

The Post-mahāyānic Character of the Lotus Sutra and its Principle

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Within the complete scope of the historical development of Buddhist thought, in contrast to the Mahāyānic systems of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* [ASPP] and the *Gaṇḍavyūha* [GV] that preceded it, the Lotus Sutra [SP] is duly defined as post-mahāyānic (*mahāyānottara* in Sanskrit). Such a definition is due to the fact that, at the stage of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha revealed his true nature as the live, God-like Tathāgata, freeing himself from the idealistic characterization in the preceding Mahāyānic systems. Through its presupposition of Śākyamuni's "fulfillment of the vow" to make all living beings attain buddhahood, the Lotus Sutra first, if not fully qualified, provides us with the "indicative" half of "the dialectic of human existence of the original enlightenment" (i.e., "you are in yourself the Tathāgata"), then leads us to succeeding systems of thought through the concealed latter "imperative" half of the dialectic (i.e., "still, you should by yourself become the Tathāgata") and, ultimately, to the final level of a religio-philosophy.

The great disaster of earthquake and tsunami that struck the Tohoku district of Japan on the 11th of March this year made me change the plan of this presentation from a scholastic argument to distinguishing the post-mahāyānic character of the Lotus Sutra from the mahāyānic character of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* [ASPP] and the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* [GV] to descriptions of the evolutions of the theories of the *Tathāgatagarbha* system which necessarily lead us to the thought of the "open-system" or the thought of Puruṣa - its essence being the idea to understand the Nietzsche's notion of *Notwendigkeit* (destiny) as the turning (*Wende*) of difficulty (*Not*) which is actually necessitated for the people of the district that suffered fatally from the disaster.

I define the Lotus Sutra [SP] as a scripture of the post-mahāyānic (*mahāyānottara*) Buddhism in the total image of the historical development of Buddhism.

Post-mahāyānic Buddhism is composed of two systems in my notion, i.e., the system of Lotus Sutra and the system of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory.

The Lotus Sutra is the system of self-information of the presence of the Tathāgata of *dharmakāya* to the world; and the systems of the *tathāgatagarbha* theories are the logia of argument about the logia of *dharmakāya*, the cosmos-pervading existence of the God-like Tathāgata.

The systems composing the history of Buddhism show their own special features on the common framework of the *Schema* of the two-worlds theory of the Buddhist view of the world, the celestial world of *nirvāṇa* or the *dharmakāya* of the cosmos-pervading Tathāgata, the world *A* transcendently corresponding with the terrestrial world of living beings, the world *B*.(Fig.1)

I use the following terms to limit the concepts of these two worlds:

dharmā of neuter singular (*dh. n. sg.*) = the world itself.

dharmā of feminine singular (*dh. f. sg.*) = the essence of the existentiality of the world

dharmā of masculine plural (*dh. m. pl.*) = the individual existences constituting the contents of the world. (Fig.2)

The *dharmā* of neuter singular assumes the bipolar structure of *dh. f. sg.* and *dh. m. pl.*, the basis and the surface appearances of the world respectively.

The *dharmā* of feminine singular assumes the bipolar structure of *avidyā* (the substance of the world *B*) and *vidyā* (the substance of the world *A*).

In the mahāyānic system, the essence of *dh. m. pl.* composing the world *A* of *ASPP* is indicated with the term *puṇya-kriyā-vastu* (facts as metrical deeds); and in the case of *GV*, the world *A* is expressed with the compound word *Samantabhadra-caryāmaṇḍala*, the whole of the meritorious deeds accomplished or accumulated by the Great Bodhisattva Samantabhadra.

In these two systems of *ASPP* and *GV*, the ideal world *A* itself appears instantaneously to a certain person as well as to all the persons presented in the image of the world when that person accepts a certain *Idee* of the deeds of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva as his own ideal and (Fig.3) performs it actually, and is kept existing through his continuation of doing the deed incessantly. (Fig.4)

In the “trace teaching” (迹門) of the Lotus Sutra, all the people present in the world *B* are

announced to have been buddhas in its mythological setting of *ganjōju* (願成就) as the vow of Śākyamuni Buddha to make all the people become *buddhas* has been realized since he attained his enlightenment some forty years ago at Gayā. However, they are *buddhas* of human size as is suggested in the verse 60 of the Skillful Means Chapter:

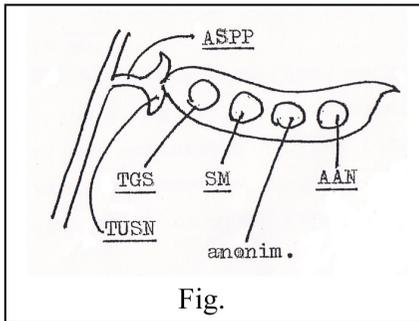
evaṃ ca cintemy ahu śāriputra
kathaṃ nu evaṃ bhavi sarvasattvāḥ /
dvātriṃśatīlakṣaṇarūpadhāriṇaḥ
svayaṃprabhā lokavidū svayaṃbhūḥ //60//

“At the time, O Śāriputra, I wondered how I could make all the people be as perfect buddhas ---- having bodies equipped with the thirty-two characteristic marks, being themselves resplendent, being knowers of the world, being born of themselves (60).” (Fig.5)

In the “original teaching” (本門), however, the Buddha Śākyamuni emerges in the text (ch.16, the Chapter of the Duration of the Life) as the cosmos-pervading Tathāgata of *dharmakāya* presenting his whole existence in the world *B*, and at the same time, to each living being existing in the world in the same manner, i.e., with his whole existences, respectively (*tatrāpi cātmānam adhiṣṭhahāmi sarvāṃś ca sattvāna tathaiva cāham*, XVI,v. 4ab, KN.323.13).

Here we find that the complete figure of the world-view of post-mahāyānic Buddhism appeared, and that the following systems of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory make themselves emerge within the framework shown in the “original teaching” of *SP* (Fig.6).

The image of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory can be limited within the figure composed with the quotations from the *tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* [*TGS*], the *Śrīmālā-sūtra* [*ŚM*] and the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa-parivarta* [*AAN*] found in the *Ratnagotravi bhāga Mahāyānottaratantra-śāstra* [*RGV*].



I at one time expressed my image of the formation of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory with the simile of a peapod (Fig.), in which the four peas *TGS*, *ŚM*, an anonymous text, and *AAN* are contained in order; afterwards however, I withdrew the idea as I was taught the fact that the quotation from the anonymous text quoted in *RGV* has been identified

by Dr. E. Zimmermann with the corresponding passage of *TGS* existent in the Tibetan Tripiṭaka. The quotation from the “anonymous text” found in *RGV* goes as follows:

*tatra ca sattve sattve tathāgatadhātur utpanno garbhagataḥ
saṃvidyate na ca te sattvā budhyanta iti* /(Johnston, p.72)

“And here, the *tathāgatadhātu* (the substantiality of the Tathāgata) has originated (*utpanna*) and has been existent within the limitation of the individual existence (*garbha*) of each people; still these people don’t recognize the fact.”

This newly obtained knowledge added a change to the former image of the gradual formation of my *tathāgatagarbha* theory; the phenomenon of the expression *utpanna* found in the quotation of the anonymous text, which is actually the existent *TGS*, was simultaneous with that of *anutpanna* which is found in the following decisive quotation from *ŚM* in *RGV*:

*na khalu bhagavan dharmavināśo duḥkhanirodhaḥ / duḥkhanirodhanāmnā
bhagavann anādikāliko ’krto ’jāto ’nutpanno ’kṣayaḥ kṣayāpagataḥ nityo
dhruvaḥ / śivaḥ śāśvataḥ prakṛtiparisuddhaḥ sarvakleśakosavinirmukuto
gaṅgāvālikāvyativṛttair avinirbhāgair acintyair buddhadharmaḥ saman-
vāgatas tathāgatadharmakāyo deśitaḥ / ayam eva ca bhagavaṃs tathāga-
tadharmakāyo ’vinirmuktakleśakośas tathāgatagarbho sūcyate /*
(Johnston, p.12)

Here, the fact goes as follows: One and the same absolute (絶対者) is , in its aspect of *anutpanna*, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata or the world *A* which contains buddhadharmas (*dh. m. pl.*) in number greater than the number of sands of the river Ganges, and is at the same time existent in its aspect of *utpanna* within each living being with its wholeness.

