

*Bodhi and Anuttarā Samyak-Saṃbodhi in the Lotus Sūtra**

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- 0-0 Buddhism is thought of as something in which followers seek *nirvāṇa*. However, rather than the attainment of *nirvāṇa* or *parinirvāṇa*, *Mahāyana* Buddhism, and the Lotus Sūtra in particular, place emphasis on the aspiration to realize the mental condition of *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi*.
- 0-1 When the Lotus Sūtra describes where practices (*caryā*) for bodhisattvas are carried out, the terms “*bodhi*” or “*anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi*” are employed so as to indicate a spiritual realm. *Bodhi*, and variants such as *agra-bodhi*, etc., appear in verse portions as shortened forms of *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi*.
- 0-2 Attaining buddhahood, which is the goal of bodhisattva practices, is denoted particularly as “*abhisam/budh* (to be completely awakened) to *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi* (the full dynamic of ultimate enlightenment)” .
- 0-3 Regarding the concept of *parinirvāṇa*, the Sūtra's attitude is that the Buddha Śākyamuni is *not* in that state (In 1991, at the 10th CIABS held at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, I discussed the subject, “*Anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi* set against the concept of *parinirvāṇa* as depicted in the Lotus Sūtra,” and the paper was printed in Varanasi next year.). Here, I would like to discuss how and why the concepts of *parinirvāṇa* and *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi* are denoted in the Sūtra.
- 1-0 According to the Sūtra, *bodhi* / *Anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi* exist in the practitioners' minds, and are not set aside as final conditions gained by practice.
- 1-1 The beginning of the Lotus Sūtra reveals its perspective regarding *bodhi* and *bodhisattvas* (a theme which I spoke on at the Eighth Conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley in 1987). In the portrayal of the buddha-worlds of the east, the bodhisattvas are summarized as: “...*ye bodhisattvā... vividhena vīryeṇa janenti bodhim* (I vs 13, KN 10.9, WT 8.11).” The reference must be read as: “bodhisattvas...who give birth to [attain] *bodhi* through various endeavors.” This expression has, as its premise, the idea that *bodhi* exists in these bodhisattvas' minds at the place and time of their actual practices: it is not something that awaits them at the end. The idea that *bodhi* is not limited to buddhas but is shared and also exists in bodhisattvas' minds is expounded in this Sūtra in advance of any discussion about buddhas and *bodhi*.

1-2 The Kashgar ms. (in the N.F. Petrovsky Collection) denotes a different reading here: “...*caranti bodhau* (ms. *caramti* for. 17a 5-6).” This locative *bodhau* must be read as “practice amidst *bodhi*,” instead of “practice toward *bodhi*,” in light of the expression “*janenti bodhim*” in the case of many other manuscripts. Furthermore, in the case of the following reference from vv7~11,

buddhāṃś ca paśyāmi...(I vs 7 KN 9.9, WT 7.8)

.....

ye cāpi anye sugatasya putrā...

.....

teṣāṃ pi bodhīya vadanti varṇaṃ // (I vs 11 KN 10.5 WT 8.2)

we should read these as:

And I [can] see buddhas,

...

Also, to the other children of Sugata,

...

Send praises for their *bodhi*.

1-3 Some of the references that indicate a realm shared by those who are not buddhas are:

caranti ete vara-bodhi-cārikāṃ (V vs 44, KN 131.12 WT 123.1)

[Śrāvakas, in reality,] do the practice of supreme *bodhi*.

sthito 'smi bodhaye (IX vs 7, KN 219.10 WT 192.15)

[Ānanda says,] I am in the condition of *bodhi*.

kena bodhīya sthāpitāḥ (XIV vs 25, KN 306.3 WT 259.19)

by whom have [these bodhisattvas] been established in *bodhi*?

*evam eva Bhaiṣajyarāja dūre te bodhisattvā mahāsattvā bhavanty
anuttarāyāṃ samyak-saṃbodhau yāvan nēmaṃ dharma-paryāyaṃ
śṛṇvanti...* (KN 233.6 WT 202.16)

Thus, indeed, *Bhaiṣajyarāja*, these bodhisattvas, *mahāsattvas* [who follow the other school] are far from *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi* unless they know this *dharma-paryāya*.

*dūre yūyaṃ kula-putrā anuttarāyāḥ samyak-saṃbodher na tasyāṃ
yūyaṃ saṃdrśyadhve* / (KN 285.9 WT 244.4)

You are far from *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi*, O *kula-putrā*, you are not seen there. (Here, the Buddha is telling his followers that they should *not* say things like this to others).

