a few hundred lines, or less, up to 8,000 lines, that appeared during the first and during the third phase.

The principal or the oldest text is the Aṣṭasārikā Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra (八天頌般若波羅密經), *'The Sūtra on the Perfection of Wisdom'* in 8,000 lines and its shorter verse summary or possible original, as the case may be, the Ratra-guna-samuccaya-gāthā, *'Verses on the Accumulation of Precious Qualities'* (寶積經). It may be (at least it is the prevailing theory) that the Aṣṭasāhasrikā was

³¹⁵ Edward Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, Tokyo, 1978, p.1; Conze 1960: 9 ff.; 1968; 11ff.; also see *Mahāyāna Buddhism - The Doctrinal Foundation*, Paul Williams, New York, 4th rpt. 1998, p. 41.

expanded in the Satasahasrikā (100,000 lines) (一百千頌般若波羅密經) and the Pañcavimsatisāhasrikā (25,000 lines) (二萬五千頌般若波羅密經), and then condensed in the Sārdhadvisāhasrikā (2,500 lines) (二千五百頌般若波羅密經). The Astadasa or Perfection of Wisdom ‘in 18,000 lines’ (十八千頌般若波羅密經). A Dasasahasrikā or Perfection of Wisdom ‘in 10,000 lines’ (十千頌般若波羅密經) is also sometimes classed with the larger sūtras. The Saptasatikā (700 lines) (七百頌般若波羅密經) and the Adhyardhasatikā (150 lines) (一百五十頌般若波羅密經).³¹⁶

Among the shorter sūtras or around 300-500 the texts were shortened, the finest of this process are the two earliest, both appearing before 400 C.E., the Vajracchedikā (金剛般若波羅密經) in 300 lines and the Hṛdaya (Heart sūtra, 心經 hoặc 心經般若) in 25 or 14 lines³¹⁷ and the latter comprises only 262 words in the Chinese translation.³¹⁸

The Vajrachedikā-prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra (金剛般若波羅密經)

The Vajrachedikā (金剛 or 金剛般若) or ‘Diamond-Cutter’ sūtra (*vajra*, 金剛 is really the mythical ‘thunderbolt’, and denotes something of irresistible strength) is also known as ‘the Perfection of Wisdom’. A short text in two parts and thirty-two chapters, it is in the form of a dialogue between the Buddha (佛陀) and Subhūti (須菩提). The Sanskrit original does not, however, give any chapter division, and the one adopted by Max Muller and other

³¹⁶ Prajñā Pāramitā Text: 20-24, also see EL, ff. 132.

³¹⁷ SSPW, 14.

³¹⁸ Shohei Ichimura, *Buddhist Critical Spirituality: Prajñā and Śūnyatā*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001, p. 258.

scholars date back to ca. 530 C.E. when in China it was introduced into Kumarajiva of translation (摻摩羅什). It is not really of much help. Unlike the summaries, the Vajracchedikā Sūtra (as it is popularly known) does not attempt to give a systematic survey of the Prajñā-pāramitā teachings. Instead, it confines itself to a few central topics, which it inculcates by addressing the intuition rather than the logical intelligence. The result is not one that is calculated to endear the work to scholars.

The full title the Vajracchedikā Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra (as it reads in Kumarajiva's version) indicates that the teaching of the sūtra aims at revealing the Buddha's Diamond Mind, so as to cut off people's doubts and awaken their faith. This Diamond Mind is the Absolute Mind of Supreme Enlightenment. What the Buddha does, in the course of his dialogue with Subhūti, is simply to remove the latter's doubts as they arise one by one in his mind as he listened to the Buddha's discourse. According to Thich Nhat Hanh, the name of this sūtra is Vajracchedikā Prajñā-pāramitā. Vajracchedikā means '*The Diamond that cut through afflictions, agnoraance, delusion or illusion*'. In China and Vietnam, people generally call it the Diamond Sūtra, emphasizing the word 'diamond', but, in fact, the phrase 'cutting through' is the most important. Therefore, the Sūtra's full name is 'the Diamond that Cuts through Illution'.³¹⁹

Prajñā-pāramitā means 'Perfection of Wisdom', 'Transcendent Understanding', or 'the understanding that brings us across the ocean of suffering to the other shore'. Studying and practicing this Sūtra can help us cut through ignorance and transporting ourselves to the shore of

³¹⁹ The Diamond that cut through Illusion, Thich Nhat Hanh, California: Parallel Press: 1991, p. 1.

liberation.

Six Chinese translations are extant, beginning with Kumārajīva's (摻摩羅什, 402 C.E.), and proceeding through those of Bodhiruci (菩提留志, 509 C.E.), Paramārtha (真諦, 562 C.E.), Dharmagupta (達摩銅多, 605 C.E.), and Hsuan-tsang (玄莊, 648 C.E.), to that of I-tsing (義淨, 703 C.E.). They were not all made from the same recension; Kumārajīva's, indeed, was not made direct from the Sanskrit text. In addition there are various Tibetan, Mongolian and Manchu translations, as well as one in Sogdian which has not survived completely. The hundred or so commentaries in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese, though of no concern to us here are nevertheless further evidence of the overwhelming popularity of the sūtra. In the West, it has begun to attract a corresponding degree of attention. Editions of the Sanskrit text, and renderings into English, French and German have already appeared. In English alone there are at least eight complete translations, besides incomplete ones. Versions have also appeared in modern Japanese and in Thai. It would seem that the Vajracchedikā Sūtra is destined to exert no less influence in the future than it did in the past, and over an even vaster field.³²⁰

The Hṛdaya Sūtra (心經)

The Hṛdaya or Heart Sūtra, often bound up in one volume with the Vajracchedikā Sūtra, is the only Prajñāpāramitā text that rivals it in popularity. Indeed so closely are the two allied, both intrinsically and extrinsically, that it is really quite improper to speak in terms of rivalry at all. Though an extremely concentrated work, consisting of only a single leaf in most editions, it exists in two recensions, a long

³²⁰ EL, p. 151.

and a short one.

These agree in the body of the Sūtra, but the longer recension has, both at the beginning and the end, an account of the circumstances of its preaching. The Sūtra is really a dialogue in which, although only one of them actually speaks, the two participants constitute, as it were, two poles between which is generated the energy that determines the dialectical movement of the exposition.

The participants are the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, who does not figure prominently elsewhere in the Prajñā-pāramitā literature, and Śāriputra. It is the former who speaks. Addressing the great disciple by name, he reveals to him the content of his transcendental spiritual experience as he courses in the profound Perfection of Wisdom.

Specifically the Sūtra is a restatement of the Four Noble Truths in the light of the dominant idea of Śūnyatā. As in the case of several other very short Sūtras, by far the greater portion of the material has been taken from the Large Prajñā-pāramitā. Nevertheless, the parts have been welded together into a convincing artistic unity, and the dialectical stages through which Avalokiteśvara conducts Śāriputra follow one upon another as inevitably, as the movements of a Beethoven quartet. As if the message of the Prajñā-pāramitā were not already sufficiently condensed, the body of the sūtra proper concludes with a short mantra constituting as it were its veritable quintessence: ‘Gate, Gate, Pāragate, Pārasamgate, Bodhi Svāhā’ (竭諦, 竭諦, 波羅竭諦, 波羅增竭諦, 菩提薩婆訶).³²¹ By the proper intonation of these words one’s heart is opened to the influence of Perfect Wisdom.

³²¹ 般若波羅密多心經, 佛學業書, 台灣, 一九九八, p. 135.

The Hṛdaya sūtra being as popular as the Vajracchedikā Sūtra, its literary backwash is no less impressive. The Sanskrit text of both recensions has been found in palm-leaf form in Japan, the shorter one having been brought there in 609 C.E. and the longer in 850 C.E. In the course of six centuries seven Chinese translations of the sūtra produced, by Kumārajīva (摻摩羅什) or one of his disciples - (ca. 400 C.E.), Hsuan-tsang (玄奘, 649 C.E.), Dharmacandra (法月, 741 C.E.), Prajñā (大慧, 790 C.E.), Prajñācakra (慧眼, 861 C.E), Fa-cheng (施護, 856 C.E), and Dānapala (陀那枳羅, ca. 1000 C.E). It was translated into Tibetan by Vimalamitra (無垢有). There are also Mongolian and Manchu versions. Commentaries and expositions abound. Its popularity in the West is attested by a dozen English translations, besides six in French and one in German.³²²

A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms (中英佛學辭典) gives a definition as below:

‘The Sūtra of the heart of Prajñā; there have been several translations, under various titles, the generally accepted version being by Kumarajiva, which gives the essence of the Wisdom Sūtras. There are many treatises on the Sūtra.’³²³

On average, two new versions of the Hṛdaya Sūtra became available to the public every one hundred years, each with some incremental improvements. Because of its brevity and preciseness, the text was popular and most widely circulated in China.

The Hṛdaya Sūtra was the pan-sectarian text accepted by all Buddhist schools as the essential core doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism, not only by the above scholastic

³²² EL, 152.

³²³ DCBT, pp. 337-8.

traditions but also by the practical traditions of Ch'an and Pureland. As it is concise and short, the text was fit for memorization and chanting by an individual or community of people. Monks and nuns as well as lay people in China, Vietnam, Japan, Korea... frequently chant this Sūtra at the pray performance. The widespread use of the Hṛdaya Sūtra was one of the distinctive features of Mahāyāna Buddhist culture in the later half of the first millennium. In other words, the essence of the entire Mahāyāna teaching is contained in this sūtra of only 262 words in the Chinese translation. How important the Hṛdaya Sūtra is! We may recognize it.

The Concept of Śūnyatā in Mahāyāna Sūtras

After the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, Buddhism became popular and developed from early Buddhism into Hīnayāna (小乘) (we also call Early Buddhist Tradition) and Mahāyāna (大乘) (the Developed Buddhist Tradition).³²⁴ The division between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism was established sometime between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. Hīnayāna is the conservative Buddhist school which tries to preserve the orthodox teachings and practices of Buddhism. It accepts the Pāli canon as the main

³²⁴ During the late fourth century B.C., the Buddhist organization was divided into two schools: the Mahāsaṅghika (the majority or great assembly) and the Sthaviras (the school of elders). Soon afterwards, during the third century B.C., some eight schools of dissenters arose from the Mahāsaṅghika. During the second and third centuries B.C., some ten schools of dissenters arose from the Sthaviras. These eighteen schools were later referred to as Hīnayāna. The traditions surrounding these schools are unreliable, contradictory and confused. See Edward Conze's *Buddhist Thought in India* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), pp. 119-120.

scriptures.³²⁵ For Hīnayānists, there is only one Buddha, who is the founder of Buddhism, and the highest goal or level one can achieve in life is to become an Arahata, a good disciple of the Buddha who attains salvation for himself by his own effort.

Māhayāna Buddhism is the later liberal Buddhist school which has a new interpretation of Buddhism. It does not accept the Pāli canon as the sole scriptural source, but has many new scriptures written in Sanskrit, then Chinese, Tibetan...³²⁶ According to Māhayānists there is not just one Buddha, but many. In principle, everyone has Buddha-nature and can become a Buddha. The ideal one seeks to achieve is to become not merely an Arahata, but a Bodhisattva, a Buddha-to-be, who has a great compassion for the world of

³²⁵ The Pali canon was compiled and edited by three monastic councils. The First Council assembled just a few months after the death of Buddha (483 B.C.) in Rājagaha, the Second about a hundred years later (around 383 B.C.) in Vesali, and the Third in 225 B.C. in Pataliputra. The canon is divided into three collections called "Baskets" (*piṭaka*). The first collection, the Vinayapiṭaka, contains the rules for monastic discipline (*vinaya*), the second, the Suttapiṭaka, the sermons (*sutta*) of the Buddha and his disciples, and the third, the Abhidhammapiṭaka, the codifications and analyses of the teachings. There are certain extra-canonical Pali works such as the Milindapañha, the Visuddhimagga and the scholastic manual Abhidhammatthasangaha. The Sarvastivada scriptures were written in Sanskrit.

³²⁶ There is no canon of the Māhayāna because the Māhayāna represents no unity of sects. There are only separate sūtras which are called Mahāyāna sūtras, originally written in Sanskrit. Many of these Sanskrit originals have been lost, and are preserved mainly in their Chinese and Tibetan... translations. The earliest Mahāyāna literature is the Prajñā or "wisdom" literature and other Māhayāna scriptures are too numerous to mention. And as illustrated above, we touch upon the Vajracchedika-prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra, the Hṛdaya Sūtra belonging to Prajñā-pāramitā scriptures. However, sometimes we also take some quotations from the Vimalakīrti and Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtras.

mortals, and, after attaining salvation for himself, helps others to attain salvation. The chief philosophical difference between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna is that while the former assert the reality of dharmas (elements or entities), the latter declare that all things are empty.

In other words, it is said that pudgalanairātmya (我空) and dharma- nairātmya (法空) (non-substantiality of the self and the dharmas) are the two important concepts associated with Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna respectively.³²⁷

In the later development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the philosophy of concept of non-substantiality of the dharmas (*dharma nairātmya*, 法空) was widely accepted. It basically denied the separate reality of the elements (of existence). According to this, substance is unreal, a thought-construction (*vikalpa*, 想) and the modes and attributes (associated with the thought-construction) are also unreal. It is well known that with the emergence of a vast literature such as Prajñā-pāramitā (般若波羅密經), Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka (妙法蓮花經), Laṅkāvatāra (楞伽經), Lalitavistara (神通遊戲經), Samādhirāja (三昧王經), Suvarṇabhāṣa (金光明經), Dasabhūmi (十地經), Sukhāvati (無量壽經), Vimalakīrti (維摩詰經), Āvataṃsaka Sūtras (華嚴經) and other Māhayāna scriptures are too numerous to mention and among them specially the title of Prajñā-pāramitā. T.R.V. Murti says in this connection, “The prajñāpāramitā revolutionised Buddhism in all aspects of its philosophy and religion by the

³²⁷ See T.R.Sharma, An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy, Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1994, p. 24.

basic concept of Śūnyatā.³²⁸

The philosophical systems of Prajñā-pāramitā literature including Vajrachedikā-prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra and the Hṛdaya Sūtra in Buddhism made radical changes in the earlier concepts. The twin concepts of pudgalnairātmya and the dharmanaitātmya as found in the early Buddhism were made broad based in the Prajñā-pāramitā literature. The basic concept of nairātmya was further transformed into Śūnyatā. This concept of Śūnyatā subsequently absorbed in itself some of the concepts which were primarily conceived either ontological, epistemological or metaphysical. Some of the concepts like ādhyātma, rūpa (色), saṃskṛta (有為), asaṃskṛta (無為), prakṛti (自性), bhāva (有), abhāva (非有), svabhāva (實體), parabhāva (真體), vijñāna (識), saṃskara (行), vastu (事健) and sattva (有情) were associated with the concept of Śūnyatā.

It may be stated that the Mādhyamika (中論) system is a school of thought relying the concept of Śūnyatā, but Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna (龍樹) cannot be called its founder because Śūnyatā was present before him in the Mahāyāna Sūtras (大乘經), some of which are prior even to Ashvaghōṣa (馬鳴). Nāgārjuna is only the first systematic expounder of Śūnyatā. However, it is to the glory of Nāgārjuna that he seized these threads and wove them into unity; it is to the greatness of Nāgārjuna that he developed these more or less scattered ideas almost to perfection in a thoroughly consistent manner. Nāgārjuna who wrote number of works of which the Mādhyamika-karikā is regarded as his masterpiece presents in a systematic manner the philosophy

³²⁸ Murti, T.R.V., ed. Srinpoche C. Mani, Mādhyamika Dialectic and the Philosophy of Nāgārjuna, (The Dalai Lama Tibetan Indology Studies vol. I), Sarnath, 1977, p. x.

of Mādhyamika school in particular, Mahāyāna Buddhism in general.

Śūnyatāvādins (空論者) call themselves Mādhyamikas or the followers of the Middle Path realized by Buddha during his Enlightenment, which Path, avoiding the errors of existence and non-existence, affirmation and negation, eternalism and nihilism, also at once transcends both the extremes.

The study of the Prajñā-pāramitā literature also shows that some of the Yogācārins (瑜伽者) also produced the versified summaries of the Prajñā-pāramitā. It is said that Dignāga (陳那) in his Piṇḍārtha dwells on sixteen modes of Śūnyatā.³²⁹ It may be mentioned here that out of these sixteen modes of śūnyatā prakṛtiśūnyatā (非自性), saṃskṛtaśūnyatā (非有為) and asaṃskṛtaśūnyatā (非無為) are referred in the commentary of Haribhadra (師子賢) known as Āloka (無色界). The Prajñā-pāramitā-piṇḍārtha³³⁰ of Dignāga even negated the Bodhisattva itself. Thus, it can be said that the basic concepts of pudgalanairātmya and the dharma-nairātmya of the early Buddhism were made more elaborate in the twenty modes of Śūnyatā, as found in the Aṣṭāsārikā Prajñā-pāramitā (八天頌般若波羅密經) whereas the Prajñā-pāramitā-piṇḍārtha of Dignāga refers only to sixteen modes of Śūnyatā.

³²⁹ Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārtha, I-II, ed. G. Tucci (Minor Sanskrit Texts on the Prajñāpāramitā), JRAS, 1947, 6.18, pp. 263-4: 1. bodhisattvaśūnyatā, 2. bhokṭṛśūnyatā, 3. adhyātmikaśūnyatā, 4. vastuśūnyatā, 5. rūpaśūnyatā, 6. prakṛtiśūnyatā, 7. vijñāśūnyatā, 8. sattvaśūnyatā, 9. saṃskāraśūnyatā, 10. dharmaśūnyatā, 11. ātmaśūnyatā, 12. pudgalanairaśūnyatā, 13. saṃskṛtaśūnyatā, 14. asaṃskṛtaśūnyatā, 15. sāvadyaśūnyatā, 16. nirvadyaśūnyatā.

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 263: Bodhisattvaṃ na paśyāmīty uktavaṅs tattvato muniḥ / bhoktādhyātmikavastunāṃ kathitā tena Śūnyatā//

It may be pointed out here that the various modern commentators such as Prof. Stcherbatsky,³³¹ Aiyaswami Sastri, Bhāvaviveka,³³² Obermiller,³³³ Murti³³⁴ ... who have contributed to the successive development of the concept of Śūnyatā. According to Dr. Harsh Narayan, Śūnyavāda is complete and pure Nihilism. Śūnyavāda is a negativism which radically empties existence up to the last consequences of Negation. He has taken great pains to prove that Śūnyavāda is Nihilism pure and simple and to establish his preconceived view he has not only given some evidence from Mahāyāna Texts but has relied upon the verdict of tradition too as illustrated below:

“In the face of such an almost unanimous verdict of tradition, it is difficult to see how the nihilistic interpretation of śūnyavāda can be rejected as totally false.”

The thinkers of Yogācāra school describe Śūnyavāda as total Nihilism. Dr Radhakrishnan says that absolute (i.e. *Śūnyatā*) seems to be immobile in its absoluteness. Dr. T.R.V. Murti views Prajñā-pāramitā as absolute itself and said:

“The absolute is very often termed śūnya, as it is devoid of all predicates”.

As we see, with the emergence of the Mahāyāna Sūtras and Mahāyāna philosophers, a new dimension of Śūnyatā was added to the concept of Suññatā in Pāli Nikāyas or pudgalanairātmya and dharmanairātmya in Hīnayāna. This

³³¹ Prof. Stcherbatsky, *Madhyānta-vibhāga, Discrimination between Middle and Extremes*, Calcutta, 1971.

³³² Bhāvaviveka, *Prajñāpradīpa, on Madhyamakaśāstra*.

³³³ Obermiller, E, *A Study of the Twenty Aspects of Śūnyatā*, *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. IX, 1933.

³³⁴ Murti, T.R.V., *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: An Study of the Mādhyamika System*, Delhi: Harper Collins, 1998.

concept of Śūnyatā literally revolutionised the earlier concept in Pāli Nikāyas with regard to some shades of different entities and different meanings in Mahāyāna Sūtras such as Śūnyatā as the true nature of empirical Reality, Pratītyasamutpāda (緣起, 因緣生起), Middle Way (中道), Nirvāṇa (涅槃), and Śūnyatā (空性) is considered as beyond the Negation or Indescribable (*Chatuṣkoṭi-vinirmukta*) and Śūnyatā is the means of the relative Truth (*Sammuti*, Skt. *Samvṛti-satya*, 俗諦) and the ultimate Truth (*Paramārthasatya*, Skt. *Paramārtha-satya*, 真諦).

Now let us come to study them respectively, but first of all, we must grasp their concise definition in Mahāyāna field.

The Definition of Śūnyatā

The term Śūnyatā,³³⁵ terminologically compounded of ‘śūnya’ (empty, void, hollow) and an abstract suffix ‘tā’ (equivalent to ‘ness’), was almost invariably translated into Chinese as (空性) (emptiness, voidness, or vacuity). The concept of this term was essentially both logical and dialectical. The difficulty to understand this concept is due to its transcendental meaning (*paramārtha*, 真諦) in relation to the logico-linguistic meaning (*vyavahāra*), especially because the etymological tracing of its meaning (i.e. śūnya meaning ‘vacuous or hollow within a shape of things’, 真空) provides no theoretical or practical addition to one’s understanding of the concept.

According to A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms (中英佛學辭典),³³⁶ ‘The nature void, i.e. the immateriality of the nature of all things’ is the basic meaning

³³⁵ Shohei Ichimura, *Buddhist Critical Spirituality: Prajñā and Śūnyatā*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001, p. 218.

³³⁶ DCBT, p. 259.

of Śūnyatā. It is very interesting if we will step to examine the field of this definition through the poetic and figural similes of Śūnyatā, before entering to discover the major meanings of the concept of Śūnyatā.

Similes of Śūnyatā

The phenomenal nature of the Dhammas is well illustrated by Buddhaghosa who employs a number of similes to illustrate their unreality. Nāgārjuna also takes these similes to point out the efficacy of the logic contained in them, to comprehend the unreality of the Dhammas. These Dhammas are ever new (*nicanava*), like dew at sunrise (*suriyaggamane ussavabindu*), like a bubble of water (*udake dndaraji*), like a mustard seed at the end of an awl (*aragge sasapo*), like a flash of lightening of instantaneous duration (*vijjupado viya ca paritthayino*), like an illusion (*māyā*, 幻覺), like a mirage (*marici*, 焰喻), like a dream (*supinanta*, 夢), like a wheel of fire (*alatacakka*, 熱輪車), like the city of the Gandharvas (*gandhabba-nagara*, 乾撻婆), like froth (*phena*, 浮水) and like the banana tree (*kadali*, 香蕉).

It is very interesting and significant too that Nāgārjuna himself has used most of these similes in his Karikas: *alatacakranirmana* (熱輪車), *svapna* (夢), *maya* (幻覺), *marici* (幻想), *ambu-candra* (球周), *gandharvanagara* (乾撻婆)...³³⁷

The Buddha used a number of similes in the Nikāyas to point out the unreality of dhammas of every kind and it is these similes that have been later used with great effectiveness in Mahāyāna philosophical schools, specially of

³³⁷ Mādhyamikavṛtti, ed. L. de la Vallee Poussin, Bibliotheca Buddhica, Vol. IV, 1902-13, pp. 173, 177.

Chinese Buddhist thinkers:³³⁸

1. Emptiness implies non-obstruction... like space or the Void, it exists within many things but never hinders or obstructs anything.
2. Emptiness implies omnipresence... like the Void, it is ubiquitous; it embraces everything everywhere.
3. Emptiness implies equality... like the Void, it is equal to all; it makes no discrimination anywhere.
4. Emptiness implies vastness... like the Void, it is vast, broad and infinite.
5. Emptiness implies formlessness or shapelessness... like the Void, it is without form or mark.
6. Emptiness implies purity... like the Void, it is always pure without defilement.
7. Emptiness implies motionlessness... like the Void, it is always at rest, rising above the processes of construction and destruction.
8. Emptiness implies the positive negation... it negates all that which has limits or ends.
9. Emptiness implies the negation of negation... it negates all Selfhood and destroys the clinging of Emptiness (pointing to the thorough transcendency that is free from all abiding).
10. Emptiness implies unobtainability or ungraspability... space or the Void, it is not obtainable or graspable.

First appearing in the Nikāyas the ten similes, expressed in every Mahāyāna philosophical school, illustrate in a poetic way the unreality of the phenomena.

The Meanings of the Concept of Śūnyatā

Śūnyatā as the True Nature of Empirical Reality

In early Buddhism, Suññatā (空) defined as anattā (

³³⁸ Garma C.C. Chang, *Buddhist Teaching of Totality*, Great Britain: The Pennsylvania State University, 1972, pp. 100-1.

無我). The Theravādists and Hīnayānists understood *Suññam* or *anātmam* i.e. the non-existence of any real substance as *ātman* or individuality, e.g., *puḍgala-suññatā*, as N. Dutt writes:

“The Sarvāstivādins are also responsible for the addition of a fourth term, ‘*śūnya*’, to the usual three, namely *dukkha*, *anitya* and *anātma*, though the word conveyed no Mahayanic meaning as it connoted no other sense than *anātma*”.³³⁹

While the Mahāyānists took it to be the nonexistence of individuality (*puḍgala suññatā*) as also of the objective world (*dharma suññatā*).

The word *Śūnyatā* (空性) served to designate the true nature of empirical Reality or what is the same, the form of true nature of all phenomena. This subject matter of *Śūnyatā* will cover all the questions concerning the Buddhist outlooks on life and world.

The true Reality which usually has two widely philosophical concepts: the norm of existence and the essence of existence or it is referred to as the abstract idea of universal principle, law, causality or the such-as-it-is-ness of existence. In this aspect the true reality is not the Universe but the sufficient reason of the Universe. It is stated in the second chapter of the *Sadharmapūṇḍarīka Sūtra* as follows:

“The true entity of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, inherent cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end.”³⁴⁰

³³⁹ Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism, p. 26: This view is endorsed by P.T. Raju *Idealistic Thought of India*, p. 207; also see *Buddhism its religion and philosophy*, prof. W.S.Karunaratne, Buddhist Research Society, Singapore, 1988, p. 44.

³⁴⁰ LS, Chapter II, p. 24.

(唯佛與佛乃能究盡諸法實相。所謂諸法：如是相，如是性，如是體，如是力，如是作，如是因，如是緣，如是果，如是報，如是體末究竟等)³⁴¹

As we see, such a reality which has meanings that all things are always as they truly are. All the marks, nature, substance, powers, functions, causes, conditions, effects, retributions and the equal identity of these nine factors of all dharmas are always like such. Put it in further explanations as below:

As saying that we recognize a thing, it means that we by our senses perceive the marks manifesting the distinctive characters or nature of that thing. Since there exist the external marks manifesting the internal attributes or nature, so the thing is assumed a certain substance. The assumed substance is definitely to possess an inherent power as the nature of Śūnyatā, whose directional vector turns outwards to accomplish its function of manifestation. This is the aspect of existence of the thing itself. The world or universe is ‘a great set’ of myriad of things. All things co-exist, co-operate and interact upon one another to create innumerable phenomena. This is called the cause. The cause under different conditions produces the different effects, which lead to either good or bad or neutral retributions. It is the very universal principle, the reason of existence or the norm of existence as such. In other words, because of Śūnyatā, all things can exist; without Śūnyatā, nothing could possibly exist. Śūnyatā is therefore extremely dynamic and positive, in the Hṛdaya Sūtra’s words, this is also called ‘Form (*rūpa*) is no different from the void (*sūnya*), nor the void from form’ (色不是空，空不是色

³⁴¹ 妙法蓮華經，佛教經典會，佛教慈悲服務中心，香港，一九九四，p. 47.

).³⁴² And Nāgārjuna claimed Śūnyatā as the true nature of empirical Reality by the following famous sentence:

“With Śūnyatā, all is possible; without it, all is impossible.”³⁴³

And of course, this corresponds to the Reality as Vajrachedikā-Prajñā-pāramitā text writes,

“Subhūti, the Tathagātas’ words are true and correspond to reality. They are ultimate words, neither deceitful nor heterodox”. (須菩提! 如來是真語者, 實語者, 如語者, 不獨語者, 不異語者).³⁴⁴

Śūnyatā is not a dogma. It is simply what can be grasped in its total and absolute integrity, only in an act of intuitive Yogic knowledge, which is reserved to the great Buddha. Śūnyatā stands for the avoidance of all dogmas. The persons who take Śūnyatā as a dogma are patients of an incurable malady. The Mūlamādhyaṃika-kārikā presents that:

(Śūnyatā sarvadrśīnām proktā niḥsaraṇam jinaiḥ yeśam tu Śūnyatā drṣṭistānasādhyān pabhāṣire).³⁴⁵

In the Prajñā-pāramitā scriptures, Śūnyatā refers to the world of enlightenment, but it is also stated that this world of enlightenment is not separate from the world of delusion:

³⁴² 般若波羅密多心經, p. 134. ‘Form (rūpa) is no different from the void (śūnya)’ translated into *Form (rūpa) does not differ from the void (śūnya)*.

³⁴³ The Middle Treatise (T. 1564 in Vol. 30, tr. by Kumārajīva in 409 A.D.), xxiv: 14; Nāgārjuna’s Twelve Gate Treatise, viii, Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1982; also see Empty Logic, Hsueh Li Cheng, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991, p. 43.

³⁴⁴ 金剛般若波羅密經, 佛學業書, 台灣, 一九九八, p. 121.

³⁴⁵ Mūlamādhyaṃika-kārikā of Nāgārjuna, David J. Kalupahana, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996, xxii, p. 16.

‘Form (the world of delusion) is identical with void (the world of enlightenment)’, and ‘void is identical with form’.³⁴⁶ Here, ‘form is identical with void’ may be considered to point to the path leading from delusion to enlightenment, while ‘void is identical with form’ points to the path descending from enlightenment to delusion.

The purpose of Śūnyatā refers to the objective of extinguishing linguistic proliferation and the efforts leading towards this objective: ‘Śūnyatā’ corresponds to ultimate truth, namely, the state in which linguistic proliferation has been extinguished; and the ‘meaning of Śūnyatā’ signifies all existents relating to our everyday life in which Śūnyatā is an actually established fact.

The Śūnyavadin is neither a thorough-going sceptic nor a cheap nihilist who doubts and denies the existence of everything for its own sake or who relishes in shouting that he does not exist. His object is simply to show that all world-objects when taken to be ultimately real, will be found self-contradictory and relative and hence mere appearances.

True, he indulges in condemning all phenomena to be like illusion, dream, mirage, sky-flower, son of a barren woman, magic etc which suggest that they are something absolutely unreal. But this is not his real object. He indulges in such descriptions simply to emphasize the ultimate unreality of all phenomena. He emphatically asserts again and again that he is not a nihilist who advocates absolute negation, that he, on the other hand, maintains the empirical Reality of all phenomena.

He knows that absolute negation is impossible because it necessarily presupposes affirmation. He only denies the

³⁴⁶ 般若波羅密多心經, p. 134.

ultimate reality of both affirmation and negation. He condemns intellect from the ultimate standpoint only for he knows that its authority is unquestionable in the empirical world. He wants that we should rise above the categories and the contradictions of the intellect and embrace Reality. He asserts that it is the Real itself which appears. He maintains that Reality is immanent in appearances and yet it transcends them all, that Reality is the Non-dual Absolute, Blissful and beyond intellect, where all plurality is merged. This is the constructive side of the dialectic in Śūnyatā which we propose to consider now. Here intellect is transformed into Pure Experience.

The Saddharma-puṇḍarīka sūtra tells us that as long as we are entangled in the categories of the intellect we are like blind-born men completely in the dark; when we reach the limit where finite thought confesses its weakness and points towards Reality our blindness is cured but our vision is still blurred; it is only when we embrace Pure Knowledge of the Buddha that we gain true vision. This is Reality which is Calm and Deep and Pure Knowledge of the Buddha, which transcends intellect and which is to be directly realized through pure knowledge. It is the Most Excellent and the Final Enlightenment (*uttama agra bodhi*) by which we become one with the Buddha.³⁴⁷

Thus, we can say that Śūnyatā is the key concept of Mahāyāna, especially in the Mādhyamika Philosophy and it can be understood by Purnatā tathatā (真如), Nirvāṇa (涅槃), Pratīitya-samutpāda (緣起, 因緣生起), Paramārthatā (真諦), Nairātmya (遠離), Satya (真理), Sarvadharmāśūnyatā (一切法空), Sarvapādārthaśūnyatā (一切六句義空),

³⁴⁷ LS, pp. 29, 39, 116, 134.

Sarvabhavaśūnyatā (一切有空) etc., which generally mean the true nature of imperical Reality.

Śūnyatā as the Dependent Origination (Pratītyasamutpāda, 緣起, 因緣生起)

The Hṛdaya Sūtra of Prajñā-pāramitā literature narrated that, at one of the Dharma sessions held on Mount Gr̥dhra-kūṭa (靈鷲, Vulture Peak) in Rājṛgha (王舍), Śākyamuni (釋迦牟尼) suggested that Śāriputra (舍利弗), who held the first seat, request Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva (觀世音菩薩) to give a lecture on the insight of Śūnyatā. In reply to Śāriputra, the Bodhisattva, who was engaged in deep contemplation of Prajñā-pāramitā surveying the distress calls of sentient beings, expounded the meaning of the Truth from the point of view of Śūnyatā as under:

“Śāriputra! Form (rūpa) does not differ from the void (Śūnya), nor the void from form. Form is identical with void (and) void is identical with form. So also are reception (vedanā), conception (saṅjñā), mind impression (saṃskāra) and consciousness (vijñāna) in relation to the void. Śāriputra, the void (Śūnya) of all things is not created, not annihilated, not impure, not pure, not increasing and not decreasing.”

(舍利子! 色不異空, 空不異色; 色即是空, 空即是色。受, 想, 行, 識亦復如是。舍利子! 是諸法空相, 不生, 不滅, 不垢, 不淨, 不增, 不減).³⁴⁸

The Pāli scripture declares six sense-organs, six sense-objects and six consciousness as well as five aggregates are Suññatā as “Eye is void of self and anything belonging to self, form is void..., visual consciousness is void...”,³⁴⁹ then Hṛdaya Sūtra expands this concept by emphasis that ‘rūpa

³⁴⁸ 般若波羅密多心經, p. 134.

³⁴⁹ BKS, IV, 29.

does not differ from Śūnya' (色不異空), or 'Śūnya does not differ from rupa' (空不異色), and 'Śūnya of all things is not created, not annihilated, not impure, not pure, not increasing and not decreasing' (是諸法空相, 不生, 不滅, 不垢, 不淨, 不增, 不減). It means that because rupa must have no a nature of its own (*svabhava*), it is produced by causes or depend on anything else, so rupa is Śūnyatā or 'identical with void' (色即是空)... That which is real, would contradict the fact that phenomena are bound by the relations of cause and effect, subject and object, actor and action, whole and part, unity and diversity, duration and destruction, and the relations of time and space. Anything known through experience is dependent on conditions, so it cannot be real. According to the *Prajñā-pāramitā*, the perceived object, the perceiving subject and knowledge are mutually interdependent. The reality of one is dependent upon others; if one is false, the others must be false. The perceiving subject and knowledge of the external object must also be false. So what one perceives within or without is illusory. Therefore there is nothing, creation and annihilation, pure and impure, increase and decrease and so on... Thus, 'Śūnya of all things is not created, not annihilated, not impure, not pure, not increasing and not decreasing'.

On the other hand, what one perceives cannot be conceived as unreal since that which is unreal can never come to exist. Thus a thing cannot be said to be either real or unreal, and accordingly any such claim would be unintelligible. In *Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's* thought, the Middle Way as Śūnyatā is often presented as a provisional name for the fact that all things are causally dependent upon each other, the classic Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination or causality (*Pratītyasamutpāda*). *Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara* (觀世音菩薩) used *Pratītyasamutpāda* (緣

起，因緣生起) to refute extreme views and to prove Śūnyatā of all things. In the teaching of the Hṛdaya Sūtra, we can understand Śūnyatā (空性), Middle Way (中道), and Dependent Origination (緣起，因緣生起) are interchangeable, and lead to the conclusion that metaphysical theories are untenable.

We may illustrate it by a following formulation:

Table IV

X = - X, because X is composed by V, Y, Z, W...
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We are able to see here the reason why Śūnyatā is defined as Pratītyasamutpāda. There is the intimate connection that exists between causality and Śūnyatā. The one presupposes the other; the two are inseparably connected. Śūnyatā is the logical consequence of the Buddha's view of causality and effect. Śūnyatā is the central theme of the Mahāyāna philosophical system. This term has been used in the Prajñā-pāramitā system to denote a stage where all viewpoints with regard to the real nature of mundane world are totally rejected. In other words, we may say that to have a viewpoint is to cling to a position and there can be various types of positions with regard to the real nature of things as Saddharma Puṇḍarīka expressed under:

“... know that phenomena have no constantly fixed nature,

that the seeds of Buddhahood sprout through causation...”³⁵⁰

³⁵⁰ LS, 42.

(知法常空性，佛種從緣生)³⁵¹

In the invocation in verse at the beginning of the work, Nāgārjuna gives the fundamentals of his philosophy in a nutshell. He describes Pratītyasamutpāda by means of eight negatives. In Mādhyamika śāstra, he says:

“Anirodhamanutpādamanucchedamśāśvatam
anekārthamanānārthamanāgamamanirgamam.”³⁵²

(不生亦不滅，不一亦不異，不常亦不斷，不去亦不來)。

There is neither origination, nor cessation, neither permanence nor impermanence, neither unity nor diversity, neither coming-in nor going-out, in the law of Pratītyasamutpāda. Essentially, there is only non-origination which is equated with Śūnyatā. Elsewhere he also states that Pratītyasamutpāda (Dependent Origination) is called Śūnyatā. Here Śūnyatā referring as it does to non-origination, is in reality the Middle path which avoids the two basic views of existence and non-existence. Śūnyatā is the relative existence of things, or a kind of relativity. Dr. Radhakrishnan writes in his book *Indian Philosophy* that “by śūnyatā therefore, the Mādhyamika does not mean absolute non-being, but relative being”.

What then are the positive teachings of the writings on Prajñā-pāramitā literature? The teaching concerns the relation between conditioned and unconditioned things. Something is called ‘conditioned’ if it is what it is only in relation to something else. All the familiar things of our everyday world are conditioned in two ways: Each one is dependent on a multiplicity of other events which surround it, and all of them

³⁵¹ 妙法蓮華經, p. 46.

³⁵² Śūnyā Dharma, Sinhalese edition, p. 57.

are linked to suffering and ignorance through the twelve links of the chain of causation (or, more literally, of “conditioned coproduction”). The Vajrachedikā-Prajñā-pāramitā sūtra concludes with the famous verse:

“All phenomena are like a dream, an illusion, a bubble and a shadow, like dew and lightning. Thus should you meditate upon them.”

(一切有為法，如夢幻泡影，如露亦如電，應作如是觀).³⁵³

Like dew drops and a lightening flash the things of this world are evanescent and short-lived. Each experience bursts soon, like a bubble, and it can be enjoyed only for a moment. The transformation of the earthly scene concern us, and our true welfare, no more do the changing shapes of the clouds we may watch on a hot summer day. The appearance of this world is like a hallucination which springs from a disease in the organ of vision about as real as the spots which livery people see before their eyes. Like a magical shows it deceives, deludes and defrauds us, and it is false, when measured by what we slowly learn about ultimate reality. As a lamp goes on burning only as long as fuel is fed into it, so also this world of ours continues only while craving supplies the drive. The enlightened awake to reality as it is; compared with their vision of true reality our normal experience is that of a dream, unreal and not to be taken seriously.

Finally, what we see around us can be likened to the stars. As the stars are no longer seen when the sun has risen, so also the things of this world are visible only in the darkness of ignorance, and, in the absence of reactions to them, they are no longer noticed when the true non-dual

³⁵³ 金剛般若波羅密經, p. 132.

gnosis of the Absolute has taken place.³⁵⁴

That is the sole purpose of Buddha's teaching.

“The entire Buddhist thought revolves on the pivot of Pratīyasamutpāda, the Mādhyamika system is interpretation of Pratīyasamutpāda as śūnyatā.”³⁵⁵

Śūnyatā as the Middle Way

The term ‘middle way’ refers to something intermediary but it has transcended any dichotomy into ‘being’ and ‘non-being,’ ‘attribute’ and ‘substance’ or ‘cause’ and ‘effect’...

In a kārikā (24.18), Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna observes that Middle way is Dependent Origination and also means Śūnyatā by saying:

“What is originating co-dependently, we call emptiness. It is designation based upon (some material). Only this is the Middle Path.”

(yaḥ pratīyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tām pracakṣmahe).³⁵⁶

It is clear that Dependent Origination and Śūnyatā are one and the same thing. The other verse continues to state the same idea that:

“It is provisional designation and it is the Middle way.”

(sā prajñāptir upādāya pratipat saiva madhyamā).

“Provisional designation” refers to the verbalized form assumed by ultimate truth, and it may be said to correspond to language in which the vector leading from the sacred to the profane is grounded.

³⁵⁴ SSPW, 20.

³⁵⁵ CPB, 166.

³⁵⁶ Candrakīti on Mādhyamikaśāstra.

Nagārjuna's interpretation claims that the true nature of an object cannot be ascertained by intellect and described as real or unreal.³⁵⁷

In the Vimalakīrti Sūtra (維摩詰經), the Middle way which is called the not-two Dharma-gate, or the Dharma-gate of non-duality. A few passages discussed this topic in a great assembly of Bodhisattvas.

“At this time Vimalakīrti said to all the Bodhisattvas, “Good sirs, how can a Bodhisattva enter the Dharma-gate of non-duality? Each of you with your eloquence please tell it as you like. . .”

Virtue-Top Bodhisattva said, “Defilement and purity make two. If you see the real nature of defilement, you [will realize that] purity has no form, then you conform to the character of cessation. This is entering the, Dharma-gate of non-duality. . .”

Good-Eye Bodhisattva said, “One mark and no mark are two. If one knows that one mark is no mark, and yet does not cling to no mark, he penetrates into the state of equality, and is said to have entered the Dharma-gate of non-duality. . . Pusya Bodhisattva said, “Good and evil make two. If you do not arouse good or evil, but penetrate to the limit of no-form, thus attaining the full realization, you enter the Dharma-gate of non-duality. . .”

Pure-Conviction Bodhisattva said, “The conditioned and the unconditioned dharmas make two. If one can depart from all numbers, his mind will be like empty space; with pure Wisdom he encounters no obstruction whatsoever. This is entering the Dharma-gate of non-duality...”

Narayana Bodhisattva said, “Mundane and supra-mundane are two. The very nature of mundane is empty, which

³⁵⁷ For the detailed discussions of this, see Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Epistemology, Logic, and Grammar in Indian Philosophical Literature*, Paris: Mouton, 1971, pp. 148-151; ‘*A Critique of the Mādhyamika Position*’, *The Problem of Two Truths*, ed. by Mervyn Sprung, pp. 56-57.

is the same as the supramundane. In them there is no entering, no coming out, no overflowing and no dispersing. This is entering the Dharma-gate of non-duality. . .”

Good-Wit Bodhisattva said, “Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa make two. When one sees the nature of saṃsāra, then there is no saṃsāra, no bondage, no liberation, no burning and no relieving. He who understands this enters the Dharma-gate of non-duality...”

Lightening-God Bodhisattva said, “Insight and ignorance make two. The true nature of ignorance is insight itself. Insight cannot be grasped; it is beyond all numbers. To be equal in them without duality is to enter the Dharma-gate of non-duality. . .”

Delight-Vision Bodhisattva said, “Form and Emptiness of form are two. However, form itself is empty, not when it ceases to be, but by its very nature. In the same way, feeling, conception, impulses and consciousness are empty. . . He who realizes this is entering the Dharma-gate of non-duality. . .”

Jewel-Seal-in-Hand Bodhisattva said, “To like Nirvāṇa and to dislike the world make two. If one does not like Nirvāṇa nor loath the world, then there is no duality. Why is this so? Because if there is bondage, then there is liberation. If from the beginning there is no such thing as bondage, who would ever seek for liberation? He who realizes that there is no bondage and no liberation will have no likes or dislikes. This is entering the Dharma-gate of non-duality. . .”

Truth-Lover Bodhisattva said, “Real and unreal make two. He who truly sees, does not even see the real, how much less the unreal? Why? Because this is not something that can be seen by the eye of the flesh. Only the Wisdom-eye can see it, and yet for this wisdom-eye there is nothing seen or unseen. This is entering the Dharma-gate of non-duality...”

Thus, each and every Bodhisattva spoke in turn; then they all asked Mañjuśrī, “Please tell us, what is the Bodhisattva’s entering the Dharma-gate of non-duality?”

Mañjuśrī replied, “According to my understanding, to have no word, no speech, no indication and no cognition, departing away from all questions and answers is to enter the

Dharma-gate of non-duality.” Thereupon Mañjuśrī asked Vimalakīrti, “We have spoken, each for himself. Now, good sir, you must tell us what is the Bodhisattva’s entering the Dharma-gate of non-duality.”

Then Vimalakīrti kept silent, without a word. Whereupon Mañjuśrī praised him in earnestness, “Oh great, oh marvellous! Not to have even words or letters, this is truly entering the Dharma-gate of non-duality!”

While this chapter on entering the Dharma-gate of non-duality was preached, five thousand Bodhisattvas in the assembly all entered the Dharma-gate of non-duality and reached the state of no-arising-Dharma-maturity.³⁵⁸

The same ideas in the Vajrachedikā-Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra are expressed by the words as under:

“Subhūti, the Tathāgata knows and sees all: these living beings will thus acquire immeasurable merits. Why? (Because) they will have wiped out notions of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, of Dharma and Not-Dharma. Why? (Because) if their minds grasp form (*lakṣaṇa*), they will (still) cling to the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. If their minds grasp the Dharma, they will (still) cling to the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Why? (Because) if their minds grasp the Not-Dharma, they will (still) cling to the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Therefore, one should not grasp and hold on to the notion of Dharma as well as that of Not-Dharma”.

(須菩提！如來悉知悉見；是諸眾生，得如是無量福德。所以故？是諸眾生，無復亦相，人相，眾生相，壽者相，無法相，亦無非法相。何以故？是諸眾生，若心取相，則為著我，人，眾生，壽者。

³⁵⁸ Garma C.C. Chang, *Buddhist Teaching of Totality*, Great Britain: The Pennsylvania State University, 1972, pp. 95-6.

若取法相，即著我，人，眾生，壽者。是故不應取法，不應取非法)³⁵⁹

The notion of Dharma as well as that of Not-Dharma here means the negation of the dual, because it is produced by causes or depends on anything else, so it is falsely produced or appears as the Buddha said to Subhūti that “Subhūti, (when) the Tathāgata speaks of an ego, there is in reality no ego, although common men think so. Subbuti, the Tathāgata says common men are not, but are (by expediency) called, common men” (須菩提! 如來說有我者，即非有我，而凡夫之人以為有我。須菩提! 凡夫者，如來說即非凡夫，是名凡夫。³⁶⁰

It is itself a means (*Madhyama*) between all extremes, a Middle Path (*Madhyamamārga*), or a moderate course of action (*Madhyama pratipāda*).

The Middle Way represents a characteristic attitude, rooted in a certain set of individual and social concerns, which shapes the motivation for one’s actions in the world. It is indicative of a particular sort of deconstructive philosophy which endows the Mādhyamika with its paradoxical ‘non-position’. This notion of a Middle Way is fundamental to all Buddhist teachings—it is in no sense the exclusive property of the Mādhyamika—yet it was given priority by Nāgārjuna and his followers, who applied it in a singularly relentless fashion to all problems of ontology, epistemology, and soteriology.

As we mentioned in the previous chapter,³⁶¹ the concept of a Middle Way obviously proved to be a very

³⁵⁹ 金剛般若波羅密經, pp. 113-4.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

³⁶¹ Chapter V, pp. 136-143.

fruitful heuristic in early Buddhist literature, a device that could seemingly be exploited as an aid toward the explanation of virtually any important point of doctrine. One of the most crucial doctrinal issues for all Buddhists is, of course, the concept of selflessness (*nairātmya*), and here as elsewhere we encounter the all-pervasive influence of the Middle Way, this time interpreted by Nāgārjuna as the absence of any philosophical view—the ‘view’ which is really no view at all:

“The Buddhas have indicated that there is a self, they taught that there is no self, and they also taught that there is neither any self nor any no-self.”

(ātmety api prajñāpitam anātmety api deśitaṃ/ buddhair nātmā na cānātmā kaścīd ity api deśitaṃ).³⁶²

The Middle Way and Pratītyasamutpāda are two ways of designating the same notion, namely, Śūnyatā. Both aim at showing that the true state of things is incomprehensible and indescribable, beyond the reach of thought and language.³⁶³

Thus, in the Mahāyāna Buddhism, Pratītyasamutpāda and Śūnyatā, are equal and synonymous but it points out to another main important factor, i.e., the Dependent Origination, if understood in the empirical sense, simply refers to a mere nomenclature. This fact is further explained by Candrakīrti (月稱) saying that wheels (of a chariot) being the components of a chariot, thus this whole structure is designated as a chariot in the worldly sense. The chariot has no independent status and since it originates dependently, it lacks its own nature. Now, these very components are by their nature unproduced. According to him this very non-production of the components of the wheel etc., is Śūnyatā.

³⁶² Madhyamakaśāstra.

³⁶³ Nāgārjuna, The Middle Treatise, xviii: 7.

Such a Śūnyatā, whose characteristic is non-production, is also designated as the Middle Path.³⁶⁴ Moreover, according to Candrakīrti's explanation Śūnyatā (空觀), nomenclature (*upādāya prajñapti*, 假觀) and the Middle Way (*Madhyama pratipadā*, 中觀) are considered to be 'different names' (*viśeṣa sañjñā*) of the Dependent Origination (*Pratītyasamutpāda*, 緣觀).³⁶⁵ As far as the meaning of the two terms is concerned, Candrakīrti says at another place that whatever is the meaning of Dependent Origination it is emptiness.³⁶⁶ The term nomenclature based on some material is also interpreted by various scholars in different ways. This Śūnyatā always assumes some nomenclature, which in Buddhist philosophy is called *prajñapti*. Thus, it finally leads to the Middle path which is free from the two extremes of existence and non-existence.

The *Madhyama pratipada* is also free from the two extremes of eternalism and annihilationism. The Middle way is to see the things as they are. In the whole of the *kārikā* there are four *padas* viz., *Pratītyasamutpāda* (緣觀), *Śūnyatā* (空觀), *Upādāya-pratipadā* (假觀) and *Madhyama pratipada* (中觀). As a matter of fact, all the four have some logical sequence in them. According to Gadjin M. Nagao all these four *padas* associated with each other in some way, are

³⁶⁴ Cf. Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā* on *Mādhyamikaśāstra* (24.18) op.cit. p. 220: *yā ceyam svabhāvasūnyatā sā prajñaptir upādāya, saiya śūnyatā upādāya prajñaptir iti vyavasthāpyate. cakrādīny upādāya rathāṅgāni rathah prajñayate / tasya vā savāṅgāny upādāya prajñap, sā svabhāvenānutpattih, yā ca svabhāvānanutpattih sā śūnyatā. saiva svabhāvānutpattilakṣaṇā śūnyatā madhyamā pratipat iti vyayateasthāpyate.*

³⁶⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*: *tad evam pratītyasamutpādasyaivaitā viśeṣasañjñā śūnyatā upādāya prajñaptih, madhyamā pratipad iti.*

³⁶⁶ Cf. Candrakīrti on *Mādhyamikaśāstra*.

pratītyasamutpādāśabdasya yo' arthah sa eva' śūnyatāśabdārthah.

may say that we have always a desire to go beyond the conceptual analysis of the things which bring us to the level of Śūnyatā, beyond which our intellect fails. Venkatramanan says,

“To these three may be added another import of śūnyatā, viz., the sense of beyond, the thrust for the real, the thrust for fulfilment, which is the seat and spring of all the activities of man.”³⁶⁹

The significance of the identity relation between Pratītyasamutpāda and Śūnyatā in Mahāyāna Buddhism lies in the recognition of a philosophical fact, i.e., the law of Dependent Origination at mundane level giving rise to Śūnyatā at the transcendental level. To put it other way, the law of Dependent origination is a metaphysical ladder to reach the high pedestal of Śūnyatā at the transcendental level. And in the strict sense, Śūnyatā, the Middle way and Dependent Origination, according to the Mahāyāna, are themselves empty. Still, they are good devices for helping rid people of attachment. They perform the same function of avoiding the extremes of absolutism and nihilism. The claim that all things are empty means that all things neither absolutely exist nor absolutely do not exist. If things in the universe existed absolutely, they would have their own nature and would not be dependent upon causal conditions, but nothing in the world is seen to be independent of causal conditions. Thus, the existence of things cannot be absolutely real. And if the existence of things were absolutely unreal or nothing, there would be no change or motion in the universe, yet myriad things are perceived to arise from causal conditions.

³⁶⁹ Venkatramanan K., Nāgārjuna's philosophy, Delhi, 1978, p. 339 (a).

Śūnyatā as Nirvāṇa (涅槃)

And the next meaning, Śūnyatā is considered as Nirvāṇa. As we know in Pāli Nikāyas, Suññatā (空) means Nibbāna i.e. the attitude of emptiness, a reality beyond suffering or the state of final release. Later, the Mahāyānist or Mahāyāna teachers identified Śūnyatā (空性) with Nirvāṇa (涅槃) and added it some more colours.

As we have seen in Chapter Five,³⁷⁰ the ethical conception of Nibbāna has received the largest amount of attention in the Pāli texts as well as in the writings of modern scholars. Throughout the Nikāyas, Nibbāna is described as the destruction (*khaya*, 斷滅) of attachment (*rāga*, 貪迷), hatred (*dosa*, 疾妒) and delusion (*moha*, 幻想), of desire (*taṇhā*, 愛欲), impressions (*saṅkhārā*, 幻覺), and firm grasp of wrong views (*upādāna*, 邪見), of impurities (*āsava*, 漏) and afflictions (*kilesa*, 煩惱), of desire for existence (*bhava*, 有), birth (*jāti*, 生), old age, death (*jarāmaraṇa*, 老死), and thus of misery (*dukkha*, 苦). In describing the positive aspect of Nibbāna, the Nikāyas state that it is a condition which is very happy (*accantasukha*, 安樂), imperishable (*accuta*, 不死), steady (*acala*, *dhīra*, 安靜), tranquil (*santa*, 輕安) and free from fear (*akutobhaya*, 無畏). It is the state of the highest bliss (*amata*) and the object of Jhānas is to bring the mind into such a state that it will be above worldly pleasure and pain. It can be effected by dissociating the mind completely from all worldly matters. This is achieved by means of the trances, the highest of which is the Saññāvedayitanirodha (滅受想定). From the foregoing discussion about the highest trance, it is evident that Nibbāna is psychically Saññāvedayitanirodha

³⁷⁰ pp. 143-151.

provided that the adept complies with the other necessary conditions of Arhathood.