This state of things coincides well with the information found in another important quotation from *ŚM* found in *RGV*, which assumes the original sight of the *tathāgatagarba* theory viewing balancingly both sides of the fact, i.e., the one side of the cosmos-pervading *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata containing all living beings of past, future, and present within it, and the other side of each living being, - which is the *tathāgatagarba*, the personal, special limitation (*garbha*) - containing the whole of the same *dharmakāya* respectively (Fig.7):

*yo bhagavan sarvakleśakośakoṭigūḍhe tathāgatagarbhe niṣkāṅkṣaḥ
sarvakeśakośavinirmukte tathāgatadharmakāye 'pi sa niṣkāṅkṣa iti /*
(Johnston, p.79)

“O the Venerable, one who doesn't doubt the fact that the absolute is separately *tathāgatagarbas* when it is concealed in the personal side limited with defilement doesn't doubt, at the same time, the fact that the same absolute is the one and only *tathāgatadharmakāya* when it is liberated from all these limitations of defilement.”

The Plateau of the *tathāgatagarba* theory emerges suddenly from the surface of *RGV* and shows its height directly at its very beginning. However, the plane of the plateau soon begins to show an inclination and attains to another height of *AAN*, which seems to be unnecessary, as is shown in the following quotation turning the direction of sight to the side of *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata the World A itself (Fig. 8).

*ayam eva śāriputra dharmakāyo 'paryantakleśakotigūḍhaḥ /
saṃsārasrotasā uhyamāno 'navarāgrasaṃsāragaticyutyutpattiṣu
saṃcāran sattvadhātur ity ucyate / sa eva śāriputra dharmakāyaḥ
saṃsārasroto-duḥkhanirviṅṇo viraktaḥ sarvakāmaṣayebhyo daśa-
pāramitāntargatais caturaśītyā dharmaskandhasahasrair bodhāya
caryāṃ caran bodhisattva ity ucyate / sa eva punaḥ śāriputra
dharmakāyaḥ sarvakleśakośaparimukutaḥ sarvaduḥkhātikarāntaḥ
sarvopakleśamalāpagataḥ śuddho viśuddhaḥ paramapariśuddha-
dharmatāyāṃ sthitaḥ sarvasattvālokanīyāṃ bhūmiṃ āruḍhaḥ sarvasyāṃ
jñeyabhūmav advitīyaṃ pauraṣaṃ sthāmaprāpto 'nāvāraṇadharmāprati-
hata sarvadharmaiśvaryabalatām adhigatas tathāgato 'rhan samyak-
saṃbuddha ity ucyate /* (Johnston, pp.40-41)

“O Śāriputra, this very *dharmakāya* is called the world of living beings when it is transmigrating in the deaths and births being limited in the (personal) side (*koṭī*) of the boundless limitations of defilements.

When the same *dharmakāya* is practicing the practices of ten *pāramitās* aiming the enlightenment, it is called a *bodhisattva*.

And furthermore, when the same *dharmakāya* having been liberated from the limitation (*koṭī*) of defilements and become cleaned perfectly, it is called a *tathāgata* an *arhat* and a *samyakusambuddha*”.

Here, the subjectivity is as if forcibly attributed to the side of the *dharmakāya* of the

Tathāgata, the world *A*; and this intentionally impressed subjectivity at the side of the absolute reminds me of the notion of the *Subjekt* advocated by Hegel in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* where God as the *Substanz* denies himself to be a man (Jesus Christus) and returns to be God as the *Subjekt* by denying again his human existence as Jesus.

However, this association of ideas, once it occurred to me, took me back to the definition of *śūnyatā* of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory which is shown in a quotation from *ŚM* in *RGV*:

*tathāgatagarbhajñānam eva tathāgatānāṃ śūnyatājñānam /
tathāgatagarbhaś ca sarvaśrāvaka-pratyekabuddhair adṛṣṭa-
pūrvo 'nadhigatapūrva iti /* (Johnston, p.76)

“The recognition of (the truth of) *tathāgatagarbha* is the recognition of *śūnyatā* to be held only by *tathāgatas*; the (fact of) *tathāgatagarbha* has neither been seen nor been attained previously by any of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*”.