2-0 The Lotus Sūtra maintains an attitude that, for each of us, the value of the ontological recognition of our world can be actualized only within the process of bodhisattva practice.

2-1 The Lotus Sūtra has at its foundation an ontological attitude of *anātman*. In chapter three of the Sūtra we can find this portrayal of *śrāvakas*,

...*ātma-dṛṣṭi-bhava-dṛṣṭi-vibhava-dṛṣṭi-sarva-dṛṣṭi-vivarjitānām...*

(WT68.19, KN71.2, cf. WT p68 note5)

...of those who are conscious of getting rid of wrong views regarding self, existence and non-existence—all of these views...

in which the Sūtra says that *ātma-dṛṣṭi*, *bhava-dṛṣṭi* and *vibhava-dṛṣṭi* are wrong views.

2-2 The teaching of the Sūtra however is more than such ontological recognition by each individual. In chapter 4, the four *arhat* representatives, after hearing the *vyākaraṇa* related to Sāriputra by Buddha, say this:

...*sūnyatā-nimittāpraṇihitaṃ sarvam āviṣkurmo nāsmābhir eṣu
buddha-dharmeṣu buddha-kṣetra-vyūheṣu vā bodhisattva-
vikrīḍiteṣu vā tathāgata-vikrīḍiteṣu vā sprhōtpādītā |*

(WT95.19, KN101.1)

We have clearly recognized [the essential states of this world as being] emptiness, devoid of form, and free from desire. Nevertheless, the aspiration to the nature of buddhas, the settled condition of the buddha-world, the activity of the bodhisattvas and that of the tathāgata have not occurred within us.

Here, Buddha and bodhisattvas are postulated from a different angle of ontological understanding.

2-3 Fundamentally, the Sūtra asserts its teaching while accommodating the theories of *śrāvakayāna* and Mahayana that predated it. However the Sutra's discussion emphasizes our aspiration to the dynamic activities of Buddha and bodhisattvas with regard to this world, negatively treating traditional Buddhistic understanding. The Sutra stresses dynamic action, initiated through the willingness of human beings. In chapter 2, it is said that, to the people who had wrong views, the Buddha at first taught:

neṣāṃ ahaṃ Śārisutā upāyaṃ

*vadāmi duḥkhasya karoṭha antam /
duḥkhena saṃpīḍita dṛṣṭva sattvān
nirvāṇa tatrāpy upadarśayāmi //67// (KN48.9, WT45.8)*

Sāriputra, for them I use skillful means,
Expounding that which produces the end of suffering.
Seeing living beings who are knocked down by suffering,
I then expound *nirvāṇa*.

Here, the teaching of *nirvāṇa* as a way to remove suffering is described as a skillful means.

- 2-4 □ In chapter 3, however, the Sūtra has Sāriputra, who had accepted the teaching of the Lotus Sūtra declare:

*vimucya tā dṛṣṭi-kṛtāni sarvaśaḥ
śūnyāṃś ca dharmān ahu sparśayitvā /
tato vijānāmy ahu nirvṛto 'smi
na cāpi nirvāṇam idaṃ pravucyati //12//
(WT.61.27, KN62.15 *nirvāṇam idaṃ prabudhyati* P.62 note7)*

Having parted from wrong views completely,
Having perceived [the essential nature of] emptiness of phenomena,
I thought to myself that I had gained *nirvāṇa*.
But, it cannot be said as *nirvāṇa*.

Here, the Lotus Sūtra argues that gaining awareness of the principle of *śūnyatā* cannot also be said as the attainment of *nirvāṇa*.

- 3-0 According to the Sūtra, the doctrine of *nirvāṇa* as the goal of Buddhist practice is just a temporary step. Bodhisattvas, those who are practicing in the realm of *bodhi*, becoming awakened, and becoming enlightened step-by-step, are the ones who are the aspirants to the Buddha's work.

- 3-1 The view point of the Lotus Sūtra can be seen in the commentary of Śrāvaka practitioners in chapter 4:

*pratyātmikīṃ nirvṛti kalpayāma
etāvatā jñānam idaṃ na bhūyaḥ /
nāsmāka harṣo pi kadā-ci bhoti
kṣetreṣu buddhāna śruṇitva vyūhān //42// (KN117.1, WT109.18)*

Thinking about our own *nirvāṇa*,
The span of thought was no more than that.
Never once did our willingness arise,

Having heard the condition of the Buddha-world.