The notable passage of the Itivuttaka (如是語經):³⁷¹ ‘Atthi, bhikkhave, abhūtam akatam asaṅkhatam’ shows that the early Buddhists conceived of Nibbāna not as annihilation but as something positive,³⁷² which is, a metaphysical interpretation of Nibbāna, however it is infinite and indescribable like Ākāsa (無為). It is called a dhātu (realm) beyond the three dhatus,— the Apariyāpanna-dhātu or Lokuttara-dhātu (超界). It is a state to be realised (*sacchikātabba*) within one’s own self (*paccattam veditabbo viññūhi*). It is homogeneous (*ekarasa*, 同一) and in it there is no individuality. It is like the disappearance of flame in the fathomless state of existence in the infinite.

The more accurate conception of Nibbāna would certainly be that it is a state beyond the domain of word and thought and possible of realisation only within one’s own self, while according to Nāgārjuna, the Śūnyatāvādins do not seek a Nirvāṇa where there is an end of kleśas (煩惱) and skandhas (蘊). Their Nirvāṇa is:

“Nirvāṇa is that which is neither discarded nor attained; it is neither a thing destroyed nor a thing eternal; it is neither suppressed nor does it arise”.

(Arahāṇam asamprāptam anucchinnaṃ aśāvataṃ,
Aniruddham anutpannaṃ etaṃ nirvāṇaṃ ucyate).³⁷³

It is also said that in Pāli literature, Nirupādhiśeṣa (解脫最後) is the state of final release where all the skandhas,

³⁷¹ Itivuttaka, ed. E. Windish, London: PTS, 1889, p. 37.

³⁷² Kathāvatthu, I-II, ed. A.C. Taylor, London: PTS, 1894-95, p. 124; also see Milindapañha, ed. V. Trenckner, London: PTS, 1962, p. 316.

³⁷³ Quoted in Mahayana Buddhism, Nalinaksha Dutt, Calcutta, 1976, p. 237.

and defilements have total cease. Then the Mahāyānists gave one more variety—the Apratiṣṭhita Nirvāṇa, the state of the Bodhisattva who shuns retiring into Final Release, although fully entitled to it, and who by his free choice devotes himself to the service of all beings. Candrakīrti in Mādhyamika-Kārikāvṛtti (中觀論頌), defined that Nirvāṇa is:

“What is not abandoned nor acquired; what is not annihilation nor eternity; what is not destroyed nor created.”

(svabhāvena hi vyavasthitānām kleśānām skandhānām ca svabhāvasyānapāyitvāt kuto nivṛttir, yatas tannivṛtṭyā nirvāṇam . . . yadi khalu śūnyavaditāḥ kleśānām skandhānām vā nivṛttilakṣaṇam nirvāṇam necchanti, kiṁ lakṣaṇarh tarhīcchanti. ucyate;

“aprahīṇam asamprāptam anucchinnaṁ aśāśvatam; aniruddham anutpannam etan nirvāṇam ucyate”).³⁷⁴

‘The function of prajñā is not to transform the real, but only to create a change in our attitude towards it.’

(na prajñā aśūnyān bhāvān śūnyān karoti; bhāvā eva śūnyāḥ).³⁷⁵

The change is epistemic (subjective), not ontological (objective). The real is as it has ever been. Nirvāṇa is not an ens (*bhāva*, 有) or non-ens (*abhāva*, 非有) etc., it is the abandonment of such considerations of the real (*bhāvābhāva-parāmarśakṣayo nirvāṇam*, 勝義諦的涅槃).³⁷⁶ This is in full accord with the teaching of Buddha asking us to abandon the existential (*bhava-dṛṣṭi*, 現有) and non-

³⁷⁴ MādhyamikaKārikāvṛtti (Prasannapadā) by Candrakīrti, commentary on Mādhyamika kārikās, Bib. Budd. IV, p. 521.

³⁷⁵ Loc.cit.

³⁷⁶ Eta evaṁ na kasyacin nirvāṇe prahāṇam nāpi kasyacin nirodha iti vijñeyam. tataś ca sarva.kalpanākṣayarūpam eva nirvāṇam. tathoktam Ārya Ratnāvalyām: na cābhāvo’pi nirvāṇam kuta evāsya bhāvatā; bhāvābhāva-parāmarśa-kṣayo nirvāṇam ucyate. MKV. p. 524.

existential (*vibhava-dr̥ṣṭi*, 非現有) views.³⁷⁷ This is the true significance of the *avyākṛta* (無記, Inexpressibles) regarding the nature of the Tathāgata (如來)—whether he exists after death or does not or both or neither.³⁷⁸ Nirvāṇa as one with the Absolute is free from thought-determinations. And only by leaving these do we attain Nirvāṇa.

It is the contention of the Mahāyāna that the final release is possible only through Śūnyatā by the giving up of all views, stand-points and predicaments.³⁷⁹

Nāgārjuna, the leading exponent of Śūnyatā, has made this point very clear. He says, “Because I have no acceptance whatsoever, I am free from all faults.”

Candrakīrti, in commenting upon this verse, says that it is not to be eradicated like *rāga* (passion, 貪欲) etc. nor to be attained like the fruits of a saintly life (e.g., *Srotāpatti* (修陀還), *Saṅgāhāra* (修陀舍) etc.). It is not eternal like *aśūnya* (real elements).³⁸⁰ It is by its nature without origin and decay, and its *lakṣaṇa* (characteristic, 相) is that it does not admit of any description.³⁸¹ In such an indescribable thing, how can an imagination (*kalpanā*, 想像) of the existence of *kleśas* and *skandhas*, and their eradication

³⁷⁷ MK, xxv, 10.

³⁷⁸ Cf. *Vadānta Paribhāṣā*, chapter I.

³⁷⁹ ‘muktis tu śūnyatādr̥ṣṭes tadarthāśeśabhāvanā’. A dictum of Nāgārjuna quoted in BCAP. p. 438 and also in *Subhāṣita Samgraha*. Also in Guṇaratna's commentary (p. 47) on *Saḍḍarśana Samuccaya*. *buddhaiḥ pratyeka-buddhaiś ca śravakaiś ca nisevitā; mārgas tvam ekā moksasya nāstyanya iti niścayah*. ASP. IX, 41. *na vinānena mārgeṇa bodhir ityāgamo yataḥ*, GBWL, IX, 41.

³⁸⁰ Prof. Stcherbatsky suggests in the footnote that *Aśūnya* = Nirvāṇa of the Hīnayānists = *Pradhāna* of Sāṃkhya.

³⁸¹ Prof. Stcherbatsky translates ‘*prapañca*’ by plurality and then sometimes even stretches this sense of the word.

through *Nirvāṇa* find a place? So long as those activities of our imagination continue to exist, there can be no *Nirvāṇa*. *Nirvāṇa* is realised only when all *prapañcas*, i.e., attempts at particularization or definition cease. To the argument of the *Sarvāstivādins* (上座部) that even admitting the non-existence of *kleśas* and *skandhas* at the stage where *Nirvāṇa* (涅槃) is reached, it may be that they exist in *saṃsāra*, i.e., before the attainment of *Nirvāṇa*, — the *Mahāyānists* give the forcible reply that there is not the slightest difference between *Nirvāṇa* and *Saṃsāra* (輪迴). So, in fact, *Nirvāṇa* requires no process of eradication. *Nirvāṇa* is really the complete disappearance (*kṣaya*, 遍滅) of all figments of the imagination. The *kleśas*, *skandhas*, etc., the disappearance of which is generally supposed to be necessary in *Nirvāṇa*,³⁸² have, according to the *Mādhyamikas*, no real existence whatsoever. Those who cannot get rid of the conception of 'I-ness' or 'Mine-ness' usually assume the existence of non-existent things.

Put it in the broad view, he told that the paths advocated by other systems can at best lead to partial release, or be a preliminary to this.³⁸³ Consideration of the real in any

³⁸² *Madhyamakavṛtti*, ed. L. de la Vallee Poussin, BB. iv, 1902-13, p. 445.

³⁸³ "Ekaṃ hi yānaṃ dvitīyaṃ na vidyate". See also *ĀṣṭaSāhasrikāPrajñāpāramitā*, Śānti Deva, Bib. Ind., p. 319. ekaṃ eva hi yānaṃ bhavati yad uta buddha-yānaṃ. bodhisattvānaṃ yathā āyusmataḥ subhūter nirdeśaḥ.

It is explicitly stated in the *AbhisamayĀlamkāra* *Āloka*, Haribhadra, G.O.S. Baroda, p. 120 that it is the opinion of *Nāgārjuna* and his followers that the votaries of other paths do not gain final release, that they remain in a lower state, but are, at the end of the period, enlightened by the Buddha.

Ārya *Nāgārjuna*-pādāis tanmatanusāriṇaś caikayāna-nayavādina āhuh: labdhvā bodhi-dvayaṃ hy ete bhavād uttrastamānasāḥ; bhavanty āyuh-ksayāt tuṣṭāḥ prāpta-nirvāṇa-saṃjñāḥ. na tesaṃ asti nirvāṇaṃ kim tu

particular mode, e.g. as Substance, Being, Becoming etc necessarily creates an other, the opposite, from which it is distinguished. We cannot help being attached to what we take to be real—our view—and reject others. A view, because of its restriction, determination, carries with it duality, the root of saṃsāra. Nāgarjuna states this dialectical predicament thus: when the self is posited, an other (*para*) confronts it; with the division of the self and the non-self, attachment and aversion result. Depending on these all vices spring up. Attachment begets the thirst for pleasure, and thirst hides all flaws (of the objects). Blinded by this, the thirsty man imagines qualities in things, and seizes upon the means to achieve pleasure. Saṃsāra is thus present as long as there is the attachment to the ‘I’.³⁸⁴

The root-cause of dukkha, in the Mādhyamika system, is the indulging in views (*dr̥ṣṭi*, 觀念) or imagination (*kalpanā*, 妄想). *Kalpanā* (*vikalpa*, 妄想分別) is avidyā (無明) par excellence. The real is the indeterminate (*śūnya*); investing it with a character, determining it as ‘this’ or ‘not this’, is making the Real one-sided, partial and unreal. This is unconsciously to negate the real; for all determination is negation. The dialectic then, as the Śūnyatā of *dr̥ṣṭis*, is the negation of stand-points, which are the initial negation of the real that is essentially indeterminate (*nirvikalpa*,

janma-bhavatrāye; dhātau na vidyate tesāṃ te’pi tiṣṭhanty anāsrave. akliṣṭa-jñāna-hānāya paścād buddhaiḥ prabodhitāḥ; sambhṛtya bodhi-sambhāraṃ te’pi syur lokanāyakāḥ. *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* Aloka, Haribhadra, G.O.S. Baroda, p. 120.

The Catuḥ Stava (I, 21, quoted by Advayaavajra, p. 22) has a verse of this import: “dharmadhātor asambhedād yānabhedo’sti na prabho; yānatritayam ākhyātāṃ tvayā sattvāvatārataḥ”.

³⁸⁴ Ratnāvalī of Nāgarjuna as quoted in *BodhiCaryāvatāraPañjikā* by Prajñākaramati, Bib. Ind., p. 492.

niṣprapañca, 無分別). Correctly understood, Śūnyatā is not annihilation, but the negation of negation; it is the conscious correction of an initial unconscious falsification of the real.

The word emptiness or empty gains its true connotations in the process of salvation or nirvāṇa and has different meanings during the process. All things may be empty in the sense that they are devoid of definite nature, characteristic or function.

Emptiness may be used to discredit theories and dismiss view-points. To claim that all things are empty may show that discursive reasonings and conceptual statements about the true nature of things are unacceptable. The term is also used to devalue and to designate things worthless, useless, to be discarded. To empty one's mind may mean that one sees the world as suffering and transcends it.

The Mahāyānist conception of Nirvāṇa as Śūnyatā is that the Mahāyānists deny the existence of elements altogether. Many of the aspects of their conception are brought out by the various terms used in Mahāyānic works. For instance, when Nirvāṇa is equated with Śūnyatā, the implication is that all things which are ordinarily supposed to exist are really nonexistent just as the mirage has no substantiality whatsoever, e.g., the pṛthivī-dhātu (地大) is Śūnya of real origination, destruction, or existence in reality.³⁸⁵ When it is equated with Tathatā (真如) or Dharmatā (法性), the implication is that all things of this world are essentially of the same nature, void of any name or substratum.³⁸⁶ It is that which is neither existence nor non-existence.³⁸⁷ Śūnyatā represents the negative and Tathatā the

³⁸⁵ Ś, 246.

³⁸⁶ *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, ed. B. Nanjio, Kyoto, 1923, p. 226.

³⁸⁷ Ś, 263.

positive aspects of the Truth. When it is called bhūtaḥ (實濟, true limit), it is implied that on analysis of dharmas, which are false designations, one arrives finally at the Reality, beyond which it is impossible to pass and which alone is truth. Some of the other expressions which are often used as synonyms of Nirvāṇa are avitathatā (不非真理, not untruth); ananyatathatā (獨一, unique); aviparyāsatathatā (不遍, irreversible); paramārtha (真諦, the highest truth), tattva (本質, the essence); acintyadhātu (難誦的本體, incomprehensible substance), dharmadhātu (法界, totality of things), dharmasthiti (本體諸法, substratum of things); supraśānta (淳淨, perfectly calm, unruffled by origination or destruction); advaya and advayādhikāra (不分, non-separable and non-divisible).³⁸⁸

In the third paragraph of the Hṛdaya text, we read:

“Therefore, with the void (*sūnya*), there is no form (*rūpa*) and no perception (*vedāna*), conception (*saṅjñā*), mind impression (*saṃskāra*) and no consciousness (*viññāna*); there is no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind; there is no form, sound, smell, taste, touch and idea; there are [no such things as the eighteen realms of sense (*dhātu*) from the realm of sight up to that of the faculty of mind (*viññāna*); there are no such things as the twelve links in the chain of existence (*nidānas*) from ignorance (*avidyā*) with also the end of ignorance up to old age and death (*jaramarana*) with also the end of old age and death; there are no (such things as) the four noble truths and there is no wisdom and also no gain.”

(是故空中無色，無受，想，行，識，無眼，耳，鼻，舌，身，意，無色，聲，香，味，觸，法，無眼界，乃至無意識界，無無明，亦

³⁸⁸ Cf. S, II, pp.25 ff; “Iti kho, bhikkhave, yā tatra Tathatā avutatthatā anaññaTathāgata idapaccayatā, ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, paṭicca-samuppādo”.

無 無 明 盡， 乃 至 無 老 死， 亦 無 老 死 盡。 無 苦， 集， 亦， 道， 無 智， 亦 無 得。³⁸⁹

In this paragraph we see that all the important and fundamental teachings of Buddhism are rejected: the five skandhas, the eighteen dhātus, the Four Noble Truths, including Nirvāṇa and the holy Path... are all abolished. This great view is succinct in one very famous sentence of Vajrachedikā-prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra: “They should develop a mind which does not abide in anything” (應 無 所 住 而 生 其 心).³⁹⁰

Also the same text, but in other passage, the Buddha taught Subhūti that:

“They will have wiped out notions of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, of Dharma and Not-Dharma. Why? (Because) if their minds grasp form (*lakṣaṇa*), they will (still) cling to the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. If their minds grasp the Dharma, they will (still) cling to the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Why? (Because) if their minds grasp the Not-Dharma, they will (still) cling to the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Therefore, one should not grasp and hold on to the notion of Dharma as well as that of Not-Dharma. This is why, the Tathāgata always said: “Ye Bhiksus, should know that the Dharma expound is likened to a raft. Even the Dharma should be cast aside; how much more so the Not-Dharma”.

(是 諸 眾 生， 無 復 我 相， 人 相， 眾 生 相 壽 者 相， 無 法 相， 亦 無 非 法 相。 何 以 故？ 是 諸 眾 生， 若 心 取 相， 則 為 著 我， 人， 眾 生， 壽 者。 若 取 法 相， 即 著 我， 人， 眾 生， 壽 者。 是 故 不 應 取 法， 不 應 取 非 法。 以 是 義 故， 如 來 常 說： 汝 等 毘 丘！ 知 我 說 法， 如 筏 喻 者， 法 尚 應 捨， 何 況 非 法？)³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ 般若波羅密多心經, p. 134-5.

³⁹⁰ 金剛般若波羅密經, p. 116.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 113-4.

Because the Dharma was expressed by Buddha is not a doctrine of philosophy, if it is anything at all, it is therapeutic device cleansing of men's innate coarse or subtle clings. In Early Buddhism, the good deeds, the Holy Truth, Nibbāna - a state of perfect rest and happiness, and beyond the three worlds is the aim for practitioner. Then, the contention of the Mahāyānists is that the only Reality is Nirvāṇa or Dharmadhātu, or Noble Eightfold Paths everything else being a total delusion of the mind, or therapeutic method. When a patient is cured i.e. freed from clings, then the Four holy Truths... which becomes useless and abandoned behind as 'a raft'.

At the moment, one realises this essence of Dharma, then he does not distinguish or grasp one thing from another. That is to say Saṃsāra is identical with Nirvāṇa, he becomes perfect, i.e., a Buddha, because the Mahāyānists hold that all beings other than Buddhas are under delusions, the nature of which varies according to their spiritual advancement. So, one must eradicate from his mind the conception not only of his own individuality but also of the substantiality of anything whatsoever perceived or cognized by him. When a being attains a state of mind, in which he cannot distinguish himself from any other thing it corresponds to an ontology of the world (relative reality) or from the (absolute reality) transcendentalism. He is said to attain Nirvāṇa which means the nature of absolute Śūnyatā, absolute transcendentalism in the Mahāyānic sense as the Hṛdaya Sūtra conclude that:

“Because of gainlessness, Bodhisattvas who rely on Prajñā-pāramitā, have no hindrance in their hearts, and since they have no hindrance, they have no fear, are free from contrary and delusive ideas and attain the Final Nirvāṇa”.

(以無所得故，菩提薩埵，依般若波羅密多故，心無罣礙，無罣

礙故，無有恐怖，遠離顛倒夢想，究竟涅槃。³⁹²

This is why Bodhisattva Vimalakirti kept silent when he was asked to describe the absolute (the Dharma-gate of non-duality).³⁹³ This is the reason for the Buddha's silence, and for his answer to Upaśiva's inquiry about Nirvāṇa:

“He who has gone to rest, cannot be measured;
For there (in Nirvāṇa) nothing can be named.
When all dharmas are abolished,
So are all passages of speech”.³⁹⁴

It is also very worthwhile, if we come to give more explanation about the relation between Nirvāṇa and Saṃsāra.

As a matter of fact, noumenon and Phenomena are not two separate sets of entities, nor are they two states of the same thing. The absolute is the only real; it is the reality of saṃsāra which is sustained by false construction (*kalpanā*, 妄想). The absolute looked at through the thought-forms of constructive imagination is the empirical world; and conversely, the absolute is the world viewed sub specie aeternitatis, without distorting media of thought.³⁹⁵

Śūnyatā means transcendentality (*Paramārthatā*) or non-substantiality (*Nairātmya*), both of the bodies (*pudgala*) and the elements (*Dharma*) composing them which stand over against and yet inform the phenomenal existence (*Samvrtisatya*).

³⁹² 般若波羅密多心經, p. 134-5.

³⁹³ Garma C.C. Chang, *Buddhist Teaching of Totality*, Great Britain: The Pennsylvania State University, 1972, p. 97.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³⁹⁵ MK, xxv, 9.

Śūnyatā also stands for that ‘naturelessness’ (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) through which one realises the ‘Unity of the apparently opposites’. It is in the light of the doctrines such as this that Nāgārjuna sees no difference between ‘Saṃsāra’ and ‘Nirvāṇa’.

The conditioned is here equated with the unconditioned. And that unconditioned identity of the conditioned and of the unconditioned is the principal message of the Prajñā-pāramitā literature. This quite incomprehensible Absolute is perpetually held before us as a standard. With it we should identify, into it we should sink ourselves. We are, indeed, taught to view the world as it appears when the individual self is extinct. All hidden concern for self advancement is counteracted. One should not aim at a private and personal Nirvāṇa, which would exclude others and the world, but at the full omniscience of a Buddha which somehow includes both.

Personal merit must be surrendered to all beings. No personal attainment is, in any case, possible, no entity can provide lasting rest and security, no freedom is complete while constrained by the need to keep anything out.

In every way the Prajñā-pāramitā scriptures attempt to correct misconceptions which the practices of the Abhidharma may have fostered.³⁹⁶ The Abhidharma had convinced us that there are no ‘beings’ or ‘persons’, but only bundles of dharmas. Yet, although beings are not there, they must nevertheless, from compassion, not be abandoned, and their welfare, though strictly non-existent, must be furthered

³⁹⁶ For more detail, see *Basic Buddhist Concepts*, Kogen Mizuno, tr. Charles S. Terry and Richard L. Gage, Tokyo, 1994, pp.13-35; and *2500 Years of Buddhism*, P.V. Bapat, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, 1919, pp. 31- 42.

by 'skill in means'. The Abhidharma had rejected all conditioned things as perilous. Now one realises the peril of keeping, them apart from the unconditioned. The Abhidharma had cultivated wisdom as the virtue which permits one to see the 'own being' of dharmas.

Now the Prajñā-pāramitā literature in its turn regards the separateness of these dharmas as merely a provisional construction, and it is cultivated as the virtue which permits us to see everywhere just one emptiness. All forms of multiplicity are condemned as the archenemies of the higher spiritual vision and insight. When duality is hunted out of all its hiding places, the results are bound to be surprising. Not only are the multiple objects of thought identified with one mysterious emptiness, but the very instruments of thought take on a radically new character when affirmation and negation are treated as non-different, as one and the same.

Once we jump out of our intellectual habits, emptiness is revealed as the concrete fullness; no longer remote, but quite near; no longer a dead nothingness beyond, but the life-giving womb of the Buddha within us.

This doctrine of emptiness has baffled more than one inquirer, and one must indeed despair of explaining it if it is treated as a mere theoretical proposition, on a level with other theoretical statements. And yet, everything is really quite simple, as soon as one pays attention to the spiritual intention behind this doctrine. In teaching 'emptiness' the Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtras do not propound the view that only the Void exists. The bare statement that 'everything is really emptiness' is quite meaningless. It is even false, because the rules of this particular logic demand that the emptiness must be as well denied as affirmed.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁷ SSPW, 21.

The Hṛdaya Sūtra has these five stages in view when it ends with the formula: ‘Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!’ (竭諦, 竭諦, 波羅竭諦, 波羅增竭諦, 菩提薩婆訶).³⁹⁸

1. Gate: gone from the data of common sense to the dharmas, and their emptiness.
2. Gate: gone from infatuation with conditioned dharmas to their renunciation, because of their emptiness.
3. Paragate: gone beyond from Nirvāṇa, the real nature of conditioned dharmas.
4. Parasamgate: gone altogether beyond even beyond the difference between the world and Nirvāṇa, to a transcendent non-duality, in which affirmation and negation are identified in one emptiness.
5. Bodhi Svaha: means O what an awakening! The final stage of transcendental emptiness, in which the long sleep is at last over.

It will be seen that the word Śūnyatā in each case derives its meaning from the context created by a spiritual attitude. Outside that context it has no meaning at all.

Thus, it becomes clear that the change from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna was a revolution from a radical pluralism (*dharmavāda*, 法) to a radical Absolutism (*advayavāda*, 不二), from dogmatism (*dṛṣṭivāda*, 念) to criticism (*śūnyavāda*, 非念), from the plurality of the momentary elements (*dharmavāda*, 相) to the essential unity underlying them (*dharmatāvāda*, 性), from the unreality of an eternal substance (*pudgala-nairātmya*, 我不實) to the unreality of

³⁹⁸ 般若波羅密多心經, p. 135.

all elements (*dharmānairātmya*, 法不實).

Buddha has taught his doctrine to enable us to overcome all suffering and thus to become real Bhikṣus (*bhinnakleśho bhikṣuḥ*) and obtain Nirvāṇa. But as long as the duality of the subject and the object is not transcended, neither Bhikṣutā nor Nirvāṇa can be realized.³⁹⁹ Ignorance is of two kinds: Ignorance due to suffering (*kleśāvaraṇa*, 煩惱障), and Ignorance in the form of objects covering the Real (*jñeyāvaraṇa*, 所知障). Śūnyatā is the antithesis of Ignorance of both kinds. It is Pure Knowledge.

There are some quotations as quoted below:

“Nirvāṇa is an illusion. Even if there is anything greater than Nirvāṇa, that too will be only an illusion.”⁴⁰⁰ A Bodhisattva is a mere dream. Even the Buddha is only a name. Even the Perfect Wisdom itself is a mere name. Dreams, echoes, reflections, images, mirage, illusion, magic, void—such are all objects of intellect.⁴⁰¹ The Śatasāhasrikā Prajñā-pāramitā (八千頌般若經) also condemns all dharmas as illusory. They have neither origination nor decay, they neither increase nor decrease, they are neither suffering nor its cessation, they are neither affirmation nor negation, neither eternal nor momentary, neither Śūnyatā nor aśūnyatā.⁴⁰² They are mere names and forms. They are Māyā (夢幻). And Māyā is declared to be an inconsistent category which cannot resist dialectical scrutiny and which is

³⁹⁹ SSPW, 45.

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nirvṇamapi māyopamam svapnopamam.

Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, ed. R. Mitra, Calcutta, 1888, p. 40.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., p. 25, 39, 196, 198, 200, 205, 279, 483, 484.

⁴⁰² Ibid., p. 119, 120, 185, 262.

ultimately found to neither existent nor non-existent.⁴⁰³ All phenomena are mere names; they are only a convention, a usage, a practical compromise.⁴⁰⁴ The *Laṅkāvatāra* (楞伽經) condemns them to be like an illusion, a dream, a mirage, a hare's horn, a barren woman's son, a magic city, the double moon, a moving fire-brand presenting an appearance of a circle, a hair seen floating in the atmosphere by defective vision, an empty space, a sky-flower, a mere echo, a reflection, a painting, a puppet like mechanism, which can be called neither existent nor non-existent.⁴⁰⁵

Many Mahāyāna sūtras such as the *Lalitavistara* (神通遊戲經),⁴⁰⁶ the *Samādhirāja* (三昧王經)⁴⁰⁷ and the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (金光明經)⁴⁰⁸ ... also join in such descriptions.

In the Complete Enlightenment Sūtra is displayed the same ideas by the following passage:

“Complete Enlightenment is universally illuminating in quiescent-extinction without duality. Hundreds of thousands of millions of asamayas of Buddha worlds, as innumerable as the grains of sand of the Ganges, are like flowers in the sky, randomly arising and perishing. They are neither identical to nor separate [from the nature of Complete Enlightenment]. Since there is no bondage or liberation, one begins to realize that

⁴⁰³ nāmarūpameva māyā māyaiva nāmarūpam. Ibid., p 898; māyāyāḥ padam na vidyate. Ibid., p. 1209.

⁴⁰⁴ yachcha prajñaptidharmam tasya notpādo na nirodho nyatra saṃjñāsaiṅketamātreṇa vyavahriyate. Ibid., p 325.

⁴⁰⁵ *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, ed. B. Nanjio, Kyoto, 1923, p. 22, 51, 62, 84, 85, 90, 95, 105.

⁴⁰⁶ See *Lalitavistara*, ed. P.L. Vaidya, BST, I, 1958, p. 176, 177 & 181.

⁴⁰⁷ See *Samādhi-rāja*, Sanskrit Manuscript No. 4, Hodgson collection, Royal Asiatic Society, London, p. 27 & 29.

⁴⁰⁸ See *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa*, Manuscript No. 8, Hodgson collection, Royal Asiatic Society, London, p.31, 32 & 44.

sentient beings have intrinsically accomplished Buddhahood, and that birth and death and Nirvāṇa are like yesterday's dream".⁴⁰⁹

Or in 'the Large sūtra on Perfect Wisdom' is also expressed the same idea:

“What is the emptiness of ultimate reality? “Ultimate reality” means Nirvāṇa. And that Nirvāṇa is empty of Nirvāṇa, on account of its being neither unmoved nor destroyed. For such is its essential nature”.⁴¹⁰

Now, let us read a passage from the Concise Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra, in explanation of the nature of Emptiness.

“Subhūti said, “O Kausika, a Bodhisattva who aspires to the glorious vehicle should abide in the Prajñā-pāramitā with the teaching of Emptiness. He should not abide in form, in feeling, conception, impulses or consciousness; he should not abide in form that is transient or eternal . . . He should not abide in the fruit of Arhatship . . . not even in Buddha's Dharmas. In this manner he should benefit and deliver infinite sentient beings.”

Whereupon Śāriputra thought, “Where then should a Bodhisattva abide?”

Subhūti, knowing his thought said to him, “What do you think, Śāriputra? Where does Tathāgata abide?”

Śāriputra said, “Tathāgata abides nowhere. This non-abiding mind itself is the Tathāgata. Tathāgata does not abide in conditioned things, nor in the unconditioned. The Tathāgata who abides in all dharmas is neither abiding nor non-abiding. Just so, a Bodhisattva should also rest [his mind] in this manner.”

At that time in the assembly many gods thought, “Even the languages and letters of the Yaksha demons are intelligible, but what Subhūti has just said is unintelligible.”

⁴⁰⁹ The Complete Enlightenment, Trong. & Com. By Cha'n Master Sheng-yen, London, 1999, p. 26.

⁴¹⁰ LSPW, 145.

Knowing their thoughts, Subhūti addressed the gods, “In that, there is no speech no demonstration and no hearing.”

The gods thought, “What Subhūti intended to do was to make the doctrine easier for us to understand, but what he has done is to make the doctrine more subtle, profound, and obscure.”

Reading their thoughts, Subhūti said to the gods, “If a devotee wants to attain the state of Stream-Winner, Once-Returner, No-Returner or Arhat... he should not depart from this deep insight. . .”

The gods thought, “Who can understand and agree with what Subhūti has just said?”

Subhūti knew their thought and said, “I say sentient beings are like dreams and magical delusion. Stream-Winners ... Arhats are also like dreams and magical delusions.”

The gods said, “Subhūti, are you saying that the Buddha’s Dharmas are also like dreams and magical delusions?”

Subhūti said, “Yes, I say Buddha’s Dharmas are like dreams and magical delusions. I say Nirvāṇa is also like a dream and a magical delusion.”

The gods said, “O Subhūti, are you really saying that even Nirvāṇa is like a dream and a magical delusion?”

Subhūti said, “O dear gods, if there were something that was more superior even than Nirvāṇa, I would still say that it is like a dream and a magical delusion. O dear gods, there is not the slightest difference between Nirvāṇa and dreams and magical delusions.”⁴¹¹

The doctrine of Śūnyatā is clearly expressed here. It is difficult to find parallel statements of this kind in the Vedic literature or in other sources of religious scriptures. Because it contrasts to the Upanishad doctrines of eternal Being or the theistic religions as Catholicism, Hinduism and so on...

⁴¹¹ Garma C.C. Chang, *Buddhist Teaching of Totality*, Great Britain: The Pennsylvania State University, 1972, pp. 94-5.

Therefore, we can see that if Nibbāna is the highest aim in Pāli Nikāyas, then in the process of evolution, we do come across a new departure when we find in Mahāyāna sūtras usually said that a fully enlightened Buddha is like illusion, is like a dream, and so is Nirvāṇa, and even if perchance there could be anything more distinguished than Nirvāṇa, even that is like a magical illusion, like a dream i.e. the Nirvāṇa, or Buddhhood is the aim for enlightenment, but when attained and we awaken it, then we come beyond them.

Śūnyatā as beyond the Negation or Indescribable (avāchya / anabhilāpya)

In the Mahāyāna sūtras, especially the Mādhyamika, language is like a game, and our debate whether A is B or A is not B is like a magical creation.

In this case the action and the prevention are equally illusory, yet it makes sense to say that one prevents the other. Similarly, according to Nāgārjuna, his own words are empty, like things created by magic or illusion, and yet he can refute the essence of all dharmas. His negation is not a negation of something real.

Nāgārjuna argued:

“Just as a magically formed phantom could deny a phantom created by its own magic, so could negation and refutation.”⁴¹²

Nāgārjuna’s negation is only a tool for eliminating extreme views. If there is no extreme to be removed, there need be no such things as affirmation and negation. Words such as right and wrong or erroneous are really empty terms without reference to entities or things. The right view is

⁴¹² Nāgārjuna, Hui Cheng lun (The Refutation Treatise), T. 1631, p. 24.

actually as empty as the wrong view.

The Mādhyamika refutation of erroneous views and illumination of right views is a therapeutic device for abolishing intellectual and emotional attachment. To obtain enlightenment, one has to go beyond right and wrong, true and false, and see the empty nature. We do not negate anything. There is nothing which can be negated. Hence, we will go beyond affirmation and negation.

In the Large sūtra on Perfect Wisdom, the Buddha confirmed it that

“Furthermore, a Bodhisattva stands firm in the perfection of wisdom. When he courses in the perfection of wisdom, a Bodhisattva does not get at the Not-Beyond or at the Beyond of any dharma whatsoever. It is then that he is one who stands firm in perfect wisdom, and he likewise instigates, exhorts, and introduces all beings thereto. But all this is as though done by a magician with regard to illusory beings...”⁴¹³

Śūnyatā essentially means Indescribable (*avāchya* or *anabhilāpya*) as it is beyond the Four categories of Intellect (*chatuskoṭi-vinirmukta*). It is Reality which ultimately transcends existence, non-existence, both and neither. It is neither affirmation nor negation nor both nor neither. Empirically it means Relativity (*pratītya-samutpāda*) which is phenomena (*saṃsāra*); absolutely it means Reality (*tattva*) which is release from plurality (*nirvāṇa*). The world is Indescribable because it is neither existent nor non-existent; the Absolute is Indescribable because it transcends and no category of intellect can adequately describe it. Everything is Śūnya: appearances are Svabhāva-Śūnya or devoid of ultimate reality and Reality is Pratītyasamutpāda or devoid of plurality.

⁴¹³ LSPW, 140.

To easily grasp the above meanings, we may illustrate the formulation of Four Categories of Intellect (*chatuskoṭi-vinirmukta*) by a table as under:

Existence = X, non-Existence = -X

Either Existence or non-Existence = X / -X

Neither Existence nor non-Existence = -(X / -X)

Table VI

$-\left[(X) / (-X) / (X / -X) / -(X / -X) \right]$

Ashvaghoṣa (馬 鳴) said that Tathatā (真 如) is neither Śūnya (空) nor Aśūnya (非 空) nor both nor neither because it transcends all categories of the intellect. ‘All things in the world from beginning are neither matter nor mind (empirical ego), nor consciousness (momentary and individual), nor non-being, nor being; they are after all, inexplicable.’⁴¹⁴ But this does not mean that there is no reality because it is the Real itself which appears ‘The divine nature of the Absolute Reality is not unreal.’

The Śūnyavadins take ‘existence’, ‘is’, ‘affirmation’, ‘being’ in the sense of absolute existence or ultimate reality; it means Eternalism. Those who maintain that the world exists are committing a great error because when we penetrate deep we find that this entire world with all its manifold phenomena is essentially relative and therefore ultimately unreal. And those who advocate non-existence or non-being are also committing a great error because they are denying even the phenomenal reality of the world. They are

⁴¹⁴ Suzuki, The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna, p. 111-12.

condemned by the Śūnyavadins as nihilists (*nāstikas*, 虛無主義者). Eternalism and Nihilism are both false. Intellect which is essentially discursive, analytic and relational involves itself in contradictions. All that can be grasped by it is essentially relative. It gives us four categories—existence, non-existence, both and neither — and involves itself in sixty-two antinomies.⁴¹⁵ It cannot give us Reality. Reality transcends all the categories and reconciles all the antinomies of intellect. It is to be directly realized through spiritual experience. It is the Non-dual Absolute in which all plurality is merged. We must rise above the subject-object duality of the intellect and the plurality of the phenomena.

The Buddha was not a speculative metaphysician but a practical soteriologist at heart. His chief concern was the salvation or Nirvāṇa of sentient beings from the sorrowful world. In teaching men to achieve Nirvāṇa, the Buddha was believed to be a skillful teacher. On the one hand, he knew that all words and concepts are empty, and that discursive reasoning should be avoided. But on the other hand, he understood that sentient beings are attached to mundane things and could know only discursive knowledge. In order to help them various of attachments, he employed words such as the middle way and extreme views, worldly and ultimate truths, illumination and negation, and emptiness and non-emptiness, to expound his Dharma. Actually ‘the true nature of all dharmas is entirely inexplicable and unrealizable.’⁴¹⁶ Thus all doctrines or verbal messages the Buddha gave are nothing but skillful means (*upāya*, 方便) used to achieve the goal of non-attachment.

Still men tend to be attached. This clinging or longing

⁴¹⁵ D, I; LS, 48.

⁴¹⁶ LS, p. 7.

is likened by the Mahāyānists to a disease or fire, a source of suffering, delusion and ignorance in life. Śūnyatā is a soteriological device to expunge the disease or fire so that human beings are released from misery and so it is likened to medicine or water. The Mahāyāna have argued that one should properly understand the nature, purpose and function of the device, and not be bound to it. Otherwise, one cannot be transformed.

Śūnyatā as the Means of the Relative Truth (Samvrtisatya, 俗諦) and the Ultimate truth (Paramārthasatya, 真諦)

One should also understand the doctrine of Śūnyatā by means of the two fold truth, namely the conventional or relative truth (*Samvrtisatya/Vyavahāra*, 俗諦) and the ultimate or absolute truth (*Paramārthasatya*, 真諦). Nāgārjuna said:

“All Buddhas taught Dharma by means of the two-fold truth for the sake of sentient beings. They taught by means of, first, the conventional truth, and second, the ultimate truth.”⁴¹⁷

Nāgārjuna’s idea of the twofold truth reflects a difference in the manner in which one may perceive things and the point of view from which one looks at them. Worldly or conventional truth involves emotional and intellectual attachment to what one perceives, and hence objects of knowledge are considered fixed, determinate and self-existing. When one sees things from this standpoint, he is committed to linguistic conventions as well as ontological

⁴¹⁷ The Twelve Gate Treatise, viii. xxiv: 8, See Chi-tsang, *the Meaning of the Twofold Truth*, pp. 77-115, and *The Profound Meaning of the Treatises*, pp. 1-14.

entities. The meaning of a word is believed to be the object for which the word stands. The true nature of things can be described and explained by language.

This standpoint is *Samvrtisatya*, often presented as discursive knowledge.⁴¹⁸ However, one may see what he perceives from a different point of view, namely, the standpoint of transcendental or ultimate truth whereby he reevaluates the phenomenal world without attachment. One can know that things perceived are empty of a fixed, determinate or self-existing nature. From this standpoint, one is committed neither to ontological entities nor linguistic ideas. The meanings of words are seen as human projections. Language cannot give true nature and conceptualization is abandoned. This unattached standpoint is *Paramārthasatya*.⁴¹⁹

The twofold truth is essentially a tactical device. This device has been established to defend Buddhism against possible charges of nihilism and absolutism, to help sentient beings know Buddha's Dharma and to explain certain obscurities and inconsistencies in the teachings of the Buddha.⁴²⁰

With this Two Truths system, the problems of being and non-being, men versus Buddha, finite and infinite, and so forth can all be solved with consistency and ease. When Buddha says that human beings and devas exist, that karma and saṃsara exist, that the Eight Fold Path and Three Bodies (Trikaya, 三身) of Buddha exist, that a cake is a cake and a

⁴¹⁸ For a detail discussion of this, see Mervyn sprung, ed. op. Cit., pp. 17, 38, 43 and 57, and N. Dutt, *Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Its Relation to Hīnayāna*, London, 1930, pp. 216-127.

⁴¹⁹ For a detail discussion, see Chi-tsang, op.cit. See also Mervyn Sprung, *Ibid.*, pp.17, 43 & 58.

⁴²⁰ Chi-tsang, op. cit.

pen a pen, he is talking from the standpoint of saṃvṛti-satya. When he says that heaven and earth do not exist, that saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa do not exist, that Buddhahood and Enlightenment do not exist, he is talking from the viewpoint of Paramārthasatya. The paradoxical statement of Vajrachedikā-prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra:

“The minds the Tathāgata speaks of are not minds, but are (expediency) called minds”. (如來說諸心，皆為非心，是名為心).⁴²¹

or also the same text, but in other passages are expressed that

“Subhūti, the Prajñā-pāramitā as expounded by the Buddha, is not Prajñā-pāramitā but is (merely) so called.”

(須菩提！佛說般若波羅密，即非般若波羅密，是名般若波羅密).⁴²²

“Subhūti, the Tathāgata says these living beings are not (really), but they are (expediency), called living beings.”

(眾生眾生者，如來說非眾生，是名眾生).⁴²³

To easily bear in mind, we may sum it up in the following formulation:

Beings = B ; not Beings = -B .

Table VII

$B = -B \Rightarrow B$

The first B is the assertion of living beings in the

⁴²¹金剛般若波羅密經, p.126.

⁴²² Ibid. 118.

⁴²³ Ibid. 128.

mundane truth; its negation -B is the denial of living beings in the Ultimate Truth. The third B represents illusion, the nature of man's mind, in which the merging or identification of mundane and transcendental is expressed.

Here we see the vital point that the Two Truths should never be treated as two separate entities in two distinct and divided categories. Worldly truth, though not unconditional, is essential for the attainment of the ultimate truth and nirvāṇa; according to Nāgārjuna's Middle Treatise, "without worldly truth, ultimate truth cannot be obtained."⁴²⁴ Relative truth is not useless in achieving enlightenment, nor can it be said that there is no relation between worldly and ultimate truths. Transcendental truth is explained by speech, and speech is conventional and conditional. The Bodhisattva knows and practices this teaching of the twofold truth. He uses words and concepts, but realizes that they neither stand for, nor point to, anything substantial. He employs Pratītyasamutpāda to refute extreme views, and recognizes that they are all empty. It is this skill-in-means (*upāya*, 方便) which enables him to live in conditional and transcendental worlds simultaneously, and hence to save and benefit himself and others equally. The Twelve Gate Treatise states:

"If one does not know two truths, he cannot know self-interest, other-interest and common-interest. But, if one knows conventional truth, he then knows ultimate truth; and if he knows ultimate truth, he knows conventional truth."⁴²⁵

⁴²⁴ Ibid, xxiv, 10; the Twelve Gate Treatise, viii.

⁴²⁵ The Twelve Gate treatise, viii. Chi-tsang commented that 'to know ultimate truth is to benefit oneself (self-interest); to know conventional truth is to be able to benefit others (other-interest); to know both truths simultaneously is to benefit all equally (common-interest). Therefore it established the twofold truth'. A Commentary on the Twelve Gate Treatise (T. 1825), p. 206. See also The Profound Meaning of Three

The concept of the Two Truths itself is only valid when we, standing firmly on this side, try to describe the other side and its paradoxical relationship with this side. It is only an expedient device to explain away the delusory tension between the mundane and the transcendental for people who are deeply rooted in this side. The purpose of preaching the Two Truths system is to go beyond the system itself and see the non-distinctive nature of the two. When all relativities are transcended, all pairs and duals are demolished, a wondrous state of great freedom in which all polarities merge into one vast totality will be revealed. In this state of non-dual totality, one then fully realizes the meaning of ‘Form is identical with void’, and ‘void is identical with form’ (色即是空, 空即是色)⁴²⁶ of the Hṛdaya Sūtra, the central to the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures, and on the basis of this Nāgārjuna formulated an integrated dynamic theory of praxis. His weapons in doing were a series of arguments based on formulae of negation, a broader interpretation of dependent co-arising, and also his needfulness of that aspect of the meaning of Śūnyatā inherent in Śūnyatā.

The law of dependent origination helps us in knowing the causes and conditions of this phenomenal world in a very subtle way. After analysing these causes and conditions of the phenomenal world, what is achieved in the transcendental sense, is nothing but Śūnyatā. After this we reach a stage, which may be called a phenomenal vacuum, which is Śūnyatā. On the one end is the dependent origination and on the other end is the Śūnyatā; and in between there is the existence of the whole of the phenomenal world. The discovery of the law of dependent origination was an attempt

Treatise, p.11 and The meaning of the Twofold Truths, pp. 81, 82c, 85c & 86.

⁴²⁶ 般若波羅密多心經, p. 134.

to analyse the mundane world and what is ultimately achieved by this process is known as the *sāmvrtisatya*. At the other end process led to the concept of *Śūnyatā*, which at level of the *paramārthasatya* may be designed as the phenomenal vacuum. This stage may be interpreted as silence, i.e., beyond which our intellect can no longer work.

For the sake of clarity, a diagram about the Two Truth on Three Levels is offered under. On the ground of '*A simplification of Chi Tsang's Two Truths on Three Levels*',⁴²⁷ we change some of his signs with reasons such as:

$\Delta = B$ (because B i.e. Beings), $v = /$ (because / i.e. either), $\sim = -$ (Because – i.e. minus, deny).

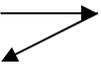
Table VIII

MUNDANE TRUTH	ULTIMATE TRUTH
1. Affirmation of being: B	1. Denial of being: -B
2. Affirmation of either being or non-being: B / -B	2. Denial of either being or non-being: -(B / -B)
3. Either affirmation of either being or non-being or denial of either being or non-being: (B / -B) / -(B / -B)	3. Neither affirmation nor denial of either being or non-being: -[(B / -B) / -(B / -B)]

The path leading from the delusion to enlighten the true nature of *Śūnyatā* on the basis of the Two Truths may be considered by a process of below arrows of table IX:

⁴²⁷ Garma C.C. Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality*, Britain: The Pennsylvania University, 1972, p. 109.

Table IX

SAMVṚTI-SATYA		PĀRAMĀRTHA-SATYA
1. B		1. - B
2. B / -B		2. - (B / -B)
3. (B / -B) / - (B / -B)		3. - [(B / -B) / (B / -B)]

To conclude this part, we may quote Nāgārjuna's words which emphasize the Two Truths system as below:

“Those who are unaware of the distinction between these two truths are incapable of grasping the profound meaning of the Buddha's teaching.”⁴²⁸

or:

“Those who do not know these two standpoints cannot understand the teaching of the Buddha.”

(dve satye tamupāshritya Buddhānām dharmadhāraṇa. lokasamvṛtisayañcha satyañcha paramārthataḥ. yenayor na vijānanti vibhāgam satyayor dvayoḥ. te tattvam na vijānanti gambhīram Buddhaśāsane).⁴²⁹

Thus, the doctrine of emptiness is given to save, or to account for, empirical phenomena and practical affairs. Nāgārjuna's twofold truth has also been considered as two fixed sets of truth. His distinction between samvṛtisatya and paramārthasatya has been taken to imply or correspond to an ontological distinction between 'relative reality' and 'absolute reality'.

⁴²⁸ The Middle Treatise, xxiv: 9; The Twelve Gate Treatise, viii.

⁴²⁹ Ibid, XXIV, 8-9.

The Relation between the Concepts of Suññatā and Śūnyatā

Here we start to come to an important point about the approach of Suññatā (空) and Śūnyatā (空性) i.e., the relation between the concept of Suññatā in Pāli Nikāya and Śūnyatā in Mahāyāna sūtras.

The teaching on Suññatā is almost the same in the two systems but they appear to be different due to the difference in standpoint that is adopted by each school. The Mādhyamika primarily shows the inadequacy and incompetence of logic and reason to grasp Reality or to describe it accurately. On the other hand the primary interest of Suññatā in the Theravāda is in ethics and ethical culture. Its approach is not so much philosophical, or even dialectical, as preeminently ethical and religious. Hence the Theravāda, following the example of the Buddha, is not disposed to go thoroughly into, all the philosophical implications of the theory of causality. It is possible to deny the reality of dukkha on the basis of the same arguments on which it denies the reality of the dukkhatā, that is, the experience of dukkha. But to do so is to do harm to its ethical ideology and emphasis on ethical striving. If there is no dukkha there is no point in undertaking ethical culture and religious endeavour. The same consideration applies to other categories such as vedanā (受), magga (道) and nibbuti (解脫).

The Theravāda denies the reality of the feeler (*vedaka*, 受者), the doer (*kāraka*, 造作者), and the released (*nibbuta*, 解脫者). It could have gone further and denied release (*nibbuti*, 解脫), feeling (*vedāna*, 受) and the path (*magga*, 道). But this is not done for obvious ethical reasons. To deny the reality of the path is to rule out altogether the possibility of a religious life. To deny feeling is to deny the

very possibility of experience. To deny release is to render all life aimless and philosophical consistency and thoroughness are, in the Theravāda, subordinated to ethics and the dictates of ethics. This standpoint of the Theravādins is entirely opposed to that adopted by Nāgārjuna, at least in his capacity as the author of the Kārikas. In this work, he denies not only kāraka but kriyā as well (ch. XVIII), not only nibbuta but nibbuti (*Nirvāṇa*) as well (ch. XXV), not only pudgala (我) but skandha (蘊), dhātu (界) and āyatana (處) as well (ch. III), and so on. His logic does not deter Nāgārjuna from denying even the reality of the Buddha and his Jhāna. But the Theravādin has elected to follow the middle path in a way that is more faithful than that of Nāgārjuna himself.

The difference between the Śūnyatā (空性) of Mahāyāna and the Suññatā (空) of Theravāda is not fundamental as may appear at first sight. All the differences are due only to a difference in approach to the facts of nature. This fact emerges all the more clearly as we go further in considering the Suññatā of the Theravāda. The Suññatā of things has been considered in the Theravāda books from a variety of standpoints, with the ethical interest foremost in every case.

1. Suññatā without divisions comprehends the whole universe.
2. Suññatā is twofold when it refers to substance and substantial.
3. Suññatā is fourfold when it refers to the following modes: not seeing substance in oneself, not attributing substance to another (person or thing), not transferring one's self to another, not bringing in another's self into oneself:

(neva katthaci attānam passati, (na ca kvacani parassa ca attānaṃ kvaci passati), na tam parassa parassa kiñcanabhava

upanetabbam passati, na parassa attanam attano kincanabhavē upanetabbam passati).⁴³⁰

4. Suññatā is sixfold when it is applied to each of the sense organs, the six kinds of objects corresponding to them and the six kinds of consciousness arising from them, from the point of view of the following six characteristics: substance (*atta*), substantial (*attaniya*), permanent (*nicca*), stable (*dhuvā*), eternal (*sassata*) and non-evolutionary (*avipariṇāmadhamma*).⁴³¹
5. Suññatā is eightfold when it is considered from the point of view of the following: non-essential (*asāra*, *nissāra sarāpagata*, *nīccasārāsāra*), essentially unstable (*dhuvāsārāsāra*), essentially unhappy or disharmonious (*sukhasārāsāra*), essentially non-substantial (*attasārāsāra*), non-permanent (*suññam niccena*), non-stable (*suññam dhuvēna*), non-eternal (*suññam sussatēna*), evolutionary or fluxional (*vipariṇāmadhamma*).⁴³²
6. Suññatā is tenfold from the point of view of the following modes: devoid (*ritta*), empty (*tuccha*), void (*suñña*), non-substantial (*anatta*), godless (*anissariya*), unfree (*akamakāri*), disappointing (*alabbhaniya*), powerless (*avasavattaka*), non-self (*para*), separated (*vivitta*).⁴³³
7. Suññatā is twelvefold from the point of view of these other modes thus taking rūpa as an instance one can regard it as being: (*satto*), no animal (*jīvo*), no human (*naro*), no youth (*mānava*), no woman (*itthi*), no man

⁴³⁰ Visuddhimagga II, ed. H.C. Warren and D. Kosambi, HOS, 41, 1950, p. 654.

⁴³¹ Loc. cit.

⁴³² Loc. cit.

⁴³³ Ibid., 655.

(*puriso*), no substance (*attā*), nothing substantial (*attaniya*), not myself (*ahaṃ*), not mine (*mama*), not another's (*aññassa*), not anybody's (*kassaci*).⁴³⁴

8. Suññatā is forty-twofold when considered from the point of view of these modes: impermanent (*anicca*), inconsistent (*dukkha*), diseased (*roga*), abscessed (*gaṇḍa*), evil (*sallu*), painful (*agha*), ailing (*ābādhū*), alien (*para*), decaying (*paloka*), distressing (*iti*), oppressing (*upuddava*), fearful (*bhayu*), harassing (*upasagga*), unsteady (*cala*), breaking (*pabhaṅga*), unstable (*addhuvu*), unprotected (*atāna*), unsheltered (*alena*), helpless (*asarāṇa*), refugeless (*asarāṇībhūta*), empty (*ritta*), devoid (*tuccha*), void (*suñña*), substanceless (*anatta*), unpleasant (*anassāda*), disadvantageous (*ādīnava*), changing (*vipariṇāmadhamma*), essenceless (*asāraka*), originating pain (*aghamāla*), torturing (*vadhaka*), annihilating (*vibhava*), depraved (*sāsava*), compounded (*saṅkhatu*), frustrating (*maramisa*), tending to birth (*jātidhamma*), tending to decay (*jarādhamma*), tending to disease (*vyādhidhummu*), tending to death (*maraṇadhamma*), tending to grief, sorrow and lamentation (*sokuparidevu dukkhu domanassa upāyāsa dhamma*), originating (*samudaya*), cesant (*atthaṅgama*), dissolving (*nissaraṇa*).⁴³⁵

When the Buddha says that one should look upon the world as being *suñña* he means that one should regard the world of objects and subjects in all the above ways.⁴³⁶

These are not the only ways in which Suññatā is

⁴³⁴ Loc. cit.

⁴³⁵ Loc. cit.