The notion of *śūnyatā* should necessarily require the deeds to be directed to the side of the absolute from the side of individual human existences (Fig.9). What are the deeds required of the people in the Buddhism of the post-mahayānic stage then? A form of practice has been shown actually at the end of the historical development of Buddhism in India as the life-long pilgrimage of holy places (*pīṭha*) of the Saṃvara tantrists, indicating concretely the reality of the imperative proposition of the following “propositions of the open system”:

<p>A: “You are in yourself (<i>svayam</i>) your own Father,” and yet B: You should by yourself (<i>svayam</i>) become your own Father.</p>
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This particular notion of pilgrimage indicated at the end of the history of Buddhism in India is to be opened to the universal and contemporal notion of human freedom, the essence of which should be the idea *Notwendigkeit*, i.e., the turn (*Wende*) of our historical and personal difficulties (*Not*) which has possibly been advocated by Schelling, preceding Nietzsche, in his main work, “*Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit*.”

Figures Indicating the Historical Evolution
of the Post-mahāyānic Buddhism

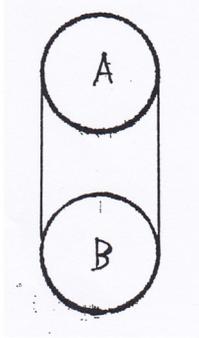


Fig.1

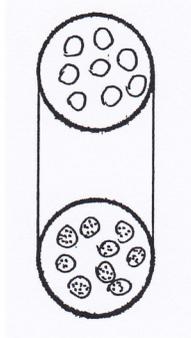


Fig.2

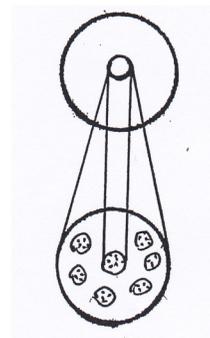


Fig.3

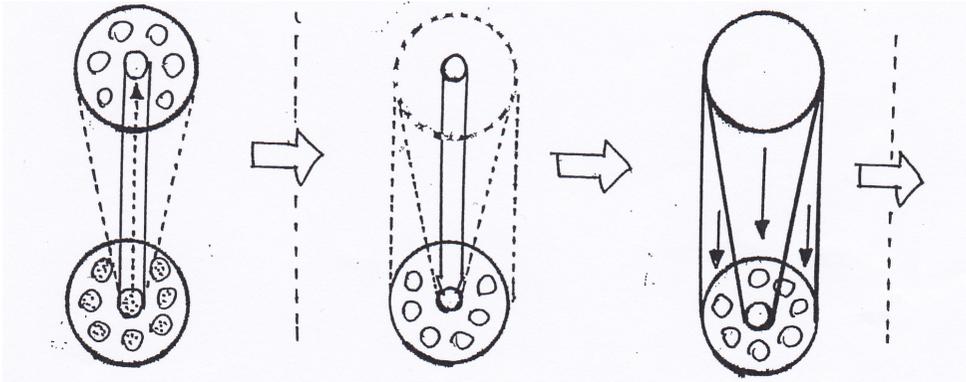


Fig.4: ASPP~GV

Fig.5: SP 迹門

Fig.6: SP 本門

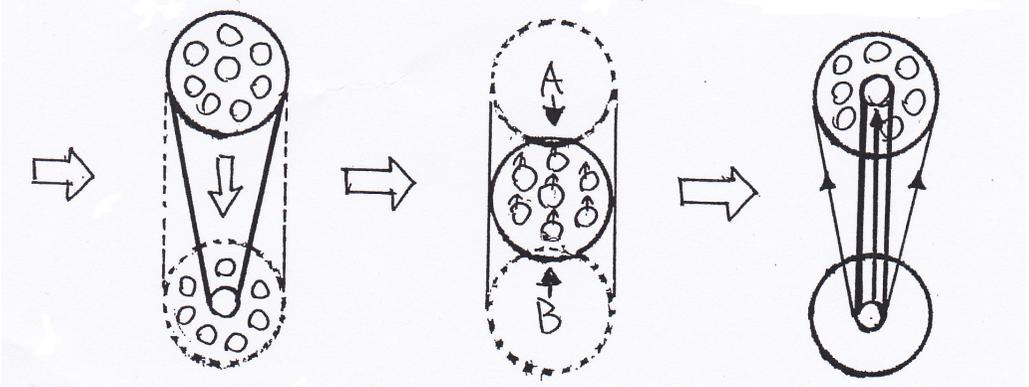


Fig.7: $TGS \sim SM$

Fig.8: AAN

Fig.9: $Post-th.g$