The mention of the Buddha-world is related to the description of the fully composed buddha-world of Sāriputra when he attains buddhahood in the future as predicted by Śākyamuni in chapter 3. It signifies that the fully composed condition of a buddha-world is one of the attributes of a Buddha. It also means that the goal of followers must not be just the personal attainment of *nirvṛti*, but to become a completely enlightened one through the path of awakening step-by-step and inspiring oneself to share activities in a buddha's world with a buddha and other bodhisattvas.

3-2 The Sūtra's stance also shows that having willingness (*harṣa*, joy and excitement) to involve oneself in the world is requested of the practitioner.

Following the above verse, the Sūtra says that awakening an ontological recognition does not automatically include *śraddhā*.

śāntāḥ kila sarv' imi dharma 'nāsravā

nirodha-utpāda-vivarjitās ca /

na cātra kaś-cid bhavatīha dharmo

evaṃ tu cintetva na bhoti śraddhā //43// (KN117.3, WT110.1 kilā)

All phenomena, indeed, are settled and pure.

And without growth or extinction.

So, in this stage, there is not any rule.

Acknowledging this, we had no further aspiration [to the attributes of a buddha].

Even if one has achieved an appropriate reflection on the nature of existence (*cintetva*), it does not automatically entail aspiration (*śraddhā*) to the attributes of a buddha. Thus, the Sūtra criticizes the *śrāvakayāna* goal.

3-3 The concept of *śraddhā* mentioned here is highlighted in Chapter 2, together with another concept, *adhimukti*. Also in Chapter 4, it is said that the *śrāvaka* practitioners are:

...saṃsāre ca hīnādhimuktikāḥ / (KN 109.1, WT 102.2)

ones who are keeping lowly aspirations within the cyclic state of rebirth.

Buddha recognized their attitude:

tathāiva cāsmāka vināyakena

hīnādhimuktitva vijāniyāna /

na śrāvitaṃ buddha bhaviṣyathēti

yūyaṃ kila śrāvaka mahya putrāḥ //36// (KN 116.1, WT 108.23)

Just like this, the Leader,

Knowing the insufficiency of our aspiration,
Did not say, “you will become buddha,”
Or “you, [the *śrāvakas*] are indeed my children.”
neither disclosing the path of Buddhahood nor calling them successors of Buddha.

suduṣkaraṃ kurvati loka-nātho
upāya-kausālya prakāśayantaḥ /
hinādhimuktān damayantu putrān
dametva ca jñānam idaṃ dadāti //49//

(WT 110.25, KN 118.5 suduṣkuraṃ)

The Master of the World performs a quite difficult task;
Expounding with skillful means,
Nurturing the children who have low aspirations,
Having done so, imparting this [buddha’s] wisdom to them.

The Sūtra explains that only after training them with appropriate means will the Buddha initiate them into his wisdom. The Lotus Sūtra positions the preceding schools of Buddhism in such a manner. Particularly, the last portion of verse 49 is a summary of “the disclosure of the ultimate aim and wisdom of the Buddha to guide all beings into the path of a buddha” as described in the prose portion of Chapter 2. It is the fundamental attitude of this Sūtra. Such an attitude shows that the Buddha in this Sūtra is not satisfied with just ontological recognition by followers; it is an assertion that what is most important is to focus on the actual mental condition of one’s individual life. The Buddha in the Sūtra manifests his attitude to grasp the beings in this world of dependent origination through that same dynamic.

- 4-0 The perspective of the Buddha in this Sūtra must be connected to the revolutionary exposition regarding the fundamental condition of buddhas and bodhisattvas.
- 4-1 *Bodhi / anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi*, rather than relating to a metaphysical existence, indicate a realm wherein bodhisattvas—the name for mahāyāna practitioners, including followers of this Sūtra—can gain awareness, be awakened, and become enlightened. Through contexts, examples of which can be seen in 1-3, we can acknowledge that *bodhi* is in the hands of the bodhisattvas. It is not their final goal, perhaps to be achieved in another life. Rather, it is a realm in this life in which practitioners can awaken, step-by-step to the causes and effects of their passions.
- 4-2 As already mentioned, the Buddha Śakyamuni does not yet enter the state of *parinirvāṇa*; that is, he stays in this world even though he has completely

achieved the condition of *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi*. This is unveiled by the Buddha's exposition in Chapter 15:

*tāvaca-cirābhisambuddho 'parimit'āyus-pramāṇas tathāgataḥ sadā
sthitaḥ /*

aparinirvṛtas tathāgataḥ parinirvāṇam ādarśayati vaineya-vaśāt /

(WT 271.14-16, KN 318.15-319.1: *āyus-pramāṇam, vaineyavaśena*)

The Tathāgata, with a life-span of immeasurable length, who attained enlightenment in the distant past, always exists. The Tathāgata manifests himself as being in the state of *parinirvāṇa* in the hope of inspiring [the sentient beings], although he is not yet in the condition of *parinirvṛta* [*aparinirvṛta*].

*idānīm khalu punar ahaṃ kula-putrā aparinirvāyamāṇa eva
parinirvāṇam ārocayāmi / (KN 319.4, WT 272.4)*

Further, O son of good family, although I am not really in the state of *parinirvāṇa* now, I proclaim that I am [in the state of] *parinirvāṇa*.

- 4-3 Furthermore, another Buddha, Prabhūtaratna, who entered *parinirvāṇa* in the ancient past, happens to appear in the presence of Śākyamuni in Chapter 11, around the middle of the Sūtra, and collaborates with Śākyamuni up until the audience ends in Chapter 20. The following description occurs in Chapter 20, *Tathāgata-rddhy-abhisamkāra*, in the latter half of the Sūtra:

atha khalu bhagavān Śākyamunis tathāgataḥ sa ca bhagavān

Prabhūtaratnastathāgato 'rhan samyak-saṃbuddhaḥ parinirvṛtaḥ...

(KN 387.7, WT 328.2.cf. KN 389.2, WT 329.9.XX vs 7 KN 393.3, WT 332.14.)

And indeed, the Bhagavat Śākyamuni who is a Tathāgata, and the Bhagavat Prabhūtaratna who is a Tathāgata, *Arhat*, *Samyak-saṃbuddha*, who has entered the state of *parinirvṛta*...

It is obvious that the Sūtra is here contrasting the Buddha Śākyamuni with the Buddha Prabhūtaratna who is in the state of *parinirvṛta*.

- 4-4 Prabhūtaratna is a buddha of the past. In the above quotation, *parinirvāṇa* and *parinirvṛta* have the same meaning. Moreover, judging by the reference to a request to build a *stūpa*, it is obvious that these terms are here also used to refer to the death of the Buddha. Incidentally, the term *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi* occurs in the description of a past episode in Prabhūtaratna's life and the bodhisattva practices he underwent before he attained buddhahood. In the passage

dealing with Prabhūtaratna's past experiences, *parinirvāṇa* (*parinirvṛta*) and *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi* are treated as different things. However, since *parinirvāṇa* (*parinirvṛta*) is used only to mean the death of the Buddha, it is impossible to understand in any more detail how these terms relate to one another.

4-5 Then what are the implications of the situation, described in the above passage from Chapter 20, whereby Prabhūtaratna, who is in the state of *parinirvāṇa*, and Śākyamuni, who is considered not to be in this state, act and work together—both of them being connected with the real world? I would like to suggest what can be taken from this context. The first thing is that the Sūtra propounds that the Buddha Śākyamuni is not dead. The second is that the buddha who died, while working with Śākyamuni, is connected with the real world. This kind of conclusion, however, does not answer how the Sūtra dares to let a buddha who died appear in the story. Śākyamuni is a historical person. The Sūtra stresses his *aparinirvṛta*. If we understand from the context that Śākyamuni is not dead, then what is meant by “not dead?” The Lotus Sūtra, like the other *Mahāyāna sūtras*, talks of various buddhas aside from Prabhūtaratna. But those buddhas had no historical existence. It can be said that originally these other non-historical buddhas in the Sūtra can be described as buddhas on condition that they are in the state of *parinirvāṇa*. In other words, it can be argued that by describing buddhas in the same scenario who have two different backgrounds—concrete and abstract—the Sūtra is teaching that they both work together, connected with the real world.

5-0 The concepts of *bodhi* / *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi* are established for followers not only as the goal but also as the path to it. The breadth of these concepts as denoted by the Sūtra ranges from step-by-step awareness to the condition of being a buddha. Thus, by means of these concepts, the Buddha of the Sūtra successfully invites the people into the realm of Buddhism.

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