⁴³⁶ Ibid. 655-6.

considered in the books of the Theravāda. The other analyses of this concept show a more detailed and deeper insight into the understanding of Suññatā. Before we can proceed to their examination it is necessary to refer at this stage to some of the divisions of śūnyatā that occur in the books of the Mahāyāna.

First of all, it may be very useful for our analysis, if we can give a look at the number of Śūnyatās which is often listed in Mahāyāna texts. The commentary *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (莊嚴證道歌) of Haribhadra (師子賢) on *Aṣṭasāhaśrikā Prajñā-pāramitā* (八天頌般若波羅密經) speaks of twenty modes of Śūnyatā. The *Madhyānata-vibhaṅgaṭīkā* (中邊分別論疏) mentions sixteen modes of Śūnyatās. Dignāga (陳那) in *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārtha* speaks of sixteen modes of Śūnyatā.⁴³⁷ Obermiller⁴³⁸ analyses the twenty modes of Śūnyatās on the basis of *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* of Haribhadra. The *Aṣṭasāhaśrikā Prajñā-pāramitā* adds a new dimension to the domain of Śūnyatā when it says the Śūnyatā of all the dharmas cannot even be described. On the *Aṣṭasāhaśrikā Prajñā-pāramitā* there is a commentary known as *āloka* written by Haribhadra. In this commentary twenty modes of Śūnyatā have been mentioned and he also assigns each mode of Śūnyatā to one of the ten planes of meditation

⁴³⁷ *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārtha*, I-II, ed. G. Tucci (Minor Sanskrit Texts on the *Prajñāpāramitā*), JRAS, 1947, 6.18, pp. 263-4: 1. bodhisattvaŚūnyatā, 2. bhokṭṛŚūnyatā, 3. adhyātmikaŚūnyatā, 4. vastuŚūnyatā, 5. rūpaŚūnyatā, 6. praptiŚūnyatā, 7. vijñānaŚūnyatā, 8. sattvaŚūnyatā, 9. saṃskāraŚūnyatā, 10. dharmaŚūnyatā, 11. ātmaŚūnyatā, 12. pudgalanairatmyaŚūnyatā, 13. saṃskṛtaŚūnyatā, 14. asaṃskṛtaŚūnyatā, 15. sāvadyaŚūnyatā, 16. nirvadyaŚūnyatā.

⁴³⁸ Obermiller, E., *A Study of the Twenty Aspects of Śūnyatā*, Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. ix, 1933, pp. 170-187.

(*dasa-bhūmi*) or to the preparatory or posterior stages. Prof. T.R.V. Murti⁴³⁹ who has given a list of twenty modes of Śūnyatā as an appendix to the Central Philosophy of Buddhism surmises that it is a later innovation as Nāgārjuna himself does not deal with them. The list as given by him is found at several places in Mahāyāna literature, such as the Pañcavimśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā, the Madhyānta-vibhaṅgaṭīkā and the Abhisamayālaṅkāra. It is clear that Professor Murti is not aware of the list that appears in the Pāli books, for otherwise he would not have said that the list found in the Mahāyāna literature was late in point of elaboration. The list that he has given may be quoted from the Abhisamayālaṅkāra:⁴⁴⁰

1. The Unreality of Internal Elements of Existence (*adhyātmaśūnyatā*, 內空的不實本質). The first mode applies to physical facts, states such as feeling, volition etc. Their nature is not described either as changing (*akūṭastha*) or as totally undestroyable (*avināśī*); that is neither real (*sat*) nor unreal (*asat*). This constitutes their Śūnyatā relatively or unrelatively.
2. The Unreality of External Objects (*bahirdhāśūnyatā*, 外空的不實本質). This relates to external forms because all forms can be external only. The external form is taken in shape of sense organs such as eye, nose etc. This is known as the Unreality of External Objects.
3. The Unreality of both together as in the sense organs or the body (*adhyātmabahirdhāśūnyatā*, 內外空的不實本質). Since all the dharmas are unreal and the basis of all the dharmas is also unreal, their (of dharmas and bases) knowledge is also unreal.

⁴³⁹ CPB, pp. 351-356.

⁴⁴⁰ Loc. cit.

4. The Unreality of (the knowledge of) Unreality (*Śūnyatāsūnyatā*, 非空的不實本質). This is an important mode of Śūnyatā. The criticism that everything is relative, unreal (*Śūnya*) may be thought to stand out as a view; when all things are rejected, the rejection itself could not be rejected. This rejection itself is as relative, unreal as the rejected.
5. The Unreality of the Great Space (*mahāsūnyatā*, 大空的不實本質). Hence we can say that space is notional, our conception of it is relative to this distinction of directions east, west etc., and also to the things resident in them. The Śūnyatā of space is termed as Great Space because it has infinite expanse.
6. The Unreality of the Ultimate Reality (*paramārthasūnyatā*, 真空的不實本質). By the Unreality of the Ultimate Reality is meant the unreality of Nirvāṇa as a separate reality.
7. The Unreality of the Conditioned (*samskṛtasūnyatā*, 俗空/有為的不實本質).
8. The Unreality of the Unconditioned (*asamskṛtasūnyatā*, 無為的不實本質). These two unrealities make a natural pair. The conditioned is unreal and it is nothing in itself, it is neither permanent nor nonemergent. The unconditioned (*asamskṛta*) can only be conceived in contradiction to the conditioned; it is neither brought out into being nor destroyed by any activity of ours.
9. The Unreality of the Limitless (*atyantasūnyatā*, 無限的不實本質). This mode of Śūnyatā is with reference to our consciousness of the Limit and the Limitless. With

regard to this unreality T.R.V. Murti says⁴⁴¹ that it might be thought that steering clear of the two extremes or ends of Existentialism and Nihilism, we are relying on a middle line of demarcation and that thereby the Middle or the Limitless might become invested with a nature of its own. The Limitless is nothing in itself; the Middle position is no position at all, but a review of positions.

10. The Unreality of that which is Beginningless and Endless (*anavarāgrasūnyatā*, 無始, 無終的不實本質). This mode of Śūnyatā is similar in character. It applies to distinctions in time such as beginning, the middle and the end. These distinctions are subjective. We can say that nothing stands out rigidly on the beginning, the middle and the end, the times flow into each other. Consequent on the rejection of the beginning etc. the beginningless too turns out to be notional; and it should be recognised as relative or unreal on the account.
11. The Unreality of Undeniable (*anavakāraśūnyatā*, 非夫定的不實本質). When we reject anything as untenable, something else is kept aside as unrejectable, the undeniable, it might be thought. This eleventh mode of Śūnyatā brings out this aspect.
12. The Unreality of the Ultimate Essences (*prakṛtisūnyatā*, 自性的不實本質). All the things exist in themselves. Nobody causes them either to happen or to mar them. The things are in themselves void, lack essential character of their own. There is no change in our notions not in real.
13. The Unreality of All Elements (*sarvadharmasūnyatā*, 諸法相的不實本質). This mode of Śūnyatā only

⁴⁴¹ CPB, 354.

reiterates that all modes of being, phenomenal and noumenal lack essential reality and so are unreal.

14. The Unreality of all Definitions (*lakṣaṇasūnyatā*, 相的不實本質). In the early Buddhism an attempt had been made to give a precise definition of entities e.g., the impenetrability of matter, and apprehension of object of consciousness (*viññāna*). This brings home to us that matter and other entities lack the essence attributed to them. All definition is of the nature of a distinction within general class and is therefore nominal in character.
15. The Unreality of the Past, the Present and the Future (*anauplambhasūnyatā*, 過去, 現在, 未來的不實本質). The unreality or the purely nominal character of the past, the present and the future is demonstrable by the consideration that in the past itself there is no present and the future and the vice versa; and yet without such relating the consciousness of the past etc. does not arise.
16. The Unreality of Relation or Combination conceived as non-ens (*abhāvasvabhāvasūnyatā*, 無法有法空的不實本質). All the elements of the phenomenal existence are dependent on each other and they are dependent (*pratīyasamutpannatvāt*), and they have no nature of their own.
17. The Unreality of the Positive Constituents of Empirical Existence (*bhāvasūnyatā*, 有空的不實本質). The five upādāna skandhas i.e. duhkha, samudaya, loka, dṛṣṭi and bhāva do not stand for any objective reality, their collection is a non-entity, as it is a grouping subjectively imposed upon them. This shows that corresponding to words and concepts there is no entity.
18. The Unreality of the non-ens (of the Non-empirical) (*abhāvasūnyatā*, 非無有的不實本質). The

unconditioned conceived as the absence of the five groups is also unreal. Space, one of the unconditioned is defined as non-obstruction (*anāvṛtti*). This is determined solely by the absence of the positive characters. The same is the case with Nirvāṇa, another unconditioned.

19. The Unreality of the Self-being (*svabhāvasūnyatā*, 有法空的不實本質). This mode of Śūnyatā emphasises the nature of reality as something existing in itself (*svabhāva*). It may be stated that *svabhāva* is here dialectically juxtaposed to Śūnyatā (*svabhāvasya śūnyatā*).
20. The Unreality of Dependent Being (*parabhāvasūnyatā*, 第一有空的不實本質). In this case also no external factor like the agent or his instruments play any part in making up its reality.

A careful examination of the evidence in the Pāli canon shows that this list cannot be so late as professor T.R.V. Murti thinks it is. As a matter of fact the Pāli records preserve for us a longer list than that of the twenty modes.

“Suññasuññaṃ (空), saṃkhārasuññaṃ (有為空), vipariṇāmasuññaṃ (壞空), aggasuññaṃ (上空), lakkhṇasūññaṃ (相空), vikkhambhanasuññaṃ (撒空), tadangasuññaṃ (類空), samucchedasuññaṃ (滅空), patippassadhisuññaṃ (輕安空), nissaraṇasuññaṃ (捨空), ajjhattasuññaṃ (內空), bahiddhāsuññaṃ (外空), dubhatosuññaṃ (假空), sabhāgasuññaṃ (同分空), visabhāgasuññaṃ (同分分別空), esanāsuññaṃ (欲空), pariḅhasuññaṃ (持空), paṭilābhasuññaṃ (樂空), paṭivedhasuññaṃ (倍空), ekattasuññaṃ (惟空), nānattasuññaṃ (慧空), khantisuññaṃ (忍空), adhiṭṭhānasuññaṃ (願空), pariyogāhanasuññaṃ (入空), paramatthasuññaṃ (勝義諦空).”

If this list of 25 Suññatā of Patisambhidāmagga belonging to Khuddhaka - Nikāya is compared with what is given in the Mahāyāna texts it will be found that most of the items in the latter are already to be found in Theravāda text. We have here not only a correspondence in ideas but also a correspondence in terminology. This suggests powerfully that at some period in early Buddhist history there had been either close association between the Theravāda and the Mahāyāna or that both schools had derived some of the terminology from a common fund of tradition which may be described as a still earlier form of what may be called, for want of a better term, original Buddhism. This list also tells us something more to confirm our view that the Theravāda teaching on Suññatā is considerably well developed and that the Śūnyatā of the Mādhyamika does not therefore represent a development that is altogether new in the history of Buddhist thought as has been suggested by scholars like Aiyaswami Sastri and Stcherbatsky.⁴⁴²

We have already had occasion to remark that the lists given above do not by any means exhaust the Theravāda analysis of Suññatā. The consideration of the many-sided nature of Śūnyatā has been incorporated as an aid to meditation. We are told that Nibbāna itself can be regarded as consisting of Suññatā and that final release could be obtained

⁴⁴² Madhyānta-vibhanga, Trans. Th. Stcherbatsky, Leningral, 1937, p.v. also see Buddhism: its Religion and Philosophy, Prof. W.S. Karunaratne, Buddhist Research Society, Singapore, 1988, p. 44.

To illustrate it, the words of Th. Stcherbatsky read as follow: "The term Śūnyatā is an innovation of the Mahāyāna, an innovation made necessary by the course of philosophic development. Its germs are found in the Hīnayāna, but the Mahāyāna has given it quite a new interpretation, an interpretation in which the two main schools of Buddhism radically diverged".

by developing insight into this fact of the universe.⁴⁴³

There are various Interpretative Approaches to understand Śūnyatā as we discussed above. Considering the vast philosophical literature on the concept of Śūnyatā. According to T.R. Sharma in *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy*,⁴⁴⁴ we can divide the various approaches into the following:

1. Early Pāli traditions of Theravāda concerning Suññatā.
2. Later Hīnayāna traditions of interpreting Suññatā.
3. Vijñānavāda, Mādhyamika and Prajñāpāramitā sūtra approaches towards Śūnyatā.
4. The tradition of interpreting Śūnyatā among the Vaipulyasūtra.
5. Commentarial approaches adopted in the different commentaries such as Prassanapadā of Candrakīrti and Āloka of Haribhadra.

The concept of Śūnyatā does not seem fully developed in the first two traditions mentioned above except some stray reference to Puññatā in the early Pāli philosophical works of Theravāda tradition. The concept of Śūnyatā was fully developed by the Prajñā-pāramitā and the Mādhyamika system of philosophy. Nāgārjuna seems to be its chief exponent in the sense that he laid major emphasis on his philosophy of nothingness or emptiness (*niḥsvabhāva*, 虛無主義) to the concept of Śūnyatā.

These meanings of emptiness are exemplified in the successive stages of the Suññatā in Pāli Nikāyas and

⁴⁴³ Visuddhimagga II, 658.

⁴⁴⁴ T.R. Sharma, *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy*, Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1994, pp. 75-6.

Mahāyāna sūtras or the evolution of the concept of Śūnyatā associated with a number of levels of understanding.

In Pāli Nikāyas, on the first level, the Suññatā in non-philosophic meaning is as non-substantiality and the ideal of Suññatā that we should contemplate exactly what is negative or affirmative followings its reality. The second level is Suññatā defined as anattā because of void of a self and nothing belonging to a self (*anattā*), and it comes to exist by the cause of 12 nidānas (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*). The last meaning is Suññatā considered as Nibbāna because Nibbāna is the state of final release, or transcendental emptiness, while in Mahāyāna sūtras, it is said that, the world or universe is ‘a great set’ of myriad of things. All things co-exist, co-operate and interact upon one another to create innumerable phenomena. This is called the cause. The cause under different conditions produces the different effects, which lead to either good or bad or neutral retributions. It is the very universal principle, the reason of existence or the norm of existence as such. In other words, because of Śūnyatā, all things can exist; without Śūnyatā, nothing could possibly exist, in the Hṛdaya Sūtra says, ‘*The Śūnya does not differ from rūpa*’.⁴⁴⁵ Śūnyatā is, therefore, as the true Nature of Empirical Reality. However, at this stage one may still be attached to conceptualization and to a monistic view of the universe. Because any conceptualization is an extreme. This is the first level of Śūnyatā.

On the second level, Śūnyatā as the Principle of Pratītyasamutpāda, because a thing must have no a nature of its own (*svabhāva*), it is produced by causes or depends on anything else, so it is Śūnyatā as the Hṛdaya text expresses

⁴⁴⁵ 般若波羅密多心經, p. 134.

“Eye is void of self and anything belonging to self, form is void..., visual consciousness is void...”⁴⁴⁶

On the third level, Śūnyatā means Middle way. As we know, common things, which appear to be real, are not really real. But Śūnyatā in this sense may be misinterpreted as non-being or nothing. People distinguish between being and non-being, existence and non-existence, permanence and impermanence, Saṁsāra (the cycle of life and death) and Nirvāṇa. All these should be regarded as extremes. Hence, the term ‘middle way’ (*madhyama*) is employed to revoke dualistic thinking and refers to something intermediary but it has transcended any dichotomy into ‘being’ and ‘non-being,’ ‘attribute’ and ‘substance’ or ‘cause’ and ‘effect’... The term Śūnyatā means that both naive realism and nihilism are unintelligible and their descriptions of the world should be discarded.

On the fourth level, Śūnyatā as Nirvāṇa and come beyond Nirvāṇa which is truly equated with Tathāgata (如來) or Dharmatā (法性) implicating that all things of this world are essentially of the same nature, void of any name or substratum. Mahāyānists declared the forcible statement that there is not the slightest difference between Nirvāṇa (涅槃) and Saṁsāra (娑婆) because when the complete disappearance of all things is really, there is Nirvāṇa.

The next point, Śūnyatā means beyond all Negation Indescribable which implies that monistic as well as dualistic and pluralistic views of the world are untenable. It is the negation of conceptualization, stated as a denial of both duality and non-duality. It is Reality which ultimately transcends existence, non-existence, both and neither. It is beyond the Four categories of Intellect (*chatuskoṭi-*

⁴⁴⁶ BKS, IV, 29.

vinirmukta) viz. ‘neither affirmation nor negation nor both nor neither’. At this stage, one is supposed to be free from all attachments from the rude to the subtle in mind. If there were something more superior even than Nirvāṇa, it is like a dream and a magical delusion. If this occurs, Śūnyatā means total non-attachment.

However, if Śūnyatā is the total Śūnyatā, then it is meaningless. Hence on the last level, Śūnyatā is the Means of the Relative Truth (*Saṃvrtisatya*) and the Ultimate truth (*Paramārthasatya*). That is to say, worldly truth, though not unconditional, is essential for the attainment of the ultimate Truth and Nirvāṇa. The Hṛdaya Sūtra, the central of the Prajñā-pāramitā scriptures, has expanded this significance by the emphasis words that ‘rūpa does not differ from Śūnya’ or ‘rūpa is identical with Śūnya’.⁴⁴⁷ Relative truth is not useless in achieving enlightenment, nor can it be said that there is no relation between worldly and ultimate truths. Thus, Prajñā-pāramitā is of the nature of knowledge; it is a seeing of things, it arises from the combination of causal factors... From that, “Bodhisattvas have no hindrance in their hearts, and since they have no hindrance, they have no fear, are free from contrary and delusive ideas”.⁴⁴⁸ in order that he can content himself (自在) with entering the world to spread the Truth of Śūnyatā to all walks of life without any obstacle.

Hence, the concept of Śūnyatā in Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra opens our knowledge that in Pāli Nikāyas, the concept of Suññatā is displayed very simple with the idea of the reality and that suññatā in Pañca Nikāya is also the form of real nature i.e. Śūnyatā in Prajñā-pāramitā texts. In other words, Suññatā in Pāli scriptures attached special importance to

¹³³ 般若波羅密多心經, p. 134.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 135.

shere non-self and until the appearance and development of Mahāyāna, specially Prajñā-pāramitā literature, then the field of non-self is represented in two parts: the non-substantiality of the self (*pudgala nairātmya*) and the non-substantiality of the dharmas (*dharma nairātmya*) i.e. from subjective to objective, from six internal sense-bases to six external sense-bases, from affirmation of either being or non-being to denial of either being or non-being... are empty. The negation of all things give us to insight into the reality (*Śūnyatā of Śūnyatā*). That is also to say, Suññatā in Pāli Nikāyas is the foundation for the development of Prajñā-pāramitā literature.

As far as the role of Śūnyatā in Mahāyāna texts is concerned, Edward Conze revealed that the Mahāyāna theorists regarded the Hṛdaya Sūtra (the Heart Sūtra) which represents all of the family of Prajñā-pāramitā literature, as ‘*The Second Turning of the Wheel of the Law*’.⁴⁴⁹ Because the Hṛdaya Sūtra is the shortest scripture on the doctrine of Śūnyatā, it is the only sūtra in which Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara actively participates as the chief exponent of the insight of Śūnyatā.

Put it in more clear words, it is said that seven weeks after the Buddha’s Enlightenment, he gave the first discourse to group of five ascetics at the Deer forest (鹿苑), in Isipatana (諸天墮處) entitled ‘*Dhamma-cakka-pavattana-vaggo*’ (經轉法論) means ‘The Foundation of Kingdom of Norm’ or ‘The rolling of the Wheel of Truth’ or ‘The First Turning of the Wheel of the Law’ to void sense pleasures and self-mortification and follow the Middle Way which leads to calm, wisdom, enlightenment, Nibbāna and to present the reality of sufferings (*dukkha*), its arising, its cessation and the

⁴⁴⁹ Shohei Ichimura, *Buddhist Critical Spirituality: Prajñā and Śūnyatā*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001, pp. 108-9.

path to its cessation. Suffering is an eternal problem of human beings. In one form or the other, all progressive thoughts of mankind concentrate on the problem of suffering in the sense of finding out their answer. And the Buddha's discourse was applied it for whoever can experience the Truth by himself. That is the reason this lecture is called '*The First Turning of the Wheel of the Law*' and in which the knowledge of Four holy Truths (四諦)⁴⁵⁰ is equated to *vidyā* (明, *vijjā* or knowledge in Pāli).

We can read a passage in the *Hṛdaya Sūtra*:

“All Buddhas of the past, present and future obtained complete vision and perfect enlightenment (*anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*) by relying on *Prajñā-pāramitā*. So we know that *Prajñā-pāramitā* is the great supernatural Mantra, the great bright, unsurpassed and unequalled Mantra which can truly and without fail wipe out all sufferings.”

(三世諸佛，依般若波羅密多故，得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。故知般若波羅密多，是大神咒，是大明咒，是無上咒，是無等等咒，能除一切苦，真實不虛)。⁴⁵¹

Accordingly, this *Hṛdaya Sūtra* is meant to be, as Edward Conze says, ‘A restatement of the Four holy Truths for beginners on the method of bearing this teaching in mind as well as on the spiritual advantages of following it’.⁴⁵² Conze dismisses Tantric influence on this text, despite the fact that the closing section comprises a few Tantric terms ‘mantra’.

Edward Conze's words, the term *mantra* (*mantā* in

⁴⁵⁰ Loc. cit.

⁴⁵¹ 般若波羅密多心經, p. 135.

⁴⁵² Edward Conze, *Text, Sources, and Bibliography of the Prajñā-pāramitā-hṛdaya*, JRAS, 1948, p. 47.

Pāli, 神咒) or vidyā (*vijjā* in Pāli, 明) is not intended to mean, ‘a secret, mysterious lore of magical potency which can be compressed into a magical formula, a spell’. Rather, the term is intended to mean, ‘the knowledge of the four holy Truths which is the fundamental insight (*vijjā*, 明) of the Buddha’. In parallel to ‘The First Turning of the Wheel’ (*dharmacakra-pravartana-sūtra*) (第一轉法輪), the main subject of which is the Four holy Truths, while the Mahāyāna theorists regarded the Heart Sūtra as ‘*The Second Turning of the Wheel of the Law*’ (第二轉法輪) because Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, who was engaged in deep contemplation surveying the distress calls of sentient beings, expounded the meaning of the Four holy Truths from the point of view of Śūnyatā. That is to say if in Early Buddhism considered ‘Four holy Truths’ is the real truth and Nibbāna is the aim for a practitioner, then in Developed Buddhism some things such as Four holy Truths, Nirvāṇa, or ‘even if any thing greater than Nirvāṇa, that too will be only an illusion’ (*nirvāṇamapi māyopamam svapnopamam*).⁴⁵³ The negation of all, neither reality in ‘attainment’ nor in ‘non-attainment’ (得不得) is the most true and proper signification of the concept of Śūnyatā in Mahāyāna texts.

From these marks, we can find out that Śūnyatā in Mahāyāna sūtras has its seeds in Nikāyas and its evolution only means Mahāyānists added more colours of variety into Suññatā. Thus, the teaching on Suññatā is almost the same in the two systems but they appear to be different due to the difference in standpoint that is adopted by each school.

It should be noted that to obtain liberation one need not pass through these levels or even infinite stages of a gradual progression; one can achieve enlightenment instantly. Also,

⁴⁵³ Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, ed. R. Mitra, Calcutta, 1888, p. 40.

no matter how one gets enlightenment, when attachment is gone, emptiness should be discarded.⁴⁵⁴ To realize this ‘non-abiding’ nature of emptiness is true wisdom. This is the achievement of moksa (解脫, salvation).⁴⁵⁵

The term empty or Śūnyatā is mainly a soteriological device, a tool of Nirvāṇa or Salvation. Psychologically, Śūnyatā is detachment. The teaching of Śūnyatā is to empty the mind of cravings. Morally, this negation has a positive effect, namely, preventing one from doing evils and making one love oneself and others. It is to foster the virtue of compassion (*karuṇā*, 慈悲). And epistemologically, Śūnyatā is an unattached insight that truth is not absolutely true. It teaches that discursive knowledge does not provide true wisdom and that enlightenment is the abandonment of conceptual thinking. Metaphysically, Śūnyatā means that all things are devoid of definite nature, characteristic and function, and that metaphysical views are unintelligible and should be discarded. This is not to advocate nihilism but rather to save or to account for the possibility of empirical phenomena and practical values. Spiritually, Śūnyatā is freedom, Nirvāṇa or liberation from the suffering of the world.⁴⁵⁶

To repeat once more: Emptiness is not a theory, but a ladder that reaches out into the infinite. A ladder is not there to be discussed, but to be climbed. If one does not even take the first steps on it, the farther rungs seem, I admit, rather remote. They come nearer only as one goes up there. Emptiness is used as a traditional term to express the

⁴⁵⁴ Chi- tsang, *Chung-kuan-lun-su* (A Commentary on the Middle Treatise), T. 1842, p.11.

⁴⁵⁵ The Middle Treatise, xviii: 5.

⁴⁵⁶ Hsueh-li Cheng, *Nāgārjuna's Twelve Gate Treatise*, Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1982, pp.13-14.

complete negation of this world by the exercise of wisdom. The central idea is the total denial of, the complete emancipation from, the world around us in all its aspects and along its entire breadth. It is a practical concept, and it embodies an aspiration, not a view. Its only use is to help us get rid of this world and of the ignorance which binds us to it. It has not only one meaning, but several, which can unfold themselves on the successive stages of the actual process of transcending the world through wisdom. Not everyone, of course, is meant to understand what emptiness means. In that case it is better to pass on to something else.⁴⁵⁷



⁴⁵⁷ SSPW, 24.

CHAPTER SEVEN

**THE CONDUCT OF
BODHISATTVA-CARYĀ**

After a discussion on the development of the concepts of Bodhisattva (菩薩) and Śūnyatā (空性), the next point that merits a thorough discussion is the question of the Bodhisattva path (*Bodhisattvā-cāryā*, 菩薩行) in Mahāyāna Sūtras.

In Encyclopedia of Religion⁴⁵⁸ it is stated that the English term Bodhisattva path translates the Sanskrit Bodhisattva, ‘Vehicle of the Bodhisattva’ or, more frequently, *Bodhisattvā-cāryā* ‘The Practice of the Bodhisattva’ terms widely employed in Mahāyāna Buddhist texts.

There is not one kind of cause and condition which is used in seeking the Buddha way. The Bodhisattvas either cultivate Dharma through belief and understanding of the twelve causes and conditions, the Middle Way or through belief and understanding of the six Perfections (*Pāramitās*, 波羅密). When one talks of the Bodhisattvas or their effort to become an Enlightened One (*Buddha*, 佛陀), the role of these perfections becomes much more significant. When one discusses various appearances of their practice of the Bodhisattva way, this does not refer to the physical

⁴⁵⁸ Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Mircea Eliade, Vol. II, Collier Macmillan publishing Company, London, 1987, p. 165.

appearances of the Bodhisattvas, but to the various practices and Dharmas they cultivated.

The Bodhisattva path (菩薩行) consists of three main stages. These are as under:

- 1 The Preliminary Devotional Practices (起信心)
- 2 The Thought of Enlightenment (發菩提心)
- 3 The Practice of Moral Perfections (*Paramita*, 須波羅密).⁴⁵⁹

The Preliminary Devotional Practices

To begin with, one starts with doing obeisance and worship to the Buddha (佛), Dhamma (法) and Saṅgha (僧). Confession of sins (*Pāpādeśanā*, 懺悔) assumes an important place in the Bodhisattva path and therefore he confesses his sins to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas and begs for their help and protection.

In Mahāyāna, confession came to be regarded as an atonement for absolving sin and this forms the very essence of denunciation by oneself of one's own past sins (*vidūsaṇa-samudācāva*: atonement). The confessors entreated the Buddhas to wash them clean with their water of mercy and to absolve their sin. In this way the confessors invoked the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to absolve even the sin acquired by the five grave offences (*pañcānantaryakarma*, 五無間業). Repentance over one's sin became an important feature in these confessional services.

In Sanskrit Buddhist literature confession of sin came to be referred to as *pāpādeśanā* and this was regarded as one

⁴⁵⁹ G. Dhammsiri, Fundamentals of Buddhist Ethics, The Buddhist Research Society, Singapore, 1986, 113-128.

of the prerequisites to the awakening of the Thought of Enlightenment (*Bodhicitta*, 菩提心). In this context it is worthwhile to quote from the Bodhicaryāvatāra (菩薩行) of Śāntideva (寂天), who is flourished in the 7th century A.D.) which explains the process of confession as under:

“Whatever harmful acts of body, speech and mind
 I have done, in a disturbed state,
 Towards the three jewels of refuge,
 My parents, my spiritual master and others”⁴⁶⁰
 “I, trembling with fear,
 Offer myself to Samantabhadra;
 To Manjughosha, also,
 I make a gift of my body
 To the Protector Avalokiteśvara
 Who infallibly acts with compassion,
 I utter a mournful cry
 “please protect this miscreant”
 In my search for refuge,
 I cry from my heart
 For Akāśagarba, Ksitigarbha,
 And all the Compassionate Protectors”.⁴⁶¹

The Mahāvastu (佛本行集經異本) places the would-be Bodhisattva developing this requirement under the stage known to it by the name Natural Career (本行). It is the courses of conduct of Bodhisattvas, and the person passing through this stage is called at the beginning an

⁴⁶⁰ GBWL, 13.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 16.

ordinary being. The first part of the first bhūmi (地), speaking in terms of bhūmi (*stages*), can be included in this career. Bodhisattvas or rather future Bodhisattvas abiding in this stage of novitiate are to respectfully regard their parents, religious persons and elders. It is their nature (*prakṛiti*, 性) to practice ten right ways of behavior (*daśa-kuśala-karma-patha*, 十善業道) and to exhort others to give alms and acquire merit.

But as their spiritual faculty is not yet absolutely purified and developed to the standard required for the aspiration, they do not produce the thought of Enlightenment. Notwithstanding, they are fully ripe for promotion to the rank of Bodhisattva and as soon as the necessary conditions are fulfilled, they will advance to the next stage representing the second course of conduct, which is known to the Mahāvastu by the name of Resolving Career (*praṇidhāna-caryā*, 解行).

The second element, Adhimukti, signifies the being's aspiration for attaining Enlightenment. This aspect is not separately discussed in the text. The treatises on the Bodhisattva's career refer to this aspiration as occurring immediately before the Bodhicitta (菩提心).

The word Adhimukti or Atimukti (善思惟)⁴⁶² occurs in the sense of inclination, zeal or fondness, but this does not seem to be connected with the term Adhimukti which technically means strong inclination attachment or earnest and zealous application. In Encyclopedia of Buddhism⁴⁶³ the term derived from the intensifying directive 'adhi' and the root 'muc' (*muñcati*), to release, signifies an 'abandoning' of

⁴⁶² Adhimukti: (阿提目多迦) means entire freedom of mind, confidence, interpreted by 善思惟. Quoted in DCBT, p. 288.

⁴⁶³ EB, I, 201.

the present position with a 'going forth' in a new direction. Such resolve, therefore, has in it a liberating force, which leads to emancipation (*vimokkha*, 解脫), although with this specific connotation it would rather be considered as a perfection of determination (*adhiṭṭhāna-pāramī*, 願波羅密).

The compilers, at least the authors of the Daśa-bhūmika Sūtra (十地經) section, probably included this element in the preliminary stage. And According to the Daśa-bhūmika Sūtra, the future Bodhisattva (菩薩) prepares himself to undertake a long and strenuous journey for the realisation of Bodhisattvahood (菩薩果). He concentrates on his spiritual edification. On the eve of his departure, the thought of Enlightenment is awakened in his mind due to his immaculate dispositions and transparency of his inward resolution.

The Thought of Enlightenment (菩提心)

Bodhicitta, or the 'Thought of Enlightenment' (菩提心), is an important concept common to Theravāda (原始佛教), and Mahāyāna Buddhism (大乘佛教). Though not directly mentioned, the idea is explicit in Theravāda Buddhism. It was in Mahāyāna, however, that the Bodhicitta concept developed along both ethical and metaphysical lines and this development is found in Tantrism (密教), too, wherein it also came to be regarded as a state of great bliss (*mahāsukha*, 大樂). In Mahāyāna it developed along pantheistic lines, for it was held that Bodhicitta is latent in all beings and that it is merely a manifestation of the Dharmakāya (法身, Body of Law) or Bhūtatathatā (一如, 如如, 真如, suchness of existence, i.e., the Universal Spirit) in the human heart.

Though the term Bodhicitta does not occur in Pāli, traces of this concept are found in Pāli canonical literature where, for example, we are told how Gotama after renouncing household life resolved to strive to put an end to all the ills of existence by comprehending fully the causes of all ill.⁴⁶⁴ It is this comprehension that came to be known as the Enlightenment (*bodhi*), and Gautama came to be known as the Enlightened One—the Buddha. The earliest canonical references do not say that Gautama, when he first resolved to attain Enlightenment, did so in pursuit of the welfare of others. It was after attaining Enlightenment that he decided to preach the doctrine to others for their welfare.

The early Buddhist Sanskrit texts such as the Mahāvastu (佛本幸集經異本) and the Lalitavistara (神通遊戲經) clearly state that though altruism is a main motive, the Bodhisattva should first set himself free and then commence to release the others from the bonds of saṃsāra (輪迴), for a person who is already in bondage cannot set free another just as a blind man cannot show the way to others. But, in later Mahāyāna, altruism became the sole motive for the development of the Bodhicitta and this change is well represented by the character of Avalokiteśvara (觀世音菩薩), the great compassionate being who abandoned his own emancipation for the sake of others.

Alongside with the development of the ethical aspect, Bodhicitta also developed on the metaphysical side. This development is seen in the works of such Buddhist philosophers as Nāgārjuna (龍樹), Vasubandhu (世親, 天親) and Sthiramati (天意). D.T. Suzuki quotes Nāgārjuna, who explains this concept thus:

⁴⁶⁴ See M. I, 163 & A. I, 145.

“Bodhicitta is free from all determination, i.e., it is not included in the categories of five skandhas (factors of existence), twelve āyatanas (elements of sense-perception), eighteen dhātus (physical elements), it is not particular existence which is palpable. It is non-atmanic, universal. It is uncreated and its self-essence is void.”⁴⁶⁵

With the further development of the metaphysical aspect, the concept of Bodhicitta (菩提心) became indefinable so that ultimately Buddhist teachers either had to describe it by comparison, or be content with saying that it is immeasurable (*aprameya*, 無量), infinite (*aparyanta*, 無限) and indestructible (*akṣaya*, 永久: e.g., Bodhicittatpāda-sūtra-śāstra).⁴⁶⁶ However, it should be noted that with the lapse of time these two aspects of the Bodhicitta, namely the ethical and the meta-physical aspects, blended together and Bodhicitta came to be regarded as consisting of both void (*Śūnyatā*, 空性) which is identical with *prajñā* (智慧) and therefore representing the metaphysical aspect) and compassion (*karuṇā*, 慈悲, representing the ethical aspect).⁴⁶⁷

Bodhicitta (菩提心) is the same as *Bhūtatathatā* (如如), *Tathatā* (真如) or *Buddhatvā* (佛性) and as such it is universal, being latent in all beings. This latent Bodhicitta has to be awakened and cultivated. But, Bodhicitta cannot be successfully cultivated if one resolves to do so merely for the sake of cultivating it. One should resolve to save oneself and, above all, to save others. If a person resolves to attain it

⁴⁶⁵ D. T. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, New York, 1977, p. 297.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 209 ff.

⁴⁶⁷ See *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, Gaekwad's Oriental series, Baroda, LXII, p. 19 where it is said *Śūnyatākaruṇā-garbhaṃ bodhicittaṃ*.

merely for the sake of attaining it, it should be known that such a person will not overcome birth and death; nor will he attain Enlightenment, for the very thought of attainment then becomes an attachment. Attachment of the mind itself is called a false-belief. Thus, only a person with a proper predisposition could resolve to awaken successfully the Bodhicitta in him. One may set one's heart on awakening the Bodhicitta by seeing a miracle performed by the Buddha or a Bodhisattva, or by studying the doctrine and scriptures or by being encouraged by the Buddhas.

The Bodhicittotapādasūtra-Śāstra (經論菩提心) enumerates ten qualities that should be cultivated by an aspirant. Thus, one who aspires to awaken the Bodhicitta should:

- 1 Gather friends (paricinoti kalyānamitrāṇi),
- 2 Worship the Buddhas (pūjayati buddhān),
- 3 Acquire roots of merit (saṅgrhṇāti kuśalamūlāni),
- 4 Search the good laws (gaveṣayati praṇītadharmān),
- 5 Remain ever compassionate (bhavati nityaṁ suratacittaḥ),
- 6 Bear all suffering that befall him (kṣamate duḥkhānyāpatitāni)
- 7 Remain kind, compassionate and honest (bhavati maitraḥ kāruṇikaḥ),
- 8 Remain even-minded (bhavati samacittāśayaḥ),
- 9 Rejoice in Mahāyāna with faith (śraddhayābhinandati mahāyānaṁ)
- 10 Search the Buddha-wisdom (gaveṣayati buddha-prajñāṁ).

Four other qualities, too, are mentioned in the same text. They are:

- 1 Reflecting on the Buddhas (anuvicintayan buddhān),
- 2 Reflecting on the defects of the body (pratyavekṣamāṇaḥ kāya-syādinavān),
- 3 Being compassionate towards beings (dayamaṇaḥ sattveṣu),
- 4 Searching after the highest fruit (gaveṣayannuttaniam phalaṁ).⁴⁶⁸

In the Bodhisattva path, the most momentous moment is the generation of the thought of Enlightenment (*Bodhicitta*). The Bodhicitta is a combined result of wisdom and compassion and the Bodhisattva-bhūmi (菩薩地經) formulates it as follows: “All beings should I lead to Nirvāṇa, by means of the three vehicles. And even when I have led all beings to Nirvāṇa, no being at all has been led to Nirvāṇa”.⁴⁶⁹ There is at the same time a popular tradition which formulates it as “For the sake of each single being I will experience for hundreds of thousands of niyutas of koṭis of aeons the pains of the hells, of the animal world, of the worlds of Yama, until those beings have won Nirvāṇa in the realm of Nirvāṇa which leaves nothing behind.”⁴⁷⁰

Long ago in the distant past Kṣtigarbha Bodhisattva (Earth Stove Bodhisattva, 地藏菩薩) vowed:

“If the hells are not empty I will not become a Buddha, when living beings have all been saved, I will attain to Bodhi”.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁸ Quoted in EB, III, 186.

⁴⁶⁹ LSPW, 124.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid. loc. cit.

⁴⁷¹ Sūtra of the Past Vows of Earth Stove Bodhisattva, The Collected Lectures of Tripiṭaka, Hsuan Hua, tr. Bhikṣu Heng Ching, Buddhist Text Translation Society, The Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religious, NY, 1974, p. 20.

This is the vow of the Bodhisattvas.

The Bodhisattva is recorded to identify himself with all beings (i.e., the rest of beings). The technique of practising this caryā is explained by Śāntideva as follows:

First of all, I should make an effort

To meditate upon the equality between self and others.

I should protect all beings as I do myself

Because we are all equal in (wanting) pleasure and (not wanting) pain

Although there are many different parts and aspects such as the hand

As a body that is to be protected, they are one

Likewise, all the different sentient beings, in their pleasure and their pain

Have a wish to be happy that is the same as mine

The suffering that I experience

Does not cause any harm to others

But that suffering (is mine) because of my conceiving of (myself as) 'I'

Thereby it becomes unbearable

Likewise, the misery of others

Does not befall me.

Nevertheless, by conceiving of (others as) 'I' their suffering becomes mine;

Therefore, it too should be hard to bear

Hence I should dispel the misery of others

Because it is suffering, just like my own,

And I should benefit others

Because they are sentient beings, just like myself".⁴⁷²

There is yet another equally important aspect of the Bodhisattva path which a Bodhisattva develops after a long and strenuous endeavor and that happens to be the guarding of the Bodhicitta (Consciousness for Enlightenment). This act requires total awareness. Ācārya Śāntideva (寂天) in his well-read work Bodhicaryāvatāra (菩薩道) mentioned to this respect as follows:

“Those who wish to destroy the many sorrows of (their) conditioned existence,

Those who wish (all beings) to experience a multitude of joys

And those who wish to experience much happiness

Should never forsake the Awakening Mind

The moment an Awakening Mind arises

In those fettered and weak in the jail of cycle existence”⁴⁷³

“All beings wishing to be free from worldly abodes

Should firmly take hold of this precious Awakening Mind”.⁴⁷⁴

Ācārya Śāntideva further explains how the general behaviour of the Bodhisattva should be:

The stock, the cat and the thief,

By moving silently and carefully,

Accomplished what they desired to do;

A Bodhisattva, too, should always behave in this way

With respect, I should gratefully accept

⁴⁷² GBWL, 104.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 3.

Unsought-after words that are of benefit,
And that wisely advise and admonish me
At all time, I should be the pupil of everyone.⁴⁷⁵

Also, one can say that the Bodhisattva concept is the most logical Buddhist ideal which conforms to the principles expounded by the Buddha himself in the *Kālāma Sūta*,⁴⁷⁶ where he says that no one should follow another blindly, but everyone should try to attain one's own perfection without depending on another.

The Bodhisattva undergoes this suffering willingly in order to help others and, therefore, he performs the unique feat of voluntarily coming back to Saṃsāra again and again, thus willingly postponing his final entering into Nirvāṇa.⁴⁷⁷

Growing and popularizing doctrines of Bodhisattva included another group of performances in the preliminary functions that precede the production of the Thought of Enlightenment. This particular group of rituals and formalities is known by the name 'Anuttara Pūjā' (無上供養) which mainly consists of the worship and adoration of the Buddha (佛陀), the Dhamma (法) and the Saṅgha (僧).

This Thought of Enlightenment seems to bear two aspects: (1) Lokārhitam, (利他) concern over the welfare of others, and (2) Ātmahitam (自利)⁴⁷⁸ desire for his own salvation. First, he would obtain the Supreme Enlightenment and get himself delivered and then he would show the path of emancipation to others. The Bodhisattva-bhūmi (菩薩地) is more eloquent in this context as it explains the two objects of

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁷⁶ BGS, I, 171-2, also see Chapter I, pp. 23-4.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid. loc. cit.

⁴⁷⁸ DCBT, p. 218.

the Thought of Enlightenment.⁴⁷⁹

This self-surrender is a central point in the Bodhisattva path and the spirit of this surrender is vividly portrayed by Ācārya Śāntideva:

“May I be the doctor, the medicine
 And may I be the nurse
 For all sick beings in the world,
 Until everyone is healed
 May a rain of food and drink descend
 To clear away the pain of thirst and hunger,
 And during the aeon of famine
 May I myself change into food and drink
 May I become an inexhaustible treasure
 For those who are poor and destitute;
 May I turn into all things they could need
 And be placed close beside them
 Without any sense of loss,
 I shall give up my body and enjoyments
 As well as all my virtue of the three times
 For the sake of benefiting all
 ... May all who say bad things to me
 Or cause me any other harm,
 And those who mock and insult me
 Have the fortune to fully awaken
 May I be protector for those without one,
 A guide for all travellers on the way;

⁴⁷⁹ E.J.Thomas, *Buddhism*, London, 1934.

May I be a bridge, a boat and a ship
For all who wish to cross (the water)
May I be an island for those who seek one,
And a lamp for those desiring light,
May I be a bed for all who wish to rest
And a slave for all who want a slave.⁴⁸⁰

This thought is known to the Mahāvastu (佛本行集經異本) as citta (心), manasa (末那識), manoratha or saṅkalpa (思惟). A recurrent passage repeatedly found in the Mahāvastu relates how this thought and resolve come into effect. Bodhisattva expresses his enthusiastic wish to become a Perfect Buddha endowed with all characteristics for the benefit of the world:

“I, having crossed (the transmigratory existence), may help the living beings to cross. I, being liberated may liberate others. I, being comforted, may comfort others. I, being finally released, may release others.”

Making one’s mind for that greatest goal is, according to vivid elaboration of that moment, really an unparalleled event which surpasses all other meritorious acts. Nature exhibits its unusual phenomena (*Adbhuta Dharma*) on such rare occasions. Earthquakes take place and a light appears in the world. The entire Universe becomes happy on such occasions.⁴⁸¹

A Bodhisattva-to-be who abides in this stage makes the following ten great praṇidhānas (十種大願):

1 Mahāpūjopasthānāya Prathamam Mahāpraṇidhānam Abhinirharati.

To pay homage to all Buddhas, (一者禮敬諸佛).

⁴⁸⁰ GBWL, 20-22.

⁴⁸¹ E.J.Thomas, Buddhism, London, 1934.

- 2 Sarvatathāgatabhāṣitadharmanetrisaṁdhāraṇāya... Saddharmapari-grahāyadvitīyaṁ.
To preserve the teachings of the good Doctrine of all Buddhas,
(二者稱讚如來).
- 3 Tuṣṭitabhavanavāsaṁ ādim kṛtvā... yāvan mahāparinirvāṇo-pasamkramaṇāya tṛtīyam.
To approach the great nirvāṇa after accomplishing all the deeds of Buddha — beginning from his residence in the heavenly abode of the Tuṣṭita down to his attainment of great Nirvāṇa, (三者廣修供養).
- 4 Sarvabhūmipariśodhanaṁ... cittotpādābhinirhāraya... caturthaṁ.
To render all the stages immaculate in order to produce resolution or thought. (四者懺悔業章).
- 5 Sarvasattvadhātuparipācanāya, Sarvabuddhadharmāvatāraṇāya, Sarvajñajñāna-pratishāpanāya... pañcamam.
To bring about the spiritual maturity of all creatures, to enable them to comprehend the Doctrine of all Buddhas and to establish the knowledge of the Omniscient, (五者隨喜功德).
- 6 Lokadhātuvaimātryāvātānāya, sastham.
To make knowable the diversity of the world-system (Lokadhātu) (六者請轉法輪)
- 7 Sarvabuddhaksetrapariśodhanāya saptamam.
To bring about the purification of all the lands of the Buddha,
(七者請佛住世).
- 8 Mahāyānavataraṇāya astamam.
To cause to enter into the great vehicle, (八者常隨佛學).
- 9 Sarvabodhisattvacaryācaranāya amoghasarvacestatāyai navamam.
To practise all the course of conduct of the Bodhisattvas and to achieve irresistibility of the state of all efforts, (九者恆順眾生).
- 10 Abhisambodhimahājñānābhijñābhinirharāya daśamam.
Tāni ca Mahāpranidhānāni daśabhir nisthāpadair abhinirharati.

To accomplish perfect enlightenment, great knowledge, and intuition. (十者普皆迴向).

The Thought of Enlightenment (*Bodhicitta*, 菩提心) and Resolve (*Praṇidhāna*, 菩提) are to mark the commencement of the second career of the Bodhisattva. These two components, *Bodhicitta* and *Praṇidhāna*, are closely inter-related and intermingled.

According to the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* (大乘大莊嚴經論), *Praṇidhāna* (願) is both the cause and the result of the Thought of Enlightenment. The production of the Thought of Enlightenment is possible even through paying homage to the Buddha at a *stūpa*, whereas it is obligatory for one to meet a Buddha in order to make the formal Resolve.

A Bodhisattva's career should start with his making a resolution before a Buddha (*Abhīnīhāra* or *Mūlapraṇidhāna*, 願菩提) to become a Buddha for the welfare and liberation of all creatures. In later literature, this *abhīnīhāra* (本願) is preceded by a period during which the Bodhisattva practises *mano-praṇidhi* (意願) when he resolves in his mind to desire to become a Buddha without declaring his intention to others. According to the Mahāyānist theory this would be the production of the Thought of Enlightenment (*Bodhicitta*, 菩提心).⁴⁸² Even for the *abhīnīhāra* (根願) or the First Resolve to become a Buddha to be effective eight conditions (*Samodāna Dhamma*) have to be fulfilled. These are as follows:

1. *Manussottam*: The aspirant should be a human being.
2. *Liṅga Sampatti*: A male.
3. *Hetu*: Sufficiently developed spiritually to become an Arahant in this very life.

⁴⁸² BDBSL, 168.

4. Sathhāra Dassanam: A recluse at the time of the declaration.
5. Pabbajjā: That he should make the resolution personally before a Buddha.
6. Guṇa Sampatti: That he should possess the jhānas.
7. Adhikāra: Be prepared to sacrifice even his life.
8. Chandatā: The resolution has to be absolutely firm.⁴⁸³

According to the Sarvāstivādīs (一切有部者), those who attain the Bodhisattvahood, 菩薩果) are qualified to gain five advantages. These are as follows:

1. They are not born in woeful states, but only among gods and men,
2. They are no more reborn in a poor or a low class family,
3. They are, by virtue, a man and not a woman,
4. They are born in perfection free from physical defects,
5. They can remember the previous lives of their own and never forget them.⁴⁸⁴

In the Sutta Nipāta Commentary (經集之疏解) it is written that a Bodhisattva, during his career, escapes from being born in eighteen inauspicious states (*aṭṭhārasa abhabbaṭṭhānāni*, 十八法不共). These are as follows:

1. He is never born blind,
2. ... Deaf,
3. ... Insane,
4. ... Slobbery or rippled,
5. ... among savages (*milakkhesu*),
6. ... In the womb of a slave or

⁴⁸³ Buddhavaṃsa, ed. by R.Morris, II, London, 1882, p. 59.

⁴⁸⁴ Bs, 3.

7. ... As a heretic,
8. He never changes his sex,
9. He is never guilty of any of the five ānantarika-kammas, and
10. He never becomes a leper,
11. If born as an animal, he never becomes less than a grail or more than an elephant,
12. He is never born either among various classes of petas,
13. Nor among the Kālakañjakas,
14. He is born neither in the Avīci,
15. Nor in the Lokantaraka-Nirayas,
16. He is born neither as Māra,
17. Nor in the worlds where there is no perception (*asaññibhāva*),
18. Nor, in the Suddhāvāsas,
19. Nor in the rūpa-worlds,
20. Nor even in another cakkavāla.⁴⁸⁵

As for the Bodhisattva's birth among the low caste people, the passage just mentioned seems to misrepresent Buddhism in general and the Jātaka texts in particular. It is because of the fact that in the Jātaka texts it is clearly mentioned that the Bodhisattva was born as a Caṇḍāla⁴⁸⁶ and among low caste people as well.⁴⁸⁷

According to one of the Jātakas⁴⁸⁸ Bodhisattvas make the five great sacrifices (*Mahāpariccāga*) of giving up:

⁴⁸⁵ Vide as cited in G.P. Malalasekere, Op. Cit., p. 323.

⁴⁸⁶ SBFB, IV, The Mātanga Jātaka, Story No. 497, p. 235 ff; The Cittasambhūta Jātaka, Story No. 498, p. 244 ff.

⁴⁸⁷ SBFB, IV, The Amba Jātaka, Story No. 474, p. 124 ff.; The Chavaka Jātaka, story No. 309, p. 18 ff.

⁴⁸⁸ SBFB, V, Sarabhangā-Jātakā, Story No. 552, p. 64 ff.

1. Wife, 2. Children, 3. Kingdom, 4. Life and 5. Limb.

The Buddha, before whom the abhīnīhāra is made, looks into the future and, if satisfied, declares the fulfillment of the wish, giving all the particulars of such fulfillment. This declaration is called Veyyākaraṇa (Skt. *Vyākaraṇa*, 受記) and is made also by all subsequent Buddhas whom the Bodhisatta meets during his career.⁴⁸⁹

The Praṇidhāna (願) is divided into two parts in the Pāli tradition. First, the Bodhisattva-to-be aspires for the bodhi, his intention being quite personal and unexpressed. This stage of aspiration is known as mano-panādhāna (意願) which seems to correspond to the state of Adhimukti or Atimukti (善思惟), and signifies the commencement of the psychological process that finally culminates in the production of the Thought of Enlightenment. After that he declares it as the turning point in the Bodhisattva's spiritual maturity at which juncture the strong and earnest wish to attain Enlightenment occupies his mind. The term ceto-panidhāna (願) also occurs, but it hardly suggests any particular significance as the proclamation (*vivarjana*)⁴⁹⁰ is seen declared on the same occasion. This may reflect a period when the whole scheme, including the terms and stages, were not yet fully defined or settled.⁴⁹¹

The development of the Bodhicitta is the first and the most essential requirement of a person seeking recognition as a Bodhisattva and after such recognition he is permitted to take up the practices (*cariyā*, Skt. *caryā*, 行) of a Bodhisattva

⁴⁸⁹ E.J. Thomas, *Buddhism*, London, 1934.

⁴⁹⁰ DCBT, p. 429.

⁴⁹¹ E.J. Thomas, *Buddhism*, London, 1934.

(菩薩).⁴⁹²

D.T.Suzuki says that Bodhicitta, a form of the Dharmakāya (法身) as it manifests itself in the human heart, is present in the heart of all sentient beings, but in ordinary mortals it is dormant and miserably crippled by its unenlightened intercourse with the world of sensuality⁴⁹³ as under:

“Nirvāṇa (涅槃), Dharmakāya (法身), Tathāgata (如來), Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏), Paramārtha (真諦), Buddha (佛陀), Bodhicitta (菩提心), Bhūtatathatā (真如)—all these terms signify merely so many different aspects of one and the same reality and Bodhicitta is the name given to a form of the Dharmakāya (法身, Law-body) or Bhūtatathatā (真如, suchness of existence) as it manifests itself in the human heart, and its purification or negatively its liberation from all egoistic impurities constitutes the state of Nirvāṇa.”

⁴⁹⁴

In the Bodhisattvabhūmi (菩薩地經) it is given that there are four types of causes which are instrumental for the development of Bodhicitta. These may be noted as follows:

- 1 Four subsidiary causes (*pratyayas*, 緣), viz. (a) miracles shown by the Buddha; (b) teachings of the Buddha as recorded in the Bodhisattva-piṭaka (菩薩藏); (c) compassion for suffering beings, and (d) bad time (*kaṣāya-kāla*) for which beings suffer.
- 2 Four basic causes (*hetus*, 因), viz. (a) inclusion in

⁴⁹² N.Dutt (ed.), *Bodhisattvabhūmiḥ*, Vol. II (Patna), K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1978, p. 9.

⁴⁹³ D.T.Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, New York, 1977, p. 302.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 299.

Bodhisattva-gotra, 菩薩種性; (b) finding a good spiritual guide (*kalyāṇamitra*, 善友) who again may be of four types; (c) compassion, and (d) courage to relieve the distress of beings.

- 3 Four kinds of power (*bala*, 力), viz. (a) his own power; (b) power of recruiting others for exertion to attain Bodhi; (c) power of visualization of the Buddha or listening to his discourses and coming into contact with good persons and doing good deeds, and (d) power and desire to relieve the distress of beings, who have been suffering constantly and continuously.
- 4 There are four causes of retrogression from maintaining the Bodhicitta (菩提心). These are: (a) bad spiritual guide; (b) not enough compassion for the sufferings of beings; (c) fear and diffidence in removing the distress being suffered by beings continuously, and (d) lack of the four basic causes of the Bodhicitta.⁴⁹⁵

The Bodhisattvabhūmi (菩薩地經) states that the Bodhicitta (菩提心) is of two kinds, that is, (1) Nairyāṇika (不退轉菩提心) and (2) Anairyāṇika (退轉菩提心). By the former one attains Bodhi (Enlightenment) without retrogression, while the latter does not lead to Bodhi (Enlightenment). Again Anairyāṇika is of two kinds — (a) Ātyantika and (b) Anātyantika. By the former it is meant that the transgression is such that Bodhisattva loses bodhi forever, while by the latter it is meant that the transgression is temporary and that is why there is every likelihood of Bodhisattvas attaining Bodhi ultimately.⁴⁹⁶ While according to ‘A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms’(中英佛學辭

⁴⁹⁵ N.Dutt, Op. cit., p. 10.

⁴⁹⁶ Loc. cit.

典), Avaivartika or avinivartaniya (不退轉) means never receding, always progressing, not backsliding, or losing ground; never retreat but going straight to Nirvāṇa; an epithet of every Buddha.⁴⁹⁷

Ācārya Śāntideva (寂天) pointed out that the Bodhicitta (菩提心) is of two kinds — (1) Bodhipraṇidhicitta (菩提心願, will to win Enlightenment) and (2) Bodhiprasthānacitta (菩提心行, going through the practices for obtaining Enlightenment). The former is compared to the one who is desirous of going, while the latter is compared to the one who is actually going. Bodhipraṇidhicitta of course produces much merits like Bodhiprasthānacitta.⁴⁹⁸

The Bodhisattva exerts himself to the utmost to do good to all beings with a view to leading them to Bodhi (Enlightenment). He prefers to continue as a Bodhisattva even to the extent of deffering his own Buddhahood (佛果). In this process he transfers his merits earned thereby to the sentient beings.

From the time an aspirant sets his heart on the awakening of Bodhicitta up to his declaration of these great aspirations, it forms the preparatory stage and is called bodhipraṇidhi-citta (菩提心願). The merits of Bodhicitta is so great and wonderful and is ‘Bodhisattva-maker’, so that Vasubandhu (世親, 天親) in his Bodhicittotpāda-sūtra-śāstra (經論菩提心) compares Bodhicitta to the ocean:

“In the beginning when the great ocean manifests itself, it should be known that it is the store of all kinds of jewels, inferior, medium and superior, valuable and invaluable wish-

⁴⁹⁷ DCBT, p. 109.

⁴⁹⁸ GBWL, 145.

yielding gems. Just so, at the beginning, bodhicitta, too, should be thought of as the store of gods, men, disciples, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, merits, meditation and wisdom.”

(Mahāsamudro yadādau sanudeti jñātavyaḥ so' dhamamadhyammottanmāṇ cintāmaṇiratnamuktāphalānāmākaro bhavati. Bodhisattvasya cittotpāda apyenvaṇi... tad devamanuṣyaṇāṃ śrāvakapratyeka-buddhabodhisattvānaṃ dhyānasya prajñāyaścopattalerrāharab).⁴⁹⁹

Moral Perfections (Pāramīs / pāramitās, 波羅密)

With the development of Bodhicitta, a Bodhisattva must practise the pāramitās. This is the second stage of the development of Bodhicitta and is called Bodhi-prasthāna-citta.⁵⁰⁰ In other words, the germination of the Bodhicitta produces a Bodhisattva out of an individual, and to realize the complete fulfillment of this pledge, the Bodhisattva makes an entry into the most arduous and strenuous stage of the path, viz., the practice of the pāramitās.⁵⁰¹

A Bodhisattva must practise the six / ten Pāramitās (波羅密, Perfections). The term pāramitā has been very significantly interpreted by various scholars. T.W. Rhys Davids and W. Stede give the meanings: ‘Completeness, perfection, highest state.’⁵⁰² Pāramitā has also been translated as transcendental virtue, perfect virtue, highest perfection, complete attainment, etc.⁵⁰³ and H.C. Warren translates it as

⁴⁹⁹ EB, III, 184.

⁵⁰⁰ EB, III, 186 (also see Śīks. p. 8; Bc. ch. i, v. 15).

⁵⁰¹ Gunapala Dharmasiri, *Fundamentals of Buddhist Ethics*, The Buddhist Research Society, Singapore, 1986, p. 120.

⁵⁰² PED, 77.

⁵⁰³ BDBSL, 165.

perfection.⁵⁰⁴ J.S. Speyar,⁵⁰⁵ M.S. Bhat, M.V. Talim,⁵⁰⁶ P.V. Bapat leave the word untranslated.⁵⁰⁷

Pāramitā is derived from parama (and not from *pāra* with the root ‘i’ to go), as the Bodhisattva Bhūmi (菩薩地經) clearly explains. The pāramitās are so called because they are acquired during a long period of time (*parameṇa kālena samudāgatāḥ*), and are supremely pure in their nature (*paramayā svabhāva-viśuddhyā viśuddhāḥ*). They also transcend the virtues or qualities of the Śrāvakās (聲聞) and the Pratyeka-buddhas (辟支佛), and lead to the highest result (*paramam ca phalam anuprāyacchanti*). The derivation of the term from parama is placed beyond the possibility of doubt. It simply means ‘highest condition, highest point, best state, perfection.’⁵⁰⁸ The Tibetan equivalent is pha-rol-tu-phyin-pa. The Bodhisattva Bhūmi connects it with Pāramitā.⁵⁰⁹

The earlier and alternative form pāramī also points to the derivation from ‘*parama*’. The suffix – ‘*tā*’ was probably added to it on the analogy of the abstract substantives ending in – ‘*tā*’. It has been suggested that a compound like dāna-pāramitā may be explained as “the quality or condition of a person who is a dāna-pāramī, who possesses the pāramī or highest point of dāna or charity.” In this case, the suffix - tā would be added to a bahu-vrīhi compound (*dānasya pāramīr*

⁵⁰⁴ Buddhist Dictionary, Colombo, 1956, p.116; H.C. Warren, Buddhism in Translation, Cambridge, 1922, p. 23.

⁵⁰⁵ Ed. by J.S. Speyar, The Jātakamālā (Tr.), Delhi 1971, p. 93.

⁵⁰⁶ M.S. Bhat, M.V.Talim, The Geneology of The Buddhas, Translation of the Buddhavaṃsa, Bombay, 1969, p. 10.

⁵⁰⁷ P.V. Bapat, Vimuttimaggā and Visuddhimaggā, Poona, 1937, pp. 64-80.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 166.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid. loc. cit.

yasya). But the two words in such a compound as *dāna-pāramitā* seem to stand in direct opposition, and it is better to construe thus:

“Dānaṁ eva pāramitā dāna-pāramitā”.⁵¹⁰

The term *pāramitā* chiefly denotes the ethical principles as the proper means of leading to spiritual goal. In this regard, R. Spence Hardy gives a very sane and apt translation. He translates it as (1) prescribed virtue,⁵¹¹ (2) a class of virtue,⁵¹² (3) primary virtue.⁵¹³ Philosophically, it is ‘the cardinal virtues’ termed by Plato as the fundamental virtues called for practice by a person concerned or ‘the categorical imperative’⁵¹⁴ propounded by Kant.⁵¹⁵ Similar in its context to R.A.P. Roger’s term ‘positive morality’ as is the highest principle for determining the true worth of actions regarding human life.⁵¹⁶

The Bodhisattva’s *pāramitā* is not ideal morality nor a concept, but it is a logically practical principle determining the worth of human action in daily life. Although it is (as in the texts) prescribed for those who are the Bodhisattva’s yet it may be, no doubt, followed or practised by anybody in so far as the Buddhist principles are concerned.

According to Mahāyānists, the doctrine of *pāramitās* leading to Bodhisattvahood (菩薩果), and in the end Buddhahood (佛果) was the new method of Buddhist practice resulting from the intention of Mahāyāna patriarchs

⁵¹⁰ Loc. cit.

⁵¹¹ R.S. Hardy, *A Manual of Buddhism*, Varanasi, 1967, p. 49.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁵¹⁴ R.A. Rogers, *A Short History of Ethics*, London, 1962, p. 66.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

of later times. Nevertheless, there are two trends of thought relating to the above point of view. The first group has considered the pāramitā doctrine to be one of the marks most characteristically distinguishing Mahāyāna from Hīnayāna.⁵¹⁷ In the contrast, there was in the research of the second one, nothing new in the six pāramitās. All the items were found in the old Buddhist scriptures.⁵¹⁸ In their views, in Buddhism, there was really no innovation, but what seemed so was in fact a subtle adaptation of preexisting ideas. Great attention has always been paid to continuous doctrinal development and to proper transmission of the teachings from teacher to teacher.⁵¹⁹

These perfections were later enumerated, and there are slight differences between the Pāli and the Sanskrit lists. However, their theme is the same, which is ethical perfection.⁵²⁰

Ten Pāramitās in Pāli Buddhist Texts

The canonical Pali texts mention the number of pāramitās (波羅密) in (1) the Apadāna (譬喻經), (2) the Jātaka (本生經), (3) the Buddhavaṃsa (佛史) and (4) the Cariyāpiṭaka (所行藏).

In the Apadāna the ten pāramitās are evidently mentioned and the text runs as follows:

⁵¹⁷ D.T.Suzuki, Study in The Lankavatara Sūtra, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd, London, 1975, p. 366.

⁵¹⁸ BDBSL, 170-1.

⁵¹⁹ E. Conze, A short History of Buddhism, George Allen & Unwin LTD, London, 1980, also see Edward Conze, Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies, Bruno Cassier (Publisher) LTD, Oxford, London, 1967, p. 70.

⁵²⁰ BDBSL, 168.

“The Bodhisattva gave the gift (dāna) to the needy. He then observed sīla perfectly and fulfilled the pāramitā in the worldly renunciation. He then attained the Supreme Enlightenment. He was indifferent to both gain and loss, pleasure and pain. He was impartial and attained the Supreme Enlightenment”.

(Datvā dattabbakaṃ dānaṃ sīlaṃ pūretva asesato,
Nekhamme pāramīṃ patvā patto sambodhī uttamaṃ.
Labhālābhe sukhe dukkhe samāne ca vimānane,
Savatthe sāmako hutvā patto sambodhi uttamaṃ).⁵²¹

It is mentioned in the Visuddhimagga (清淨道論, IX.124) that the Great Beings (*Mahāsattvas*) are concerned about the welfare of living beings, not tolerating the sufferings of beings, wishing long duration to the higher states of happiness of beings and being impartial and just to all beings, by fulfilling the first pāramitā they fulfill all the pāramitās:

1) *Dāna-pārami* (布施波羅密): They give alms (*Dāna*) to all beings, so that they may be happy without investigating whether they are worthy or not. In the Jātaka literature, many stories are found which show how the Bodhisatta fulfilled the Dāna-pāramitā, the former birth stories of Gautama, when he was a Bodhisatta, either in human form or non-human form, it is written that he practised such types of dāna. In the Mahākapi Jātaka,⁵²² the Bodhisattva is a great monkey leader, who at the attack by the men of the Vārāṇasi king, allowed fellow monkeys to pass off safely by treading on his body, stretched as the extension of a bridge. In the Sasa Jātaka,⁵²³ the Bodhisattva is

⁵²¹ Ed by Marry E. Lilley, Apadāna, London, 1925, p. 56.

⁵²² SBFB, V, Mahākapi Jātaka, Story No. 516, p. 37 ff.

⁵²³ SBFB, III, Sasa Jātaka, Story No. 316, p. 34 ff.

a young hare who offers his own body in the absence of any other thing to offer, just to observe the sacred vow. The story of Prince Vessantara,⁵²⁴ which is widely appreciated, shows Prince Vessantara in fulfillment of his vow to give whatever he is asked to give, not only surrenders the palladium of his father's kingdom, but even his own wife and children...

2) *Sīla-pārami* (持戒波羅密): By avoidance of doing them any harm, they observe morality (*Sīla*).

3) *Kṣānti-pārami* (忍辱波羅密): Though having become heroes through energy, Bodhisattvas are nevertheless full of forbearance (*Khanti*) towards the manifold failings of beings. It is the patient endurance of suffering inflicted upon oneself by others and the forbearance of others. Bodhisattva practices patience to such an extent that he is not provoked even when his hands and feet are cut off.

4) *Vīrya-pārami* (精進波羅密): For the sake of welfare and happiness of others they constantly exert their energy or perseverance (*Vīrya*). Here *Vīrya* does not mean physical strength though this is an asset, but strength of character, which is far superior. It is defined as the persistent effort to work for the welfare of others both in thought and deed. Firmly establishing himself in this virtue, the Bodhisatta develops self-reliance and makes it one of his prominent characteristics. The *Vīrya* of a Bodhisatta is clearly depicted in the Mahājanaka Jātaka.⁵²⁵ Shipwrecked in the open sea for seven days, he struggled on without once giving up hope until he was finally rescued. Failures he views as steps to success, opposition causes him to double his exertion, dangers increase his courage, cutting his way through difficulties, which impair the enthusiasm of the

⁵²⁴ SBFB, VI, Vessantara Jātaka, Story No. 547, p. 246 ff.

⁵²⁵ SBFB, VI, Mahājanaka Jātaka, Story No. 539, p. 16 ff.

feeble, surmounting obstacles, which dishearten the ordinary, he looks straight towards his goal. Nor does he ever stop until his goal is reached.

5) *Nekkhamma-pārami* (出離波羅密): In order to bring morality to perfection, they train themselves in renunciation (*Nekkhamma*). *Nekkhamma* implies both renunciation of worldly pleasures by adopting the ascetic life and the temporary inhibition of Hindrances (*Nīvaraṇa*) by Jhānas (Ecstasies). A Bodhisatta is neither selfish nor self-possessive but is selfless in his activities. He is ever ready to sacrifice his happiness for the sake of others. Though he may sit in the lap of luxury, immersed in worldly pleasures, he may comprehend their transitoriness and the value of renunciation. Realizing thus the vanity of fleeting material pleasures, he voluntarily leaves his earthly possessions, and donning the simple ascetic garb, tries to lead the Holy Life in all its purity. Here he practises the higher morality to such an extent that becomes practically selfless in all his actions. No inducement whether fame, wealth, honour, or worldly gain, could induce him to do anything contrary to his principles.

6) *Paññā-pārami* (智慧波羅密): In order to understand clearly what is beneficial and what is injurious to beings, they purify their wisdom (*paññā*).

7) *Sacca-pārami* (真實波羅密): Once they have promised to give or do something they do not break their promise (*Sacca*). So, *sacca* is here meant the fulfillment of one's promise. This is one of the salient characteristics of a Bodhisattva, for he is no breaker of his word. He acts as he speaks, he speaks as he acts (*Yathā vādi tathā kāri, yathā kāri tathā vādi*). He makes truth his guide and holds it his bounden duty to keep his word. He ponders well before he

makes his promise. In the Hiri Jātaka ⁵²⁶ and the Mahāsutasoma Jātaka ⁵²⁷ Bodhisattva practiced Viriya Pāramitā. A Bodhisattva is trustworthy, sincere and honest. What he thinks, he speaks. There is perfect harmony in his thoughts, words and deeds. He does not use flattery to win the hearts of others, does not exhort himself to win their admiration, does not hide his defects or vainly exhibits his virtues. The praise-worthy he praises without malice. The blameworthy he blames judiciously, not with contempt but out of compassion. He honours the word of others as he honours his own.

8) *Adiṭṭhāna-pārami* (願波羅密): *Adiṭṭhāna* is translated as resolute determination. Without this firm determination (*Adiṭṭhāna*), the other perfections cannot be fulfilled and they work for the wealth and welfare of beings. It is compared to the foundation of a building. This will-power forces all obstructions out of Bodhisattva path and no matter what may come to him, sickness, grief, or disaster, he never turns his eyes away from his goal. For instance, the Bodhisattva Siddhārtha made a firm determination to renounce his royal pleasure and gain enlightenment. Six long years, it was a superhuman struggle. He had to endure manifold hardships and face innumerable difficulties. At a crucial moment, when he most needed their help his five favorite disciples deserted him. Yet he did not give up his effort. The Bodhisattva is a man of iron determination, whose high principles cannot be shaken to do good. None could tempt him to do anything contrary to those principles. As occasion demands, he is as soft as a flower and as firm as a rock.

⁵²⁶ SBFB, III, Hiri Jātaka, Story No. 363, p. 129 ff.

⁵²⁷ SBFB, VI, Mahāsutasoma Jātaka, Story No. 537, p. 246 ff.

9) *Metta-pārami* (悲心波羅密): With unshakable kindness (*metta*) they are helpful to all. Metta is loving kindness. In Sanskrit it is Maitrī. It is benevolent, goodwill or friendliness, wish for the happiness of all beings without exception. It is this Metta that prompts a Bodhisattva to renounce personal deliverance for the sake of others. He is permeated with boundless goodwill towards all beings, irrespective of caste, creed, colour or sex. Since he is the embodiment of universal love, he fears none, nor is he feared by any. He ever cherishes in his heart boundless goodwill towards all that live.

10) *Upekkhā-pārami* (捨波羅密): The tenth Pāramī is Upekkhā or equanimity. By reason of their equanimity (*Upekkhā*) they do not expect anything in return. The Pāli term Upekkha is composed of *upa*, which means justly, impartially or rightly (*yuttito*) and *ikkha*, to see, discern or view. The etymological meaning of the term is discerning rightly, viewing justly or looking impartially, that is, without attachment or aversion, without favour or disfavour. Here the term is not used in the sense of indifference or neutral feeling. The most difficult and the most essential of all perfections is this equanimity, especially for a layman who has to live in an ill-balanced world with fluctuating fortunes. Slightings and insults are the common lot of humanity. So are praise and blame, loss and gain, pain and pleasure. Amidst all such vicissitudes of life a Bodhisatta tries to stand unmoved like a firm rock, exercising perfect equanimity.

In pāli scriptures, these are ten Pāramitās as ten transcendental virtues, ten powers which Bodhisattva practice positively out of compassion for the many, devas and humans.

Ten Pāramitās in Sanskrit Literature

According to the Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, the concept of pāramitā (波羅密) is divided into two categories, viz., (1) The chief Pāramitās and (2) the supplementary pāramitās. The former are enumerated as below:

1. Dāna (布施, Generosity and Liberality in Giving),
2. Sīla (持戒, Virtuous Conduct, Morality),
3. Kṣānti (忍辱, Forebearance),
4. Vīrya (精進, Energy),
5. Dhyāna (禪定, Rapt Musing),
6. Prajñā (智慧, Wisdom)

The four supplementary Pāramitās are:

1. Upāya or Upāya-kauśalya (方便, Skilful-means or Skill-in-Means),
2. Praṇidhāna (願, Aspiration, resolution),
3. Bala (力, Strength),
4. Jñāna (智, Knowledge).⁵²⁸

Alternately,

1. Nekkhamma (Renunciation) instead of Dhyāna.
2. Sacca (Truthfulness) in place of Upāya (Upāyakauśalya).
3. Metta (Loving-kindness) instead of Bala.
4. Upekkhā (Equanimity) in place of Jñāna.

As for the six chief pāramitās (波羅密), the same are mentioned and discussed in the following Buddhist Sanskrit texts. These are: The Lalitavistara (神通遊戲經) (340.21ff.); The Mahāvastu (佛本幸集經異本) (III.226);

⁵²⁸ BDBSL, 168.

The Aṣṭasāhaśrikā Prajñā-pāramitā (八千頌般若波羅密經) (194.15); The Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka (慈悲蓮華經) (127.1); The Avadāna-Śataka (撰集百緣經) (7.4); The Mahāyāna-sūtralaṅkāra (大乘大莊嚴經) (99); The Dharmasaṅgraha (法數名集經異本) (Sect.7); The Samādhi-rāja Sūtra (三昧王經) (Fol.1129, 3); The Bodhisattva-bhūmika Sūtra (菩薩地經) (Fol. 47 a, 6)...⁵²⁹ The last four supplementary pāramitās, on the other hand, are mentioned in the following texts, viz., The Mahāyāna-sūtralaṅkāra (大乘大莊嚴經) (151.3); The Mahāvvyutpatti (名義大集經) (Sect.34); The Dharma-saṅgraha (法數名集經異本) (Sect.18) and The Daśabhūmika Sūtra (十地經) (57)...⁵³⁰ As, we see, the six pāramitās (空性) are mentioned and discussed in many passages of Buddhist Sanskrit literature, while the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth pāramitās are mentioned only in a few passages and are not explained at great length.

Har Dayal is of the opinion that the last three pāramitās (in the list cited in the aforesaid context) are really superfluous.⁵³¹ He left them undiscussed unlike the rest. From this it can be easily concluded that the present day scholars of Buddhist Sanskrit Literature do not attach importance to the last four pāramitās and study the first six only. In fact, in most of the cases these are altogether ignored and in the list of the Mahāyāna pāramitās only the six main ones are mentioned and the rest are not even enumerated and mentioned.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., pp.167-8, 356, Note 7.

⁵³⁰ Loc. cit.

⁵³¹ Ibid.,169.

The Role of Śūnyatā in Bodhisattva-caryā

As Edward Conze has said that the two great contributions which the Mahāyāna had made to human thought were the creation of the Bodhisattva ideal and the elaboration of the doctrine of ‘Emptiness’.⁵³² Here we make an attempt to example the relation between Bodhisattva and Śūnyatā (空性). In other words, Bodhisattva-caryā (菩薩行) means Bodhisattva practises ten Pāramitās (波羅密) in which Śūnyatā plays the essential role to lead to the effect of Bodhisattva conduct (*Bodhisattva-caryā*).

First of all, we come to the first pāramitā i.e. Dāna perfection.

1) *Dāna Pāramitā* (布施波羅密, Generosity and Liberality in Giving Perfection):

The word *dāna* (布施) literally means ‘giving’, and this seems to be the best rendering in this context.⁵³³ In the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa defines *Dāna* as follows: *Dānaṃ vuccati avakkhandhaṃ* means to give with heart is really called the *Dāna*, though the word *dāna* literally stands for (i) charity, (ii) generosity, (iii) alms-giving, (iv) liberality, etc.⁵³⁴ It is Bodhisattva’s perfection of gift when he offers, gives up or remains indifferent to his body.⁵³⁵

There are three kinds of *dāna* (布施, donation): donating material goods (財施), donating the Law (*Dharma*, 法施) and donating fearlessness (無畏施). The first means

⁵³² Edward Conze, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, Bruno Cassier (Publisher) LTD, Oxford, London, 1967, p. 54.

⁵³³ BDBSL, 172.

⁵³⁴ PED, 153.

⁵³⁵ Ś, 182.

to give wealth to others. The second refers to the teaching of Law rightly and the third means to remove the anxieties or sufferings of others through one's own efforts.

i) The Giving of Wealth (*Āmisadāna*, 財施)

The giving of wealth includes both outer and inner wealth. The outer wealth refers to one's kingdom and treasures, one's wife and sons. Those who practise the Bodhisattva way have no mark of self and so they are able to give away their kingdom, their homes and even their wives and sons. Śākyamuni Buddha for example should have become a king, but he chose instead to become a monk. He left his wife and his newly born son. Relinquishing the glory of royalty, he went to the state of homelessness. The inner wealth, on the other hand, refers to one's own body, head, eyes, brains and marrow, skin, blood, flesh and bones — all can be given to others.⁵³⁶

ii) The Giving of Law (*Dharmadāna*, 法施)

When the Bodhisattva feels satisfied only with the supply of material aid, without raising them from their misery or introducing them into beatitude, he uses ineffective method (*anupāya*). Because material help is not sufficient. The best way of helping them is to establish them in goodness as follows:

“Monks, there are these two gifts, the carnal and spiritual. Of these two gifts the spiritual is prominent. Monks, there are these two sharings together, the sharing of the carnal and the sharing of the spiritual. Of these two sharings together the spiritual is pre-eminent.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 132.

Monks, there are these two acts of kindness, the carnal and the spiritual. Of these two acts of kindness the spiritual is pre-eminent.”⁵³⁷

Therefore, the Dāna of this type is to speak the dharma to benefit beings, to teach and transform all living beings by explaining the Buddha-dharma to them. Of all the offerings the dharma offering is supreme. The offering of dharma is to move out the suffering of other and to propagate the Buddha-dharma for the sake of all beings as explained:

“The feeling that causes the good people’s hearts to be moved when they see others’ suffering is compassion”.

(Paradukke sati sadhunam hadayakampanam karoti’ ti karuṇa).⁵³⁸

iii) The Giving of Fearlessness (*Abhayadāna*, 無畏施)

The third dāna is the giving of fearlessness. When some one encounters disasters or calamities which terrify him, at that moment the Bodhisattva removes his anxieties and sufferings through one’s own efforts. Dispelling fear means to give the gift of fearlessness.

The giving of fearlessness is the best way that can give a genuine peaceful and happy environment for everyone, because a real state of fearlessness is considered as synonymous with the freedom and bliss without war, dislike, fighting, killing...etc.

According to Mahāyāna, the best and noblest gift among three a Bodhisattva can give to others is the gift of Dharma, other gifts are considered of a lower category than this as the Buddha once said that ‘the gift of Dhamma triumphs over all gifts’. (*Sabbedānaṃ Dhamma-dānaṃ jināti*,

⁵³⁷ Itivuttaka: As It Was Said, tr. F. L. Woodward, M.A., PTS, London: Oxford University Press, 1948, p. 185.

⁵³⁸ EB, IV, 201.

法施是最上施) and a Sūtra preserved in Chinese translation proved it by the following passage:

“What is a bad means (anupāya)? When, by the practice of the perfections the Bodhisattvas help others, but are content to supply them with merely material aid, without raising them from their misery or introducing them into beauty, then they are using a bad means. Why? Because material help is not sufficient. Whether a dunghill be large or small, it cannot possibly be made to smell sweet by any means whatsoever. In the same way, living beings are unhappy because of their acts, because of their nature; it is impossible to make them happy by supplying them with merely material aid. The best way of helping them is to establish them in goodness”.⁵³⁹

To illustrate Bodhisattva’s practice of Dāna pāramitā in the Mahāyāna Sūtras, we can find some significant verses in Chapter One “Introduction” (品序)⁵⁴⁰ of Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra (妙法蓮華經), which clearly show that the performance of Dāna Pāramitā is the Bodhisattva’s Way. At the beginning of this Sūtra is narrated that Maitreya Bodhisattva Mahāsattva (彌勒菩薩摩訶薩) addresses Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva Mahāsattva (闍殊師利菩薩摩訶薩) that within the while hair mark emitted by the Buddha, the World-honoured One, he can see Bodhisattvas as numberless as the grains of the sands in the Gaṅgā river (恆河) are giving all kinds of charity (*dāna*) such as gold, silver, coral, pearls, mani jewels, seashell, agate, diamonds, and other rarities, men, women servants, carriages, jeweled hand carriages, and palanquins...to beings.

Not only do these Bodhisattvas give valuable objects, but they even give their bodies, their own flesh, their hands and feet. There are Bodhisattvas who are giving their wives

⁵³⁹ Quoted by Henri de Lubac, *Aspects of Buddhism*, p. 24.

⁵⁴⁰ LS, p. 3 ff.

and children to others. They give happily. Not even once do they feel bad about giving wives and children. Bodhisattvas practice such giving in order to attain the supreme Enlightenment as is described in Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra:

“Again I see Bodhisattvas
who give their own flesh, hands and feet,
or their wives and children,
seeking the unsurpassed way.
I also see Bodhisattvas
who happily give
heads, eyes, bodies and limbs
in their search for the Buddha wisdom.”⁵⁴¹

(又見菩薩 身肉手足 及妻子施 求無上道。又見菩薩 頭目身體 欣樂施與 求佛智慧。⁵⁴²)

In the Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra (大寶積經) (one of the earliest Mahāyāna texts), it is stated that only those Bodhisattvas who have attained the realization of the non-arising of dharmas are able to practise extreme charity: for other people this practice may serve no purpose or even harm them and others. This means that these Bodhisattvas have attained the realization of the dharmas.⁵⁴³

Again in the text it is written that there are Bodhisattvas who with fine food and drink and broth and herbs made offerings to the Buddha and the monks, so that when those who have left home get sick, they can use them to cure their illness. There are four kinds of offerings: food and

⁵⁴¹ LS, 9.

⁵⁴² 妙法蓮華經 佛教經典會 佛教慈悲服務中心, 香港 一九九四 p. 16.

⁵⁴³ See G.C.C.Chang (ed.) A Treasury of Mahāyāna Sūtras — Selections From the Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra Tr. From the Chinese by the Buddhist Association of the United States, Pennsylvania and London, 1983, p. 267.

drink, clothing, bedding and medicine. The clothing given is no ordinary clothing. It is very fine and expensive, and absolutely priceless. They are given in charity in order to attain the Supreme Enlightenment with a million different kinds of precious sandalwood and with much fine bedding, with gardens and groves, fruits and flowers in large quantity, with flowing springs and bathing ponds. They make this offering to the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha. All these offerings of many different kinds are given to the Triple Jewel for seeking the Supreme way that is Buddha way.

Likewise in Chapter XII entitled 'Devadatta' (提婆達多品),⁵⁴⁴ Śākyamuni himself describes that during many thousands of aeons that long back when he had been a king, he had taken the strong resolution to arrive at supreme perfect Enlightenment. For that he exerted himself to fulfill the Six Perfections (*Ṣaṭ Pāramitās*, 六波羅密). In charity he had given innumerable, immeasurable gold, money, gems, pearls, villages, towns, boroughs, provinces, kingdoms, royal capitals, wives, sons, daughters, slaves, male and female, elephants and horses. This giving is related to outer wealth. However, he had given his inner wealth also. But in his heart the thought of self-complacency did not occur.

In the same chapter in other place, the Bodhisattva Prajñākūṭa (智積菩薩) says that he himself had seen the Blessed Śākyamuni, the Tathāgata performing numberless charitable tasks while he was striving after enlightenment. And during many aeons he did not feel satisfied about his arduous task. He went everywhere for weal and welfare of creatures. He did not take rest but kept busy in doing his sacrificial tasks. Whenever he found any being in trouble, to help out that being he did not care even for his own body. As

⁵⁴⁴ LS, p. 182 ff.

it is mentioned in the Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra:

“Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulated said, “When I observe Shakyamuni Thus Come One, I see that for immeasurable kalpas he carried out harsh and difficult practices, accumulating merit, piling up virtue, seeking the way of the bodhisattva without ever resting. I observe that throughout the thousand-millionfold world, there is not a single spot tiny as a mustard seed where this bodhisattva failed to sacrifice body and life for the sake of living beings. Only after he had done that was he able to complete the bodhi way”⁵⁴⁵

(智積菩薩言：我見釋迦如來，於無量劫難行，苦行，積功累德，求菩提道，未曾止息。觀三千大千世界，乃至無有如芥子許，非是菩薩，捨身命處，為眾生故然後得成菩提道)。⁵⁴⁶

In Chapter XXIII entitled ‘Former Affair of the Bodhisattva Medicine King’⁵⁴⁷ (藥王菩薩本事品) a story is mentioned of Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Sarvasattva Priyadarśana (一切眾生喜見菩薩摩訶薩, Gladly Seen by All Living Beings), who burnt his own body with the object of paying worship to the Tathāgata and his Dharmaparyāya of the Lotus of The True Law. His sacrificial deed is praised by all the Buddhas. That is the real worship of the Law. No worship with flowers, incense, fragrant, umbrellas, flags, banners, no worshipping with material gifts or with uragasāra sandal equals. This, young men of good family, is the sublimest gift, higher than the abandoning of royalties, the abandoning of beloved children and wives. Sacrificing one’s own body, young men of good family, is the most distinguished, the chiefest, the best, the very best, the most sublime worship of the Law.

⁵⁴⁵ LS, 187.

⁵⁴⁶ 妙法蓮華經, pp. 177-8.

⁵⁴⁷ LS, p. 281 ff.

The above mentioned paragraph shows clearly that giving of one's body is the highest degree of charity. In the same story it is mentioned that the body of Sarvasattva Priyadarśana (一切眾生喜見菩薩摩訶薩) continued blazing for twelve thousand years without ceasing to burn. After the expiration of those twelve thousand years the fire was extinguished. Then the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Sarvasattva Priyadarśana having paid such worship to the Tathāgata, disappeared from that place and appeared in the house of king Vimaladatta (淨德, Pure Virtue). In this birth Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Sarvasattva Priyadarśana made eighty four thousand stūpas in order to pay honour to the relics of the Tathāgata Candravimalasūrya-prabhāsaśrī (日月淨明德如來, Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue Thus Come One). There he burnt his own hand which was marked by the one hundred auspicious signs, and so paid worship to those stūpas containing relics of the Tathāgata and while paying worship, he educated countless hundred thousands myriads of Koṭis⁵⁴⁸ of disciples from that assembly. In consequence of this all those Bodhisattvas acquired the samādhi termed Sarvarūpa-sandarśana (現一切色身三昧).

In Chapter XXIV entitled “The Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound”⁵⁴⁹ (妙音菩薩, Bodhisattva Gadgadasvara), Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Gadgadasvara preaches Dharmaparyāya in various shapes to different beings according to their ability and capacity. In Chapter XXV “The Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds” (觀世音菩薩普門品), Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara (觀世音菩薩摩訶薩)

⁵⁴⁸ ‘Koṭis: A million. Also explained by 100,000; or 100 lakṣa, i.e. 10 millions’. Quoted in DCBT, p. 261.

⁵⁴⁹ LS, p. 298 ff.

preaches Dharmaparyāya in various shapes to different beings. This all comes under the second kind of Dāna—the offering of Dharma, that is, propagating the Buddhadharma for the sake of all beings. And Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara (觀世音菩薩摩訶薩) has given the fearlessness as follows:

“This bodhisattva and mahāsattva Perceiver of the World’s Sounds can bestow fearlessness on those who are in fearful, pressing or difficult circumstances. That is why in this saha world everyone calls him Bestower of Fearlessness”.⁵⁵⁰

(是觀世音菩薩摩訶薩於布畏急難之中能施無畏是故此娑婆世界皆號之為施舍無畏者).⁵⁵¹

Each giving has three ties: (1) a perception of self (我), (2) a perception of others (他), and (3) a perception of the gift (物 施). The supramundane perfection of giving, on the other hand, consists in the three-fold purity. Here, with the insight of Śūnyatā (空 性), a Bodhisattva who gives a gift, does not apprehend a self, a recipient and a gift; also no reward of his giving. He surrenders that gift to all beings, but he apprehends neither beings, nor self. He dedicates that gift to Supreme Enlightenment, but he does not apprehend any Enlightenment.⁵⁵² This is called the supramundane perfection of giving (最上布施波羅密) and numerous Bodhisattvas like Ganges sand (恆河沙) practice this pāramitā (波羅密).

“One could also see bodhisattvas
carrying out almsgiving, forbearances, and so forth,
their number like Ganges sands,

⁵⁵⁰ LS, 302.

⁵⁵¹ 妙法蓮華經, p. 287.

⁵⁵² Quoted in Edward Conze, *Selected Sayings From The Perfection of Wisdom*, Boulder, 1978, pp. 66-7.

due to the illumination of the Buddha's light".⁵⁵³

(又見諸菩薩，行施忍辱等，其數如恆河，其由佛光照)。⁵⁵⁴

The perfection of generosity is understood in Mahāyāna to be non-clinging. By this is meant a special kind of wisdom permeating action that upholds the concept of emptiness. It rejects the dialing between all evasive thoughts of giver, gift and recipient. Lying in the stratum of wisdom and compassion generosity rises from the invalidation of 'ego' which causes misery to beings.

The doctrine of selflessness (*Nairātmya*) is a metaphysical expression genuinely sought to illustrate the ethical injunction and a saviour device of a supreme order. Its virtue is non-clinging.

However, we should know that Bodhisattva insights the nature of Śūnyatā (空性) the selflessness of all things, the spirit of nonclinging, so that he is able to give all his possessions happily to others but not grasp it as Vajrachedikā prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra (金剛般若波羅密經) taught:

"If a Bodhisattva's mind does not abide in forms (lakṣaṇas) when practising charity (dāna), his merit will be inconceivable and immeasurable. Subhūti, what do you think? Can you think of and measure the extent of space in the East?"

'I cannot. World Honoured One.'

'Subhūti, can you think of and measure (all) the extent of space in the South, West and North, as well as in the intermediate directions, including the zenith and nadir'

'I cannot. World Honoured One!'

⁵⁵³ LS, 61.

⁵⁵⁴ 妙法蓮華經 p. 18.

‘Subhūti. (when) a Bodhisattva practises charity without a mind abiding in forms, his merit is equally inconceivable and immeasurable.’

‘Subhūti a Bodhisattva’s mind should **THUS** abide as taught.’

(若菩薩不住相布施，其福德不可思量。須菩提！於意云何？東方虛空，可思量不？

不也，世尊！

須菩提！南，西，北方，思維，上，下虛空方，可思量不？

不也，世尊！

須菩提！菩薩無住相布施，福德亦復如是不可思量。須菩提！菩薩但應如所教住。⁵⁵⁵

2) Śīla Pāramitā (持戒波羅密, Virtuous Conduct, Morality Perfection)

The second virtue which a Bodhisattva cultivates is Śīla (持戒). As it is mentioned in the text:

“And I see those who observe the precepts,
no flaw in their conduct,
pure as jewels and gems,
and in that manner seeking the Buddha way.”⁵⁵⁶

(又見具戒，威儀無缺，淨如寶珠，以求佛道).⁵⁵⁷

This means that there are Bodhisattvas who observe the moral precepts, and guard them as they would hold a precious pearl. Their precepts are not the slightest deficient.

⁵⁵⁵ 金剛般若波羅密經, 佛學業書, 台灣, 一九九八 p. 112.

⁵⁵⁶ LS, 10-11.

⁵⁵⁷ 妙法蓮華經 p. 18.

Their clear and lofty purity is as priceless as a jewel by which they attain the Buddha way.

Such an irreversible Bodhisattva (不退轉菩薩) observes the ten ways of wholesome action. He himself observes and instigates others to observe abstention from taking life, abstention from taking what is not given to him, abstention from wrong conduct as regards sensuous pleasures, abstention from intoxicants as tending to cloud the mind, abstention from lying speech, abstention from harsh speech, abstention from indistinct prattling, abstention from covetousness, abstention from ill-will, abstention from wrong views. Even in his dreams he never commits offences against these ten precepts, and he does not nurse such offences in his mind.⁵⁵⁸

The Bodhisattvabhūmi (菩薩地)⁵⁵⁹ lists three categories of morality: (1) restraint from immoral behavior; (2) cultivation of virtuous behavior; and (3) accomplishing what is most beneficial for all living beings. These three are identified as invariable concomitants of the deep-rooted tendency of conceptual thought to construct reified notions of an ultimately real self. They are diagnosed as symptomatic of an attitude inharmonious with the concept of Śūnyatā, (空性), and they help to forge the links of a chain which keeps the mind firmly bound to a beginningless cycle of misery.

Śāntideva (寂天) in his famous work - the Śikṣāsamuccaya (大乘集菩薩學論) discusses again the most compelling pragmatic justification for virtuous behavior:

⁵⁵⁸ Edward Conze, *Selected Sayings from the Perfection of Wisdom*, Boulder, 1978, p. 67.

⁵⁵⁹ BB, 140.

“A [Bodhisattva] cultivates the desire to abandon all sinful and unmeritorious behavior. In this context, [an action] is evil and unmeritorious if it causes the mind to become agitated and so is opposed to balanced concentration. Such [an action] is also referred to as ‘an opponent to samādhi (禪定).’⁵⁶⁰

A calm mind alone is capable of deep concentration (*samādhi*) which in its turn is obtained by a highly disciplined practice of meditation, like that of the ‘great seal’ (*mahāmudrā*, 大首印). If the mind is unobstructed and without fear that it can quickly grasp the inner essence of Śūnyatā.

Non-clinging is the basic need for attaining the state in which such mind is realized or cultivated. The theme is well elaborated in the Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-śāstra (大智度論):

“The highest kind of moral conduct, its perfection, consists in the non-clinging way, not clinging to sin or merit as absolute and unconditioned. The Bodhisattva that enters deep into the truth of things, cultivating the contemplation of their Śūnya-nature, beholds with his eye of wisdom that sin and merit are not absolute and unconditioned.”⁵⁶¹

The perfection of morality lies in equanimity in thought and action toward the sinner and no remarkable pride to appreciate the merited. This is the non-clinging way of looking into things that provides reason to the thought of pure kind and a clear vision unblurred from biases.

3) Kṣānti Pāramitā (忍辱波羅密, Forebearance Perfection)

Apart from fulfilling Śīla Pāramitā there are Bodhisattvas who practice Kṣānti Pāramitā to fulfil the

⁵⁶⁰ Ś, 27-30, 66.

⁵⁶¹ The Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-śāstra of Nāgārjuna (tr. Kumārajīva), T. 1509, Vol. 25, p. 163c.

Bodhisattva-caryā. In this context one can find very significant verses related to this topic in the Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra as:

“Or I see bodhisattvas
who become monks,
living alone in quietude,
delighting in chanting the sūtras”⁵⁶²

(或見菩薩，而作毘獨處閑靜，樂誦經典).⁵⁶³

The verses referred to above show the cultivation of the Perfection of Patience. There are Bohisattvas who have left the home life to become bhikṣus and dwell deep in the forests or in mountain caves. Evil people may strike or rebuke them the Bodhisattvas must endure patiently. When evil beasts bite them, then also they must be patient and not become frightened or alarmed. They remain unperturbed and like to read and recite Sūtras.

“And I see Buddha sons
abiding in the strength of fortitude,
taking the abuse and blows
of persons of overbearing arrogance,
willing to suffer all these,
and in that manner seeking the Buddha way.”⁵⁶⁴

(又見佛子，住忍辱力，增上慢人，惡罵唾打，皆悉能忍，以求佛道).⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶² LS, 9.

⁵⁶³ 妙法蓮華經 p. 17.

⁵⁶⁴ LS, 11.

⁵⁶⁵ 妙法蓮華經 p. 18.

“Mañjuśri, what do I mean by the practices of a Bodhisattva or Mahāsattva? If a Bodhisattva or Mahāsattva takes his stand on perseverance, is gentle and compliant, never violent, and never alarmed in mind; and if with regard to phenomena he takes no action but observes the true entity of phenomena without acting or making any distinction, then this I call the practices of a Bodhisattva or Mahāsattva”.⁵⁶⁶

(文殊師利! 云何名: 菩薩摩訶薩行處? 若菩薩摩訶薩住忍禪地? 柔和善順而不卒暴, 心亦不敬, 又復於法無所行, 而觀諸法如實相, 亦不行, 不分別是名: 菩薩摩訶薩行處).⁵⁶⁷

Maitreya Bodhisattva Mahāsattva (彌勒菩薩) again says to Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva Mahāsattva (文殊師利菩薩) that some true disciples of the Buddha are also seen who cultivate the Perfection of Patience (*kṣānti Pāramitā*, 忍辱波羅密). These Bodhisattvas exclusively cultivate the practice of patience. In cultivating patience, they calmly endure the abuse, criticism and threat from proud monks. They endure all this without getting angry. They are able to bear all this because they seek the Buddha way as in Vajraccedikā Prajñā Pāramitā (金剛般若波羅密經) as under:

“Subhūti, the Tathāgata speaks of the perfection of patience (*kṣānti pāramitā*) which is not but is called the perfection of patience. Why? Because Subhūti, in (a) past, when my body was mutilated by Kalirāja, I had at that time no notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. I would have been stirred by feelings of anger and hatred. Subhūti, I also remember that in the past, during my former five hundred lives, I was a Kṣanti and held no conception of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Therefore, Subhūti, Bodhisattvas should forsake all

⁵⁶⁶ LS, 197.

⁵⁶⁷ 妙法蓮華經, p. 185.

conceptions of form and resolve to develop the Supreme Enlightenment Mind (Anuttara-samyaksam-bodhi). Their mind should not abide in form, sound, smell, taste, touch and dharma. Their minds should abide nowhere. If mind abides somewhere it should be in falsehood. This is why the Buddha says Bodhisattvās' minds should not abide in form when practising charity (dāna). Subhūti, all Bodhisattvas should thus make offering for the welfare of all living beings. The Tathāgata speaks of forms which are not forms and of living beings who are not living beings.”

(須菩提! 忍辱波羅密, 如來說非忍辱波羅密是名忍辱波羅密。何以故? 須菩提! 如我昔為歌利王害截身體, 我於爾時, 無我相, 無人相, 無眾生相, 無壽者相。何以故? 我於往昔支解時, 若有我相, 人相, 眾生相, 壽者相, 應生瞋恨須菩提又念過去於五百世, 作忍仙人於所世, 無我相, 無人相, 無眾生相, 無壽者相。是故須菩提菩薩應離一切相發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心。不應住色生, 不應住聲, 香, 味, 觸, 法生心, 應生無所住心, 若心有住, 即為非住, 是故佛說菩提心, 不應住色布施。須菩提! 菩薩為利益一切眾生, 應如是布施! 如來說切諸相, 即是非相。又說一切眾生, 即非眾生)。⁵⁶⁸

Kṣānti Pāramitā or the Perfection of Patience deserves special attention because Kṣānti brings one closer to equanimity which is a feature of Nirvāṇic experience. Sangharakshita says “Kṣānti is a composite virtue. In it are blended not only patience and forbearance, the literal meanings of the term, but also love, humility, endurance and absence of anger and of desire for retaliation and revenge”.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁸ 金剛般若波羅密經, pp. 120-1.

⁵⁶⁹ Gunapala Dharmasiri, *Fundamentals of Buddhist Ethics*, Singapore, The Buddhist Research Society, 1986, p. 207.

The Bodhisattvabhūmi (菩薩地)⁵⁷⁰ designates three particular varieties of kṣānti.

The first two are defined primarily in terms of a lack of antipathy, as the patience to forgive those who inflict injury and the patience to bear necessary and unavoidable suffering. In this context, of course, ‘injury’ must be understood as a reference to any sort of cruelty, either intentional or unintentional, as well as to physical violence. These first two kinds of patience should be practiced as social virtues, with the understanding that although the concepts of ‘self’ and ‘other’ are entirely suitable and harmless enough for practical purposes, they become pernicious and destructive when used to justify anger and resentment.

Both of these types merge into a third sort of ‘patience’, which is described in of the most refined order. Patience in this sense is not practiced as a social virtue, but with the specific aim of cultivating one’s intellectual appreciation of doctrinal and philosophical issues to the point where soteriological application of the concept of emptiness finally becomes a real possibility. This third kind of patience is defined as a quality of stamina in conjunction with a proper attitude or sensitivity. Both are considered necessary in order that the bodhisattva conducts a meaningful analysis of the various aspects. ‘Intellectual flexibility’ which culminates in a deep, noninferential understanding that all things are, from the perspective of the truth of the highest meaning, entirely unproduced (*anutpattikadharmakṣānti*, 無生法忍). *Anutpattikadharmakṣānti* means by virtue of the understanding of the true nature of things the Bodhisattva is able to be non-clinging; he is able to keep free from misconstructions (不作分別) in regard to the senses and

⁵⁷⁰ BB, 189.

their different objects. In their mundane nature they are conditioned, non-substantial and in the ultimate comprehension, they enter the non-dual dharma. Although they are not two, they are also not one. By this comprehension the mind gives rise to faith in the truth of things and does not revert (信心不轉). This is the Bodhisattva's dharmakṣānti (法忍) capacity to sustain the comprehension of the truth of things.⁵⁷¹ It is this capacity to have faith in the purity and the impregnability of the teachings of the Buddha by banishing all wrong notions and gaining the understanding of the truth of things that is called the endurance for dharma.⁵⁷² As his heart of faith is great, his mind is free from doubt and repentance; as his power of faith is great, his mind can accept and hold firmly the truth of things. This is the endurance for dharma.⁵⁷³

On account of the power of concentration and meditation, the mind becomes soft (柔軟) and pure (清淨); in this state when one hears the teaching of the true nature of things, one responds to it heartily (應心與會), holds it firm in faith (信著) and penetrates deep into it, remaining free from doubt and repentance. This is the endurance for dharma.⁵⁷⁴ By virtue of this endurance for dharma the Bodhisattva enters the door of wisdom (入智慧門), comprehends (觀) the universal reality and does not revert (不退) or repent (不悔).⁵⁷⁵ Having known the true nature of Prajñā-pāramitā, he does not give rise to imaginative

⁵⁷¹ The Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-śāstra of Nāgārjuna (tr. Kumārajīva), T. 1509, Vol. 25, p. 168 b.

⁵⁷² Ibid., p. 170c.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., p. 171c.

⁵⁷⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 172a.

constructions; his mind remains ever free from clinging and thus he has the capacity to forbear, to endure all things.⁵⁷⁶ Therefore, the Yogācāra (瑜伽論) philosopher Asaṅga (無著), who stated that kṣānti is ‘a most essential factor in the awakening of a bodhisattva’. And this kṣānti (忍辱) relates with the Buddha’s body of the Dharma (法身).

‘Patience’ is the cornerstone of a way of life based on insight and attention rather than on manipulation and control. The (true) status of the Bodhisattva is the Anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti. Having achieved this dharma-kṣānti, he comprehends the entire world as Śūnyatā and remains completely non-clinging at heart. Being (firmly) established in the true nature of all things, he does not cling any more to the world with passion.

3) Vīrya Pāramitā (精進波羅密, Energy Perfection)

The next perfection is characterized by enthusiasm and perseverance in every undertaking. Vīrya (精進) is the source of energy to begin the Bodhisattva’s career and to see it through to full awakening.

There are three aspects mentioned specifically:

- 1 Energy and stamina which serve as armor in encounters with difficulties and provide the encouragement necessary to avoid depression;
- 2 Energy which produces enthusiasm and good spirits; and
- 3 Energy which helps to accomplish the welfare of all living beings.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 172a, 97b, 168b ff., 415b, 417c.

⁵⁷⁷ BB, p. 200 ff.

As a further clarification of the meaning of the term, Śāntideva offers the following verse:

“What is Vīrya? —It is resolution in pursuing whatever is good. And what is referred to as the antithesis of vīrya? — Laziness, slothfulness, attachment, depression, and self-contempt.”⁵⁷⁸

It may be very interested if here we can add some ideas of Mahatma Gandhi as under:

“A ceaseless effort (whether it be ethical or religious) to attain self-purification can develop in us the capacity to bear”.⁵⁷⁹

Thus, one should strive with heroic vigour for purification. In this connection, Saddharma Puṇḍarika Sūtra (妙法蓮花經) depicts in detail the way Bodhisattvas practice Vīrya pāramitā by going without eating and sleeping to study the Buddha-dharma (佛法). They do not deliberately refrain from food in order to cultivate Buddhahood (佛果). In fact, they just forget the idea of food and sleep. They think only of cultivating and studying the Buddha-dharma for getting Supreme Enlightenment. They go deep into the mountain valleys. It is also observed that there exist some Bodhisattvas who do not ever sleep. If they do sleep, they just sit at a place and doze off for perhaps a moment. Within the forest groves they seek with diligence the Buddha way. They, in fact, are intent on finding the road to the accomplishment of Buddhahood q.v. Saddharma Puṇḍarika Sūtra as under:

“If there are living beings who attend the Buddha, the World- Honored One, hear the Law, believe and accept it, and put forth diligent effort, seeking comprehensive wisdom, Buddha

⁵⁷⁸ EE, 73.

⁵⁷⁹ R.K.Prabhu and U. R. Rao, *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, Navajivan publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1969, p. 31.

wisdom, wisdom that comes of itself, teacherless wisdom, the insight of the Thus Come One, powers and freedom from fear, who pity and comfort countless living beings, bring benefit to heavenly and human beings, and save them all, they shall be called [those who ride] the Great Vehicle. Because the Bodhisattvas seek this vehicle, they are called Mahāsattvas.”⁵⁸⁰

(若有眾生從佛世尊聽法信受，勤修精進，求一切智，佛智，自然智，無師智，如來知見，力無所畏，愍念安樂無量眾生，利益天人，度說一切，是名大乘；菩薩求此乘故，名為摩訶薩如彼諸子為求鹿車，出於火宅).⁵⁸¹

or in other passage in the same text:

“Ajita, these good men take no delight in being in the assembly and indulging in much talk. Their delight is constantly to be in a quiet place, exerting themselves diligently and never resting. Nor do they linger among human or heavenly beings, but constantly delight in profound wisdom, being free from all hindrances. And they constantly delight in the Law of the Buddhas, diligently and with a single mind pursuing unsurpassed wisdom.”⁵⁸²

(阿逸多! 是諸善男子等不樂在眾，多有所說，樂靜處，勤行精進，未曾休息，亦不依止人天而住。樂智，無有障礙，亦樂於諸佛之法，一念精進，求無上慧).⁵⁸³

According to Śāntideva (寂天), he must cultivate this confidence in three areas:

(1) Confidence in the ability to act on his own initiative, which must grow directly from the Buddhist teachings;

⁵⁸⁰ LS, 61.

⁵⁸¹ 妙法蓮華經, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁸² LS, 219.

⁵⁸³ 妙法蓮華經, pp. 205-206.

- (2) Self-respect as a deterrent to the afflictions of clinging, antipathy, and delusion; and
- (3) The power of self-assurance which is not worn down or swayed by the opinion of others.⁵⁸⁴

Vīrya (精進) is not simply the strengthening of the power of will in service to the Buddhist teachings. It is also the energy needed to remain constantly attentive and to observe all aspects of experience with extreme patience and care.

Initially a Bodhisattva's energy is said to be generated from faith or conviction (*śraddhānusārin*) of emptiness. Realizing the true nature of voidness, Bodhisattva constantly efforts to attain enlightenment as The Large Sūtra of Perfect Wisdom depicts:

“This is the foremost ‘undertaking’ of the Bodhisattva, i.e. the endeavour about emptiness. When he courses in emptiness, a Bodhisattva does not fall on the level of a Disciple or Pratyekabuddha, but purifies the Buddha-field, matures beings, and quickly knows full enlightenment. Among the ‘endeavours’ of a Bodhisattva the ‘endeavour’ about the perfection of wisdom is declared to be the highest, the best, the choicest, the most excellent, the utmost, the unsurpassed, the peerless, the unequalled, the most sublime. And why? There is nothing above that ‘endeavour’, i.e. above the ‘endeavour’ about perfect wisdom, about emptiness, the signless, the wishless”.⁵⁸⁵

By the non-clinging way the Bodhisattva cultivates the perfection of effort. Right effort, putting forth energy in the right way, is fundamental to the cultivation of concentration and meditation as well as of true wisdom (禪

⁵⁸⁴ EE, 74.

⁵⁸⁵ LSPW, 65.

定實智慧之根).⁵⁸⁶ Vīrya, (精進) effort has been also called chandas determination and absence of lassitude apramāda (不放棄). Determination comes first; then follows effort, the putting forth of energy; and there is the aspect of the absence of langour which means to keep the effort unfailing.⁵⁸⁷ The Bodhisattva, with his mind fixed on the Way of the Buddha from the very start, exerts himself in order to cultivate all that is good and thus he gradually achieves the perfection of effort. It is the effort put forth in order to achieve the Way of the Buddha (為佛道精進) that is called the perfection of effort.⁵⁸⁸

5) Dhyāna Pāramitā (禪定波羅密, Meditation Perfection)

Meditation is a method of shaking oneself free from habitual patterns of thought and of refining both the will and the intellect through a maturing of insight into the nature of cognitive and perceptual processes as they influence everyday experience. The ultimate goal of such practice is not to eliminate emotional involvement or to divorce oneself from the external world, but to create a stable and attentive mind which can serve as a workable foundation for appreciating the significance of any experience in the wider context of the Buddhist teachings. Sensitivity in all relationships is to be enhanced, not devalued, and for this it is absolutely necessary to undermine egotism and the clinging to concepts and views of any kind.

The flow of events comes to be seen as a dynamic and constantly changing interaction between the six organs of

⁵⁸⁶ The Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-śāstra of Nāgārjuna (tr. Kumārajīva), T. 1509, Vol. 25, p. 172 b.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 173c.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 174c.

sensation (including the mind) and their respective objective referents—an interaction which is experienced as entirely devoid of any stable, abiding ground. Apprehended in this way, the everyday procession of worldly affairs generates and sustains not only dichotomizing thought and emotion, but a deeper understanding of the philosophical literature as well. The conventional world remains just as it is, but with the steady refinement of philosophical understanding and the direct application of these concepts, one sees the meaning of emptiness unfold as a new dimension within the old order of things—a new natural interpretation that “seems to emerge from the things themselves.”

The meditator establishes himself in a great inner peace characterized in the texts as the actualization of emptiness, devoid of reified thought and therefore free from the distortions of an emotionally unbalanced, egocentric mind. This tremendous inner peace is described as the power embodied in realization of the ‘Suchness’ (如是) or ‘Śūnyatā’ (空性) of everyday experience, the ability to see oneself and all the other things of the world with ‘perfect clarity’ just as they are in the context of their relations with each other. The highest experience of perfect, balanced concentration (*samyaksamādhi*, 正定) involves the transformation and harmonization of the entire personality so that one’s attitude and form of life are in complete accord with the understanding gained through study and critical reflection as The Large Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom represented the contemplation (觀) of all Dharmas (諸法) in detail vividly under:

“...He does not settle down in any dharma, contemplates the essential original nature of all dharmas, also instigates other beings to the contemplation of all dharmas, but never bases himself on anything...

Moreover, Subhūti, the great vehicle of the Bodhisattva, the great being, that is the emptiness of the subject, etc. to: the emptiness of other being.

-What is the emptiness of the subject? Dharmas on the subject-side are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Therein the eye is empty of the eye, on account of its being neither unmoved nor destroyed. And why? Because such is its essential nature. And so for the ear, etc. to mind.

-What is the emptiness of the object? Dharmas on the object-side are forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch objects, and mind objects. Therein form is empty of form, on account of its being neither unmoved nor destroyed. For such is its essential nature. And so for sounds, etc. to: mind objects...

-What is the emptiness of emptiness? The emptiness of all dharmas is empty of that emptiness, on account of its being neither unmoved nor destroyed. For such is its essential nature...

- What is infinite emptiness? That of which no end is got at, that infinite is empty of the infinite, on account of its being neither unmoved nor destroyed. For such is its essential nature.

- What is the emptiness without beginning or end? That of which no beginning or end is got at, of that the middle is nonexistent. And that of which neither beginning nor middle nor end is got at, of that there is no coming or going. Beginning, middle, and end are also empty of beginning, middle, and end, on account of their being neither unmoved nor destroyed. For such is their essential nature...

What is the emptiness of all dharmas? All dharmas means the five skandhas, the twelve sense fields, the six kinds of consciousness, the six kinds of contact, the six kinds of feeling conditioned by contact. Conditioned and unconditioned dharmas, these are called "all-dharmas". Therein all dharmas are empty of all-dharmas, on account of their being neither unmoved nor destroyed. For such is their essential nature...

This is called the great vehicle of the Bodhisattva, the great being.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁹ LSPW, 143-146.

Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra (妙法蓮花經) expresses that the Bodhisattvas also fulfil the fifth Pāramitā, i.e. Dhyāna or Meditation Perfection (禪定波羅密) in order to attain Enlightenment as below:

“One could also see bodhisattvas
entering deep into meditation practices,
their bodies and minds still and unmoving,
in that manner seeking the unsurpassed way.”⁵⁹⁰

(又見諸菩薩，入諸禪定，身心寂不動，以求無上道)。⁵⁹¹

Also in Chapter XV ‘Emerging from the Earth’ (從地勇出品) belonging to Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra presented such Jhāna which Bodhisattvas attained not only in one kalpa but numerous:

“It has in fact not been long since you attained the way. But this great multitude of bodhisattvas have already for immeasurable thousands, ten thousands, millions of kalpas applied themselves diligently and earnestly for the sake of the Buddha way. They have learned to enter into, emerge from and dwell in immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of samadhis, have acquired great transcendental powers, have over a long period carried out brahma practices, and have been able step by step to practice various good doctrines, becoming skilled in questions and answers, a treasure among persons, something seldom known in all the worlds”.⁵⁹²

(佛亦如是，得道以來，其實未久，而此大眾諸菩薩等，以於無量千萬億劫，為佛道故，勤行精進善入出住無量百千萬億三昧，得大神通，久修

⁵⁹⁰ LS, 19.

⁵⁹¹ 妙法蓮華經 p. 26.

⁵⁹² LS, 221.

梵行，喜能次第習諸善法巧於問答，人中之實，一切世間甚為稀有).⁵⁹³

It is the dhyāna followed by the great compassion for all beings and issuing in the oath to help all to realize the joy of contemplation through abandoning the pleasures of sense that gets the name of perfection. It is the spirit of non-clinging that gives the quality of perfection to concentration and meditation. In the non-clinging (*Śūnyatā*) cultivation, the Bodhisattva does not seize its flavour, does not seek its result (不受味, 不求報). He enters dhyāna only in order to soften and subdue the mind.⁵⁹⁴ He rises from the state of dhyāna and enters again the realm of desires through the skilfulness of *Śūnyatā* and this he does in order to help all to cross the stream of birth and death. It is then that dhyāna gets the name of perfection.⁵⁹⁵ One who has attained the perfection of dhyāna does not seize the characteristics of collectedness and disturbedness of mind as absolute and unconditioned, for one has comprehended the true nature of things. The ultimately true nature of the elements that obstruct the mind is also the ultimately true nature of the collected, concentrated, state of mind.⁵⁹⁶ The dhyāna that is saturated with this comprehension of the ultimate truth has attained its perfection.

6) Prajñā Pāramitā (智慧波羅密, Wisdom Perfection)

Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra reflected that some Bodhisattvas cultivate Prajñā Pāramitā (智慧波羅密) for

⁵⁹³ 妙法蓮華經, p. 207.

⁵⁹⁴ The Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-śāstra of Nāgārjuna (tr. Kumārajīva), T. 1509, Vol. 25, p. 187c.

⁵⁹⁵ Loc.cit.

⁵⁹⁶ The Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-śāstra of Nāgārjuna (tr. Kumārajīva), T. 1509, Vol. 25, p. 189 b, c.

fulfilling Bodhisattva-caryā. To illustrate the same the rendering of some of them may be reproduced as below :

“Again I see bodhisattvas,
 profound in wisdom, firm in purpose,
 who know how to question the Buddhas
 and accept and abide by all they hear.
 I see Buddha sons
 proficient in both meditation and wisdom,
 who use immeasurable numbers of similes
 to expound the Law to the assembly,
 delighting in preaching the Law,
 converting the bodhisattvas,
 defeating the legions of the devil
 and beating the Dharma drum.”⁵⁹⁷

(復見菩薩，智志固能問諸佛，聽悉受按，又佛子，定慧具足，以無量喻，為眾稱法，欣樂說無法，化諸菩薩破魔兵眾，而學法鼓)。⁵⁹⁸

This means that their wisdom is extremely profound and their determination is extremely firm and solid. They are well able to question the Buddhas concerning their doubts. They ask about the dharma and having received their answers they can put what they have heard into actual practice in accordance with dharma — that is to say they accept, uphold and cultivate the Pāramitā. In accordance with the dharma there are others whose samādhi and wisdom power is perfected. They use an uncountable number of parables, analogies and doctrines in order to preach dharma to the

⁵⁹⁷ LS, 10.

⁵⁹⁸ 妙法蓮華經 p.18.

multitudes. They expound the Buddha-dharma for the sake of living beings. The more they speak the more they like to speak. The dharma which they propound is extremely profound, subtle and wonderful.

Again verses of the same theme may be illustrated as under:

“Or there are Bodhisattvas
who expound the Law of tranquil extinction,
giving different types of instruction
to numberless living beings.
Or I see bodhisattvas
viewing the nature of all phenomena
as having no dual characteristics,
as being like empty space.
And I see Buddha sons
whose minds have no attachments,
who use this wonderful wisdom
to seek the unsurpassed way.”⁵⁹⁹

(或有菩薩，說寂滅法種種教詔，無數眾生，
或有菩薩，觀諸法性，無有二相，獨如虛空，又見
佛子，心無所著，以此妙慧，求無上道).⁶⁰⁰

To express this more clearly, it may be said that there are Bodhisattvas who are teaching ‘Still Extinction Dharma’ (常寂滅法). ‘Still Extinction’ means that all dharmas are Śūnyatā appearances. Bodhisattvas use all manners of devices and teaching methods to:

⁵⁹⁹ LS, 11-12.

⁶⁰⁰ 妙法蓮華經 p. 19.

- 1 Cause living beings to turn their back on the dust and unite with Enlightenment;
- 2 Lead living beings to a clear understanding and awakening;
- 3 Help living beings to awaken to the fact that all insolvent with the dust of worldly affairs is a form of suffering.

There are Bodhisattvas who look at the nature of all dharmas as lacking the mark of duality. These dharmas are like empty space. There are also Buddha's disciples whose minds have no attachment and who use wondrous wisdom to attain Supreme Enlightenment. This wondrous wisdom comes simply from their non-attachment.

The nature of *prajñā* as 'nondualistic knowledge' (*advāyajñana*, 智不二) i.e. Śūnyatā is the key to its relationship with the other perfections. According to the Mahāyāna literature, all five perfections must be practiced for eons, during which time they are purified by perfect wisdom and so purged of all associations with the reified concepts 'agent' 'action' or 'recipient'. Accompanied by full comprehension of the Śūnyatā of all things, the practice of these virtues releases one from obscuring emotional afflictions and reified thought. Actualization of Śūnyatā releases us from the grip of the observational language and natural interpretations that are useful in their own right but spiritually dangerous unless placed in contrast with an alternative, soteriological truth. Through their transformation all six perfections are held responsible for engendering the realization of the Buddha's body of the Dharma, which is the truth of the highest meaning. Only at this point are they properly called 'perfections' and *prajñā* is chief among them. In union with perfect wisdom each of the other qualities takes part in fostering a deep inner peace, the affective counterpart

to direct awareness of conventional truth as it is in its relational, contextual nature.

Prajñā is not amassed through accretion of theoretical formulas or through reference to any sublime, metaphysical, or mystical reality. It is the essential clarity and flexibility of the mind revealed when, through the discipline of the path, the Bodhisattva has completely rid himself of the tendency to cling to the contents of conceptualization and perception as though some or all of them were grounded in an a priori truth or reality. Prajñā is a matter both of intellectual understanding and of action. With it the Bodhisattva not only slashes away at the thick undergrowth of reified concepts but is also conducted along the path to a point where the concept of Śūnyatā is actualized through his attitude and behavior in the world which is illustrated in the Large Sūtra of Perfect Wisdom as below:

“Śāriputra: How is a Bodhisattva, a great being who is joining (exerting) himself, to be called “joined to perfect wisdom”?

The Lord: Here, Śāriputra, a Bodhisattva, a great being, who is joined to the emptiness of form is to be called ‘joined’. And so if he is joined to the emptiness of feeling, etc.; of the eye to mind, of sight-objects to mind-objects, of eye-element, sight-object-element; eye-consciousness-element, etc. to mind-consciousness-element; of suffering, origination, stopping, path; and of ignorance, etc. to: decay and death. Joined to the emptiness of all dharmas is he to be called ‘joined’. Of whichever conditioned and unconditioned dharmas he may have formed a notion, joined to the emptiness of all those dharmas is he to be called ‘joined’. Moreover, Śāriputra, a Bodhisattva, a great being, who courses in perfect wisdom, should be called ‘joined’ if he is joined to the emptiness of the essential original nature.

It is thus, Śāriputra that the Bodhisattva, the great being who courses in perfect wisdom is, when joined to these seven emptinesses, to be called ‘joined’. It is thus, Śāriputra, that he

who courses in perfect wisdom by means of these seven emptinesses should, because of that, not even be called ‘joined’ or ‘unjoined’. And why? Because there he does not review form, etc., as ‘joined’, or as ‘unjoined’.⁶⁰¹

Or another passage in the same text states a following lesson:

“Śāriputra: How then should the Bodhisattva, the great being, course in perfect wisdom?

The Lord: Here the Bodhisattva, the great being, coursing in the perfection of wisdom, truly a Bodhisattva, does not review a Bodhisattva, nor the word ‘Bodhisattva’, nor the course of a Bodhisattva, (nor the perfection of wisdom, nor the word ‘perfection of wisdom’.

He does not review that ‘he courses’, nor that ‘he does not course’). He does not review form, feeling, perception, formative forces, or consciousness. And why? Because the Bodhisattva, the great being, is actually empty of the own-being of a Bodhisattva, and because perfect wisdom is by its own-being empty. And why? That is its essential original nature. (For it is not through emptiness that form, etc. is empty.) Nor is emptiness other than form, etc.”⁶⁰²

This Prajñā-pāramitā (智慧波羅密) is also understood to mean Śūnyatā (空性). As we mentioned the meanings of Śūnyatā in the previous Chapter, here we only sum up that Śūnyatā was regarded as a middle way between the dogmas of absolute Existence and absolute Non-existence.

The Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra (楞伽經) shows that absolute Existence and Non-existence are relative terms, as each proves the necessity of the other.⁶⁰³ Nāgārjuna has expressed this view in his famous aphorism of eight negatives which

⁶⁰¹ LSPW, 60.

⁶⁰² Ibid., 56.

⁶⁰³ Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra, ed by B. Nanjio, Kyoto, 1923, p. 54.

sum up the early teaching on Śūnyatā, which really amounts to a systematic exposition of the old Buddhist formula of the Paṭicca-samuppāda (Skt. *Pratītya-samutpāda*, 緣起, 因緣生起). Śūnyatā denotes the absence of an absolute self-existent Substance or Substratum in all things and phenomena (*dharmā-natrātmya*, 法空).⁶⁰⁴ It also implies the non-existence of any uncaused or self-caused entities and phenomena...

Some Buddhist philosophers go further and explain Śūnyatā as absolute Non-existence (*abhāva*, 非有). The *Sata-sāhasrikā Prajñā Pāramitā* (一百千頌般若波羅密經)⁶⁰⁵ says:

“Ignorance is non-existent; the saṃskāras are non-existent; Consciousness, Name-and-form, the Sixfold Sphere of the Senses, Contact, Sensation, Craving, Grasping, Becoming, Birth, Old age-and-Death are all non-existent (*avidyamāna*)... A bodhisattva does not find and discern the origination or cessation, corruption or purification, this side or the other side of any thing or phenomenon. If a clever magician or his apprentice were to create a great crowd of people in a square and preach the Perfection of Wisdom to them in order to establish them therein, then he would not thereby establish any being in the Perfection of Wisdom, because all things and beings are of such a nature that they are illusory (*māyā-dharmatā*). . . All dharmas exist in that they do not exist. They are not merely empty, they are identical with Emptiness. They are transient, painful, non-substantial, quiescent, void, signless, aimless, unproduced and unrelated. ‘There are no form, sensation, perception, volitions and consciousness, no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind; no forms, sounds, odours, savours, tangible things and mental objects; no Patn, or its origin or cessation; no eightfold Way; no past, present or future, no uncompounded elements; no

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., I & Mahāyāna- sūtrāṅkāra, Pari, 1907, 1911, p. 149-2.

⁶⁰⁵ The Śata-sahasrikā Prajñā Pāramitā, ed. by P. Ghosa, Calcuta, 1902-13, pp. 136, 141, 842, 1197, 1216, 1360, 1440, 1643.

Bodhisattva, no Buddha and no Enlightenment... A Bodhisattva is himself like a phantom of illusion (māyā-purusa).”

Thus, the Sata-sāhasrikā Prajñā Pāramitā expound its doctrine of negation, which is surely carried to the utmost limit. The Vajracchedikā Prajñā Pāramitā (金剛般若波羅密經) text exhibits the same tendency. It declares that there are no individuals, no qualities, no ideas, no Doctrine, no beings to be delivered, no production or destruction, no Bodhisattva, no Buddha and no Bodhi.⁶⁰⁶

In other words, Prajñā and Śūnyatā are the sources of a Bodhisattva’s moral strength.

7) Upāya Pāramitā (方便波羅密, Skillful Perfection)

This is the most important of the four supplementary pāramitās. The term is a translation of upāya (方便), a mode of approach, an expedient, stratagem, device. The meaning is teaching according to the capacity of the hearer, by any suitable method, including that of device or stratagem, but expedience beneficial to the recipient. Mahāyāna claims that the Buddha used this expedient or partial method in his teaching until near the end of his days, when he enlarged it to the revelation of reality, or the preaching of his final and complete truth. In Saddharma Puṇḍarika sūtra relates some interesting parables. Among them is ‘Parable of the Lost Son’⁶⁰⁷ in Chapter IV of Belief and Understanding (信解品) which may be briefly as follows:

A certain poor man lost a loved son who left his home and went out a far country. Later father became rich, his son

⁶⁰⁶ See in BDBSL, 245 & 金剛般若波羅密經, op.cit. p. 21.5, 441.ii, 42.8, 43.16, 23.7, 38.9, 37.13.

⁶⁰⁷ LS, 80 ff.

wandering about in search of food and raiment. The father suddenly saw a young poor man whom he knew to be his son but his son was filled with fear at the thought that he had perhaps come into wrong street and might be punished for his rashness. So, he ran away in great haste. His father now exhibited his Upāya-kauśalya (方便) by letting the poor fellow go away. Then, he called two poor men of humble origin and said to them hire him as a labourer cleaning the refuge-barrel in his house. Then, the father put on dirty clothes, took a basket in his hand, and going near unto his son, said: “Work here, my man; do not go anywhere else... Look upon me as your own father...henceforward you are unto me like my son”. In this way, the father found the chance of speaking to his son, who thereupon felt happier in the house. But he continued to live in his hovel of straw and did the same menial work for twenty years. At last, the rich man fell sick and felt that his days were numbered. So, he first gave much wealth to the young man, and then he gathered together all his kinsfolk and citizens, said to them: “He is my son; I am his father. To him, I leave all my possessions”. The son was greatly astonished at this, and rejoiced exceedingly in his heart.

In this parable, father is the Buddha; the son is every pious Buddhist; the labour of cleaning the refuge-barrel is the lower teaching about Nirvāṇa (Liberation); the declaration of the filial relation is the higher doctrine of Mahāyāna.

And there are many places in the same text telling that Gautama Buddha really attained Enlightenment many aeons ago and lives for ever; he pretends to be born as a man and attain bodhi under tree. He does so in order to help mankind, and this is his Upāya-kauśalya. Specially, in chapter two

‘Expedient Means’,⁶⁰⁸ in which the meaning of Upāya kauśalyā is elucidated through the doctrine of Triyānas (Three Vehicles), viz., Śrāvaka-yāna (聲文乘), Pratyekabuddha-yāna (辟支佛乘 / 緣覺乘) and Bodhisattva-yāna (菩薩乘) in order to respond to different temperaments of listeners as under:

A Bodhisattva reveals all the activities of this world, is never tired of teaching beings, and manifests himself according to the wish of beings. He is never attached to deeds, and delivers all, manifesting himself sometimes as an ignorant being, sometimes as a holy man, sometimes in the midst of Saṃsāra, and sometimes in the state of Nirvāṇa. (Avatamsaka-sūtra)

Upāya-kauśalya is the way in which the Bodhisattvas act for saving the beings from the thralldom of suffering. It starts from genuine ability to perform such action. It is not the crafty method of achieving one’s objective. It is imbued with the morality of compassionate action with the contiguous purpose of bringing forth merit (*puṇya*, 功德). Mahāyāna preceptors have a strong faith in skilfull method of the exercise of supreme wisdom.

8) Praṇidhāna Pāramitā (願波羅密, Resolution Perfection)

William James in his work *The Varieties of Religious Experience* regards the following as the psychological essence of our experience of Praṇidhāna:

“It is as if there were in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call ‘something there’ more deep and more general than any of the special and particular ‘senses by which the current

⁶⁰⁸ LS, 23 ff.

psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed”⁶⁰⁹

The very fact that men of perfect faith have appeared in the fold of every religion proves that faith is possible. And Praṇidhāna, we have seen, not only needs but generates faith. In the Mahatma Gandhi’s own words, Praṇidhāna is: “...the key of the morning and the belt of the evening”.⁶¹⁰ That is, if we start the day with it, prayer can become the spring of hope and courage to deal with routine activities. Also, closing the day with a prayer would enable us to cease worrying about what has been done or left undone. Thus, on the one hand Praṇidhāna helps us in sanctifyng our daily work as an offering to the Buddha and on the other in perfecting our observance of the vows. Praṇidhāna, thus is a ‘necessary spiritual disciplines.’⁶¹¹

It is so not merely because it is indispensable for the practice of truth and ahimsā (不害) but because it helps in the observance of the other vows too.

The essence of Praṇidhāna is, according to Gandhi, its conduciveness to peace and order in the individual and social life. This is borns out by the following words of his: “without prayer there is no inward peace”, “the man of prayer will be at peace with himself and with the whole world... prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts”.⁶¹²

⁶⁰⁹ William Jamesin, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Longmans, Green and Co., 1941, p. 58.

⁶¹⁰ Gandhi, M. K., *In Search of the Suprems*, vol. I, Navajivan publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1962, p. 173.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid*, 176.

⁶¹² *Loc.cit.*

As faith ripens, Praṇidhāna gains in inwardness, generating noble thoughts and they get reflected in words and actions of love and truth, and of evergrowing selflessness. All this makes for increased purity of heart. Mahatma Gandhi says:

“Prayer is not exclusive. It is not restricted to one’s own caste or community. It is all inclusive. It comprehends the whole, thus means the establishment of the kingdom of Heaven on earth.”⁶¹³

Śāntideva, in Śikṣāsamuccaya has explained the necessity or the value of Praṇidhāna as first essential for the practice of Bodhisattva-caryā as below:

“In resolution truly, O Blessed One, is the root of the Buddha’s qualities. He who has no resolution, from him all the Buddha’s qualities are far away. Yet when he has made his resolve, Blessed One, even if there are no Buddhas present, the voice of the Dharma comes forth from space and from the flowering trees. When a Bodhisattva has pure resolve in his vow, then all teaching and instruction pour forth from the wellsprings of his own mind.”⁶¹⁴

The Bodhisattva Praṇidhāna was inspired by his recognition of the terrible suffering of the world. From the point of view of the higher, soteriological truth, however, this commitment to beings who do not exist is the paramount absurdity. But Buddhist compassion cannot be appreciated without a clear understanding of the relationship between soteriological and conventional truths. The wisdom of a Bodhisattva is cultivated both through philosophical reflection and in the silence of meditation, where the world responds to this supplication for higher knowledge by revealing its intrinsic emptiness, the deepest secret of the

⁶¹³ Gandhi, M. K., Prayer, Navajivan publishing House, Ahmedabad, p. 20.

⁶¹⁴ EE, 100.

spirit inherent in the very fabric of everyday life. His quest for knowledge culminates in a direct experience of the philosophical concepts that he has understood through study and reflection. At the same time, compassion takes root in the Bodhisattva's original vow, and it too matures, along with wisdom, into a total affirmation of the identity of emptiness and form, culminating in his selfless concern for all those still caught up in the necessary illusion of worldly existence.

With actualization of Śūnyatā and a deep noninferential appreciation of the concept of dependent origination as the bridge linking the necessity of conventional truth with insight into its illusory nature, has the Bodhisattva achieved the wisdom and the reserves of strength effectively to commit himself to what might once have seemed a preposterous paradox: an ideal of sympathy for countless empty beings were trapped in an empty cycle of fear and misery. This immense concern for the anguish of other creatures is presented as the natural expression of perfect harmony between heart and mind. Compassion is in profound accord with the knowledge gained through philosophical analysis, but it is not in the least analytical. On the contrary, this boundless love becomes manifest as the active, operational aspect of 'wisdom as an effect', which finds its embodiment in an impulse finally to bring together in nirvāṇa all sentient beings, who have been from the beginning united not only by their spiritual ignorance and suffering in the world but also by their innermost nature, which is empty of any transcendental ground for perception, conceptualization, or clinging. The Bodhisattva's vow is a vow of refined, purified love, immersed in paradox and contradiction and nurtured in a wisdom that does not ignore but incorporates and transcends the claims of reason.

The Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhists composed the four-fold Bodhisattva Praṇidhāna in verse which has been adopted

without exception by all schools in East Asia. The early original form of the four-fold vow can be traced back to the Eight Thousand Verse Wisdom Sūtra (Fasc.8),⁶¹⁵ Lotus Sūtra (Chap. 3), and so on, but it is clearer still in the Bodhisattva Ornament Sūtra (vol. 1 of two vols.).⁶¹⁶ In this Sūtra, the Bodhisattva's vow is formulated with reference to the goals of the Four holy Truths as follows:⁶¹⁷

“May I help all those who have not overcome-suffering overcome it;

May I help all those who have not understood causal aggregation understand it;

May I help all those who have not settled firmly in the path settle upon it;

May I help all those who have not realized Nirvāṇa realize it.”

This original form was eventually refined into the presently practiced formula of the four-fold vow in verse as follows:

“However innumerable the sentient beings might be, I vow to rescue them from suffering;

However inexhaustible the inner defilements might be, I vow to terminate them;

However unlimited the subjects of practice might be, I vow to master them;

⁶¹⁵ *Aṣṭasāhassrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (八千頌般若波羅密經).

⁶¹⁶ 菩薩瓔珞本業經 or the Sūtra on the Original Action of the Garland of the Bodhisattva (2 fasc.) translated by Buddhasmṛti (Chu-fo-nien) in 376-378. Taisho. 24 (no. 1485), 1010 ff. ‘Garland’ (mālā) mentioned in the title is the jewel-ornament consisting of crown, necklet, and bracelets of the Bodhisattvas. This Sūtra was composed to manifest the original Action of the Bodhisattvas.

⁶¹⁷ Cf. The Mochizuki Bukkyo Daijiten, Vol. 2, p. 1755b. (四弘誓願) Su hūng shih yuan or shigu-seigan).

However infinite the height of the Buddha way might be,
I vow to realize it.”
(眾生無邊誓願度，煩惱無盡誓願斷，法門無
量誓願學，佛道無上誓願成).⁶¹⁸

According to Mahāyāna tradition, there are three great Bodhisattvas- Avalokiteśvara (觀世音菩薩), Mañjuśrī (文殊師利菩薩) and Samantabhadra (普賢菩薩) who represent respectively the great compassion, wisdom and vows of all Buddhas. In the vows of Bodhisattvas is expressed the compassionate zeal of the ideal Bodhisattva whose only concern in life is to relieve the pains and burdens of all sentient beings, and to bestow upon them true happiness through the achievement of Buddhahood.

A Bodhisattva is aspirant of the achievement of perfect wisdom in a ruesome world of beings that know no solution because of the frame of their unrestive mind. The Bodhisattva has perfect insight into the conditioned world. It is because of the luminosity which he bears toward all out of his boundless openness.

9) Bala Pāramitā (力波羅密, Strength Perfection)

The Bodhisattva's practice at this stage consists primarily in consolidating the powers that are described as an important fruit of spiritual maturity. These powers play in the realization of the Bodhisattva's commitment to act in the world on behalf of all sentient beings. The Bodhisattva not only understands the doctrine and conceptual content of the Buddhist teachings about the Śūnyatā, but he is, in addition, capable of conveying his understanding and insight of it to others in innumerable ways.

⁶¹⁸ Shohei Ichimura, *Buddhist Critical Spirituality: Prajñā and Śūnyatā*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001, p. 112.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of these last four stages, is their focus on the Bodhisattva's commitment to action. Although earlier he expended enormous effort in cultivating an inferentially based understanding of the central concepts of the Mahāyāna, this understanding did not lead him to renounce the world and retire into the peace of Nirvāṇa, much less into the sterility of a purely rationalistic or idealistic abstraction. The Bodhisattva is to live and teach in the world with dignity and grace. His actions are efficient, he can waste no effort in confusion or hesitation. And the whole of everyday experience is said to reflect the strength of his vow to propagate the teachings and lead all sentient beings to liberation from suffering.

10) Jñāna Pāramitā (智波羅密, Knowledge Perfection)

The culmination of the Bodhisattva's intellectual and spiritual journey comes with his ascent to the Jñāna Pāramitā (智波羅密), then immediately preceding his transformation into a fully awakened Buddha. The most significant event at this level, and the paramount symbol of the Bodhisattva's highest accomplishment, is entrance into a meditative state of balanced concentration immersed in nondualistic knowledge of emptiness. This event is represented by his initiation into the omniscience of a perfect Buddha, which is the quintessential perfection.

It is difficult to draw any definite distinction between Prajñā Pāramitā (智慧波羅密) and Jñāna Pāramitā (智波羅密). It is evident that nondualistic knowledge is inseparable from the Bodhisattva's experience in all its aspects. It is this experience, in both its conceptual and perceptual aspects. Jñāna (智) is the essential clarity and unerring sensibility of a mind that no longer clings to reified concepts of any kind. It is direct and sustained awareness of

the truth, for a Bodhisattva, that meaning and existence are found only in the interface between the components of an unstable and constantly shifting web of relationships, which is everyday life, while prajñā is the strength of intellectual discrimination elevated to the status of a liberating power, a precision tool capable of slicing through obstructions that take the form of afflictions and attachments to deeply engrained hereditary patterns of thought and action. Prajñā (智慧) has an analysis quality which does not seem to figure as a specific characteristic of nondualistic knowledge developed by the Bodhisattva at Jñāna Pāramitā. In other words, Jñāna Pāramitā (智波羅密) is similar to Prajñā Pāramitā (智慧波羅密), but Jñāna (智) refers more to intellectual knowledge and Prajñā (智慧) to intuition.

As far as the degree of Pāramitā (波羅密) is concerned, Pāramī is of ba kinds: low, middle and high degrees as follows:

Dāna Pāramī: Given in low degree (or ordinary, good, 下分布施):

With the compassion, he gives alms to his relative, wife, children... is called Given in low degree. (*Karuṇopāya kosalla paritahitā putta dārassa paricāgo dāna Pāramī nāma*).

Dāna Uppapāramī: Given in middle degree (or extraordinary, better, 中分布施).

With the compassion, he gives his own head, eyes, arms, legs... is called Given in middle degree. (*Karuṇopāya kosalla paritahitā aṅga paricāgo dāna ūpapāramī nāma*).

Dāna Paramattha pāramī: Given in high degree (or superlatively extraordinary, the best, 上分布施):

With the compassion, he gives his own life... is called Given in high degree. (Karuṇopāya kosalla paritahitā jīvita paricāgo dāna paramattha pāramī nāma).

Therefore, 10 Pāramīs will increase to 30 factors.

It is also interesting to note here that it depends on the variety of the length of a Bodhisatta's career and the function of each Pāramī.

Paññādhika Bodhisatta (智慧菩薩, Intellectual Bodhisattva): means Bodhisattas cultivate the wisdom. Therefore, they have to practice the Pāramī for at least four asaṅkheyyas (阿增祇劫) and one hundred thousand kappas.

Saddhādhika Bodhisatta (信心菩薩, devotional Bodhisattva): means Bodhisattas cultivate the devotion. So they have to practice Pāramī for at least eight asaṅkheyyas and one hundred thousand kappas.

Viriyādhika Bodhisatta (精進菩薩, Energetic Bodhisattva): means Bodhisattas cultivate the diligence. Therefore they should practice Pāramī for sixteen asaṅkheyyas and one hundred thousand kappas.

The first of these periods is the very least that is required and is intended for those who excel in wisdom (*Paññā*, 智慧). The middle period is for those who excel in faith (*Saddhā*, 信心); the last and the longest for those whose chief feature is perseverance (*Vīriya*, 精進).⁶¹⁹

It is ordinary, when it is practised by the ordinary worldly persons for the sake of happiness in this life or the next; it is extraordinary, when it is cultivated by the

⁶¹⁹ Ven. Narada Maha Thero, *Vision of the Buddha*, Singapore, Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre, pp. 289-296.

Hīnayānists for the sake of personal Nirvāṇa; but is of the highest degree, when it is acquired by the Mahāyānist Bodhisattvas for the welfare and liberation of all beings. All the Perfections can be cultivated only by means of attentive thought, resolute purpose, self-mastery, and wisdom in the choice of means.

These three kinds of Bodhisattvas correspond to Jñāna Yogi, Bhakti Yogi and Karma Yogi of the Brāhmaṇic religious system.

Intellectual Bodhisattvas are less devotional and more energetic; devotional ones are less energetic and more intellectual; energetic ones are less intellectual and more devotional. Seldom, if ever, are these three characteristics harmoniously combined in one person. The Buddha Gautama is cited as one of the intellectual group.⁶²⁰

According to the Books, the intellectual ones attain Buddhahood within a short period, devotional ones take a longer time, and energetic ones take longer still.

Intellectual Bodhisattvas concentrate more on the development of wisdom and on the practice of meditation than on the observance of external forms of homage. They are always guided by reason and accept nothing on blind belief. They make no self-surrender, and are not slaves either to a book or to an individual. They prefer lonely meditation. With their silent but powerful thoughts of peace radiating from their solitary retreats they render moral help to suffering humanity.⁶²¹

In short, the ideal of Śūnyatā (空性) is applied to all the Perfections (*Pāramitās*, 波羅密). They are then

⁶²⁰ Loc. cit.

⁶²¹ Loc. cit.

‘purified’ and exercised in their highest potency. Thus a Bodhisattva should ‘purify’ the ten Pāramitās respectively and all persons and things that Bodhisattva meets in practising the other Perfections should be regarded as illusory and unreal. This is the best way of exhibiting the pāramitās in all their glory. In other words, Śūnyatā and Pāramitās are the sources of a Bodhisattva’s moral strength. From awakeing the real nature of Śūnyatā, the ideal of Bodhisattva is allied with the ten Pāramitās so that the fruits of the vivid natures, characteristics and effects were shown as the following diagram:

Table X

**THE ROLE OF ŚŪNYATĀ (EMPTINESS) IN TEN
PĀRAMITĀS**

	Pāramitā	Nature	Characteristics	Effect
1	Dāna Pāramitā 布施波羅密 (Perfection of Giving)	The spirit of nonclinging and harmony with the emptiness	Donation	Selflessness (nairātmya)
2	Śīla Pāramitā 持戒波羅密 (Perfection of Conduct or Morality)	The clear and lofty purification	Keeping disciplines	The right ways of behavior (kuśala-karma- patha)

<p>3</p>	<p>Kṣānti Pāramitā 忍辱波羅密 (Perfection of Forbearance)</p>	<p>The absence of anger and desire for retaliation and revenge</p>	<p>Loving- kindness and compassion</p>	<p>The tranquillity and softness</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Vīrya Pāramitā 精進波羅密 (Perfection of Energy)</p>	<p>Faith or conviction (Śraddhānusāri n) of emptiness</p>	<p>Enthusiastic and positive attitude</p>	<p>Transferring constantly bad deeds into good ones without laziness, slothfulness, attachment, depression, and self-contempt or the uninterrupted will to win Enlightenment</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Dhyāna Pāramitā 禪定波羅密 (Perfection of Meditation)</p>	<p>The tranquillity of emptiness</p>	<p>Right thought and freed from distortions of an emotionally unbalanced and egocentric mind</p>	<p>The tremendous inner peacefulness and the maturing of insight</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Prajñā Pāramitā 智慧波羅密 (Perfection</p>	<p>Intuition or transcendental idealism</p>	<p>Detachment of dharma and freed from all desires and fears</p>	<p>Emancipation (vimokkha) or the absolute Truth of Reality</p>

	of Wisdom)			
7	Upāya Pāramitā 方便波羅密 (Perfection of Skillfulness)	Intellectual of the formation / figure of emptiness	A proper state of flexibility or sensitivity	Spreading the truth effectively for living beings in all walks of society
8	Prāṇhāna Pāramitā 願波羅密 (Perfection of Resolution or Aspiration)	The foundation of the Faith at the triple Gems: Buddha- dharma-sangha	Going forth in a new way	Perseverance constantly of the Bodhi-citta until to Buddhahood
9	Bala Pāramitā 力波羅密 (Perfection of Strength)	Active and dynamic	Actualization	Conveying understand or rationalistic or idealistic abstraction to be reality
10	Jñānā Pāramitā 智波羅密 (Perfection	Intellectual knowledge or Non dualistic knowledge of emptiness	The essential clarity and unerring sensitivity	Omniscience of a perfect Buddha or the quintessential Perfection

	of Knowledge)			
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Śīla-Samādhi-Paññā (戒-定-慧)

The origin of the first sixfold formula of the pāramitās (波羅密) must be sought in the early Buddhist triad, śīla (戒, virtuous conduct), samādhi (定, concentration) and paññā (慧, wisdom), which are known as the three skandhas (groups constituting the factors of spiritual progress) and also to the three Śikṣās⁶²² (branches of instruction, the threefold training and discipline). It is probable that prajñā was added to the original group of the two — śīla and samādhi — which are mentioned together in several passages. Śīla is often said to lead to samādhi, and prajñā is not spoken of in that context. The eightfold way also ends with samādhi.⁶²³

The threefold śikṣā is defined as adhi-śīla (善戒), adhi-citta (善心) and adhi-prajñā (善慧) in the Mahā Vyutpatti,⁶²⁴ the prefix ‘*adhi*’ denotes pre-eminence and importance. Citta is here synonymous with samādhi. The last two items are identical with the fifth and sixth pāramitās (*dhyāna* and *prajñā*). Śīla is the second pāramitā, to which kṣānti was gradually attached as an important virtue. These two were mentioned together even before the final formulation of the six Perfections.

The fourth pāramitā (*vīrya*) was placed between the śīla section (which appertained especially to the laymen) and

⁶²² ‘Three Śikṣās i.e., *Learning, study*’ quoted in DCBT, p. 212.

⁶²³ BDBSL, 167.

⁶²⁴ Section 36.

the dhyāna-prajñā section (which was really cultivated by the monks). The first pāramitā occupied an independent position from a very early period, when it was coupled with śīla. Dāna and śīla were regarded as the laymen's special duties, which paved the way to a happy rebirth. The well-known sentence, which describes Buddha's preaching, begins thus:

“Dāna-kathaṃ Śīla-kathaṃ sagga-kathaṃ.”⁶²⁵

This was the complete gospel for the layman-householder. The higher virtues of renunciation and celibacy are then mentioned in the latter part of the same sentence:

“Kāmānaṃ Ādinavaṃ okāraṃ samkilesaṃ,” etc.⁶²⁶

Dāna was thus the first step that an ordinary person was taught to take; and it was placed before śīla as a distinct duty, though it is logically included in moral conduct (*śīla*).⁶²⁷

It may be inferred that dāna and prajñā were added to the central dual of śīla and samādhi, and they were emphasised on account of the influence of Brāhmaṇism. Vasubandhu (世身) clearly explains in the Majjhima Commentary that the six pāramitās are fundamentally related to the three śikṣās. The first three pāramitās correspond to adhi-śīla, and the fifth and sixth to adhi-citta and adhi-prajñā respectively; while the fourth (*vīrya*) is regarded as belonging to all the three branches of discipline. (Sometimes, the third pāramitā is coupled with the fourth). Thus making three pairs of pāramitās as is illustrated by a following table:

⁶²⁵ D, Ambaṭṭha sutta, VII, 220.

⁶²⁶ D, I, 110-112, 148-149.

⁶²⁷ BDBSL, 166.

Table XI

Adhi-śīla (善 戒)	Adhi-citta (善 心)	Adhi-prajñā (善 慧)
↓	↓	↓
Dana / śīla / Kṣanti (布施 / 持戒 / 忍辱)	Samadhi (禪 定)	Prajñā (智 慧)
-----∨-----		
Vīrya (精 進)		

In this connection, it may be pointed out that the division of the pāramitās (波羅密) into two sections (with vīrya as the common or neutral middle term) is based on the doctrine of the Twofold Equipment (*sambhāra*, 資糧) of a Bodhisattva. *Sambhāra* means ‘what is carried together’, hence ‘materials and requisite ingredients’, ‘necessary conditions’, ‘equipment’. According to Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms,⁶²⁸ *Sambhāra* supplies for body or soul, e.g. food, almsgiving, wisdom, etc. It consists of puṇya (功德) merit acquired by good deeds in social life) and jñāna (智), knowledge acquired by concentration and wisdom). ‘Merit’ leads to happiness, sense-pleasure, and welfare on earth and in the heavens; but ‘knowledge’ confers final liberation. The accumulation of ‘merit’ is therefore the aim of the layman, while the acquisition of ‘knowledge’ is the goal of the monk.

According to Vasubandhu (世身), the first two pāramitās (波羅密, *dāna* and *śīla*) lead to merit, the last pāramitā (*prajñā*) constitutes knowledge, while the other

⁶²⁸ DCBT, p. 413.

three partake of the characteristics of both kinds of sambhāra (資糧). For the sake of clarity, the XII table is given under:

Table XII

Dāna / Śīla	→	Merit
Prajñā	→	Knowledge
Kṣanti / Vīrya / Samadhi	→	Sambhāra

However, the application of the results of all the pāramitās (波羅密) for the attainment of Enlightenment really abolishes the distinction between mundane merit and supra-mundane knowledge, and all the pāramitās may be regarded as conducive to the equipment of knowledge. In this way, Vasubandhu attempts to unify and sublimate social action and ascetic meditation in the single ideal of the quest for Bodhi (菩提).

The six pāramitās are thus related to several basic concepts of early Buddhism. In fact, there is nothing new in the formula of the six pāramitās: all the items are found in the old Buddhist scriptures. But the Mahāyānists really contrast their pāramitās with the Thirty-seven Bodhi-pāksya-dharmas (三十七助道品) which are supposed to constitute the highest ideal of the so-called Hīnayāna. It is certainly surprising that the terms dāna, śīla and kṣanti are absent from that curious and comprehensive catalogue of monk's duties, which does not seem to include social sympathy and altruistic service.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁹ Gunapala Dharmasiri, *Fundamentals of Buddhist Ethics*, Singapore, The Buddhist Research Society, 1986, p. 21.

The early Mahāyānists were perhaps proud of having combined the social virtues of a righteous layman-householder with the ascetic ideals of a meditative monk in this formula of the pāramitās. They thus bridged the gap that yawned between popular and monastic Buddhism. They taught that a Bodhisattva should not cease to practise charity and forbearance in social life, when he ascended to the higher stages of concentration and wisdom. The six pāramitās were not new, but the new method of juxtaposition was devised by the Mahāyānists. They preferred their new formula to the Thirty-seven Bodhi-pāksya-dharmas (三十七助道品), which were regarded as too monastic and unsocial in their scope and tendency. Charity and moral conduct, which could lead a Buddhist only to the gates of a heaven of temporary pleasure in the old dispensation, were not considered to be as important as concentration and the higher wisdom. All are classed together as indispensable factors in the attainment of Enlightenment.

The pāramitās are extolled to the skies in many passages of Buddhist literature. They are ‘the great oceans of all the bright virtues and auspicious principles’, and confer prosperity and happiness on all creatures. They are a Bodhisattva’s best friends. They are ‘the Teacher, the Way and the Light’. They are ‘the Refuge and the Shelter, the Support and the Sanctuary’. They are indeed ‘Father and Mother to all’. Even the Buddhas are their ‘children’.⁶³⁰

Certain general characteristics are ascribed to all the pāramitās as a group. They are sublime, disinterested, supremely important and imperishable. They lead to welfare, happy rebirths, serenity, unremitting spiritual cultivation, successful concentration and the highest Knowledge. They

⁶³⁰ BDBSL, 245.

are free from contamination by sensual pleasure, partiality, love of reward and culpable self-complacency. They are placed in this order, as they imply one another and form a progressive scheme of action. The practice of each pāramitā is impossible without the cultivation of the preceding one.

The Major Characteristics of Bodhisattvas

It is also worthwhile to pay attention that beside the cultures of ten Pāramitās, there are some noble characteristics which Bodhisattvas possess while they practice the path of Bodhisattva such as:

i) Bodhisattvas ‘keeping the defilement’ (留種子) as a course for Bodhisattva’s compassionate activities

It means when a Bodhisattva hopes to reborn to help people, he must retain the seed of existence as Vijnaptimātratāsiddhi (唯識) stated that:

“[A Bodhisattva] retains the obstacle of defilement (kleśāvaraṇa) to sustain his vow to be reborn [into saṃsāra].”⁶³¹

(留煩惱障, 助願受生).

A Bodhisattva is reborn, fully mindful and conscious of whatever place where he chooses to be reborn. Because he is not contaminated by the defilements owing to the fact that he has stayed with the view of pratīyasanutpāda (緣起) for a long time, there is the ‘guarding of defilements’.

ii) Great Compassionate (大慈悲)

A Bodhisattva should practice four psycho-physical modes of living known as maitrī (慈), karuṇā (悲), muditā (喜) and upekṣā (捨), which are not to be viewed in

⁶³¹ Chen Wei Shi Lun, Shindo Edition, chapter 9, p. 31, line 10.

discreteness or in isolation. Here also there is centricity of karuṇā and the remaining three are its corelation. Maitrī is the basis of karuṇā. It stands for love, respect and care for all lives. It is concreteness of loving kindness based on the feeling that just as our life is precious to us, so also is the life of others. Muditā is altruistic sympathetic joy. It is happiness in the happiness of all. It is a consequence of karuṇā. Upekṣā is the prerequisite of karuṇā. It stands for compassion to all beings. It also means equanimity of mind apart from impartiality.

The Pali-English Dictionary defined Karuṇā (慈悲) means:

“Desire of bringing welfare and good to one’s fellowmen (ahita-dukkha-apanayakammata), or the desire of removing bane and sorrow of one’s fellow men, it also denotes the exalted state of compassion for all beings (paradukkhe satī sadhunam hadaya-kampanam karoti).”⁶³²

Compassion is the root-motivation of the Bodhisattva who sacrifices himself selflessly for the welfare of many and out of compassion for the world. Compassion has become the principle feature of the ideal for Bodhisattva’s service to society as pointed out by Peter Harvey:

“Compassion is the root-motivation of the Bodhisattva, is much emphasized. In Eastern and Northern Buddhism, the taking of Bodhisattva vows, often done after taking the precepts, is a solemn commitment which expresses the compassionate urge to aid all beings. This is to be done by constant practice for the ‘perfection’: generosity, virtue, patience, vigour meditation and wisdom. In Southern Buddhism, there is a set of ten perfections, seen as noble qualities of aid in compassionately benefitting others...”⁶³³

⁶³² PED, 197.

⁶³³ Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlai, 1990, p. 200.

In *Sadharmā Puṇḍarīka Sūtra*, the Buddha said because of the suffering of living beings in the six realms, Bodhisattva has increased boundless or unlimited compassion to lead them to better way as under:

“I see the living beings in the six paths,
 how poor and distressed they are, without merit or wisdom,
 how they enter the perilous road of birth and death,
 their sufferings continuing with never a break,
 how deeply they are attached to the five desires,
 like a yak enamored of its tail,
 blinding themselves with greed and infatuation,
 their vision so impaired they can see nothing.
 They do not seek the Buddha, with his great might,
 or the Law that can end their sufferings,
 but enter deeply into erroneous views,
 hoping to shed suffering through greater suffering.
 For the sake of these living beings
 I summon up a mind of great compassion.”⁶³⁴

(我以佛眼觀，見六道眾生，貪窮無福慧，入生死險道，相續苦不斷，深著於五欲，如犛牛愛尾，以貪愛自蔽，盲暝無所見，不求大世佛，乃與斷苦法，入諸邪見，以苦求捨苦為是眾生故，而起大悲心)。⁶³⁵

The Buddha also confirms that developing great compassion means developing the mind and in the contrast as under:

⁶³⁴ LS, 42.

⁶³⁵ 妙法蓮華經 p. 47.

“Develop the (mind-) development that is friendliness, Rahula. For, from developing the (mind-) development that is friendliness, Rahula, that which is malevolence will be got rid of. Develop the (mind-) development that is compassion, Rahula. For, from developing the (mind-) development that is compassion, Rahula, that which is harming will be got rid of.”⁶³⁶

In Chapter XXIV entitled ‘The Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound’ (妙音菩薩, *Bodhisattva Gadgadasvara*), through the steadiness in the meditation termed Sarvarūpasandarśana (現一切色身三昧), Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Gadgadasvara transforms himself in various shapes for example under the shape of Brahmā, Śiva Kubera, citizen, villager, girl, boy, wife and goblin, etc. to close with all walkings of life to guide them the nature of Buddha in themselves.⁶³⁷

It is also to be noted that Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara is projected as a saviour and protector of all beings for example as it is also written in the verse of the Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra:

“Wonderful sound, Perceiver of the World’s Sounds,
Brahma’s sound, the sea tide sound—
They surpass those sounds of the world;
Therefore you should constantly think on them,
From thought to thought never entertaining doubt!
Perceiver of the World’s Sounds, pure sage—
To those in suffering, in danger of death,
He can offer aid and support.
Endowed with all benefits,
He views living beings with compassionate eyes.

⁶³⁶ MLS, II, 95.

⁶³⁷ LS, 298 ff.

The sea of his accumulated blessings is immeasurable;

Therefore you should bow your head to him!”⁶³⁸

(妙音，觀世音，梵音海潮音，勝彼世間音是故常修念，念念物生疑，觀世音淨聖，於苦煩死危，能為作依估，具一切功德，慈眼現眾生福眾海無量，是故應頂禮).⁶³⁹

iii) Irreversibility of position (地位不退轉)

It means Bodhisattvas seek after Great Vehicle (*Mahāyāna*, 大乘) no other. The Great Vehicle is the Great Dharma (大法). If one believes in the Great Dharma, one must believe in the dharma doors (法門) of the Great Vehicle. For that one needs a heart full of faith, because the Buddha-dharma is as vast as the sea and can be entered only by means of faith (信心). Faith is the mother of the merit and virtue which one cultivates. Therefore, belief in the Great Dharma (大乘) is one of the characteristics of a Mahāsattva (摩訶薩). Great Bodhisattvas believe in all the great dharmas.

“... they shall be called [those who ride] the Great Vehicle, because the bodhisattvas seek this vehicle, they are called mahāsattvas.”⁶⁴⁰

(...是名；大乘；菩薩求此乘故，名為摩訶薩，勤行精進).⁶⁴¹

iv) Irreversibility of Thought (思想不退轉)

⁶³⁸ LS, 305-6.

⁶³⁹ 妙法蓮華經, p. 290.

⁶⁴⁰ LS, 61.

⁶⁴¹ 妙法蓮華經, pp. 65-6.

The Bodhisattvas are ever mindful in their practice of the Bodhisattva way, in the practice of the six perfections and thousands of conducts.

v) Irreversibility of Practice (修習不退轉)

They only go forward, they do not retreat. They also should be known by the attributes, tokens and signs of a Bodhisattva who is irreversible from Full Enlightenment. However, there are some kinds of Bodhisattva who have irreversibility of practice but others have not yet attained it as The Large Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom as illustrated below:

“Moreover, a Bodhisattva knows that “these Bodhisattvas have been predicted to full enlightenment, and those have not. These Bodhisattvas are irreversible, and those are not. These Bodhisattvas are in full possession of their superknowledges, and those are not.

This Bodhisattva, in full possession of his superknowledges, goes, in each of the ten directions, to world-systems numberless as the sands of the Ganges, and there he honours, respects, reveres and worships the Tathāgatas; that Bodhisattva, not in full possession of the superknowledges, does not go to numberless Buddha-fields, and does not there honour, respect, revere and worship the Tathāgatas. This Bodhisattva will become a recipient of the superknowledges, that one will not. This Bodhisattva good when he settles down in such ideas as “form, etc., is ill, not self, empty, signless, wishless”.⁶⁴²

vi) Irreversibility of Dharma Wheel (法輪不退轉)

The Bodhisattvas turn the wheel of dharma to teach and convert living beings. So, there is a common phrase: ‘The Dharma Wheel forever turns’. The eternal timing of the Dharma Wheel refers to the irreversible Dharma Wheel.

⁶⁴² LSPW, 78.

vii) Bodhisattvas have very ancient, deep and great roots (種功德根)

For many lives and throughout many kalpas, they have sent down and nurtured roots of goodness which are extremely deep. Good roots are called ‘roots of virtue’ and they are the basis of the way of virtue. They have sent down the roots of the virtuous nature. The roots which are limitless and boundless.

As the Vajracchedikā Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra says that such people will have planted good roots with not just one Buddha, two Buddhas, three, four or five Buddhas, but will have planted good roots with measureless millions of Buddhas. The Mahāsattvas have planted their roots of virtue, in the presence of as many Buddhas as there are grains of sand in limitless, boundless hundreds of thousands of tens of thousands of Gaṅgā rivers (恆河). So they are perfected with great roots. Their extremely deep foundation is a kind of greatness, as the Saddharma Puṇḍarika Sūtra mentions:

“Since the far distant past, in the dwelling place of immeasurable, boundless numbers of Buddhas, they must have planted good roots, carried out the Bodhisattva way, and engaged constantly in brahma practices. World-Honored One, it is hard for the world to believe such a thing!”⁶⁴³

(其等久遠已來，於無量無邊諸佛所，殖諸善根，成就菩薩道，修梵行，世尊！如所之事，世所難信)。⁶⁴⁴

These great Bodhisattvas throughout limitless kalpas and in the presence of limitless Buddhas had sent down and nourished the roots of the virtuous nature. By making

⁶⁴³ LS, 221.

⁶⁴⁴ 妙法蓮華經 p. 207.

offerings to Triple Gems and turning the irreversible Dharma Wheel they plant and nurture their roots. The Bodhisattvas in the Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra were constantly and at all times receiving the praise and commendation of all the Buddhas.

viii) Bodhisattvas possess great wisdom (智慧)

The wisdom came as a result of having brought forth the great bodhi-heart. Bringing forth the great Bodhi-heart, the resolve to take across all living beings and they are not attached to the mark of having made them crossed over. As in the Vajraccedika Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtra, the Lord says to Subhūti, someone who has set out in the vehicle of a Bodhisattva should produce a thought in this manner. Again and again, all Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas should subdue their hearts with the vow as many beings as there are in the universe of beings, comprehended under the term ‘beings’:

“...All living beings born from eggs, wombs, humidity or by transformation, with or without form, either thoughtful or thoughtless, and neither thoughtful nor thoughtless are all led by me to final Nirvāṇa for the extinction of reincarnation. Although immeasurable, uncountable and unlimitable numbers of living beings are thus led to (the Nirvāṇa for) the extinction of reincarnation, it is true that not a living being is led there.”

(所有一切眾生之類若卵生，若胎生，若濕生，若化生；若有色，若無色，若有想若無想，若非有想，若非無想，我皆令入無餘涅槃而亦度之。如是亦度無量無數無邊眾生，實無眾生得亦度者)。⁶⁴⁵

Although the Buddha saves countless beings, in actuality there are no beings that he saves. Living beings save themselves. Thus it is said that crossing over living beings but not attaching oneself to the mark of doing so.

⁶⁴⁵ 金剛般若波羅密經, p. 111.

ix) Bodhisattvas understand the great principle (成佛的原理)

All living beings basically are Buddhas, that is the great principle of the identity of all beings in principle with the Buddha. In principle every one of us is a Buddha. The example of Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Sadāparibhūta (常不輕菩薩, *Bodhisattva Never Disparaging*) is suitable here as given in Chapter XX entitled ‘The Bodhisattva Never Disparaging’. His particular merit is that he respects every one. He spends his life wandering round the earth, approaching all kinds of people, whether he knew them or not to bow to them and speak words of praise, saying:

“I would never dare disparage you, because you are all certain to attain Buddhahood”.⁶⁴⁶

(我不敢輕於汝等，汝等皆當作佛).⁶⁴⁷

He does not feel bad when people abuse him or insult him because of his statement. But he continues unperturbed because he considers that all these people observe the course of duty of Bodhisattvas and are to become Tathāgatas (如來).

x) Bodhisattvas cultivate the great conduct (修習大修行)

Beside practising the Six (or Ten) Pāramitās (波羅密), the Bodhisattva also cultivates Catuḥ-saṃgraha-vastu (四攝法, four all-embracing virtues of Bodhisattva)⁶⁴⁸: (a) Dāna (布施, giving) (b) Priyavacana (愛語, kind words) (c)

⁶⁴⁶ LS, 167.

⁶⁴⁷ 妙法蓮華經, pp. 253-4.

⁶⁴⁸ DCBT, 175.

Arthakṛtya (利行, helpfulness) and (d) Samānārthatā (同事, cooperation).

1. Giving: Bodhisattvas should resolve to give, to make gifts of wealth, dharma and fearlessness to all living beings in order to lead them to love and receive the truth.

2. Kind words: Bodhisattvas who must practise affectionate speech (only Bodhisattvas can do this, those who are not cannot), have no mark of self. They see all living beings as identical with themselves. For the sake of leading them to love and receive the truth, Bodhisattvas use kind, affectionate words to convert them.

3. Helpfulness: All living beings like to receive benefits. There are many ways to help others, but, in general, Bodhisattvas do deeds which cause others to have advantage with the same purpose.

4. Cooperation: Bodhisattvas can transform themselves into thousands of millions of bodies. When they see living beings suffering, they then transform themselves to that kind of body to teach the dharma. For example when Śākyamuni Buddha was practising the Bodhisattva way he turned into a deer in order to teach and transform the deer.

The Four Methods of Conversion which is the expedient means effectively of Bodhisattvas on the Bodhisattva-caryā.

xi) Bodhisattvas pass through great kalpas (劫)

One small kalpa (小劫) amounts as 16,800,000 years, a kalpa as 336,000,000 years and a mākākalpa as 1,334,000,000 years.⁶⁴⁹ One thousand small kalpas form a middle kalpa. Four middle kalpas constitute a great kalpa (大

⁶⁴⁹ See note 82, p. 31, chapter II.

劫). The Bodhisattva traverses three great asaṅkheyya kalpas (阿僧祇劫). It depends on the time of Bodhisattva practices pāramitās and other virtues so that he proceeds step by step to each of the stages of spiritual feelings (*Ten Bhūmis*, 地). Therefore, there have been different kinds of Bodhisattvas as we above mentioned. However, Mahāyāna Sūtras declared generally that Bodhisattvas spent a very long time which was very difficult to count and we can not imagine out with the words ‘immeasurable’, ‘boundless’, ‘inconceivable number of kalpas’⁶⁵⁰ as Saddharma Puṇḍarika sūtra said that:

“...This great multitude of bodhisattvas have already for immeasurable thousands, ten thousands, millions of kalpas applied themselves diligently and earnestly for the sake of the Buddha way.”⁶⁵¹

(而此大眾諸菩薩等，已於無量千萬億劫，為佛道故，精進修習).⁶⁵²

xii) Bodhisattvas seek the great result (Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi, 無上正等正覺)

The result of Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi (阿耨多羅三藐三菩提 / 無上正等正覺) that is of supreme, equal and proper Enlightenment, the result of the realization of Buddhahood.

Mahāyāna Sūtras have proved these virtues and characteristics and numerous other morals which Bodhisattvas possessed. However, it depends on practices differently so that the fruit of Bodhisattvas will come out in variety.

While discussing the qualities of a Bodhisattva and a Bodhisattva- Mahāsattva, it will be in the fitness of things, if

⁶⁵⁰ LS, 14.

⁶⁵¹ LS, 221.

⁶⁵² 妙法蓮華經 p. 207.

the list of Bodhisattva- Mahāsattvas in Mahāyāna Sūtras is examined thoroughly. This gives a number of hints and clues to comprehend the nature, qualities of Bodhisattvas or Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas in Mahāyāna. Sometimes, even the names are highly suggestive. But these nature and characters, as a matter of fact, are the symbolization of the attributes and virtues of Śākyamuni Buddha whose moral became the goal for living beings with their earnest wish to aim at. That is the reason for the Index of the list of Bodhisattvas' names which often appears in Mahāyāna Sūtras, has been done.⁶⁵³

The Relationship of Ten Pāramitās (十波羅密) and Ten Bhūmis (十地)

In the Mahāyāna, there is also the important factor of Bhūmi (地) or stages in the spiritual progress of the Bodhisattva. This concept of Bhūmi, which are ten in number is found in such Mahāyāna works as the Mahāvastu (佛本幸集經異本), Bodhisattva-bhūmi (菩薩地經), Daśabhūmika Sūtra (十地經) and so on. But according to Har Dayal, N. Dutt and others, it is almost certain that bhūmi were only seven in the beginning not in the Bodhisattva-bhūmi, Lankāvatāra Sūtra (楞伽經) and finally the formulation of the ten bhūmi (十地) fixed in Prajñā-pāramitā (般若波羅密), Mahāvastu and Dasa bhūmi as in the case the last three Pāramitās added later. In the Encyclopedia of Buddhism⁶⁵⁴ stated that the concept of the state of spiritual growth of a Bodhisattva is said to be one of the unique features which distinguish Mahāyāna from Hīnayāna. The first six satisfy the spiritual yearning of Hīnayāna, the last

⁶⁵³ See in the end of this research work, p. 347-9.

⁶⁵⁴ EB, III, 74-75.

four that of Mahāyāna. The last four are the real contribution made by the Mahāyāna in this regard. And Har Dayal⁶⁵⁵ suggested that seven bhūmis in Mahāyāna might be considered as the consequence of the Theravāda doctrine of the Four stages [the status of the Stream Entrant (*Sotāpanna*, 入流, 七來), the Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmi*, 一來), the Non-Returner (*Anāgāmi*, 不來), and the Liberated One (*Arahanta*, 阿羅漢) and three Vihāras. Or Radhakishman in ‘Indian philosophy’ said that the career of an aspirant to Buddhahood represented in early Buddhism by Eight-fold-path elaborated into ten bhūmis or stages in Mahāyāna...

However, in the connection with the Bodhisattva practices in Pāli Nikāyas, we can find that nine Jhānas (禪)⁶⁵⁶ which were nine stages of spiritual process, the Bodhisattva attained under the Bodhi-tree and Buddhahood as the ten and final stage considered the final fruit of liberation coming naturally without attempt. So, the concept of ten Bhūmis is corelative with process of nine Jhānas in Pāli Nikāyas.

Generally speaking the idea of Pāramitā is brought into relationship with that of Bhūmi by making the Bodhisattva cultivate one of the Pāramitās in each Bhūmi (*Stage*). As the Bodhisattva passes from one stage to another his glory and power gradually increase until in the tenth stage he becomes almost equal to the Buddha possessing various supernatural powers. Having become the cloud of the Dharma (*Dharma-megha*, 法雲地) he sends upon needy creatures the good rain which wipes the dust of the passions and causes growth of the harvest of merits.

⁶⁵⁵ BDBSL, 270-271.

⁶⁵⁶ See Chapter III, p. 73.

Bhūmi (地) means ‘earth, place, region’ and figuratively stage, level, stage of consciousness. This concept of Bhūmi provides us with an idea of the graduation in the spiritual progress of a Bodhisattva. While the Pāramitās are related to the practical side of spiritual life, the Bhūmis indicate the stages of gradual progress. It also gives us information on the ideal life to be pursued in the Mahāyāna. As the Bodhisattva gradually progresses in respect of certain virtues, his transition from one stage (*Bhūmi*) to another takes place accordingly.

The Dasa-Bhūmika-sūtra (十 地 經) definitely increases the number of the pāramitās to ten, as it teaches that a Bodhisattva practises one of the pāramitās in each of the ten bhūmis (stages) of his career:⁶⁵⁷

“yo’ asyām pratisṭhito bodhisattvo bhūyastvena jambudvīpeśvaro bhavati mahaisryādhipata pratilabdho dharmānupaksī kṛtī prabhuh satyvāh mahātyāgena sangrahītukuśalah sattvānūm mātsaryamalavinir-vrttay paryanto mahātyāgārambhaih. Tatasarvamavirahitam buddha manasikārair-dharma manasikāraih, samghanasikārair-bodhisattva manasikārairbodhisattvacaryā manisikāraih pāramitā manisi-kārairbhūmi manisikārair...”⁶⁵⁸

A Bodhisattva firmly established in this Bhūmi gains sovereignty over Jambudvīpa (閻 浮 提).⁶⁵⁹ His activities are charity, speaking in a pleasing way, rendering good to others and pursuing identical religious goals with others.⁶⁶⁰ The

⁶⁵⁷ BDBSL, 167.

⁶⁵⁸ P.L.Vaidya, DasaBhumikasūtra Buddhist Sanskrit Texts No. 7, Darbhanga, Mithila Institute of Post- graduate Studies & Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1967, p. 3.

⁶⁵⁹ “One of the four continents, situated south of Mountaint Meru, comprising the world known to the early Indians” quoted in DCBT, p. 298.

⁶⁶⁰ This refers to the four Sangraha-vastus.

perfection of charity is one of the primary performances of this bhūmi. But it is more probable that the number of the pāramitās (and the bhūmis) was raised to ten as a consequence of the invention of the decimal system of computation in the science of arithmetic in the third or fourth century A.D.

The relationship of ten Pāramitās (十波羅密) and Bhūmis (十地) will be illustrated by a diagram:

Table XIII

THE RELATION BETWEEN TEN PĀRAMITĀS AND TEN BHŪMIS⁶⁶¹

⁶⁶¹ BDBSL, 284-251.

	Improvement of Dhammas	Achievement	Existence of Spiritual Understanding
1	Dāna Pāramitā 布施波羅密 (Perfection of Giving)	Pramuditā Bhūmi 歡喜地 (State of Joyful)	Thought of Enlightenment, joying in mind and body, keen delight, no notion of self, purified 'Root of Merits', seeing Buddhas in many fields, living for hundred of aeons, assuming a hundred forms and performing innumerable miracles.
2	Śīla Pāramitā 持戒波羅密 (Perfection of Virtue Conduct or Morality)	Vimalā Bhūmi 離垢地 (State of Pure or Immaculate)	Being straightforward, tender hearted active, self-controlled, calm, beneficent incorruptible, noble, magnanimous and free from desire.
3	Kṣānti Pāramitā 忍辱波羅密 (Perfection of Forbearance)	Prabhākari Bhūmi 法光地 (State of Illuminating or Luminous, or Living-Giving)	Pure, constant, unworldly, dispassionate, firm, resolute, ardent, ambitious, noble and magnanimous, gaining more for Buddha-knowledge, the Four dhānas, the Four non-material Samāpattis, the Four brahma Viharas and the Five abhijñās.
4	Vīrya Pāramitā 精進波羅密 (Perfection of Energy)	Arciṣmatī Bhūmi 焰慧地 (State of Radian or Effulgent)	Gaining entrance to light of Doctrine, maturing and perfect his knowledge by his firm resolution and his faith in the Triple Jewel, realizing Action, Becoming and Birth, of Transmigratory existence and Liberation, of beginning and the end, of non-existence and destruction, acquiring infinite Energy.
5	Dhyāna Phaātāramitā 禪定波羅密 (Perfection of Meditation)	Sudurjayā Bhūmi 難勝地 (State of Very-difficult-to-Conquer)	Mindfulness, fortitude, discretion, skillness in the choice of the means for attaining the ends, acquiring a knowledge of arts, sciences like writing, arithmetic, medicine etc...
6	Prajñā Phaātāramitā 智慧波羅密	Abhimukhī Bhūmi 現前地 (State of Face-to-	Understanding the ten aspects of the equality and sameness of all things and phenomena, being free from the duality of existence and non-existence, I and other,

	(Perfection of Wisdom)	Face, or Turned Toward, or Showing the Face)	doer and knower, perfectly firm, steady, profound, pure and resolutely sets to Buddha-knowledge.
6	Upāya Phaātaramitā 方便波羅密 (Perfection of Skillfulness)	Dūrangamā Bhūmi 遠行地 (State of Far-going, or Far-reaching)	Acquiring great wisdom in the choice of expedients for helping others, understanding all Buddhas are identical with their spiritual cosmic Body, completely fulfilling the practical meditation and metaphysical aspects.
8	Praṇḍhāna Pāramitā 願波羅密 (Perfection of Revolution or Aspiration)	Acalā Bhūmi 不動地 (State of Immovable or Stead-fast)	Acquiring anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti, ten powers (vasitas), understanding the process of evolution and involution of the universe, pervading the whole world with the feeling of Friendliness.
9	Bala Pāramitā 力波羅密 (Perfection of Strength)	Sādhumatī Bhūmi 善慧地 (State of Good Thought or of Holy Wisdom)	Knowing all phenomena and principles truly and certainly, becoming a great preacher, acquiring the four pratisaṁvids and protecting by the dhāraṇīs.
10	Jñānā Pāramitā 智波羅密 (Perfection of Knowledge)	Dharmameghā Bhūmi 法云地 (State of Cloud or Cloud of Virtue)	Entering the stage of abhiṣeka (anointing, consecration), acquiring a glorious body, which is seen in a celestial Lotus adorned with jewels, emitting some rays which destroyed the pain and misery of all living beings, performing many miracles and numberless magical bodies, obtaining the ten 'Deliverance' of a Bodhisattva.



CHAPTER EIGHT

THE BUDDHA'S MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS THROUGH BUDDHA BODY PERCEPTIONS

The concepts of Śūnyatā (空性) and Bodhisattvahood (菩薩) find their culmination in the Tathāgata (如來), who is the embodiment of the perfection of all virtues. How a Bodhisattva (菩薩) acquires that position and how the transformation takes place are a matter of speculation for a Pṛthakjana and a path of strong footing for the Bodhisattvas Mahāsattvas (菩薩摩訶薩). The position of the latter, that is the Bodhisattvas Mahāsattvas is so high that in certain cases they are venerated in the same way as a ‘*Samyak-sambodhi*’ (正等覺). An instance may be cited from the epithets used and the attributes paid to Venerable Avalokiteśvara (觀世音菩薩). The Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra (莊嚴經) may be cited in order to substantiate this point. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things to discuss the Lakṣaṇas (characteristics, 好相) and Anuvyañjanas (minor signs of the Buddha) as well as the major characteristics of the Buddha (佛陀) through the transference of body (*kāya*, 身) perceptions in the history of Buddhism (佛教) in detail.

The Buddha-kāya Concept in Pāli Scriptures

While tracing the origin and evolution of the Buddha-kāya (佛身) concept, one is led to the original explanations offered in Pāli Scriptures regarding the personality of Śākyamuni (釋迦牟尼佛) who attained Buddhahood (佛果) after years of religious austerities. Śākyamuni was an ordinary human being, a historical person who with his own

karma (業) at his very birth as all other human beings, but with effort and determinate mind to eliminate all his bad karma and suffering, attained the final liberation to be an awakened one at the age of thirty-five.⁶⁶²

Then he found a system of philosophy and ethics which later on came to be known as Buddhism.

The Dīgha Nakayā gave expression to the conception of Buddha in the following words:

“The Blessed One is an arhat, a fully awakened one, endowed with knowledge and good conduct, happy, a knower of the world, unsurpassed, a leader able to control men, a teacher of men and gods, the awakened, the blessed. He knows thoroughly the worlds of gods, māras, recluses, brahmins and men, and having known them he makes his knowledge known to others. He preaches the dhamma (doctrines), which is excellent in the beginning, middle and end, etc.”⁶⁶³

(Bhagavā arahāṃ sammasambuddho vijjācaraṇasampanno lokavidū anuttaro purisadhammasārathi sathā devamanussānam buddho bhagavā. So imaṃ lokāṃ sadevakaṃ sabrahmakāṃ sasamaṇa-brāhmaṇāṃ pajāṃ sadevaṃ sayāṃ abhiññā sacchi katvā pavedeti. So dhammseti adikalyāṇāṃ, etc).

A description like this does not suggest that Buddha was originally more than a man, a mortal. In the cosmology of the Buddhists, the gods of the various heavens, the highest of which is Brāhmaloka (梵天),⁶⁶⁴ are only beings of superior merit and power, but they are inferior, in the matter of spiritual attainments, to the saints or Arahatas (阿羅漢). So in

⁶⁶² Sn, pp. 76 ff; M, I, pp. 166 ff, 246 ff.

⁶⁶³ D. I, pp. 87-88; LS, pp. 144, 376; cf. Lalitavistara ed. P.L. Vaidya, BST, I, 1958, p. 3.

⁶⁶⁴ In the Mahāyānic works also, as for instance, in the Dasa., it is stated that a Bodhisattva can become a Mahābrahma in the ninth bhūmi if he so wished.

this description, the Hīnayanists do not attribute any transcendental or theistic element to Buddha. All they say is that Śākyamuni, by pure and simple spiritual culture in this life and as a result of the accumulated merits of his previous lives, reached the highest stage of perfection and attained not only knowledge and power superior to any man and god but also the highest knowledge and power attainable.

In the Majjhima Nikāya, Ānanda explains why Buddha should be considered superior to the Arahatas as well, although both arrived at the same goal. He says that there is not a single bhikkhu, who can be regarded as endowed with all the qualities in all their forms as possessed by Buddha. Moreover, a Buddha is the originator of the path not existing before, a knower and promulgator of the mārga, which is only followed by the Śrāvakas (聲聞).⁶⁶⁵

In a land where the tendency to deify saints is so strong, it lies to the credit of the early Hīnayānists that they were able to retain the human conception of Buddha even a century or two after his actual existence, when the scriptures may be regarded as having been out into a definite shape. It is true, but, as he was a great personage, the Enlightened One, he was looked upon already in his lifetime by the members of his Order as a superhuman being with divine virtues:

“There are monks, these thirty-two marks peculiar to a great man, and for that great man who possesses them only two careers are open”.

(Dvāttimsimāni bhikkhave, mahāpurisassa mahāpurisa lakkhanāni yehi samannāgatassa mahāpurisassa dveca gatiyo bhavanti anaññā: sace kho pana agāpasma anagāriyam pabbajati, araham hoti sammāsambuddho loke vicattacchado. idha bhikkhave mahāpuriso suppatitthita pādo hoti...)⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁵ M, III, 8.

⁶⁶⁶ D, Lakkhana Sutta, ix, 236.

The texts tell us that the Buddha-body is endowed with the thirty-two marks of the Superman, and again that the Tathāgata's body is made of diamonds and has ten powers and the fourfold 'fearlessness'. Thus, his disciples put their absolute trust in Śākyamuni (釋迦牟尼佛), and praised him with various appellatives.

Śākyamuni himself said that he was the All-knowing and the Tathāgata (如來), and acknowledged his own superhuman nature which was greatly widened and enlarged. Though his death showed his own human limitations subject to transience, his devoted followers could not but look upon Śākyamuni as a superhuman personage. Passages such as the following:

“Ānanda, if the Tathāgata so wishes, he can live for a kalpa or for the rest of the kalpa.” (ramaniyam Ānanda rājagaham ramaniyo gijjhakūto pabbato. yassa kassaci Ānanda cattāro iddhipādā bhāvitā bahulikātā yānikātā vatthukatā anutthitā paricitā susamāraddhā, so ākankamano kappam vā tiṭṭheyya kappāvesam vā tathāgatassa kho Ānanda cattāro iddhipādā bhāvitā bahulikātā,... so Ākankhamāno Ānanda tathāgato kappam vā tiṭṭheyya kappāvesam vā ti.)⁶⁶⁷

And, '*The Buddha put his golden foot out from the coffin*' may be regarded as the expressions of confidence of his followers who esteemed Śākyamuni as an imperishable, superhuman personality. Thus this superhuman nature of the Buddha was transmitted to later generations and enlarged with the passage of the composition of Buddha legends like the Jātakas. According to such literature the Enlightenment of the Buddha was attained not only by means of his practice of austerities for several years, but also by dint of the immeasurable good works in his previous lives, during numberless kalpas (劫) and Śākyamuni is described as a

⁶⁶⁷ D, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, xiii, 182.

superhuman being who has the thirty-two signs of perfection and the eighty marks of excellence, and eighteen exclusive properties.

As we see, these adherents considered the Buddha (佛陀) to be a great teacher and naturally, superhuman qualities came to be attributed to him, not only after his death, but even while he was alive. These qualities both intellectual and moral and even physical sufficed to make him transform from a human being to the position of the ultimate reality of the world in later Hīnayāna (小乘) and Mahāyāna Teachings (大乘佛教).

The View of the Buddha in Early Periods (the Classification of Buddhist sects)

Such a view of the Buddha-body (佛身) was characteristic of the period of traditional Schools, the Sthaviravādin (上坐部) and the Mahāsāṅghika (大眾部). And the Schools developed further these views.

In the Ariyapariyesana Sutta of the Theravādins is mentioned that Buddha attained omniscience and that he did not seek Nibbāna (涅槃). He sought Samyak Sambuddhahood (正等覺),⁶⁶⁸ in order to propound, preach and promulgate hitherto unknown religious and philosophical views. He became a Seer and visualized highest Truth or the Reality — the Truth which was so deep and subtle that he was at first hesitant to preach the same to the people at large, as it would do more harm to them than good. He stated:

“I am the all-conqueror, I am omniscient, I am untouched by all worldly objects. I am perfect in this world; I am a teacher incomparable; I am the only enlightened, tranquilized and have extinguished everything.”

⁶⁶⁸ DCBT, pp. 337.

(sabbobibho sabbavido'hamasmi, sabbesu dhammesu anopalitto. ahañ hi arahā loke, ahañ satthā anuttaro, eko'mhi sammāsambuddho sitibhūto 'smi nibbuto).⁶⁶⁹

Such utterances may well be the basis of the Mahāsāṅghika conception of Buddha. Buddha, it is said, at the intervention of Brahma, decided to preach his doctrines in a modified form for the benefit of the mediocre searchers after Truth to enable them to achieve their desired end. This modified teaching consists of the four Ārya truths (*Ariya saccas*, 四妙諦), Eightfold Path (*Aṭṭhāṅgika-magga*, 八正道), and the Law of Causation (*Paticcasamuppāda*, 緣起, 因緣生起), the subject-matter of His first discourse. The Mahāyānist took the above decision of Buddha to establish their thesis that only an omniscient Buddha could realize the highest Truth and that his disciples, who heard the first discourse (*Dhamma-cakkappavattana-sutta*, 轉法輪經), became known as the Śrāvakas (聲聞), who could attain perfection (*Arahathood*, 阿羅漢果) only by observing the instructions contained 'in the discourse; in other words, they would realize only absence of individual soul (*anatta-pudgalanairātmya*, 我空) and not the non-existence (*dharmasuñyatā*, 法空) or sameness (*tathatā*, 如來) of all phenomenal beings and objects.

The Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins along with their offshoots conceived of Buddha as a human being, who attained perfection (*Buddhahood*) and became omniscient at Bodhgayā. Until then he was subject to all human frailties common to a pious and meritorious person. The Mahāsāṅghikās did not subscribe to this view as they contended that how could one who was the best of all divine beings in merit and knowledge in his existence just prior to his birth as Prince Siddhārtha (士達多), become an ordinary

⁶⁶⁹ M, Ariyapariyesana Sutta, I, 171.

human being. Hence his appearance in the mortal world was only fictitious in order to follow the ways of the world (*lokānuvartana*). He had achieved all the perfections in his previous existences as a Bodhisattva.

The Mahāsāṅghikās, therefore, attributed to Gautama Buddha (瞿曇佛) not only supra-mundane existence but also all perfections and omniscience from his so-called birth in the womb of Queen Māyā, and not from his attainment of Bodhi at Bodhgayā. It should be noted that the Mahāsāṅghikās had in mind Buddha Gautama of Saha lokadhātu (娑婆世界) and not the countless Buddhas of the innumerable lokadhātus as conceived by the Mahāyānist.

The Mahāsāṅghikās and their offshoots mention specifically that:

1. Buddha's body is entirely supra-mundane (*lokottara*, 出世間). The eighteen dhātus (界) bereft of impure dharmās (無漏). The vocal, physical are dissociated from impurities (*āsrava-visamyukta*). The body has nothing worldly (*laukika*); it is purity only (*anāsrava-mātra*) and indestructible.
2. His material body (*Rūpakāya*, 色身) is 'unlimited' as a result of his unlimited past merits. Paramārtha (真諦) explains 'unlimited' as 'immeasurable' and 'innumerable'. It can be either large or small, and it can also be of any number. In his created body (*Nirmāṇa-kāya*, 應身) he can appear anywhere in the universe.

The Kathāvattu (論辯遯)⁶⁷⁰ throws further light on the above. It states that, according to the Vetulyakas, the doctrine that the Buddha does not live in the world of men, neither should he be located anywhere and it is his created form (*abhinimmito jino*) that delivered the religious discourses.

⁶⁷⁰ Kathāvattu, ed. A.C. Taylor, London: PTS, 1894-95, XVII. 1 & 2.

The Theravādins account for this heresy by saying that it is due to the literal but wrong interpretation of the passage.⁶⁷¹

“Buddha, born and enlightened in this world, overcame this world and remained untouched by the things of the world.”

(Bhagavā loke jāto loke sambuddho lokam abhibhuyya viharati anūpalitto lokenā ti).⁶⁷²

This is supplemented by further discussions in the Kathāvatthu relating to the heresies also attributed to the Vetulyakas, viz., Navattabbam:

“It should not be said that Buddha lived in the world of men” – (xviii. 1);

(Buddho bhagava manussaloke aṭṭhāsī ti).

“Buddhas exist in all corners of the world” (xi.6)

(sabbā disā Buddhā tiṭṭhantā ti).

2). “The discourses are delivered by created forms” (xviii.

(abhinimmitena desito ti).

These show that according to the opponents of the Theravādins the Buddha is omnipresent and, as such, beyond the possibility of location in any particular direction or sphere and that all the preachings of Buddhism have been done by the apparitional images of Buddha.

With his usual naivety, Buddhaghosa (佛音) understood the Vetulyakās as holding the opinion that Buddha remained always in the Tuṣita (兜率天) heaven, where he was before he came to this world. The discussions in the Kathāvatthu (論辯

⁶⁷¹ Nalinaksha Dutt, *Buddhist Sects in India*, Delhi: Motilal, rpt. 1998, p. 105.

⁶⁷² S, III, 140.

邂) as also the terse statement of Vasumitra (和須密多) leave no room for doubt about the fact that Mahāsāṅghikās (大眾部) especially their offshoots, — the Vetulyakas and the Lokottaravādins (說出世部) regarded Buddha as transcendental. From the discussion in the Kāthāvatthu⁶⁷³ concerning:

“Whether Buddhas mutually differ,”

(atthi buddhanam buddhehi hināṭirekatā ti).

It seems that the Andhakas (按達羅, another offshoot of the Mahāsāṅghikās, 大眾部) were still concerned with the Sambhogakāya (報身) and had not yet arrived at the conception of the Dharmakāya (法身).

Buddhaghosa says that the Andhakas hold that Buddhas differ from one another in some qualities other than attainment like Satipatthāna (四念處), Sammappadhāna (四正勤), etc., the Orthodox school (佛教原始) holding that Buddhas may differ in respect of sarīra (身, body), āyu (壽命, length of life), a prabhāva (發光, radiance) but not in regard to the attainments mentioned above. The discussion in the Kathāvatthu (論辯邂)⁶⁷⁴ shows that the Uttarāpathakas held the views that Buddhas could have no karunā (慈悲, compassion) and that Buddha’s body was made of anāsrava dharma (清淨法, pure elements).⁶⁷⁵

3. Buddha’s length of life (*āyu*) is unlimited on account of his past accumulated merits. He lives as long as the sentient beings live.

4. Buddha’s divine power (*tejas, prabhāva*, 能力) is

⁶⁷³ Kathāvatthu, op. cit., XXI, 5.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., XXVII, 3.

⁶⁷⁵ Nalinaksha Dutt, Buddhist Sects in India, Delhi: Motilal, 1998, pp. 106-10.

unlimited. He can appear in one moment all over the worlds of the universe.

5. Buddha is never tired of enlightening sentient beings and awakening pure faith (*viśuddha-sraddhā*) in them. The Chinese commentator explains that Buddha's compassion (*karunā*, 慈悲) is limitless and so in order to enlighten beings interminably, he never enters into Nirvāna.
6. As his mind is always in meditation, Buddha neither sleeps nor dreams.
7. Buddha can comprehend everything in one moment (*ekakṣaṇikacitt*, 刹那). His mind is like a mirror. He can answer any question simultaneously without reflection. In the Kathāvatthu⁶⁷⁶ this doctrine is attributed to the Andhakas (按達羅), who contend that Buddha has knowledge, of all present matters (*sabbasmim paccuppanne nānam atthīti*).
8. Buddha is always aware that he has no impurities (*kṣaya-jñāna*, 盡智) and that he cannot be reborn (*anutpādajñāna*, 無再生).

What has been stated above finds corroboration in the Mahāvastu (佛本行集經異本) in ornate language thus: The Bodhisattva in his last existence as Siddhārtha Gautama is self-born (*upapāduka*, 自生) and is not born of parents; he sits cross-legged in the womb and preaches there from to the gods, who act as his protectors; while in the womb he remains untouched by phlegm and such other matters of the womb, and he issues out of the womb by the right side without piercing it. He has no lust (*kāma*) and so Rāhula (羅候羅) was also self-born.

⁶⁷⁶ Kathāvatthu, op. cit., V. 9.

Buddha's acquisitions are all supramundane (*lokottara*, 出世間) and cannot be compared to anything worldly. His spiritual practices are supramundane and so are his merits, even his bodily movements such as walking, standing, sitting and lying are also supramundane. His eating, his putting on robes and other such acts are also supramundane. It is for following the ways of the world (*lokānuvartana*) that he shows his Īryāpathas. His feet are clean, still he washes them. His mouth smells like the lotus, still he cleanses his teeth. His body is not touched by the sun or wind or rain, still he puts on the garment and lives under a roof. He cannot have any disease and still he takes medicine to cure himself.

In the *Abhidharmakośa* (阿毘曇俱舍論頌) and its *Vyākhyā*, it is said that, according to the *Mahāsāṅghikas*, Buddhas appear at the same time in more than one world and that they are omniscient in the sense that they know all dharmas at the same time. The former statement appears also in the *Kathāvatthu*.⁶⁷⁷ In the *Kathāvatthu* and the *Kośa*, no special doctrines about the *Bodhisattva* conception are attributed to the *Mahāsāṅghikās*.

Buddha follows the ways of the world just as much as he follows the transcendental ways. There is nothing common between Him and the beings of the world. If the transcendence of Buddha be admitted, then it follows that the length of his life should be unlimited and that he need not be subject to sleep or dream as he could have no fatigue. As he is ever awake how can he have dreams?

The *lokottara* conception appears only in the introductory portion of the *Mahāvastu*, and so it is evident that the text was originally *Hīnayānic* and that, in course of time, the

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid*, XXI, 6.

introductory chapters were added by the Lokottaravādins. In the main text, the doctrines mentioned are essentially Hīnayānic, e.g., the Four Truths (*Ariya saccas*, 四妙諦), the Eightfold Path (*Āṭṭhāṅgika-magga*, 八正道), the Law of Causation (*Pratītyasamutpāda*, 緣起, 因緣生起), Impermanence of Constituents of a Being (*Skandhas*, 蘊), non-existence of Soul (*Anātman*, 無我), Theory of the Effect of past Deeds (*karma*, 業) the Thirty-seven Dharmas leading to Bodhi (*Bodhipakṣīkadharmas*, 三十七(助)道品) and so forth. There is no mention of the non-existence of phenomenal objects (*Dharmasūnyatā*, 法空), of the Three bodies of Buddha (*Trikāya*, 三身) and the two veils (*āvaraṇas*, 障) regarding the impurities (*kleśa*, 煩惱障) and the Truth (*jñeyā*, 所知障).⁶⁷⁸ The only Mahāyānic doctrines, viz., the four stages of the Practices of Bodhisattva (*Bodhisattva-Caryās*, 菩薩行), the Ten gradual spiritual Stages (*Dasa Bhūmi*, 十地), countless Buddhas and their countless spheres (*Ksetras*, 佛刹) appear more as later additions than as integral parts of the text.⁶⁷⁹ The Sarvāstivādins along with the Sthaviravādins contended that the living-body of the Buddha contained impure elements, while the Mahāsāṅghika argued that the Buddha-body was free from impure elements.

According to the Samayabhedoparacanacakra (異部宗輪論) the view that the living body of the Buddha is pure is a doctrine of the Mahāsāṅghika (大眾部), the Ekavyāvahārika (一說部), the Lokuttaravādin (說出世部), and the Kurukulaka (計引部). This is described as follows:

1. The Buddha, the Blessed One transcends all worlds;
2. The Tathāgata has no worldly substances (Laukikadharmas);

⁶⁷⁸ *Jñeya*: cognizable, the region or basis of knowledge; quoted in DCBT, 452b.

⁶⁷⁹ Nalinaksha Dutt, *Buddhist Sects in India*, Delhi: Motilal, 1998, p. 81.

3. All the words of the Tathāgata preach the Dharma;
4. The Tathāgata explains explicitly all things;
5. The Tathāgata teaches all things as they are;
6. The Tathāgata has physical form (rūpa);
7. The Buddha's authority is unlimited;
8. The life of the Buddha-body is limitless;
9. The Buddha is never tired of encouraging beings to develop faith;
10. The Buddha does not sleep;
11. The Tathāgata is above the need to ponder questions;
12. The Buddha, being always in meditation, utters no word (nāman); nevertheless, he preaches the truth for all beings by means of words and explanations.
13. The Buddha understands all matters instantaneously.
14. The Buddha gains complete understanding with his wisdom equal within a single thought-moment.
15. The Buddhas, unceasingly produce wisdom regarding destruction (of defilements: *kṣaya-jñāna*, 盡智), and wisdom concerning non-origination (*anutpāda-jñāna*, 無生智) until reaching Nirvāna.⁶⁸⁰

This assertion of the Mahāsāṃghika to the effect that the living Buddha-body is a body without defilements and that the Buddha is a purely superhuman being, was according to the Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣāśāstra (大毘婆沙論),⁶⁸¹ supported by a passage from the texts as follows:

“Though the Tathāgata remains in the world, he is supramundane and cannot be defiled by worldly elements.”

A passage of the Āgamas reads,

“The life of our Śākyamuni Buddha is extremely long, because his cosmic body (*dharmakāya*) survives the decay of his physical body,”

It seems also to support the view held by the

⁶⁸⁰ EB, III, 424.

⁶⁸¹ Vol. 76.

Mahāsāṅghikas. According to this view, it is not the Buddha's body which perished at the age of eighty years, but his superhuman character, that is, his true body, because the former is the embodiment of the latter. Such a view may be regarded as a doctrinal development of the teaching of the superhuman nature of the Buddha with the thirty-two signs of perfection and the eighteen exclusive properties. This theory may have been a forerunner of the Mahāyānistic view of the Buddha-body.

The Mahāvastu says:

“There is nothing in the world that would be equal to the Buddha. Everything pertaining to great sages transcends the world.”

(na hi kimcit samyaksambuddhanam lokena samam. atha khalu sarvam eva mahesinam lokottaram.)

According to the Kathāvatthu and its commentary by Buddhaghosa, the same opinion was held by the Andhaka, Uttarāpathaka and Vetulyaka Schools. Contrary to the above theory, the Sthaviravādins (上座部) and the Sarvāstivādins (一切有部) emphasized that the Buddha's physical body contained defilements, i.e., that the Buddha's physical body with defilement, which lasted for eighty years was his real body, while he attained the state of Nirvāna and realised the Cosmic Body free from defilements.

In the opinion of the Sarvāstivādins, although the Buddha has the thirty-two signs of perfection and the eighteen exclusive properties, his physical body is, like those of the ordinary people, a qualified and defiled body produced by karma (業). According to the Samayabhedoparacanacakra (異部宗輪論), the Sarvāstivādins say:

“Not all the words of the Tathāgata preach the Dharma; the Tathāgata does not explicitly explain all things as they are; all the scriptures are not stated with explicit meanings.”

The Sarvāstivādins assert that the Cosmic Body is a blissful result of the accomplishment of morality, contemplation, wisdom, emancipation and insight into emancipation and the cosmic body is nothing but an abstract, static and theoretical Buddha which forms the basis of his physical body.

The Mahāsāṅghikas cite, to support their theory of the absence of defilement in the Buddha’s physical body, a passage from the Āgama:

“Though the Tathāgata remains in this world, he is supramundane and cannot be defiled by worldly elements.”

But the Sarvāstivādins interpret the same passage to the effect that by the Buddha’s physical body is meant the Tathāgata remaining in this world and his Cosmic Body is designated by saying that he is supramundane and cannot be defiled (*Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*, 大毘婆沙論).⁶⁸²

Such an interpretation makes clear the stand-point of the Sarvāstivādins who distinguish in the abstract the Cosmic Body from the physical body. The difference of views of the Buddha-body between the Mahāsāṅghikās and the Sarvāstivādins seems to derive from the fact that the former views the physical body of the Buddha idealistically and the latter regards it realistically.⁶⁸³ Of the Hīnayāna schools, the Sthaviravādins had very little to do with the kāya conceptions. As Buddha was to them an actual man living in this world like any other human being and subject to all the frailties of body. Metaphorically they sometimes spoke of

⁶⁸² Vol. 76.

⁶⁸³ EB, III, 423-6.

Buddha as identical with Dhamma without any metaphysical implication but these remarks gave an opportunity to the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahāyānists to put forth their theories of Dharmakāya (法身).

The Sarvāstivādins commenced speculating on the kāya of Buddha, but it was the school of the Mahāsāṅghikās that took up the question of kāya in right earnest and paved the way for the speculations of the Mahāyānists.

In a land where the tendency to deify saints is so strong, that it lies to the credit of the early Hīnayānists that they were able to retain the human conception of Buddha even a century or two after his actual existence...

In the face of such descriptions of Buddha, it would have been difficult for the later Hīnayāna schools to sublimate the human elements in him, had it not been for certain expressions in some of the earlier works of the Piṭaka, which lent themselves to other interpretations. Some of these expressions are:

1. "Buddha said to Ānanda just before his Parinibbāna "the dhamma and vinaya that have been preached me will be your teacher after my death".

(Yo vo Ānanda mayā dhammo ca vinayo ca desito paññatto so vo maṃ accayena satthā.)⁶⁸⁴

The Dhamma (法) and Vinaya (律) clearly refer to the collection of doctrines and disciplinary rules delivered by the Buddha. It is also evident from the conversation of Ānanda with Gopaka-Moggallāna,⁶⁸⁵ in which the former explains why the monks after Buddha's death should not be regarded as without refuge (*appatisarana*, 無處歸依). He says that they

⁶⁸⁴ D, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, 242.

⁶⁸⁵ M, III, p. 7 ff.

have now a refuge in Dhamma (*dhammapatisarana*), which, he points out, are the doctrines and disciplinary rules.

2. “So a Śākyaputtīyasamana may say that he is born of Bhagavā, through his mouth, born of his doctrine, made of his doctrine, etc. Though in this passage Dhamma is equated to Brahmā, the context shows that there is no metaphysical sense in it; it is only to draw a parallel between a Brāhmaṇa and a Śākyaputtīyasamana that Dhammakāya is equated to Brahmakāya.”

(Bhagavato’ mhi putto oraso mukhato jāto dhammajō dhammanimmito dhammdāyādo iti. tam kissa hetu? tathāgatassa h’ etam adhivacanam. dhammakayo iti pi brahmakāyo iti pi, dhammabhūto it pi ti.)

“Just as a brāhmaṇa would say that he is born of brahmā, through his mouth.”

(Brāhmano putto oraso mukhato jāto brāhmajō brāhmanimmito brāhmadāyādo).⁶⁸⁶

3. Vakkali on his death-bed became very eager to see Buddha in person; so Bhagavā came to him and said:

(Alam vakkali kim te pūtikāyena diṭṭhena. yo kho vakkali dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati. yo maṃpassati so dhammaṃ passati).⁶⁸⁷

Just after saying this, Buddha referred to his Dhamma of impermanence (*anicca*, 無常). There are in the Nikāyās many passages of this import, which may well be taken as precursors of the later Mahāyānic conceptions and probably formed the basis of their speculations. But the passages, when read as they stand, do not appear to bear any metaphysical sense. In this passage, Buddha refers to his body as pūtikāya (不淨, body of impure matter), and to lay stress on his doctrines, he says that his dhamma should be

⁶⁸⁶ N. Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, Calcutta, 1976, p. 159.

⁶⁸⁷ S, *Vakkaliya sutta*, III, p. 110 ff.

looked upon with the same awe and reverence by his disciples as they regarded his person.

4. The passage in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, where Buddha says that he is neither a god, nor a gandhabba, nor a man, has been taken by Marson-Oursel as showing trace of the Mahāyānic kāya conceptions. It is not impossible to read some metaphysical ideas into the passage, though probably the compiler of the Suttas did not mean to convey them. Drona Brāhmaṇa, noticing the sign of wheel in the feet of Buddha, enquired of him whether he was a deva, a gandhabba (乾撻婆), a yakkha (夜叉) or a mortal. Buddha replied that he was none of these beings as he had got rid of the āsavas (*impurities*) by the continuance of which one remains a deva, gandhabba, yakkha or a mortal. Just as a lotus is born in water, grows in it but it remains above and is apart from it, so also Buddha was born in the world, grew up in it but overcame it (*abhibhuyya*) and lived unaffected by the same. Therefore, he asked the Brāhmaṇa not to regard him as anything but the Buddha.

Even if it be assumed that the Mahāyānic ideas are latent in the above-mentioned expressions, though not adequately expressed, the discussion in the Kathāvatthu to establish the historical existence of Buddha as against those who denied it and the manner in which references were made to the events of Buddha's life as depicted in the Nikāyas leaves no vestige of doubt about the opinion of the Theravādins regarding the kāya of Buddha.

Though the terms Rūpakāya (色身) and Dharmakāya (法身) found their way into the later Pāli works from Mahāyāna or semi-Mahāyāna works, these did not bring with them any non-realistic sense.

Buddhaghōṣa even as late as the fifth century A.D. refers thus to the kāyas:

“That bhagavā, who is possessed of a resplendent rūpakāya, adorned with eighty minor signs and thirty-two major signs of a great man, and possessed of a dhammakāya purified in

every way and glorified by *sīla*, *samādhi*, etc., full of splendour and virtue, incomparable and fully awakened”.

(Yo pi so bhagavā asiti anuvyañjana-patimandita-dvattimsa-mahāpurisalakkhaṇa-vicitra-rūpakāyo sabbākāraparisuddha silakkhandhādigunaratana samiddha-dhammakāyo samahattapuññamahatta ... appatipuggalo araham sammāsambuddho).⁶⁸⁸

Though *Buddhaghoṣa*'s conception was realistic, he was not immune from the religious bias of attributing superhuman powers to Buddha. In the *Aṭṭhasālinī* (論殊勝義) he says that during the three months of his absence from the world while Buddha was engaged in preaching *Abhidhamma* to his mother in the *Tuṣita* (兜率) heaven, he created some *Nimmita-buddhas* as exact replicas of himself. These *Nimmita-buddhas* could not be distinguished from the real Buddha in voice, words and even the rays of light that issued forth from his body. The created Buddha could be detected only by the gods of the higher classes and not by the ordinary gods or men of the world. In short, the early *Hīnayānists* conceived Buddha's *Rūpakāya* (色身) as that of a human being, and his *Dhammakāya* (法身) as the collection of his *Dhammas*, doctrines and disciplinary rules collectively.⁶⁸⁹

The *Lalitavistara* (神通遊戲經) gives us a picture of Buddha more superhuman than human and yet far from the *Mahāyānic* conceptions of the *Sambhogakāya* (報身) and *Dharmakāya* (法身), though in the last two chapters it dwells on the doctrine of *Tathatā* (真如). In the *Lalitavistara* Buddha is deified but there are no traces of the *Trikāya* (三身) conception. It says in many places that Buddha appears in the world of men for *lokānuvartana* (i.e., to follow the ways of

⁶⁸⁸ PP, 234.

⁶⁸⁹ N. Dutt, *Op. Cit.*, 142.

the world), which, if he so desired, he could avoid by remaining in one of the heavens and attaining emancipation there. The running account of Buddha's life is interrupted at times — probably these are afterthoughts of the compiler — by dialogues between Buddha and Ānanda, in order to make the treatise appear Mahāyānic and not Hīnayānic.⁶⁹⁰

At one place, Buddha explains to Ānanda that, unlike human beings, he did not stay in the filth of a mother's womb but in a jewel-casket (*ratnavyūha*, 寶藏) placed in the womb, which was as hard as a diamond but soft to the touch like the down of a Kācilindika bird (迦亶鄰陀), and that his birth and other events connected with it were all superhuman. At the same time, he prophesied that there will be, in the future, men unrestrained in act, thought and speech, ignorant, faithless, proud, and believing without deliberation what is heard by them, who will not believe in the superhuman nature of his birth.

One can perceive through the poetical exaggerations of the *Lalita-vistara* (神通遊戲經) that it has in view the historical Buddha endowed with the major and minor signs — a human being after all, who requires to be reminded by the heavenly musicians of the acts of his past lives and his resolution to become a Buddha and rescue beings from misery, and who needs a stimulus to renounce the world in order to fulfill his resolution. In connection with the offer of houses, which were made by the gods to the Bodhisattva when he was in the womb, it is said that in order to please all the gods who offered houses, he caused his appearances by means of the *Mahāvyūha Samādhi* (大莊嚴定). This does not clearly reflect any idea of the *Nirmāṇakāya* (應身,化身) — it appears more like some of the miracles mentioned in the

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 144.

Nikāyās. In the last chapter of the Lalitavistara where Buddha's attributes are mentioned, he is called the great drumma (*mahādruma*, 大鼓) because he possessed a body of Dharmakāya (knowledge of *Dharmakāya*, 法身智).

As this chapter is very likely a Mahāyāna (大乘佛教) addition, we may reasonably say that the Lalitavistara in its original form was a treatise of the Sarvāstivādins (一切有部), who viewed Buddha as a human being with superhuman attributes.

The Buddha-body Perception in Mahāyāna

The early Mahāyānists, whose doctrines are mostly to be found in the Aṣṭādasasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā (十八千頌般若波羅密), along with the school of Nāgārjuna (龍樹) (i.e., *Mādhyamika*, 中論) conceived of two kāyas:

i) Rūpa-kāya (色身 / *Nirmāṇakāya*, 應身), denoting bodies, gross and subtle, meant for beings in general, and

ii) Dharma-kāya (法身), which was used in two senses, one being the body of Dharma, (i.e., collection of practices), which makes a being a Buddha, and the other the metaphysical principle underlying the universe — the Reality (*Tathatā*, 真如).

The Yogācāra school (瑜伽論) distinguished the gross rūpakāya from the subtle Rūpa-kāya, naming the former Rūpa or Nirmāṇa-kāya (應身) and the latter Sambhoga-kāya (報身).

The Saddharma Lankāvatāra Sūtra (妙法楞伽經), representing the earliest stage of the Yogācāra (瑜伽論), conceives the Sambhoga-kāya as Nisyanda-buddha or Dharmanisyanda-buddha (等流佛, 法等流, the Buddha produced by the *Dharma*).

The Sūtrālaṅkāra (楞伽經), uses the term Sambhogakāya for Nisyanda-buddha (等流佛) and Svābhāvikakāya (自性身) for Dharmakāya.⁶⁹¹

In the Abhisamayālaṅkārikā (現觀莊嚴論) and the recast version of the Pañca-vimśati-sāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā (二萬五千頌般若波羅密經), Sambhogakāya denotes the subtle body which the Buddhas adopted for preaching the doctrines to Bodhisattvas, and Dharmakāya the body purified by the practice of the bodhipākṣika and other dharmas, which constitute a Buddha. For the metaphysical Dharmakāya these texts use the term Svabhāva or Svābhāvika-kāya (自性身).

The Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi (唯識論) retains the conception of the Kārikā but adopts a new term Svasambhogakāya (自受用身) to denote the Dharmakāya of the Kārikā and distinguishes the Sambhogakāya by naming it Parasambhogakāya (他受用身).

The Prajñā-pāramitās (般若波羅密經) also maintain the conception that the Dharmakāya is produced by Dharmas, the highest of which is according to them, the prajñāpāramitā, the knowledge which helps a person to realise the Dharma-Śūnyatā (法空). The Aṣṭādasasāhasrikā Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra (十八千頌般若波羅密經), takes up the question, whether the honour shown to the relics of the Tathāgata-kāya (如來身) is more meritorious than the honour shown to the Prajñā-pāramitā e.g., by making a copy of it. The answer given is that the relics depend on the body purified by the prajñā-pāramitā, and therefore it is the source of Buddhas. The source deserves more honour than the remnants of the fruit (relics of Buddha) produced therefrom, and therefore it is

⁶⁹¹ N. Dutt, Op. Cit: 136-7.

more meritorious to honour the Prajñā-pāramitā than the relics. It adds that all teachings of Buddha issue from the Prajñā-pāramitā, and the Dharmabhāṅakas (法師) preserve and propagate them; so the Dharmabhāṅakās should also be respected. They are protected by the Dharmakāya, the Prajñā-pāramitā.

Sarvajñatā (*omniscience*, 一切智) is pervaded (*paribhāvita*) by the prajñā-pāramitā from Sarvajñatā issues the body of Tathāgata, the relics of whom are worshipped; hence Prajñā-pāramitā deserves greater honour.⁶⁹²

The Mahāyāna finds the true body of the Buddha in the unconditioned voidness, i.e. the Cosmic Body which transcends even the Buddha's physical body. It also believes that the Cosmic Body or the unconditioned voidness reveals itself as a temporary physical body with the merciful intention of view conveying the truth to beings. Such a view may have been derived from the idealistic view of the Mahāsāṅghikas who consider the physical body of the Buddha as superhuman. However, the characteristic of the doctrine of Mahāyāna consists in the fact that the Mahāyāna finds the true body of the Buddha in voidness or absolute truth without being limited to the Idea of transcendental undefiled Cosmic Body as the true body of the Buddha advocated by the Mahāsāṅghika.

In the Vajrachedikā-prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra (金剛般若波羅密經) which says:

“He who sees me by outward appearance, (and) seeks me in sound, treads the hetetodox path, (and) cannot perceive the Tathāgata.”

⁶⁹² N. Dutt, Op. Cit, 145.

(若以色見我，以音聲求我，是人行邪道，不能見如來).⁶⁹³

and in the *Aṣṭādasasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (十八千頌般若波羅密經) which says:

“Indeed, the Tathāgata cannot be seen as a physical body, the cosmic body in the Tathāgata”.

(Na hi tathāgato rūpa-kāyato draṣṭavyaḥ dharmakāyas Tathāgata)

and in the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra* (妙法蓮花經) which says:

“Tathāgata is the eternal imperishable Buddha who has immeasurable life, and displays extinction only as an expedience.”

This is shown the Mahāyānistic view of the Buddha-body that the Buddha is identified with absolute truth or Śūnyatā. As mentioned above, “Those who perceive the dharma, perceive me” said Śākyamuni to his disciples, and now in Mahāyāna the Dharma is identified with voidness, absolute truth, the wisdom of the imperceptible voidness or Prajñā-pāramitā. And, in Mahāyāna Buddhism it is emphasized that the Cosmic Body or the unlimited and imperishable substance of Enlightenment which is absolute truth and voidness, transcending the physical body of the Buddha, is identified with the blissful or matured body (*Vipāka-kāya*, *Nisyanda-kāya*, 異熟身) which is the result of the perfection of his vows and practices in previous lives. This theory comes from the Buddha legends in which the superhuman nature of Śākyamuni is given. In the suttas of various Buddhas, such as the larger *Sukhāvativyūha* (無量壽經), the *Akṣobhyatathāgatasya-vyūha* (阿畜佛國經), *Amitābha*

⁶⁹³ 金剛般若波羅密經, 佛學業書, 台鸞, 一九九八, p. 130.

(阿彌陀佛), Akṣobhya (阿畜畢佛) and other Buddhas are described as the Cosmic Body, but with the characteristics of the Blissful Body which has form and virtue, coming from the perfection of its vows and practices. Therefore, in Mahāyāna Buddhism there are several theories of the Buddha body; one is the theory of the twofold body which assumes the Cosmic Body with which the Blissful Body is combined, (the Reward-Body), and Incarnated Body; the second is the theory of threefold body of the Cosmic Body, the Blissful Body and the Incarnated Body and the third is the theory of the fourfold body based on the above mentioned theories, and so forth.

In the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (金光明), Ruciraketu (妙懂) and Kauṇḍinya (橋陳如) Brāhmaṇa play the role of skeptics. The former enquires why Śākyamuni, who performed so many meritorious deeds, should have such a short span of life as eighty years. The latter seeks a mustard-like relic of Buddha's body to worship and thus go to heaven. Ruciraketu is told by the Buddhas of all lokadhātus that they did not know any man or god who could calculate the length of Śākyamuni's life. They said that it might be possible to count the drops of water in a sea but it would be impossible to ascertain the length of his life. Kauṇḍinya Brāhmaṇa, who only feigned ignorance, was told by Litcchavikumāra that, just as it is absurd to expect coconuts from a rose-apple tree, so it is absurd to expect a relic from the Buddhakāya (佛身). The Tathāgatas have no origin, they are ever existing and inconceivable. It is only the Nirmitakāya that is shown to them. How can a body which has no bone or blood, leave a dhātu, Buddhas have only Dharmakāya and there is only the Dharmadhātu (法界).

Nirmāṇakāya (應身)

The Mahāyānic texts tried to show on the one hand, that the Hīnayānists were wrong in their belief that Śākyamuni was really a man of flesh and blood and that relics of his body existed, while on the other hand, they introduced two conceptions of Nirmāṇakāya (應身) and Buddhakāya. Whatever is said to have been done by Śākyamuni is accounted for by those texts as the apparent doings of a created body of the Buddhakāya, a shadowy image created to follow the ways of the world (*lokānuvartana*), in order to bring conviction in the heart of the people that the attainment of Buddhahood was not an impossibility. As the Buddhas possess the knowledge of all that is to be done (*kṛtyānusthānajñāna*, 成所作智) they can take any form they desire for the enlightenment of the various classes of beings. The Mahāyānic conception of Nirmāṇakāya is essentially same as that of the Mahāsāṅghikās.

The Prajñā-pāramitās in their quaint way refer to the Nirmāṇakāya or Rūpakāya. The Pañcavimśati-sāhaśrikā Prajñāpāramitā (二萬五千頌般若波羅密經) says that of a Bodhisattva, after acquiring all the necessary Dharmas and practising Prajñā-pāramitā, becomes a Sambuddha, he then renders service to beings of all lokadhātus (世界, worlds) of the ten corners at all times by Nirmāṇamegha (應化云, *Nirmāṇa* clouds). This is called the Nairmāṇikakāya.

From the Chinese sources we are informed that Nāgārjuna, in his commentary on the Prajñā-pāramitā, names it as Mahā Prajñā-pāramitā śāstra, and speaks of two kāyas, rūpakāya and dharmakāya. The former is the body born of parents, possessing the qualities of sentient beings, and is

subject to human frailties. It was born in Kosala (橋薩羅) while his Dharmakāya was born at Rājagrha (王舍). The material body was necessary for 'earthly truth'. It was for the deliverance of beings that Buddha assumed different kāyas, different names, birth-places and the ways of emancipation. This interpretation of rūpa and dharmakāyas is also followed in the Chinese Parinirvāṇa Sūtra (般涅槃經) and Sandhinirmocana Sūtra (深密經).

Some of the Yogācāra (瑜伽論) texts furnish us with the following information regarding the conception of Nirmāṇakāya as prevailing among the Yogācārins:

The Sūtrālaṅkāra explains the Nirmāṇakāya to be those forms, which are assumed by Buddhas to render service to beings of the various worlds. It generally refers to the human form that Buddha takes in order to make a show of his acquiring the ordinary arts and crafts required by an average man, living a family life and then retiring from it, and ultimately attaining Nirvāṇa by recourse to ascetic practices.

The Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi (唯識論) tells us that the Nirmāṇakāya is meant for Śrāvakas (聲聞), Pratyekabuddhas (辟支佛, 緣覺), Pṛthagjanas (人, common men) and Bodhisattvas (菩薩), who are not yet in one of the ten Bhūmis (地). It may appear in all lands whether pure or impure.

The Chinese commentaries on the Siddhi (法成就) mention various ways, in which Buddha can transform his body or another's body or voice, and his or other's mind, to suit his purpose. Not only could he transform his body or another's body or voice, and his or other's mind, to suit his purpose. Not only could he transform himself into Śākyamuni (釋迦牟尼佛), or Sāriputra into a young girl, but also could create an altogether new apparition body, not, of course, a living, thinking being. Often he assumed the voice of Brahmā or expressed himself through the mouth of Sāriputra (舍利弗) or Subhūti (須菩提), and it was for this reason that we find Sāriputra or Subhūti explaining some of the abstruse Mahāyāna teachings, which they themselves were not expected to understand. The third way in

which he could transform his voice was to produce sounds from the sky. His thoughts were supramundane (*lokottara*, 出世界) and pure (*anāsrava*, 清淨). He could produce in mind any thought he liked; in fact, he appeared in his Nirmitakāya as Śākyamuni with a mind (*citta*) suited to the ways of the world. He could also impose his thoughts on the minds of others.

The Saddharma Lankāvatāra Sūtra (妙法楞伽經) explains the relation of Nirmāṇakāya to Dharmakāya in the same way as the Kārikā. It states that NirmitaBuddhas are not produced by actions; the Tathāgata is neither in them nor outside them:

“Sarve hi nirmitabuddhā na karmaprabhavā na tesu Tathāgato na cānyatra tebhya Tathāgato”.

It is only when the sons of the Jina (禪那) realise the visible world to have no existence apart from the *citta* that they obtain the Nirmāṇakāya free from *kriyā* (作) and *saṃskāra* (行), and endowed with *bala* (力), *abhijñā* (勝智) and *vaśita* (生). Like the Siddhi, it says that the Tathāgatas by creating Nirmāṇakāya perform the various duties of a Tathāgata (*Tathāgatakr̥tya*, 如來使命). It gives also the interesting information that Vajrapāṇi (金剛首菩薩) serves as an attendant on the Nirmitanirmāṇa Buddhas, and not on the real Buddhas and that the function of such a Buddha is to preach and explain the characteristics of *dāna* (布施), *sīla* (持戒), *dhyāna* (禪定), *vimokṣa* (解脫) and *viññāna* (惟心).

The Nirmāṇa Kāya usually translated as apparitional body is really a body assumed by Buddha in fulfillment of his resolve to save beings from misery. The manifestation of the body of bliss in the empirical world as Gautama (*Śākyamuni*) or other previous and succeeding Tathāgatas is the Nirmāṇakāya of Buddha.⁶⁹⁴ The advent of a Buddha in the

⁶⁹⁴ Yena Śākyamuni-tathāgatādirūpeṇāsaṃsāraṃ sarvaloka-dhātuṣu sat-tvānāṃ samīhitara arthaṃ samaṅkaroty asau kāyah,

world is not an accident, the lucky chance of a human being happening to attain enlightenment. It is a deliberate descent of the Divinity, incarnating itself as human being; his various (twelve principal) acts from birth to passing away into Parinirvāṇa are make-believe acts, designed to create a sense of kinship with human beings.⁶⁹⁵ Gautama is one of the Buddhas; and the Bodhisattvas are other forms chosen by divinity to help man and other beings. As Haribhadra says:

“When some living being requires the explanation of the Doctrine or some other kind of help, then the Lord, by the force of his previous vows, fulfils the purpose of this living being manifesting himself in this or that form”.⁶⁹⁶

Buddha is the Providence that takes the keenest interest in beings. The particulars with regard to the kāya conception cannot be logically demonstrated. They are to be taken as revealed to the elect and communicated by them to others.

In the Hīnayāna religion, the Gautama Buddha is an exalted human being, distinguished from the ordinary mankind by his unique and unaided attainment. He was not certainly God before he attained Bodhi. The historicity of the Buddha (*Śākyamuni*) is indispensable for that religion. In Mahāyāna, though Gautama is a historical person, he is not the only Buddha, and his occurrence is one of the innumerable acts of divine dispensation. The Mahāyāna

prabandhatayānuparato nairmāṇiko buddhasya bhagavataḥ . . . tathā cōktaṃ: karoti yena citrāṇi hitāni jagataḥ samam; ābhavāt so'nupacchinnaḥ kāyo nairmāṇiko muneḥ. *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* of Haribhadra, G.O.S., Baroda, p. 532.

⁶⁹⁵ See Buston, pp. 133ff. *Uttaratantra* of Asaṅga, pp. 245ff. (Obermiller's Trans. *Acta Orientalia*, vol. IX, 1931).

⁶⁹⁶ *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* of Haribhadra, G.O.S., Baroda, p. 525.

religion escapes the predicament of having to depend on any particular historical person as the founder of its religion.

Sambhogakāya (報身)

The Rūpakāya or Nirmāṇakāya was meant for the Śrāvakas (聲聞), Pratyeka-buddhas (辟支佛, 緣覺), Pṛthagjanas (人) and Bodhisattvas, who were not in one of the ten bhūmis, so another kāya had to be devised, a very suitable kāya for the benefit of all Bodhisattvas. This is called Parasambhogakāya (他受用身) as distinguished from Svasambhogakāya (自受用身), a similar subtle body perceived by the Buddhas alone.

It is this Parasambhogakāya (他受用身), which plays the role of a preacher of the various Mahāyāna Sūtras (大乘經典), the scenes being mostly laid either at Gṛdhra-kūṭa (靈鷲), the only place where the three dhātus are considered pure and suitable for the appearance of a Sambhogakāya (報身), or in the Sukhāvati-vyūha sūtra (彌陀經 / 無量壽經), or in one of the heavens.

It will be observed from the description of the appearance of Buddha and his manner of preaching the Sūtras that the Mahāyānists were not yet able to forget or rise above the human conception of Buddha of the Hīnayānists. They still gave Śākyamuni the role of the presiding Buddha of the universe, to whom flocked reverently with flowers, incense, etc., all the Bodhisattvas, Śrāvakas and Gṛhapatis of the various lokadhātus of the ten directions, to hear from him the Prajñāparamitā, (般若波羅密經) the Saddharmapundarīka (妙法蓮花經) or the Gandavyūha / Avamsaka-sūtra (華嚴經).⁶⁹⁷

These Bodhisattvas again had their own tutelary

⁶⁹⁷ N. Dutt, Op. Cit., 157.

Buddhas, who, according to the Mahāyāna metaphysics, possessed the same Dharmakāya as that of Śākyamuni. They also came or were sometimes sent by their Buddhas, with messages of greetings and flowers as tokens of their regard, to Śākyamuni Buddha whose Buddhakṣetra was then the Saha lokadhātu (娑婆世界). Sometimes the descriptions go so far as to say that the Buddhas themselves came to hear discourses from Śākyamuni Buddha, and the concourse of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas became so great that the Saha lokadhātu had to be cleared of all oceans, mountains, seas, rivers, and cities, as well as of gods, men and other beings.

As we read in the Hīnayāna texts monks used to come to meet Buddha, bringing with them one or two sāmaneras (沙彌), so also we read in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka that on account of insufficiency of space the countless Buddhas could not have with them more than one or two Bodhisattvas as attendants (*upasthāpakas*, 持者).

According to the Satasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā (一千頌般若波羅密經) and the Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā (二萬五千頌般若波羅密經), it is an exceedingly refulgent body, from every pore of which steamed forth countless brilliant rays of light, illuminating the lokadhātus (世界) as innumerable as the sands of the Ganges. When this body stretched out its tongue, Innumerable rays of light issued forth from it, and on each ray of light was found a lotus of thousand petals on which was seated a Tathāgatavigraha (an image of the *Tathāgata*, a sort of *Nirmāṇakāya*), preaching to Bodhisattvas, Gṛhasthās (householders), Pravrajitas (recluses) and others the dharma consisting of the Pāramitās.

After Simhavikrīḍita samādhi (師子遊戲三昧), his body illuminated the Trisāhasra-mahāsāhasra lokadhātu (三千大千

世界) just as the bright clear Sun or the full moon illuminates the world. Buddha then shows his Prakṛtyātmabhāva (真自性, real form) to all the worlds. The several classes of gods as well as the men of the four continents, Jambudvīpa (閻浮提), Aparagodāna (西牛化), etc., see this Prakṛtyātmabhāva (真自性) and think that the Tathāgata is sitting before them and preaching the doctrine. From this body again issues forth some rays of light, by which all beings of all lokadhātus see Śākyamuni Buddha preaching the Prajñāpāramitā to his saṅgha of monks and congregation of Bodhisattvas.

The Saddharma Lankāvatāra Sūtra (妙法楞伽經) presents us first with this conception, calling it Nisyanda (等流法) or Dharmatānisyanda Buddha (等流佛) and it seems that the term Sambhogakāya was not yet current. We have seen that in Hīnayāna works also, it is pointed out that the super-excellent body of Buddha, endowed with the major and minor signs of great men, was due to the countless meritorious deeds performed by him in his previous lives.

The Chinese rendering of Sambhogakāya by Pao shen (報身) in which Pao ‘報’ means fruit or reward, also indicates that Sambhoga (報身) had no other sense than ‘vipāka’ (異熟) or ‘nisyanda’ (等流). The later Yogācārins called it Parasambhogakāya (他受用身) in order to distinguish it from other kāya called by them Svasambhoga (自受用身). Though the Aṣṭasāhasrikā does not distinguish Sambhogakāya from the Nirmāṇakāya, it refers to the super-excellent body of Buddha as the result of his meritorious acts in previous lives. The Lankāvatāra (楞伽經), by using the expression Vipāka or Vipākastha (異熟), shows a stage of transition from the Hīnayānic conception of Vipākaja-kāya (異熟身) to that of the Mahāyānic Parasambhogakāya (他受用身).

The Body of Bliss (*Sambhoga* - 報身) is so called

because it represents (an existence characterised by) the full enjoyment of the Truth of the great Vehicle, as it is said: 'Perfectly enjoying the Truth or since it takes delight in the Truth'.⁶⁹⁸ The body of Bliss is the reflection of the Cosmic Body in the empirical world in a corporeal form. Buddha appears here as a Supreme God, abiding in the Akaniṣṭha (色究竟天) heaven, surrounded by a host of Bodhisattvas. He is endowed with 32 principal and 80 secondary marks of excellence.⁶⁹⁹ This body is the result of the previous virtuous deeds. The descriptions given of Buddha in the opening sections of the Mahāyāna Sūtras are of this body. The Satasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā may be cited as a good example of this. For pages on end there are descriptions of every part of Buddha's body, of rays proceeding from his head, hands and feet and even fingers, reaching up to the extremities of the world.⁷⁰⁰ Only the Bodhisattvas who have reached the tenth stage can perceive-the body of Bliss, and not others, is the opinion of some Mādhyamika teachers.⁷⁰¹

Dharmakāya (法身)

The three kāyas belong strictly, to the realm of Samvṛti, worldly and transcendental, and as such they were treated as Rūpa or Nirmāṇa-kāya by the early Mahāyānists, including Nāgārjuna. The only real kāya of Buddha is the Reality as conceived by the Mahāyānists, and is not different from the things of beings of the universe. Though an attempt

⁶⁹⁸ Buston, Vol. I, p. 129.

⁶⁹⁹ dvātriṃśal lakṣaṇāsītivyāñjanātmā muner ayam;
sāmbhogiko mataḥ kāyo mahāyānopabhogataḥ.

AbhisamayĀlaṃkāraĀloka of Haribhadra, G.O.S., Baroda, p. 526.

⁷⁰⁰ Śata Sāhasrikā, pp. 2 ff.

⁷⁰¹ This is the view of Dharmamitra the Mādhyamika, as we learn from Buston Vol. I (pp. 131 ff.). His work is called Prasphuṭapāda, and is preserved only in Tibetan.

to define it by the current words and expressions is bound to be not only incorrect but misleading, the Mahāyānic texts tried to give an idea of it as far as the language permitted.

The Kārikā⁷⁰² and the Siddhi (等流法) call it Svabhāvika or Svabhāvakāya (自性身). It is, according to them immeasurable and illimitable. It fills all space. It is the basis of the Sambhoga and Nirmāṇa kāyas. It is devoid of all marks (*mahāpūrṇa-laksanas*, 大滿相) and is inexpressible (*niṣprapañca*, 戲論). It is possessed of eternal, real and unlimited guṇas (功德). It has neither citta nor rūpa, and again Dharmakāya Buddhas may have their individual Sambhogakāya but they have all one Dharmakāya. It can only be realised within one's own self (*pratyātmavedya*, 自證) and not described, for that would be like the attempt of a blind man to describe the Sun, which he has never seen.

The Aṣṭasāhasrikā and other Prajñāpāramitās, though unrelenting in their negation of every possible statement about the reality, never assert that Tathatā (真如) or Śūnyatā (空性) or Dharmakāya (法身) in its real sense is also non-existing. The statements like:

“Suchness is immutable, unchangeable, beyond concept and distinctions.”

(tathatāvīkāra nirvikāravīkalpā nirvikalpā).

show rather a positive conception of the reality than a purely negative one. In regard to the Dharmakāya also the Aṣṭasāhasrikā makes similar statements. It says that:

“He who knows that the dharmas, existing in the world or preached by the Tathāgata, have no more existence than things

⁷⁰² Kārikā (kārika): concise statement in verse of, doctrine; quoted in A Sanskrit English Dictionary, Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages, print 14 times, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997, p. 274.

seen in a dream and does not enquire whence the Tathāgata comes and where he goes, realises the Tathāgata through dharmatā.”

The Buddhakāya, that people speak of, arises through cause and condition like the sound of flute; it involves really no appearance or disappearance. Those, who run after the form and voice of the Tathāgata and conceive of his appearance and disappearance are far from the Truth. Nor further statements than this can be made about the Reality, for that would be again prapañca.

When the Aṣṭasāhasrikā asserts that the Tathāgata does not exist, it refers to that Tathāgata as conceived by one on reading the Mahāyāna texts. Even the Bodhisattvas, unless and until they reach the tenth bhūmi, cannot extricate themselves from a conception of the Tathāgatakāya, however, subtle it may be (e.g., the *Svasambhogakāya*). They are still under a delusion and it is delusion that the Prajñāpāramitā endeavours to remove by asserting that there is no Tathāgata. The Vajracchedikā to which the Aṣṭasāhasrikā as well as the Bodhicaryāvatāra (菩薩藏經)⁷⁰³ refer,

“He who endeavoured to see me through my form and voice could not see me because a Buddha is to be seen in the sense of dharmatā (nature of dharmas), for the leaders (of men) have only dharmakāya. That dharmatā is unknowable so also is the Tathāgata”.

(dharmato buddha draṣṭavya dharmakāya hī nayakāyah, dharmatā cāpy avijñeyā na sā sakyā vijñānituṃ).

The conception of Dharmakāya was of special interest to the Yogācārins. The Lankāvatāra in describing it says that Dharmatā (自性法) of Buddha is without any substratum

⁷⁰³ GBWL, 42.

(*nirālamba*) and lies beyond the range of functioning organs of sense, proofs or signs and hence beyond the vision of Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas or the non-Mahāyānists. It is to be realised only within one's own self.

The Śūtrāṅkārā calls it Svābhāvika-dharmakāya (自性身). It is one and the same kāya in all Buddhas, very subtle, unknowable and eternal. The Trimśikā (惟識三十論頌) explains the Dharmakāya as the transformed āsraya (所依, *substratum*) - the ālayavijñāna (阿賴耶識) the transformation being effected by knowledge (*jñāna*, 成智) and the suppression of the two evils (*dausṭhulyas*, 二障), viz., kleśāvaraṇa (煩惱障) and jñeyāvaraṇa (所知障).

The Ālōka on the Abhisamayāṅkārakārikā (現觀莊嚴論) also explains the Dharmakāya in a similar way. There are two kinds of Dharmakāya, one being the Bodhipākṣika (菩提分) and the other dharmas, which are themselves pure and productive of clear knowledge (*niṣprapañca-jñānātmanā*, 真智不戲論) and the other the transformed āsraya (所依) of the same which is then called Svabhāvakāya (自性身).

The goal of Bodhisattvās is to realise the Dharmakāya. Every being has the Dharmakāya, or the Dharmakāya comprises all beings of the world, but as they are blinded by avidyā, they do not realise this fact. What the Bodhisattva aims at is the removal of this avidyā (無明) and the realisation of the fact that he is the same as the Dharmakāya.

As the Dharmakāya, Buddha fully realises his identity with the Absolute (*dharmata*, *śūnyatā*, 性空) and unity (*samatā*, 大) with all beings. It is the oneness with the Absolute that enables Buddha to intuit the Truth, which it is his sacred function to reveal to phenomenal beings.

This is the fountain-source of his implicit strength which he concretizes in the finite sphere. The Sambhoga-kāya is the concrete manifestation to himself (*svasambhoga*) and to the elect (*parasam-bhoga*) the power and splendour of god-head. In furtherance of the great resolve to succour all beings, Buddha incarnates himself from time to time in forms best calculated to achieve this end (*nirmāṇakāya*).

The Prajñā-pāramitā texts repeatedly ask us to consider Buddha as Dharmakāya, and not in the overt form which appears to us.⁷⁰⁴ Dharmakāya is the essence, the reality of the universe. It is completely free from every trace of duality. It is the very nature of the universe and is therefore also called the svābhāvika-kāya.⁷⁰⁵ The Dharmakāya⁷⁰⁶ is still a Person, and innumerable merits and powers etc. are ascribed to him.⁷⁰⁷

The Relation among Nirmāṇa-kāya, Sambhoga-kāya

⁷⁰⁴ye mām rūpeṇa cādrākṣur ye mām ghoṣeṇa anvayuh
mithyāprahāṇa-prasṛtā na mām draṅṣyanti te janāḥ
dharmato Buddhā draṣṭavyā dharmakāya hi nāyakāḥ
dharmatā cāpy avijñeyā na sā śakyā vijñānitum
Vajracchedikā. p. 43, quoted in MKV. p. 448; Bodhicaryāvatāra, Ācārya Śāntideva, p. 421.

uktaiḥ hy etad Bhagavata:
dharmakāya Buddhā Bhagavantaḥ mā khalu punar imāṁ bhikṣavaḥ
satkāyaṁ kāyaṁ manyadhvaṁ dharmakāya pariniṣpattito mām bhikṣavo
draṅṣyanty eṣa ca Tathāgatakāyaḥ.

Aṣṭaśāhasikā - Prajñā - pāramitā, (Bib. Indica), p. 94. mukhyato
dharmakāyas tathāgataḥ. Abhisamayālaṁkāraloka of Haribhadra,
G.O.S., Baroda. p. 181. See also pp. 205, 521ff.

⁷⁰⁵sarvākārām viśuddhiṁ ye dharmāḥ prāpta nirāsravāḥ;
svābhāviko muneh kāyas teṣāṁ prakṛti-lakṣaṇaḥ.
Abhisamayālaṁkāraloka of Haribhadra, G.O.S., Baroda, p. 523.

⁷⁰⁶Outlines of Mahāyāna, pp. 223 - 4.

⁷⁰⁷Abhisamayālaṁkāraloka of Haribhadra, G.O.S., Baroda, pp. 523 ff.

and Dharma-kāya

The three-body gospel of *Nirmāṇa-kāya*, *Sambhoga-kāya* and *Dharma-kāya* grew out to be a developed form of *Mahāyāna* principle. The three-body represents as: the *Nirmāṇa-kāya* is the assumed or apparitional body, a form verily of the historical Buddha which is to be revered as such. Being so much under stress his disciples came to venerate 'The Lord of Compassion' as *Supra-historical* and one who was never apart from them. The transformation body of the enlightened one is supposedly beyond time and space, formless, without colour or confrontation, unlimited in scope and primordial, the *Tathāgata*.

The *suprahistorical* body of the Buddha manifested again and again out of compassion for the sentient beings of the *Saha loka*, the world of living beings.

The transformed body of the Buddha appeared in two other forms of the *Sambhoga-kāya* and *Dharma-kāya*. *Sambhoga-kāya* is bliss-body, enjoyment body which latter does not mean physical pleasure of sensuous kind, but it is so called because of the merit of enjoying various virtues *Sambhoga-kāya* is also spiritually known to be formless and without colour.

The accomodating body of the Buddha called *Dharma-kāya* is the truth body. It is *Dharma* or *Law* itself. As truth it is also divinely conceived to be formless and colourless.

In order to understand the above doctrine, one may reverse their order. Without *Dharma-kāya* as basis, the two others *Sambhoga-kāya* and *Nirmāṇa-kāya* cannot be. Similarly without *Sambhoga-kāya* the transformation body is incomprehensible.

The Awakened one in his transformed body of the historical Buddha is still one with the formless Dharma-kāya and invisible Nirmāṇa-kāya. Mahāyāna equates Dharma-kāya with Śūnyatā or Emptiness. This is truth and wisdom that is perfect. It has rightly been cognized that emptiness or Śūnyatā is neither the negative or static state, but ever emptying it is a constant and dynamic activity that is involved into truth, Dharma. Sambhoga-kāya accomplished by fulfillment of Dharma bears a physical form, though it is ultimately formless and colourless. The Dharma-kāya is the ultimate truth which is emptying itself and is boundless openness.



CHAPTER EIGHT

THE BUDDHA'S MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS THROUGH BUDDHA BODY PERCEPTIONS

The concepts of Śūnyatā (空性) and Bodhisattvahood (菩薩) find their culmination in the Tathāgata (如來), who is the embodiment of the perfection of all virtues. How a Bodhisattva (菩薩) acquires that position and how the transformation takes place are a matter of speculation for a Pṛthakjana and a path of strong footing for the Bodhisattvas Mahāsattvas (菩薩摩訶薩). The position of the latter, that is the Bodhisattvas Mahāsattvas is so high that in certain cases they are venerated in the same way as a '*Samyak-sambodhi*' (正等覺). An instance may be cited from the epithets used and the attributes paid to Venerable Avalokiteśvara (觀世音菩薩). The Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra (莊嚴經) may be cited in order to substantiate this point. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things to discuss the Lakṣaṇas (characteristics, 好相) and Anuvyañjanas (minor signs of the Buddha) as well as the major characteristics of the Buddha (佛陀) through the transference of body (*kāya*, 身) perceptions in the history of Buddhism (佛教) in detail.

The Buddha-kāya Concept in Pāli Scriptures

While tracing the origin and evolution of the Buddha-kāya (佛身) concept, one is led to the original explanations offered in Pāli Scriptures regarding the personality of Śākyamuni (釋迦牟尼佛) who attained Buddhahood (佛果) after years of religious austerities. Śākyamuni was an ordinary human being, a historical person who with his own

karma (業) at his very birth as all other human beings, but with effort and determinate mind to eliminate all his bad karma and suffering, attained the final liberation to be an awakened one at the age of thirty-five.⁷⁰⁸

Then he found a system of philosophy and ethics which later on came to be known as Buddhism.

The Dīgha Nakayā gave expression to the conception of Buddha in the following words:

“The Blessed One is an arhat, a fully awakened one, endowed with knowledge and good conduct, happy, a knower of the world, unsurpassed, a leader able to control men, a teacher of men and gods, the awakened, the blessed. He knows thoroughly the worlds of gods, māras, recluses, brahmins and men, and having known them he makes his knowledge known to others. He preaches the dhamma (doctrines), which is excellent in the beginning, middle and end, etc.”⁷⁰⁹

(Bhagavā arahāṃ sammasambuddho vijjācaraṇasampanno lokavidū anuttaro purisadhammasārathi sathā devamanussānam buddho bhagavā. So imaṃ lokam sadevakaṃ sabrahmakam sasamaṇa-brāhmaṇaṃ pajam sadevaṃ sayam abhiññā sacchi katvā pavedeti. So dhammseti adikalyāṇaṃ, etc).

A description like this does not suggest that Buddha was originally more than a man, a mortal. In the cosmology of the Buddhists, the gods of the various heavens, the highest of which is Brāhmaloka (梵天),⁷¹⁰ are only beings of superior merit and power, but they are inferior, in the matter of spiritual attainments, to the saints or Arahatas (阿羅漢). So in

⁷⁰⁸ Sn, pp. 76 ff; M, I, pp. 166 ff, 246 ff.

⁷⁰⁹ D. I, pp. 87-88; LS, pp. 144, 376; cf. Lalitavistara ed. P.L. Vaidya, BST, I, 1958, p. 3.

⁷¹⁰ In the Mahāyānic works also, as for instance, in the Dasa., it is stated that a Bodhisattva can become a Mahābrahma in the ninth bhūmi if he so wished.

this description, the Hīnayanists do not attribute any transcendental or theistic element to Buddha. All they say is that Śākyamuni, by pure and simple spiritual culture in this life and as a result of the accumulated merits of his previous lives, reached the highest stage of perfection and attained not only knowledge and power superior to any man and god but also the highest knowledge and power attainable.

In the Majjhima Nikāya, Ānanda explains why Buddha should be considered superior to the Arahatas as well, although both arrived at the same goal. He says that there is not a single bhikkhu, who can be regarded as endowed with all the qualities in all their forms as possessed by Buddha. Moreover, a Buddha is the originator of the path not existing before, a knower and promulgator of the mārga, which is only followed by the Śrāvakas (聲聞).⁷¹¹

In a land where the tendency to deify saints is so strong, it lies to the credit of the early Hīnayanists that they were able to retain the human conception of Buddha even a century or two after his actual existence, when the scriptures may be regarded as having been out into a definite shape. It is true, but, as he was a great personage, the Enlightened One, he was looked upon already in his lifetime by the members of his Order as a superhuman being with divine virtues:

“There are monks, these thirty-two marks peculiar to a great man, and for that great man who possesses them only two careers are open”.

(Dvāttimsimāni bhikkhave, mahāpurisassa mahāpurisa lakkhanāni yehi samannāgatassa mahāpurisassa dveca gatiyo bhavanti anaññā: sace kho pana agāpasma anagāriyam pabbajati, araham hoti sammāsambuddho loke vicattacchado. idha bhikkhave mahāpuriso suppatitthita pādo hoti...)⁷¹²

⁷¹¹ M, III, 8.

⁷¹² D, Lakkhana Sutta, ix, 236.

The texts tell us that the Buddha-body is endowed with the thirty-two marks of the Superman, and again that the Tathāgata's body is made of diamonds and has ten powers and the fourfold 'fearlessness'. Thus, his disciples put their absolute trust in Śākyamuni (釋迦牟尼佛), and praised him with various appellatives.

Śākyamuni himself said that he was the All-knowing and the Tathāgata (如來), and acknowledged his own superhuman nature which was greatly widened and enlarged. Though his death showed his own human limitations subject to transience, his devoted followers could not but look upon Śākyamuni as a superhuman personage. Passages such as the following:

“Ānanda, if the Tathāgata so wishes, he can live for a kalpa or for the rest of the kalpa.” (ramaniyam Ānanda rājagaham ramaniyo gijjhakūto pabbato. yassa kassaci Ānanda cattāro iddhipādā bhāvitā bahulikātā yānikātā vatthukatā anutthitā paricitā susamāraddhā, so ākankamano kappam vā tiṭṭheyya kappāvesam vā tathāgatassa kho Ānanda cattāro iddhipādā bhāvitā bahulikātā,... so Ākankhamāno Ānanda tathāgato kappam vā tiṭṭheyya kappāvesam vā ti.)⁷¹³

And, 'The Buddha put his golden foot out from the coffin' may be regarded as the expressions of confidence of his followers who esteemed Śākyamuni as an imperishable, superhuman personality. Thus this superhuman nature of the Buddha was transmitted to later generations and enlarged with the passage of the composition of Buddha legends like the Jātakas. According to such literature the Enlightenment of the Buddha was attained not only by means of his practice of austerities for several years, but also by dint of the immeasurable good works in his previous lives, during numberless kalpas (劫 杷) and Śākyamuni is described as a

⁷¹³ D, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, xiii, 182.

superhuman being who has the thirty-two signs of perfection and the eighty marks of excellence, and eighteen exclusive properties.

As we see, these adherents considered the Buddha (佛陀) to be a great teacher and naturally, superhuman qualities came to be attributed to him, not only after his death, but even while he was alive. These qualities both intellectual and moral and even physical sufficed to make him transform from a human being to the position of the ultimate reality of the world in later Hīnayāna (小乘) and Mahāyāna Teachings (大乘佛教).

The View of the Buddha in Early Periods (the Classification of Buddhist sects)

Such a view of the Buddha-body (佛身) was characteristic of the period of traditional Schools, the Sthaviravādin (上坐部) and the Mahāsāṅghika (大眾部). And the Schools developed further these views.

In the Ariyapariyesana Sutta of the Theravādins is mentioned that Buddha attained omniscience and that he did not seek Nibbāna (涅槃). He sought Samyak Sambuddhahood (正等覺),⁷¹⁴ in order to propound, preach and promulgate hitherto unknown religious and philosophical views. He became a Seer and visualized highest Truth or the Reality — the Truth which was so deep and subtle that he was at first hesitant to preach the same to the people at large, as it would do more harm to them than good. He stated:

“I am the all-conqueror, I am omniscient, I am untouched by all worldly objects. I am perfect in this world; I am a teacher incomparable; I am the only enlightened, tranquilized and have extinguished everything.”

⁷¹⁴ DCBT, pp. 337.

(sabbobibho sabbavido'hamasmi, sabbesu dhammesu anopalitto. ahañ hi arahā loke, ahañ satthā anuttaro, eko'mhi sammāsambuddho sitibhūto 'smi nibbuto).⁷¹⁵

Such utterances may well be the basis of the Mahāsāṅghika conception of Buddha. Buddha, it is said, at the intervention of Brahma, decided to preach his doctrines in a modified form for the benefit of the mediocre searchers after Truth to enable them to achieve their desired end. This modified teaching consists of the four Ārya truths (*Ariya saccas*, 四妙諦), Eightfold Path (*Aṭṭhāṅgika-magga*, 八正道), and the Law of Causation (*Paticcasamuppāda*, 緣起, 因緣生起), the subject-matter of His first discourse. The Mahāyānist took the above decision of Buddha to establish their thesis that only an omniscient Buddha could realize the highest Truth and that his disciples, who heard the first discourse (*Dhamma-cakkappavattana-sutta*, 轉法輪經), became known as the Śrāvakas (聲聞), who could attain perfection (*Arahathood*, 阿羅漢果) only by observing the instructions contained 'in the discourse; in other words, they would realize only absence of individual soul (*anatta-pudgalanairātmya*, 我空) and not the non-existence (*dharmasuñyatā*, 法空) or sameness (*tathatā*, 如來) of all phenomenal beings and objects.

The Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins along with their offshoots conceived of Buddha as a human being, who attained perfection (*Buddhahood*) and became omniscient at Bodhgayā. Until then he was subject to all human frailties common to a pious and meritorious person. The Mahāsāṅghikās did not subscribe to this view as they contended that how could one who was the best of all divine beings in merit and knowledge in his existence just prior to his birth as Prince Siddhārtha (士達多), become an ordinary

⁷¹⁵ M, Ariyapariyesana Sutta, I, 171.

human being. Hence his appearance in the mortal world was only fictitious in order to follow the ways of the world (*lokānuvartana*). He had achieved all the perfections in his previous existences as a Bodhisattva.

The Mahāsāṅghikās, therefore, attributed to Gautama Buddha (瞿曇佛) not only supra-mundane existence but also all perfections and omniscience from his so-called birth in the womb of Queen Māyā, and not from his attainment of Bodhi at Bodhgayā. It should be noted that the Mahāsāṅghikās had in mind Buddha Gautama of Saha lokadhātu (娑婆世界) and not the countless Buddhas of the innumerable lokadhātus as conceived by the Mahāyānist.

The Mahāsāṅghikās and their offshoots mention specifically that:

1/ Buddha's body is entirely supra-mundane (*lokottara*, 出世間). The eighteen dhātus (界) bereft of impure dharmās (無漏). The vocal, physical are dissociated from impurities (*āsrava-visamyukta*). The body has nothing worldly (*laukika*); it is purity only (*anāsrava-mātra*) and indestructible.

2/ His material body (*Rūpakāya*, 色身) is 'unlimited' as a result of his unlimited past merits. Paramārtha (真諦) explains 'unlimited' as 'immeasurable' and 'innumerable'. It can be either large or small, and it can also be of any number. In his created body (*Nirmāṇa-kāya*, 應身) he can appear anywhere in the universe.

The Kathāvatthu (論辯遯)⁷¹⁶ throws further light on the above. It states that, according to the Vetulyakas, the doctrine that the Buddha does not live in the world of men, neither should he be located anywhere and it is his created form (*abhinimmito jino*) that delivered the religious discourses.

⁷¹⁶ Kathāvatthu, ed. A.C. Taylor, London: PTS, 1894-95, XVII. 1 & 2.

The Theravādins account for this heresy by saying that it is due to the literal but wrong interpretation of the passage.⁷¹⁷

“Buddha, born and enlightened in this world, overcame this world and remained untouched by the things of the world.”

(Bhagavā loke jāto loke sambuddho lokam abhibhuyya viharati anūpalitto lokenā ti).⁷¹⁸

This is supplemented by further discussions in the Kathāvatthu relating to the heresies also attributed to the Vetulyakas, viz., Navattabbam:

“It should not be said that Buddha lived in the world of men” – (xviii. 1);

(Buddho bhagava manussaloke aṭṭhāsī ti).

“Buddhas exist in all corners of the world” (xi.6)

(sabbā disā Buddhā tiṭṭhantā ti).

“The discourses are delivered by created forms” (xviii. 2).

(abhinimmitena desito ti).

These show that according to the opponents of the Theravādins the Buddha is omnipresent and, as such, beyond the possibility of location in any particular direction or sphere and that all the preachings of Buddhism have been done by the apparitional images of Buddha.

With his usual naivety, Buddhaghosa (佛音) understood the Vetulyakās as holding the opinion that Buddha remained always in the Tuṣita (兜率天) heaven, where he was before he came to this world. The discussions in the Kathāvatthu (論辯) as also the terse statement of Vasumitra (和須密多) leave

⁷¹⁷ Nalinaksha Dutt, *Buddhist Sects in India*, Delhi: Motilal, rpt. 1998, p. 105.

⁷¹⁸ S, III, 140.

no room for doubt about the fact that Mahāsāṅghikās (大眾部) especially their offshoots, — the Vetulyakas and the Lokottaravādins (說出世部) regarded Buddha as transcendental. From the discussion in the Kāthāvatthu⁷¹⁹ concerning:

“Whether Buddhas mutually differ,”

(atthi buddhanam buddhehi hināṭirekatā ti).

It seems that the Andhakas (按達羅, another offshoot of the Mahāsāṅghikās, 大眾部) were still concerned with the Sambhogakāya (報身) and had not yet arrived at the conception of the Dharmakāya (法身).

Buddhaghosa says that the Andhakas hold that Buddhas differ from one another in some qualities other than attainment like Satipatthāna (四念處), Sammappadhāna (四正勤), etc., the Orthodox school (佛教原始) holding that Buddhas may differ in respect of sarīra (身, body), āyu (壽命, length of life), a prabhāva (發光, radiance) but not in regard to the attainments mentioned above. The discussion in the Kathāvatthu (論辯邊)⁷²⁰ shows that the Uttarāpathakas held the views that Buddhas could have no karunā (慈悲, compassion) and that Buddha’s body was made of anāsrava dharma (清淨法, pure elements).⁷²¹

3/ Buddha’s length of life (*āyu*) is unlimited on account of his past accumulated merits. He lives as long as the sentient beings live.

4/ Buddha’s divine power (*tejas, prabhāva*, 能力) is unlimited. He can appear in one moment all over the worlds of the

⁷¹⁹ Kathāvatthu, op. cit., XXI, 5.

⁷²⁰ Ibid., XXVII, 3.

⁷²¹ Nalinaksha Dutt, Buddhist Sects in India, Delhi: Motilal, 1998, pp. 106-10.

universe.

5/ Buddha is never tired of enlightening sentient beings and awakening pure faith (*viśuddha-sraddhā*) in them. The Chinese commentator explains that Buddha's compassion (*karunā*, 慈悲) is limitless and so in order to enlighten beings interminably, he never enters into Nirvāna.

6/ As his mind is always in meditation, Buddha neither sleeps nor dreams.

7/ Buddha can comprehend everything in one moment (*ekakṣaṇīkacitt*, 刹那). His mind is like a mirror. He can answer any question simultaneously without reflection. In the Kathāvatthu⁷²² this doctrine is attributed to the Andhakas (按達羅), who contend that Buddha has knowledge, of all present matters (*sabbasmim paccuppanne ñānam atthīti*).

8/ Buddha is always aware that he has no impurities (*kṣaya-jñāna*, 盡智) and that he cannot be reborn (*anutpādayjñāna*, 無再生).

What has been stated above finds corroboration in the Mahāvastu (佛本行集經異本) in ornate language thus: The Bodhisattva in his last existence as Siddhārtha Gautama is self-born (*upapāduka*, 自生) and is not born of parents; he sits cross-legged in the womb and preaches there from to the gods, who act as his protectors; while in the womb he remains untouched by phlegm and such other matters of the womb, and he issues out of the womb by the right side without piercing it. He has no lust (*kāma*) and so Rāhula (羅候羅) was also self-born.

Buddha's acquisitions are all supramundane (*lokottara*, 出世間) and cannot be compared to anything worldly. His

⁷²² Kathāvatthu, op. cit., V. 9.

spiritual practices are supramundane and so are his merits, even his bodily movements such as walking, standing, sitting and lying are also supramundane. His eating, his putting on robes and other such acts are also supramundane. It is for following the ways of the world (*lokānuvartana*) that he shows his Īryāpathas. His feet are clean, still he washes them. His mouth smells like the lotus, still he cleanses his teeth. His body is not touched by the sun or wind or rain, still he puts on the garment and lives under a roof. He cannot have any disease and still he takes medicine to cure himself.

In the *Abhidharmakośa* (阿毘曇俱舍論頌) and its *Vyākhyā*, it is said that, according to the *Mahāsāṅghikas*, Buddhas appear at the same time in more than one world and that they are omniscient in the sense that they know all dharmas at the same time. The former statement appears also in the *Kathāvatthu*.⁷²³ In the *Kathāvatthu* and the *Kośa*, no special doctrines about the *Bodhisattva* conception are attributed to the *Mahāsāṅghikās*.

Buddha follows the ways of the world just as much as he follows the transcendental ways. There is nothing common between Him and the beings of the world. If the transcendence of Buddha be admitted, then it follows that the length of his life should be unlimited and that he need not be subject to sleep or dream as he could have no fatigue. As he is ever awake how can he have dreams?

The *lokottara* conception appears only in the introductory portion of the *Mahāvastu*, and so it is evident that the text was originally *Hīnayānic* and that, in course of time, the introductory chapters were added by the *Lokottaravādins*. In the main text, the doctrines mentioned are essentially

⁷²³ *Ibid*, XXI, 6.

Hīnayānic, e.g., the Four Truths (*Ariya saccas*, 四妙諦), the Eightfold Path (*Āṭṭhāṅgika-magga*, 八正道), the Law of Causation (*Pratītyasamutpāda*, 緣起, 因緣生起), Impermanence of Constituents of a Being (*Skandhas*, 蘊), non-existence of Soul (*Anātman*, 無我), Theory of the Effect of past Deeds (*karma*, 業) the Thirty-seven Dharmas leading to Bodhi (*Bodhipakṣīkadharmas*, 三十七(助)道品) and so forth. There is no mention of the non-existence of phenomenal objects (*Dharmasūnyatā*, 法空), of the Three bodies of Buddha (*Trikāya*, 三身) and the two veils (*āvāraṇas*, 障) regarding the impurities (*kleśa*, 煩惱障) and the Truth (*jñeyā*, 所知障).⁷²⁴ The only Mahāyānic doctrines, viz., the four stages of the Practices of Bodhisattva (*Bodhisattva-Caryās*, 菩薩行), the Ten gradual spiritual Stages (*Dasa Bhūmi*, 十地), countless Buddhas and their countless spheres (*Ksetras*, 佛刹) appear more as later additions than as integral parts of the text.⁷²⁵ The Sarvāstivādins along with the Sthaviravādins contended that the living-body of the Buddha contained impure elements, while the Mahāsāṅghika argued that the Buddha-body was free from impure elements.

According to the Samayabhedoparacanacakra (異部宗輪論) the view that the living body of the Buddha is pure is a doctrine of the Mahāsāṅghika (大眾部), the Ekavyāvahārika (一說部), the Lokuttaravādin (說出世部), and the Kurukulaka (計引部). This is described as follows:

- 1/ The Buddha, the Blessed One transcends all worlds;
- 2/ The Tathāgata has no worldly substances (Laukikadharmas);
- 3/ All the words of the Tathāgata preach the Dharma;
- 4/ The Tathāgata explains explicitly all things;

⁷²⁴ *Jñeya*: cognizable, the region or basis of knowledge; quoted in DCBT, 452b.

⁷²⁵ Nalinaksha Dutt, *Buddhist Sects in India*, Delhi: Motilal, 1998, p. 81.

- 5/ The Tathāgata teaches all things as they are;
- 6/ The Tathāgata has physical form (rūpa);
- 7/ The Buddha's authority is unlimited;
- 8/ The life of the Buddha-body is limitless;
- 9/ The Buddha is never tired of encouraging beings to develop faith;
- 10/ The Buddha does not sleep;
- 11/ The Tathāgata is above the need to ponder questions;
- 12/ The Buddha, being always in meditation, utters no word (nāman); nevertheless, he preaches the truth for all beings by means of words and explanations.
- 13/ The Buddha understands all matters instantaneously.
- 14/ The Buddha gains complete understanding with his wisdom equal within a single thought-moment.
- 15/ The Buddhas, unceasingly produce wisdom regarding destruction (of defilements: *kṣaya-jñāna*, 盡 智), and wisdom concerning non-origination (*anutpāda-jñāna*, 無 生 智) until reaching Nirvāna.⁷²⁶

This assertion of the Mahāsāṃghika to the effect that the living Buddha-body is a body without defilements and that the Buddha is a purely superhuman being, was according to the Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣāśāstra (大毘婆沙論),⁷²⁷ supported by a passage from the texts as follows:

“Though the Tathāgata remains in the world, he is supramundane and cannot be defiled by worldly elements.”

A passage of the Āgamas reads,

“The life of our Śākyamuni Buddha is extremely long, because his cosmic body (*dharmakāya*) survives the decay of his physical body,”

It seems also to support the view held by the Mahāsāṃghikas. According to this view, it is not the

⁷²⁶ EB, III, 424.

⁷²⁷ Vol. 76.

Buddha's body which perished at the age of eighty years, but his superhuman character, that is, his true body, because the former is the embodiment of the latter. Such a view may be regarded as a doctrinal development of the teaching of the superhuman nature of the Buddha with the thirty-two signs of perfection and the eighteen exclusive properties. This theory may have been a forerunner of the Mahāyānistic view of the Buddha-body.

The Mahāvastu says:

“There is nothing in the world that would be equal to the Buddha. Everything pertaining to great sages transcends the world.”

(na hi kimcit samyaksambuddhanam lokena samam. atha khalu sarvam eva mahesinam lokottaram.)

According to the Kathāvatthu and its commentary by Buddhaghosa, the same opinion was held by the Andhaka, Uttarāpathaka and Vetulyaka Schools. Contrary to the above theory, the Sthaviravādins (上座部) and the Sarvāstivādins (一切有部) emphasized that the Buddha's physical body contained defilements, i.e., that the Buddha's physical body with defilement, which lasted for eighty years was his real body, while he attained the state of Nirvāna and realised the Cosmic Body free from defilements.

In the opinion of the Sarvāstivādins, although the Buddha has the thirty-two signs of perfection and the eighteen exclusive properties, his physical body is, like those of the ordinary people, a qualified and defiled body produced by karma (業). According to the Samayabhedoparacanacakra (異部宗輪論), the Sarvāstivādins say:

“Not all the words of the Tathāgata preach the Dharma; the Tathāgata does not explicitly explain all things as they are; all the scriptures are not stated with explicit meanings.”

The Sarvāstivādins assert that the Cosmic Body is a blissful result of the accomplishment of morality, contemplation, wisdom, emancipation and insight into emancipation and the cosmic body is nothing but an abstract, static and theoretical Buddha which forms the basis of his physical body.

The Mahāsāṅghikas cite, to support their theory of the absence of defilement in the Buddha's physical body, a passage from the Āgama:

“Though the Tathāgata remains in this world, he is supramundane and cannot be defiled by worldly elements.”

But the Sarvāstivādins interpret the same passage to the effect that by the Buddha's physical body is meant the Tathāgata remaining in this world and his Cosmic Body is designated by saying that he is supramundane and cannot be defiled (*Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*, 大毘婆沙論).⁷²⁸ Such an interpretation makes clear the stand-point of the Sarvāstivādins who distinguish in the abstract the Cosmic Body from the physical body. The difference of views of the Buddha-body between the Mahāsāṅghikās and the Sarvāstivādins seems to derive from the fact that the former views the physical body of the Buddha idealistically and the latter regards it realistically.⁷²⁹ Of the Hīnayāna schools, the Sthaviravādins had very little to do with the kāya conceptions. As Buddha was to them an actual man living in this world like any other human being and subject to all the frailties of body. Metaphorically they sometimes spoke of Buddha as identical with Dhamma without any metaphysical implication but these remarks gave an opportunity to the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahāyānist to put forth their theories

⁷²⁸ Vol. 76.

⁷²⁹ EB, III, 423-6.

of Dharmakāya (法身).

The Sarvāstivādins commenced speculating on the kāya of Buddha, but it was the school of the Mahāsāṅghikās that took up the question of kāya in right earnest and paved the way for the speculations of the Mahāyānists.

In a land where the tendency to deify saints is so strong, that it lies to the credit of the early Hīnayānists that they were able to retain the human conception of Buddha even a century or two after his actual existence...

In the face of such descriptions of Buddha, it would have been difficult for the later Hīnayāna schools to sublimate the human elements in him, had it not been for certain expressions in some of the earlier works of the Piṭaka, which lent themselves to other interpretations. Some of these expressions are:

1. "Buddha said to Ānanda just before his Parinibbāna "the dhamma and vinaya that have been preached me will be your teacher after my death".

(Yo vo Ānanda mayā dhammo ca vinayo ca desito paññatto so vo maṃ accayena satthā.)⁷³⁰

The Dhamma (法) and Vinaya (律) clearly refer to the collection of doctrines and disciplinary rules delivered by the Buddha. It is also evident from the conversation of Ānanda with Gopaka-Moggallāna,⁷³¹ in which the former explains why the monks after Buddha's death should not be regarded as without refuge (*appatisarana*, 無處歸依). He says that they have now a refuge in Dhamma (*dhammapatisarana*), which, he points out, are the doctrines and disciplinary rules.

⁷³⁰ D, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, 242.

⁷³¹ M, III, p. 7 ff.

2. “So a Śākyaputtīyasamana may say that he is born of Bhagavā, through his mouth, born of his doctrine, made of his doctrine, etc. Though in this passage Dhamma is equated to Brahmā, the context shows that there is no metaphysical sense in it; it is only to draw a parallel between a Brāhmaṇa and a Śākyaputtīyasamana that Dhammakāya is equated to Brahmakāya.”

(Bhagavato’ mhi putto oraso mukhato jāto dhammajō dhammanimmito dhammdāyādo iti. tam kissa hetu? tathāgatassa h’etam adhivacanam. dhammakayo iti pi brahmakāyo iti pi, dhammabhūto it pi ti.)

“Just as a brāhmaṇa would say that he is born of brahmā, through his mouth.”

(Brāhmano putto oraso mukhato jāto brāhmajō brāhmanimmito brāhmadāyādo).⁷³²

3. Vakkali on his death-bed became very eager to see Buddha in person; so Bhagavā came to him and said:

(Alam vakkali kim te pūtikāyena diṭṭhena. yo kho vakkali dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati. yo maṃpassati so dhammaṃ passati).⁷³³

Just after saying this, Buddha referred to his Dhamma of impermanence (*anicca*, 無常). There are in the Nikāyas many passages of this import, which may well be taken as precursors of the later Mahāyānic conceptions and probably formed the basis of their speculations. But the passages, when read as they stand, do not appear to bear any metaphysical sense. In this passage, Buddha refers to his body as pūtikāya (不淨, body of impure matter), and to lay stress on his doctrines, he says that his dhamma should be looked upon with the same awe and reverence by his disciples as they regarded his person.

4. The passage in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, where Buddha says that

⁷³² N. Dutt, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Calcutta, 1976, p. 159.

⁷³³ S, Vakkali sutta, III, p. 110 ff.

he is neither a god, nor a gandhabba, nor a man, has been taken by Marson-Oursel as showing trace of the Mahāyānic kāya conceptions. It is not impossible to read some metaphysical ideas into the passage, though probably the compiler of the Suttas did not mean to convey them. Drona Brāhmaṇa, noticing the sign of wheel in the feet of Buddha, enquired of him whether he was a deva, a gandhabba (乾撻婆), a yakkha (夜叉) or a mortal. Buddha replied that he was none of these beings as he had got rid of the āsavas (*impurities*) by the continuance of which one remains a deva, gandhabba, yakkha or a mortal. Just as a lotus is born in water, grows in it but it remains above and is apart from it, so also Buddha was born in the world, grew up in it but overcame it (*abhibhuyya*) and lived unaffected by the same. Therefore, he asked the Brāhmaṇa not to regard him as anything but the Buddha.

Even if it be assumed that the Mahāyānic ideas are latent in the above-mentioned expressions, though not adequately expressed, the discussion in the Kathāvatthu to establish the historical existence of Buddha as against those who denied it and the manner in which references were made to the events of Buddha's life as depicted in the Nikāyas leaves no vestige of doubt about the opinion of the Theravādins regarding the kāya of Buddha.

Though the terms Rūpakāya (色身) and Dharmakāya (法身) found their way into the later Pāli works from Mahāyāna or semi-Mahāyāna works, these did not bring with them any non-realistic sense.

Buddhaghōṣa even as late as the fifth century A.D. refers thus to the kāyas:

“That bhagavā, who is possessed of a resplendent rūpakāya, adorned with eighty minor signs and thirty-two major signs of a great man, and possessed of a dhammakāya purified in every way and glorified by sila, samādhi, etc., full of splendour and virtue, incomparable and fully awakened”.

(Yo pi so bhagavā asiti anuvyañjana-patimandita-dvattimsa-mahāpurisalakkhaṇa-vicitra-rūpakāyo

sabbākāraparisuddha silakkhandhādīgunaratana samiddha-
dhammakāyo samahattapuññamahatta ... appatipuggalo araham
sammāsambuddho).⁷³⁴

Though Buddhaghosa's conception was realistic, he was not immune from the religious bias of attributing superhuman powers to Buddha. In the *Aṭṭhasālīnī* (論殊勝義) he says that during the three months of his absence from the world while Buddha was engaged in preaching Abhidhamma to his mother in the Tuṣita (兜率) heaven, he created some Nimmīta-buddhas as exact replicas of himself. These Nimmīta-buddhas could not be distinguished from the real Buddha in voice, words and even the rays of light that issued forth from his body. The created Buddha could be detected only by the gods of the higher classes and not by the ordinary gods or men of the world. In short, the early Hīnayānists conceived Buddha's Rūpakāya (色身) as that of a human being, and his Dhammakāya (法身) as the collection of his Dhammas, doctrines and disciplinary rules collectively.⁷³⁵

The *Lalitavistara* (神通遊戲經) gives us a picture of Buddha more superhuman than human and yet far from the Mahāyānic conceptions of the Sambhogakāya (報身) and Dharmakāya (法身), though in the last two chapters it dwells on the doctrine of Tathatā (真如). In the *Lalitavistara* Buddha is deified but there are no traces of the Trikāya (三身) conception. It says in many places that Buddha appears in the world of men for lokānuvartana (i.e., to follow the ways of the world), which, if he so desired, he could avoid by remaining in one of the heavens and attaining emancipation there. The running account of Buddha's life is interrupted at times — probably these are afterthoughts of the compiler —

⁷³⁴ PP, 234.

⁷³⁵ N. Dutt, *Op. Cit.*, 142.

by dialogues between Buddha and Ānanda, in order to make the treatise appear Mahāyānic and not Hīnayānic.⁷³⁶

At one place, Buddha explains to Ānanda that, unlike human beings, he did not stay in the filth of a mother's womb but in a jewel-casket (*ratnavyūha*, 寶藏) placed in the womb, which was as hard as a diamond but soft to the touch like the down of a Kācilindika bird (迦亶鄰陀), and that his birth and other events connected with it were all superhuman. At the same time, he prophesied that there will be, in the future, men unrestrained in act, thought and speech, ignorant, faithless, proud, and believing without deliberation what is heard by them, who will not believe in the superhuman nature of his birth.

One can perceive through the poetical exaggerations of the Lalita-vistara (神通遊戲經) that it has in view the historical Buddha endowed with the major and minor signs — a human being after all, who requires to be reminded by the heavenly musicians of the acts of his past lives and his resolution to become a Buddha and rescue beings from misery, and who needs a stimulus to renounce the world in order to fulfill his resolution. In connection with the offer of houses, which were made by the gods to the Bodhisattva when he was in the womb, it is said that in order to please all the gods who offered houses, he caused his appearances by means of the Mahāvyūha Samādhi (大莊嚴定). This does not clearly reflect any idea of the Nirmāṇakāya (應身, 化身) — it appears more like some of the miracles mentioned in the Nikāyās. In the last chapter of the Lalitavistara where Buddha's attributes are mentioned, he is called the great drum (*mahādruma*, 大鼓) because he possessed a body of Dharmakāyajñāna (knowledge of *Dharmakāya*, 法身智).

⁷³⁶ Ibid., 144.

As this chapter is very likely a Mahāyāna (大乘佛教) addition, we may reasonably say that the Lalitavistara in its original form was a treatise of the Sarvāstivādins (一切有部), who viewed Buddha as a human being with superhuman attributes.

The Buddha-body Perception in Mahāyāna

The early Mahāyānists, whose doctrines are mostly to be found in the Aṣṭādasasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā (十八千頌般若波羅密), along with the school of Nāgārjuna (龍樹) (i.e., *Mādhyamika*, 中論) conceived of two kāyas:

i) Rūpa-kāya (色身 / *Nirmāṇakāya*, 應身), denoting bodies, gross and subtle, meant for beings in general, and

ii) Dharma-kāya (法身), which was used in two senses, one being the body of Dharma, (i.e., collection of practices), which makes a being a Buddha, and the other the metaphysical principle underlying the universe — the Reality (*Tathatā*, 真如).

The Yogācāra school (瑜伽論) distinguished the gross rūpakāya from the subtle Rūpa-kāya, naming the former Rūpa or Nirmāṇa-kāya (應身) and the latter Sambhoga-kāya (報身).

The Saddharma Lankāvatāra Sūtra (妙法楞伽經), representing the earliest stage of the Yogācāra (瑜伽論), conceives the Sambhoga-kāya as Nisyanda-buddha or Dharmanisyanda-buddha (等流佛, 法等流, the Buddha produced by the *Dharma*).

The Sūtrālamkāra (楞伽經), uses the term Sambhogakāya for Nisyanda-buddha (等流佛) and

Svābhāvīkākāya (自性身) for Dharmakāya.⁷³⁷

In the *Abhisamayālaṅkārikā* (現觀莊嚴論) and the recast version of the *Pañca-vimśati-sāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (二萬五千頌般若波羅密經), *Sambhogakāya* denotes the subtle body which the Buddhas adopted for preaching the doctrines to *Bodhisattvas*, and *Dharmakāya* the body purified by the practice of the *bodhipākṣika* and other *dharmas*, which constitute a Buddha. For the metaphysical *Dharmakāya* these texts use the term *Svabhāva* or *Svābhāvika-kāya* (自性身).

The *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* (唯識論) retains the conception of the *Kārikā* but adopts a new term *Svasambhogakāya* (自受用身) to denote the *Dharmakāya* of the *Kārikā* and distinguishes the *Sambhogakāya* by naming it *Parasambhogakāya* (他受用身).

The *Prajñā-pāramitās* (般若波羅密經) also maintain the conception that the *Dharmakāya* is produced by *Dharmas*, the highest of which is according to them, the *prajñāpāramitā*, the knowledge which helps a person to realise the *Dharma-Śūnyatā* (法空). The *Aṣṭādasasāhasrikā Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* (十八千頌般若波羅密經), takes up the question, whether the honour shown to the relics of the *Tathāgata-kāya* (如來身) is more meritorious than the honour shown to the *Prajñā-pāramitā* e.g., by making a copy of it. The answer given is that the relics depend on the body purified by the *prajñā-pāramitā*, and therefore it is the source of Buddhas. The source deserves more honour than the remnants of the fruit (relics of Buddha) produced therefrom, and therefore it is more meritorious to honour the *Prajñā-pāramitā* than the relics. It adds that all teachings of Buddha issue from the

⁷³⁷ N. Dutt, *Op. Cit.*: 136-7.

Prajñā-pāramitā, and the Dharmabhāṅakas (法師) preserve and propagate them; so the Dharmabhāṅakās should also be respected. They are protected by the Dharmakāya, the Prajñā-pāramitā.

Sarvajñatā (*omniscience*, 一切智) is pervaded (*paribhāvita*) by the prajñā-pāramitā from Sarvajñatā issues the body of Tathāgata, the relics of whom are worshipped; hence Prajñā-pāramitā deserves greater honour.⁷³⁸

The Mahāyāna finds the true body of the Buddha in the unconditioned voidness, i.e. the Cosmic Body which transcends even the Buddha's physical body. It also believes that the Cosmic Body or the unconditioned voidness reveals itself as a temporary physical body with the merciful intention of view conveying the truth to beings. Such a view may have been derived from the idealistic view of the Mahāsāṅghikas who consider the physical body of the Buddha as superhuman. However, the characteristic of the doctrine of Mahāyāna consists in the fact that the Mahāyāna finds the true body of the Buddha in voidness or absolute truth without being limited to the Idea of transcendental undefiled Cosmic Body as the true body of the Buddha advocated by the Mahāsāṅghika.

In the Vajrachedikā-prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra (金剛般若波羅密經) which says:

“He who sees me by outward appearance, (and) seeks me in sound, treads the hetetodox path, (and) cannot perceive the Tathāgata.”

(若以色見我，以音聲求我，是人行邪道，不能見如來).⁷³⁹

⁷³⁸ N. Dutt, Op. Cit, 145.

⁷³⁹ 金剛般若波羅密經, 佛學業書, 台鸞, 一九九八, p. 130.

and in the Aṣṭādasasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā (十八千頌般若波羅密經) which says:

“Indeed, the Tathāgata cannot be seen as a physical body, the cosmic body in the Tathāgata”.

(Na hi tathāgato rūpa-kāyato draṣṭavyaḥ dharmakāyas Tathāgata)

and in the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra (妙法蓮花經) which says:

“Tathāgata is the eternal imperishable Buddha who has immeasurable life, and displays extinction only as an expedience.”

This is shown the Mahāyānistic view of the Buddha-body that the Buddha is identified with absolute truth or Śūnyatā. As mentioned above, “Those who perceive the dharma, perceive me” said Śākyamuni to his disciples, and now in Mahāyāna the Dharma is identified with voidness, absolute truth, the wisdom of the imperceptible voidness or Prajñā-pāramitā. And, in Mahāyāna Buddhism it is emphasized that the Cosmic Body or the unlimited and imperishable substance of Enlightenment which is absolute truth and voidness, transcending the physical body of the Buddha, is identified with the blissful or matured body (*Vipāka-kāya*, *Nisyanda-kāya*, 異熟身) which is the result of the perfection of his vows and practices in previous lives. This theory comes from the Buddha legends in which the superhuman nature of Śākyamuni is given. In the suttas of various Buddhas, such as the larger Sukhāvativyūha (無量壽經), the Akṣobhyatathāgatasya-vyūha (阿畜佛國經), Amitābha (阿彌陀佛), Akṣobhiya (阿畜埤佛) and other Buddhas are described as the Cosmic Body, but with the characteristics of the Blissful Body which has form and virtue, coming from the perfection of its vows and practices. Therefore, in Mahāyāna Buddhism there are several theories of the Buddha

body; one is the theory of the twofold body which assumes the Cosmic Body with which the Blissful Body is combined, (the Reward-Body), and Incarnated Body; the second is the theory of threefold body of the Cosmic Body, the Blissful Body and the Incarnated Body and the third is the theory of the fourfold body based on the above mentioned theories, and so forth.

In the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (金光明), *Ruciraketu* (妙懂) and *Kauṇḍīnya* (橋陳如) Brāhmaṇa play the role of skeptics. The former enquires why Śākyamuni, who performed so many meritorious deeds, should have such a short span of life as eighty years. The latter seeks a mustard-like relic of Buddha's body to worship and thus go to heaven. *Ruciraketu* is told by the Buddhas of all lokadhātus that they did not know any man or god who could calculate the length of Śākyamuni's life. They said that it might be possible to count the drops of water in a sea but it would be impossible to ascertain the length of his life. *Kauṇḍīnya* Brāhmaṇa, who only feigned ignorance, was told by *Litcchavikumāra* that, just as it is absurd to expect coconuts from a rose-apple tree, so it is absurd to expect a relic from the *Buddhakāya* (佛身). The Tathāgatas have no origin, they are ever existing and inconceivable. It is only the *Nirmitakāya* that is shown to them. How can a body which has no bone or blood, leave a dhātu, Buddhas have only *Dharmakāya* and there is only the *Dharmadhātu* (法界).

Nirmāṇakāya (應身)

The Mahāyānic texts tried to show on the one hand, that the Hīnayānists were wrong in their belief that Śākyamuni was really a man of flesh and blood and that relics of his body existed, while on the other hand, they introduced two conceptions of *Nirmāṇakāya* (應身) and

Buddhakāya. Whatever is said to have been done by Śākyamuni is accounted for by those texts as the apparent doings of a created body of the Buddhakāya, a shadowy image created to follow the ways of the world (*lokānuvartana*), in order to bring conviction in the heart of the people that the attainment of Buddhahood was not an impossibility. As the Buddhas possess the knowledge of all that is to be done (*kṛtyānusthānajñāna*, 成所作智) they can take any form they desire for the enlightenment of the various classes of beings. The Mahāyānic conception of Nirmāṇakāya is essentially same as that of the Mahāsāṅghikās.

The Prajñā-pāramitās in their quaint way refer to the Nirmāṇakāya or Rūpakāya. The Pañcavimśati-sāhaśrikā Prajñāpāramitā (二萬五千頌般若波羅密經) says that of a Bodhisattva, after acquiring all the necessary Dharmas and practising Prajñā-pāramitā, becomes a Sambuddha, he then renders service to beings of all lokadhātus (世界, worlds) of the ten corners at all times by Nirmāṇamegha (應化云, *Nirmāṇa* clouds). This is called the Nirmāṇikakāya.

From the Chinese sources we are informed that Nāgārjuna, in his commentary on the Prajñā-pāramitā, names it as Mahā Prajñā-pāramitā śāstra, and speaks of two kāyas, rūpakāya and dharmakāya. The former is the body born of parents, possessing the qualities of sentient beings, and is subject to human frailties. It was born in Kosala (橋薩羅) while his Dharmakāya was born at Rājagrha (王舍). The material body was necessary for 'earthly truth'. It was for the deliverance of beings that Buddha assumed different kāyas, different names, birth-places and the ways of emancipation. This

interpretation of rūpa and dharmakāyas is also followed in the Chinese Parinirvāṇa Sūtra (般涅槃經) and Sandhinirmocana Sūtra (深密經).

Some of the Yogācāra (瑜伽論) texts furnish us with the following information regarding the conception of Nirmāṇakāya as prevailing among the Yogācārins:

The Sūtrālamkāra explains the Nirmāṇakāya to be those forms, which are assumed by Buddhas to render service to beings of the various worlds. It generally refers to the human form that Buddha takes in order to make a show of his acquiring the ordinary arts and crafts required by an average man, living a family life and then retiring from it, and ultimately attaining Nirvāṇa by recourse to ascetic practices.

The Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi (唯識論) tells us that the Nirmāṇakāya is meant for Śrāvakas (聲聞), Pratyekabuddhas (辟支佛, 緣覺), Pṛthagjanas (人, common men) and Bodhisattvas (菩薩), who are not yet in one of the ten Bhūmis (地). It may appear in all lands whether pure or impure.

The Chinese commentaries on the Siddhi (法成就) mention various ways, in which Buddha can transform his body or another's body or voice, and his or other's mind, to suit his purpose. Not only could he transform his body or another's body or voice, and his or other's mind, to suit his purpose. Not only could he transform himself into Śākyamuni (釋迦牟尼佛), or Sāriputra into a young girl, but also could create an altogether new apparition body, not, of course, a living, thinking being. Often he assumed the voice of Brahmā or expressed himself through the mouth of Sāriputra (舍利弗) or Subhūti (須菩提), and it was for this reason that we find Sāriputra or Subhūti explaining some of the abstruse Mahāyāna teachings, which they themselves were not expected to understand. The third way in which he could transform his voice was to produce sounds from the sky. His thoughts were supramundane (*lokottara*, 出世界) and pure (*anāsrava*, 清淨). He could produce in mind any thought he liked; in fact, he appeared in his Nirmāṇakāya as Śākyamuni with a mind (*citta*) suited to the ways of the world. He could also impose his thoughts on the minds of others.

The Saddharma Lankāvatāra Sūtra (妙法楞伽經) explains the relation of Nirmāṇakāya to Dharmakāya in the same way as the Kārikā. It states that NirmitaBuddhas are not produced by actions; the Tathāgata is neither in them nor outside them:

“Sarve hi nirmitabuddhā na karmaprabhavā na tesu Tathāgato na cānyatra tebhya Tathāgato”.

It is only when the sons of the Jina (禪那) realise the visible world to have no existence apart from the citta that they obtain the Nirmāṇakāya free from kriyā (作) and saṃskāra (行), and endowed with bala (力), abhiññā (勝智) and vaśita (生). Like the Siddhi, it says that the Tathāgatas by creating Nirmāṇakāya perform the various duties of a Tathāgata (*Tathāgatakr̥tya*, 如來使命). It gives also the interesting information that Vajrapāṇi (金剛首菩薩) serves as an attendant on the Nirmitanirmāṇa Buddhas, and not on the real Buddhas and that the function of such a Buddha is to preach and explain the characteristics of dāna (布施), sīla (持戒), dhyāna (禪定), vimokṣa (解脫) and vijñāna (惟心).

The Nirmāṇa Kāya usually translated as apparitional body is really a body assumed by Buddha in fulfillment of his resolve to save beings from misery. The manifestation of the body of bliss in the empirical world as Gautama (*Śākyamuni*) or other previous and succeeding Tathāgatas is the Nirmāṇakāya of Buddha.⁷⁴⁰ The advent of a Buddha in the world is not an accident, the lucky chance of a human being happening to attain enlightenment. It is a deliberate descent

⁷⁴⁰ Yena Śākyamuni-tathāgatādirūpeṇāsaṃsāraṃ sarvaloka-dhātuṣu sat-tvānāṃ samīhitara arthaṃ samaṅkaroty asau kāyaḥ, prabandhatayānuparato nairmāṇiko buddhasya bhagavataḥ . . . tathā cōktam: karoti yena citrāṇi hitāni jagataḥ samam; ābhavāt so'nupacchinnaḥ kāyo nairmāṇiko muneḥ. AbhisamayĀlaṃkāraĀloka of Haribhadra, G.O.S., Baroda, p. 532.

of the Divinity, incarnating itself as human being; his various (twelve principal) acts from birth to passing away into Parinirvāṇa are make-believe acts, designed to create a sense of kinship with human beings.⁷⁴¹ Gautama is one of the Buddhas; and the Bodhisattvas are other forms chosen by divinity to help man and other beings. As Haribhadra says:

“When some living being requires the explanation of the Doctrine or some other kind of help, then the Lord, by the force of his previous vows, fulfils the purpose of this living being manifesting himself in this or that form”⁷⁴².

Buddha is the Providence that takes the keenest interest in beings. The particulars with regard to the kāya conception cannot be logically demonstrated. They are to be taken as revealed to the elect and communicated by them to others.

In the Hīnayāna religion, the Gautama Buddha is an exalted human being, distinguished from the ordinary mankind by his unique and unaided attainment. He was not certainly God before he attained Bodhi. The historicity of the Buddha (*Śākāyamuni*) is indispensable for that religion. In Mahāyāna, though Gautama is a historical person, he is not the only Buddha, and his occurrence is one of the innumerable acts of divine dispensation. The Mahāyāna religion escapes the predicament of having to depend on any particular historical person as the founder of its religion.

Sambhogakāya (報身)

The Rūpakāya or Nirmāṇakāya was meant for the

⁷⁴¹ See Buston, pp. 133ff. Uttarantra of Asaṅga, pp. 245ff. (Obermiller's Trans. Acta Orientalia, vol. IX, 1931).

⁷⁴² AbhisamayĀlankārĀloka of Haribhadra, G.O.S., Baroda, p. 525.

Śrāvakas (聲聞), Pratyeka-buddhas (辟支佛, 緣覺), Pṛthagjanas (人) and Bodhisattvas, who were not in one of the ten bhūmis, so another kāya had to be devised, a very suitable kāya for the benefit of all Bodhisattvas. This is called Parasambhogakāya (他受用身) as distinguished from Svasambhogakāya (自受用身), a similar subtle body perceived by the Buddhas alone.

It is this Parasambhogakāya (他受用身), which plays the role of a preacher of the various Mahāyāna Sūtras (大乘經典), the scenes being mostly laid either at Gṛdhrakūṭa (靈鷲), the only place where the three dhātus are considered pure and suitable for the appearance of a Sambhogakāya (報身), or in the Sukhāvati-vyūha sūtra (彌陀經 / 無量壽經), or in one of the heavens.

It will be observed from the description of the appearance of Buddha and his manner of preaching the Sūtras that the Mahāyānists were not yet able to forget or rise above the human conception of Buddha of the Hīnayānists. They still gave Śākyamuni the role of the presiding Buddha of the universe, to whom flocked reverently with flowers, incense, etc., all the Bodhisattvas, Śrāvakas and Gṛhapatis of the various lokadhātus of the ten directions, to hear from him the Prajñāparamitā, (般若波羅密經) the Saddharmapundarīka (妙法蓮花經) or the Gandavyūha / Avaiṃśaka-sūtra (華嚴經).⁷⁴³

These Bodhisattvas again had their own tutelary Buddhas, who, according to the Mahāyāna metaphysics, possessed the same Dharmakāya as that of Śākyamuni. They also came or were sometimes sent by their Buddhas, with messages of greetings and flowers as tokens of their regard, to Śākyamuni Buddha whose Buddhakṣetra was then the

⁷⁴³ N. Dutt, *Op. Cit.*, 157.

Saha lokadhātu (娑婆世界). Sometimes the descriptions go so far as to say that the Buddhas themselves came to hear discourses from Śākyamuni Buddha, and the concourse of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas became so great that the Saha lokadhātu had to be cleared of all oceans, mountains, seas, rivers, and cities, as well as of gods, men and other beings.

As we read in the Hīnayāna texts monks used to come to meet Buddha, bringing with them one or two sāmaneras (沙彌), so also we read in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka that on account of insufficiency of space the countless Buddhas could not have with them more than one or two Bodhisattvas as attendants (*upasthāpakas*, 持者).

According to the Satasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā (一百千頌般若波羅密經) and the Pañcavimśati-sāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā (二萬五千頌般若波羅密經), it is an exceedingly refulgent body, from every pore of which steamed forth countless brilliant rays of light, illuminating the lokadhātus (世界) as innumerable as the sands of the Ganges. When this body stretched out its tongue, Innumerable rays of light issued forth from it, and on each ray of light was found a lotus of thousand petals on which was seated a Tathāgatavigraha (an image of the *Tathāgata*, a sort of *Nirmāṇakāya*), preaching to Bodhisattvas, Gṛhasthās (householders), Pravrajitas (recluses) and others the dharma consisting of the Pāramitās.

After Simhavikrīḍita samādhi (師子遊戲三昧), his body illuminated the Trisāhasra-mahāsāhasra lokadhātu (三千大千世界) just as the bright clear Sun or the full moon illuminates the world. Buddha then shows his Prakṛtyātmabhāva (真自性, real form) to all the worlds. The several classes of gods as well as the men of the four continents, Jambudvīpa (閻浮提), Aparagodāna (西牛化), etc., see this Prakṛtyātmabhāva (真自性)

and think that the Tathāgata is sitting before them and preaching the doctrine. From this body again issues forth some rays of light, by which all beings of all lokadhātus see Śākyamuni Buddha preaching the Prajñāpāramitā to his sangha of monks and congregation of Bodhisattvas.

The Saddharma Lankāvatāra Sūtra (妙法楞伽經) presents us first with this conception, calling it Nisyanda (等流法) or Dharmatānisyanda Buddha (等流佛) and it seems that the term Sambhogakāya was not yet current. We have seen that in Hīnayāna works also, it is pointed out that the super-excellent body of Buddha, endowed with the major and minor signs of great men, was due to the countless meritorious deeds performed by him in his previous lives.

The Chinese rendering of Sambhogakāya by Pao shen (報身) in which Pao '報' means fruit or reward, also indicates that Sambhoga (報身) had no other sense than 'vipāka' (異熟) or 'nisyanda' (等流). The later Yogācārins called it Parasambhogakāya (他受用身) in order to distinguish it from other kāya called by them Svasambhoga (自受用身). Though the Aṣṭasāhasrikā does not distinguish Sambhogakāya from the Nirmāṇakāya, it refers to the super-excellent body of Buddha as the result of his meritorious acts in previous lives. The Lankāvatāra (楞伽經), by using the expression Vipāka or Vipākastha (異熟), shows a stage of transition from the Hīnayānic conception of Vipākaja-kāya (異熟身) to that of the Mahāyānic Parasambhogakāya (他受用身).

The Body of Bliss (*Sambhoga* - 報身) is so called because it represents (an existence characterised by) the full enjoyment of the Truth of the great Vehicle, as it is said: 'Perfectly enjoying the Truth or since it takes delight in the

Truth'.⁷⁴⁴ The body of Bliss is the reflection of the Cosmic Body in the empirical world in a corporeal form. Buddha appears here as a Supreme God, abiding in the Akaniṣṭha (色究竟天) heaven, surrounded by a host of Bodhisattvas. He is endowed with 32 principal and 80 secondary marks of excellence.⁷⁴⁵ This body is the result of the previous virtuous deeds. The descriptions given of Buddha in the opening sections of the Mahāyāna Sūtras are of this body. The Satasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā may be cited as a good example of this. For pages on end there are descriptions of every part of Buddha's body, of rays proceeding from his head, hands and feet and even fingers, reaching up to the extremities of the world.⁷⁴⁶ Only the Bodhisattvas who have reached the tenth stage can perceive the body of Bliss, and not others, is the opinion of some Mādhyamika teachers.⁷⁴⁷

Dharmakāya (法身)

The three kāyas belong strictly, to the realm of Samvṛti, worldly and transcendental, and as such they were treated as Rūpa or Nirmāṇa-kāya by the early Mahāyānists, including Nāgārjuna. The only real kāya of Buddha is the Reality as conceived by the Mahāyānists, and is not different from the things of beings of the universe. Though an attempt to define it by the current words and expressions is bound to be not only incorrect but misleading, the Mahāyānic texts tried to give an idea of it as far as the language permitted.

⁷⁴⁴ Buston, Vol. I, p. 129.

⁷⁴⁵ dvātriṃśal lakṣaṇāsītivyāñjanātmā muner ayam;
sāmbhogiko mataḥ kāyo mahāyānopabhogataḥ.

AbhisamayĀlaṃkāraĀloka of Haribhadra, G.O.S., Baroda, p. 526.

⁷⁴⁶ Śata Sāhasrikā, pp. 2 ff.

⁷⁴⁷ This is the view of Dharmamitra the Mādhyamika, as we learn from Buston Vol. I (pp. 131 ff.). His work is called Prasphuṭapāda, and is preserved only in Tibetan.

The Kārikā⁷⁴⁸ and the Siddhi (等流法) call it Svabhāvika or Svabhāvakāya (自性身). It is, according to them immeasurable and illimitable. It fills all space. It is the basis of the Sambhoga and Nirmāṇa kāyas. It is devoid of all marks (*mahāpūrṇa-laksanas*, 大滿相) and is inexpressible (*niṣprapañca*, 戲論). It is possessed of eternal, real and unlimited guṇas (功德). It has neither citta nor rūpa, and again Dharmakāya Buddhas may have their individual Sambhogakāya but they have all one Dharmakāya. It can only be realised within one's own self (*pratyātmavedya*, 自證) and not described, for that would be like the attempt of a blind man to describe the Sun, which he has never seen.

The Aṣṭasāhasrikā and other Prajñāpāramitās, though unrelenting in their negation of every possible statement about the reality, never assert that Tathatā (真如) or Śūnyatā (空性) or Dharmakāya (法身) in its real sense is also non-existing. The statements like:

“Suchness is immutable, unchangeable, beyond concept and distinctions.”

(tathatāvīkāra nirvikāravīkalpā nirvikalpā).

show rather a positive conception of the reality than a purely negative one. In regard to the Dharmakāya also the Aṣṭasāhasrikā makes similar statements. It says that:

“He who knows that the dharmas, existing in the world or preached by the Tathāgata, have no more existence than things seen in a dream and does not enquire whence the Tathāgata comes and where he goes, realises the Tathāgata through dharmatā.”

⁷⁴⁸ Kārikā (kārika): concise statement in verse of, doctrine; quoted in A Sanskrit English Dictionary, Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages, print 14 times, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997, p. 274.

The Buddhakāya, that people speak of, arises through cause and condition like the sound of flute; it involves really no appearance or disappearance. Those, who run after the form and voice of the Tathāgata and conceive of his appearance and disappearance are far from the Truth. Nor further statements than this can be made about the Reality, for that would be again prapañca.

When the Aṣṭasāhasrikā asserts that the Tathāgata does not exist, it refers to that Tathāgata as conceived by one on reading the Mahāyāna texts. Even the Bodhisattvas, unless and until they reach the tenth bhūmi, cannot extricate themselves from a conception of the Tathāgatakāya, however, subtle it may be (e.g., the *Svasambhogakāya*). They are still under a delusion and it is delusion that the Prajñāpāramitā endeavours to remove by asserting that there is no Tathāgata. The Vajracchedikā to which the Aṣṭasāhasrikā as well as the Bodhicaryāvatāra (菩薩藏經)⁷⁴⁹ refer,

“He who endeavoured to see me through my form and voice could not see me because a Buddha is to be seen in the sense of dharmatā (nature of dharmas), for the leaders (of men) have only dharmakāya. That dharmatā is unknowable so also is the Tathāgata”.

(dharmato buddha draṣṭavya dharmakāya hī nayakāyah, dharmatā cāpy avijñeyā na sā sakyā vijānituṃ).

The conception of Dharmakāya was of special interest to the Yogācārins. The Lankāvatāra in describing it says that Dharmatā (自性法) of Buddha is without any substratum (*nirālamba*) and lies beyond the range of functioning organs of sense, proofs or signs and hence beyond the vision of Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas or the non-Mahāyānists. It is to

⁷⁴⁹ GBWL, 42.

be realised only within one's own self.

The Śūtrāṅkārā calls it Svābhāvika-dharmakāya (自性身). It is one and the same kāya in all Buddhas, very subtle, unknowable and eternal. The Trimśikā (惟識三十論頌) explains the Dharmakāya as the transformed āsraya (所依, *substratum*) - the ālayavijñāna (阿賴耶識) the transformation being effected by knowledge (*jñāna*, 成智) and the suppression of the two evils (*dausṭhulyas*, 二障), viz., kleśāvaraṇa (煩惱障) and jñeyāvaraṇa (所知障).

The Ālōka on the Abhisamayāṅkārakārikā (現觀莊嚴論) also explains the Dharmakāya in a similar way. There are two kinds of Dharmakāya, one being the Bodhipākṣika (菩提分) and the other dharmas, which are themselves pure and productive of clear knowledge (*niṣprapañca-jñānātmanā*, 真智不戲論) and the other the transformed āsraya (所依) of the same which is then called Svabhāvakāya (自性身).

The goal of Bodhisattvās is to realise the Dharmakāya. Every being has the Dharmakāya, or the Dharmakāya comprises all beings of the world, but as they are blinded by avidyā, they do not realise this fact. What the Bodhisattva aims at is the removal of this avidyā (無明) and the realisation of the fact that he is the same as the Dharmakāya.

As the Dharmakāya, Buddha fully realises his identity with the Absolute (*dharmata*, *śūnyatā*, 性空) and unity (*samatā*, 大) with all beings. It is the oneness with the Absolute that enables Buddha to intuit the Truth, which it is his sacred function to reveal to phenomenal beings.

This is the fountain-source of his implicit strength which he concretizes in the finite sphere. The Sambhogakāya is the concrete manifestation to himself (*svasambhoga*)

and to the elect (*parasam-bhoga*) the power and splendour of god-head. In furtherance of the great resolve to succour all beings, Buddha incarnates himself from time to time in forms best calculated to achieve this end (*nirmāṇakāya*).

The Prajñā-pāramitā texts repeatedly ask us to consider Buddha as Dharmakāya, and not in the overt form which appears to us.⁷⁵⁰ Dharmakāya is the essence, the reality of the universe. It is completely free from every trace of duality. It is the very nature of the universe and is therefore also called the svābhāvika-kāya.⁷⁵¹ The Dharmakāya⁷⁵² is still a Person, and innumerable merits and powers etc. are ascribed to him.⁷⁵³

The Relation among Nirmāṇa-kāya, Sambhoga-kāya and Dharma-kāya

The three-body gospel of Nirmāṇa-kāya, Sambhoga-

⁷⁵⁰ye mām rūpeṇa cādrākṣur ye mām ghoṣeṇa anvayuh
mithyāprahāṇa-prasṛtā na mām draṅṣyanti te janāḥ
dharmato Buddhā draṣṭavyā dharmakāya hi nāyakāḥ
dharmatā cāpy avijñeyā na sā śakyā vijñānitum
Vajracchedikā. p. 43, quoted in MKV. p. 448; Bodhicaryāvatāra, Ācārya Śāntideva, p. 421.

uktaiḥ hy etad Bhagavata:

dharmakāya Buddhā Bhagavantaḥ mā khalu punar imāṁ bhikṣavaḥ
satkāyaṁ kāyaṁ manyadhvaṁ dharmakāya pariniṣpattito mām bhikṣavo
draṅṣyanty eṣa ca Tathāgatakāyaḥ.

Aṣṭaśāhasrikā - Prajñā - pāramitā, (Bib. Indica), p. 94. mukhyato
dharmakāyas tathāgataḥ. Abhisamayālaṁkāraloka of Haribhadra,
G.O.S., Baroda. p. 181. See also pp. 205, 521ff.

⁷⁵¹sarvākārām viśuddhiṁ ye dharmāḥ prāpta nirāsravāḥ;
svābhāviko muneh kāyas teṣāṁ prakṛti-lakṣaṇāḥ.
Abhisamayālaṁkāraloka of Haribhadra, G.O.S., Baroda, p. 523.

⁷⁵²Outlines of Mahāyāna, pp. 223 - 4.

⁷⁵³Abhisamayālaṁkāraloka of Haribhadra, G.O.S., Baroda, pp. 523 ff.

kāya and Dharma-kāya grew out to be a developed form of Mahāyāna principle. The three-body represents as: the Nirmāṇa-kāya is the assumed or apparitional body, a form verily of the historical Buddha which is to be revered as such. Being so much under stress his disciples came to venerate 'The Lord of Compassion' as Supra-historical and one who was never apart from them. The transformation body of the enlightened one is supposedly beyond time and space, formless, without colour or confrontation, unlimited in scope and primordial, the Tathāgata.

The suprahistorical body of the Buddha manifested again and again out of compassion for the sentient beings of the Saha loka, the world of living beings.

The transformed body of the Buddha appeared in two other forms of the Sambhoga-kāya and Dharma-kāya. Sambhoga-kāya is bliss-body, enjoyment body which latter does not mean physical pleasure of sensuous kind, but it is so called because of the merit of enjoying various virtues Sambhoga-kāya is also spiritually known to be formless and without colour.

The accomodating body of the Buddha called Dharma-kāya is the truth body. It is Dharma or Law itself. As truth it is also divinely conceived to be formless and colourless.

In order to understand the above doctrine, one may reverse their order. Without Dharma-kāya as basis, the two others Sambhoga-kāya and Nirmāṇa-kāya cannot be. Similarly without Sambhoga-kāya the transformation body is incomprehensible.

The Awakened one in his transformed body of the historical Buddha is still one with the formless Dharma-kāya and invisible Nirmāṇa-kāya. Mahāyāna equates Dharma-

kāya with Śūnyatā or Emptiness. This is truth and wisdom that is perfect. It has rightly been cognized that emptiness or Śūnyatā is neither the negative or static state, but ever emptying it is a constant and dynamic activity that is involved into truth, Dharma. Sambhoga-kāya accomplished by fulfillment of Dharma bears a physical form, though it is ultimately formless and colourless. The Dharma-kāya is the ultimate truth which is emptying itself and is boundless openness.



CHAPTER NINE

THE CONCLUSION

The Identity in Pāli Nikāyās and Mahāyāna Sūtras

The differences in the concepts of Bodhisatta / Bodhisattva (菩薩) and Suññatā / Śūnyatā (空性) in Pāli texts (柁厘經藏) and Mahāyāna canon (大乘經典) are not merely verbal but real. In Pāli Nikāyas, the Buddhist gospel is represented in a simple style easily understood by all. On the contrary, the themes are expressed in elaborated manner and ornate style, often polemical in their presentation and uncolloquial form. The simple ways of Pāli Nikāyas appear very near the oral transmissions of the early ages of Buddhism. It is a matter of serious consideration if the gospel of the Pāli sūtras is more akin to the original teachings of the Buddha. But it cannot be doubted that the Mahāyāna works are definitely of a developed stage in which metaphysical reasoning is super-imposed on the customary doctrines. The negative delineation of the doctrine of emptiness (*Śūnyatā*) in Prajñā-Pāramitā literature (般若波羅密經) and the multi-symbolism of Mahāyāna literature call up on a more profound study of the canon and its commentaries to follow the sophisticated style and basic formularies of the later school of thought.

In general, such verbal distinctions have led the scholars to form opinions in their own way about the identity in Pāli Nikāyās and Mahāyāna Sūtras such as:

- The doctrines (法語) of Mahāyāna Sūtras, along with those of the Pāli Nikāyas are essentially the same in origin (同原), nature (同本質) and purpose (同目的), because what are often distinguished as Prajñā pāramitā literature (般若波羅密經),

the Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka (妙法蓮花經), Lankāvatara (楞伽經), Lalitavistara (神通遊戲經), Samādhirāja (三昧王經), Daśabhūmi (十地經), Sukhāvātī (無量壽經), Vimalakīrti (維摩詰經)... always have their reference in the Early Buddhist literature - Pāli Nikāyas.

- The doctrine of Absolute Emptiness (*Śūnyāta*, 空性) in Mahāyāna is indeed came from Suññatā in Pāli Nikāyas which is also the first basic lesson of Non-self (*anātman*, 無我) and Dependent-origination (*Pratītyasamutpāda*, 緣起, 因緣生起). Thus, Suññatā (*Śūnyāta*) means nothing but Non-self, Dependent-origination, the Four Noble Truths and the way of Sīla - Samādhi - Prajñā (戒定慧) are those which are very fundamental and original for all different forms of Buddhism. All other Buddhist ideas stemmed out or developed from these doctrines in order to suit different characters and temperaments of all walks of life.

- Anātma and Paṭiccasamuppāda in Pāli Nikāyas are referred to as true Reality of all phenomena in Mahāyāna Sūtras.

- The way of Bodhisattva practices of ten Pāramitās (十波羅密) in Mahāyāna texts is the same ten Pāramīs in Pāli scriptures. In other words, the six Pāramitās (六波羅密) of Bodhisattva-caryā (菩薩行) which most of the Mahāyāna Sūtras mention and advocate, is none other than the traditional way of Sīla-samādhi-prajñā (戒定慧) with the Thirty-seven Dharmas conducive to Enlightenment (三十七助道) in Pāli texts.

- The conception of Ten Bhūmis (十地) of Mahāyāna is correlative with the simplicity, popularisation of the spiritual

process of nine Jhānas (九禪) mentioned in Pāli Nikāyas.⁷⁵⁴

The roots of Mahāyāna doctrines predominantly lie in the sūtras of the early school of Theravāda. Hence, it is not correct to say that Mahāyāna (菩薩乘) is superior or greater in appraisal to Śrāvakayāna (聲聞乘). A grosser change of more generous tendency of liberation in Mahāyāna as compared with the so-called selfish endeavor of emancipation in Śrāvakayāna must be discarded at once. What is to be accepted is that Buddha taught according to the capacity and temperament of men and women. He never herded all into a particular wisdom. And this leaves no ground for disbelief into the sublimity of the two ideologies. The Mahāyāna scriptures are as sublime as the philosophy of Pāli Nikāyas.

As a matter of fact, the Dharma was expressed by Buddha is not a doctrine of philosophy, if it is anything at all, it is therapeutic device cleansing of men's innate coarse or subtle clinging. Just as when a patient is cured i.e. freed from clings, then what the Buddha taught becomes useless and abandoned behind as 'a raft':

“Just as a raft, after being fashioned out of grass, sticks, branches and leaves, serves to cross over great stretches of water and is then abandoned, so the Dharma, by means of which we ferry over the water of birth and death to the other shore, nirvana, is not something to be taken with us but something to be left behind”.

“Ye Bhiksus, should know that the Dharma expounded is likened to a raft. Even the Dharma should be cast aside; how much more so the Not-Dharma”. (汝等毘丘! 知我說法, 如筏喻者, 法常應捨, 何況非法).⁷⁵⁵

Therefore, if Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna is merely therapeutic device, skillful means (Upāya-kausalya, 方便) to

⁷⁵⁴ See Ch.VII, p. 295.

⁷⁵⁵ 金剛般若波羅密經, 佛學業書, 台灣, 一九九八, pp. 113-4.

develop spirituality to highest perfection, or the Buddha's teaching is only one aim to liberation as the sea's taste has only one – salt, then there is not any higher or lower. In this regard, we would like to suggest that Buddhist terms of Hinayāna (小乘) and Mahāyāna (大乘) should be transferred to the words of Early Buddhist Tradition (初期傳統佛教) and Developed Buddhist Tradition (後期/發展傳統佛教).

The Application from the Concept of Boddhisattva

The Doctrine of Boddhisattva in the Individual and Society Improvement

The one common motif of the Boddhisatta in Pāli scriptures or Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna texts is the sublime way of inducing in men, the urge for living and letting others live. For inculcation of this higher aspiration in both these systems the same ideas of self-reliance, self-examination, self-awareness, self-responsibility are made to work. The urge is for being earnest, optimistic, thoughtful and careful in every situation.

The ideal of the Bodhisattva impinges on a constant and dynamic watch over one's action for realization of the goal. The ideal closely pursued gives spiritual strength and wisdom by which one must cross the shore of misery.

The Bodhisattva is a compassionate being. He teaches one to be kind to all other sentient beings. The cause of human degeneration is selfishness, born of ignorance and conceit that destroy the sacredness of our destined role. It is not understanding the way of extricating oneself from the mire of brutal systems that we fall prey, again and again, to our helpless state of misery. If we could imbibe the ideal of the Bodhisattva in our customary life we can awaken our hidden energy to many useful purposes. It is we who can

manage the state in a viable way to make our future bright.

The Doctrine of Bodhisattva in the Gnosiology

A knowledge of the Pāli Nikāyas and Mahāyāna Sutras is as much necessary to live up to the Bodhisattva ideal as the Mahāyāna texts on Prajñā Pāramitā where a simple study does not satisfy the noses of a learned person. We can study the themes from every corner of semantics and symbolical analysis as well as awaking them. This is also the requirement of persons who are engaged in propagation of Buddhist teachings.

The Application of the Concept of Śūnyatā

The Doctrine of Śūnyatā and the View of Individual and Universe

The signification of Śūnyatā which was taught by the Buddha, lies in the doctrine of anatta and Pratityasamutpāda. It has been for us a perfect view about the individual and world. Therefore, it is an undisputed fact that Buddhism never pessimistic and weary in any circumstances of ages, regime in the past, present or future, in the West civilization or our Asian countries. Following the doctrine of Śūnyatā, Buddhism usually opens a way to liberation. Buddhism does not promise man heaven or a remote paradise or sin realm. Buddhism only guides man should know clearly who he is, why he gets suffering and shows him the way of freedom. According to Buddhism, deliberation does not mean that it helps man to escape from this life to dream to the promised lands, liberation in Buddhism is to guide man face daily life, himself, five aggregations to reflect on them, to unveil their form of true reality. It means that the liberation is built on the enlightenment and comprehension of true wisdom. With such a wisdom, a Bodhisattva freed from all bonds, gains more

determinable, effort, enthusiastic to work and serve mankind without hope or desire for any reward or return from his noble action.

As far as progress of material-civilization is concerned, man can fly up to the moon, the Mars or dive to the bottom of the ocean, invent the atom-bomb, scientific-technology, computer-space-scientific-technology. The more achievements they gain in the world, the more crisis men suffer in life.

If the history of humankind is the history to seek for the object of the freed and bliss truth, then the doctrine of Śūnyatā is the very object for that purpose.

The doctrine of Śūnyatā is the basis, the great confidence not only for the 21th century but also for next ones in the view to build, upgrade and improve man and society as well as return to man and society whatever was lost by their unintention or intention.

Śūnyatā is a door for us to abide in deliberation, true nature.

The Doctrine of Śūnyatā and Science

It is very interesting to note here that having studied the concept of Śūnyatā in Buddhism, the scientists come to admit the fact that Śūnyatā corresponds with science, because both of them have some similar views.⁷⁵⁶

It is said that the nuclear scientist who discovered the principle that matter can be harnessed into energy and that energy and matter appear to be two, but they are one unit, had

⁷⁵⁶ See Buddhism and Science, Buddhassa P. Kirthisinghe ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, Rpt. 1996, pp. 8-11, 17 ff., 40 ff., 92ff., 103ff., 146ff.

the truth known from the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness. That substantiates impermanence.

A comparative study of the doctrine of Śūnyata and some specific nuances of science evince remarkable similarity. It is a great success of the modern scientist in his long career of dealing with movement and change to have evolved the principle of interchangeability of matter into energy. This is like the affirmation of the Hṛdaya Sūtra which rationalises that ‘rūpa’ is not different from arūpa or ‘Śūnyata’, the form and emptiness being identical: ‘Form (*rūpa*) is no different from the void (*sūnya*), nor the void from form. Form is identical with the void (and) void is identical with form’ (色不異空, 空不異色. 色即是空, 空即是色).⁷⁵⁷

Modern science accepts ‘matter’ as ‘energy’ and ‘energy’ means ‘material object’. This is metaphorically illustrated in the example of the power of waterfall running turbine to generate electricity. Electricity furnishes the amount of energy for propulsion of electronic appliances. This principle in Buddhist idiom strengthens the conviction that we owe our existence in the world to our naturalness in the reality of emptiness, as Nāgārjuna emphatically asserts:

“With Śūnyatā, all is possible; without it, all is impossible.”⁷⁵⁸

Mahāyāna holds that all phenomena has two signs: (i) one is inward, (ii) the other is the outward. The outward sign is open to our five-fold internal organs. The sixth sense

⁷⁵⁷ 般若波羅密多心經, 佛學業書, 台鸞, 一九九八, p. 134.

⁷⁵⁸ The Middle Treatise (T 1564 in Vol. 30, tr. by Kumārajīva in 409 A.D.), xxiv: 14; Nāgārjuna’s Twelve Gate Treatise, viii, Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1982; also see Empty Logic, Hsueh Li Cheng, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991, p. 43.

reveals the inward essence. The immense varieties and dimensions in the world's compass have their inherent nature of undiluted reality, the perceptive suchness (*Tathātā*). When we apply this to interaction of electricity, we see it into basic nature neither appearing nor disappearing, but remaining appearing and disappearing in accordance with the Causal Law.

In the successive stages in the progress of science since the time of Anaxagoras, the stellar society and numerous cosmic systems are vividly told in Buddhist books. The new science has acceded to a dynamic concept of matter against static law of old classical physics. A vitalistic view in science in opposition to Darwin's hypothesis has come to uphold all evolutionary processes, reaching from the lowest to the highest organism that illustrates a gradual unfolding in the sensuous world of a pre-existing power of mind.⁷⁵⁹

The Doctrine of Śūnyatā in Mutual Understanding among Religions

All theological religions take the ultimate reality in the substantival godhead, the omniscient, the omnipotent and the omnipresent God. In Judaism, he is called Yahweh; in Islam, he is Allah, Íśvara (*Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā*) are his designations in Hinduism. The Christians know him as Father in heaven. These are the emanations of the Primordial Buddha or fundamental principle of life (*Sambhogākāya*, the divine attaining ultimate Reality).

It is to be conceded that the ultimate truth in all these universal religious orders which is designated by different names in their systems are supposedly formless, unlimited, without colour or emptiness (*Śūnyatā*).

⁷⁵⁹ C. Egerton, Buddhism and Science, Sarnath, 1959, p. 9.

A study of the various theological systems and the Śūnyatā doctrine, as in Mahāyāna Buddhism leads one to comprehend the ground for a dynamic unity in religious pluralism without even discarding absolutism of each theological system.

The absolute Śūnyatā does not deny but rather allows each religious claim to absoluteness in terms of the godhead. It is to be relied up on that the various religious ways are grasped as manifestations of the radial absolute emptiness doctrine.

It would be easy to transfix a ground for all religions as the basis for a dynamic universal unity, the condition for it being the breaking through their traditional form of personal God-Centeredness and acceptance of emptiness to be the underlying unitary principle of life, such as Brahman. Instead of wrangling for formalism, it behooves to reason that a thorough historical and cultural understanding is evolved to smother conflicts among religious systems.

A sound proposal is offered by the Buddhist trikāya doctrine and the absolute Śūnyatā principle as the summum bonum of dharma-kāya which alone must develop real mutual understanding among religions.

Philosophy today inclines all perceptive men to dissolve their superficial differences, born on account of their traditional formalism and share the vision of relativity of inner awareness and manifestation of appearance to foster better understanding and spiritual unity on earth.



THE BODDHISATTVAS' NAMES IN SANSKRIT AND CHINESE⁷⁶⁰

Ākāśagarbha Bodhisattva	虛空藏菩薩	Xu kong zang pu sa
Akṣayamati Bodhisattva	無盡意菩薩	Wu jin yi pu sa
Anantacāritra Bodhisattva	無邊菩薩	Wu bian pu sa
Anantavikrāmin Bodhisattva	無量力菩薩	Wu liang li pu sa
Aniksiptadhura Bodhisattva	不休息菩薩	Bu xiu xi pu sa
Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva	觀世音菩薩	Guang shi yin pu sa
Bhadrapāla Bodhisattva	賢首菩薩	Ba tuo po lo pu sa
Bhaiṣajyarāja Bodhisattva	藥王菩薩	Yao wang pu sa
Bhaiṣajyasamudgata Bodhisattva	藥上菩薩	Yao shang pu sa
Buddhaghosa Bodhisattva	佛音菩薩	Fo yin pu sa
Dhācañimdhara Bodhisattva	持地菩薩	Chi de pu sa
Dhṛtiparipūrṇa Bodhisattva	堅滿菩薩	Jian man pu sa
Gadgadasvara Bodhisattva	妙音菩薩	Miao yin pu sa
Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva	地藏菩薩	Di zang pu sa
Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva	文殊師利菩薩	Wen su shi li pu sa
Mahāpratibhāna Bodhisattva	大樂說菩薩	Da yue pu sa
Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva	大勢至菩薩	Da shi zhi pu sa
Mahāvīkrāmin Bodhisattva	大力菩薩	Da li pu sa

⁷⁶⁰ See 妙法蓮華經，佛教經典八，佛教慈悲復務中心，香港，一九九四。

Maitreya Bodhisattva	彌勒菩薩	Di lie pu sa
Nakṣatrarājasamkusuinitā- bhijña Bodhisattva	宿王華菩薩	Su wang hua pu sa
Nityodyukta Bodhisattva	精進菩薩	Chang jing jin pu sa
Pūrṇacandra Bodhisattva	滿月菩薩	Man yue pu sa
Padmaśrī Bodhisattva	華德菩薩	Hua de pu sa
Prabhūtaratna Bodhisattva	多寶菩薩	Duo bao pu sa
Prajñākūṭa Bodhisattva	智積菩薩	Zhi ji pu sa
Pralānaśūra Bodhisattva	勇施菩薩	Yong shi pu sa
Ratnākara Bodhisattva	寶積菩薩	Bao ji pu sa
Ratnacandra Bodhisattva	寶月菩薩	Bao yue pu sa
Ratnapāṇi Bodhisattva	寶掌菩薩	Bao zhang pu sa
Ratnaprabha Bodhisattva	寶光菩薩	Bao guang pu sa
Ratnavīśuddha Bodhisattva	寶淨菩薩	Bao jing pu sa
Sadāparibhūta Bodhisattva	常不輕菩薩	Chang bu qing pu sa
Samantabhadra Bodhisattva	普賢菩薩	Pu xian pu sa
Sarvasattvapriyadarśana Bodhisattva	一切眾生喜 見菩薩	Yi qie zhong sheng xi jian pu sa
Supratisthitacariora Bodhisattva	安立行菩薩	An li xing pu sa
Trailokyarikrāmin Bodhisattva	越三界菩薩	Yue san jia pu sa
Vairocanarāsmipratimaṅḍita dhvajarājan Bodhisattva	光照莊嚴相 菩薩	Guang zhao zhuang yan xiang pu sa
Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva	金剛手菩薩	Jin gang shou pu sa
Viśiṣṭacāritra Bodhisattva	上行菩薩	Shang xing pu sa
Viśuśhacāritra Bodhisattva	淨行菩薩	Jing xing pu sa
Vimalagarbha Bodhisattva	淨藏菩薩	Jing zang pu sa
Vimalanetra Bodhisattva	淨眼菩薩	Jing yan pu sa

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 - 2) Mo-ho-pan-jo-po-lo-mi-ching (大品般若經) (The Large Prajñā Text) or (般若波羅密經) translated by Kumārajīva from (27 fascs.) translated by Kumārajīva from the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā - prajñāpāramitā - sūtra*. Taisho.8, (No. 223) in the year of 409 simultaneously with 大智度論.
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