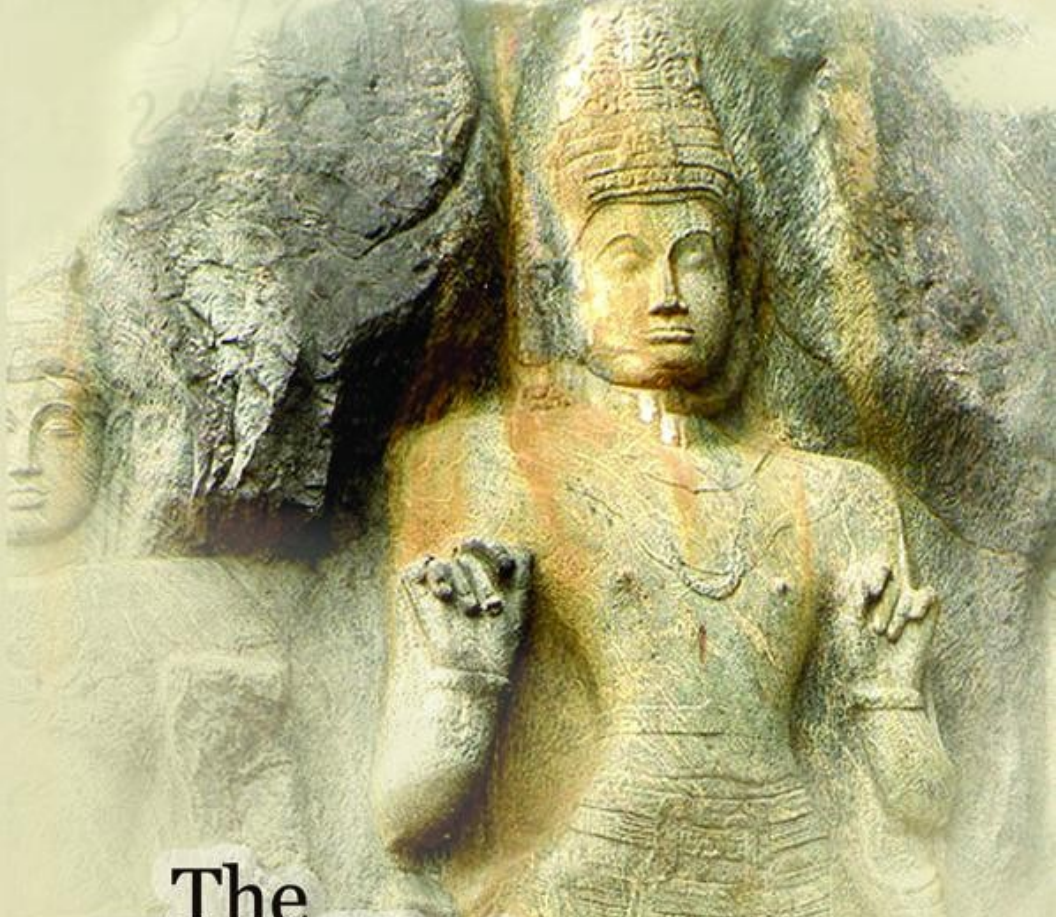

The Bodhisattva Ideal

Essays on the Emergence of Mahāyāna

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Abbreviations

Unless otherwise indicated, all references to the Pāli Canon are from the roman script edition of the Pāli Text Society.

A	Aṅguttara Nikāya (PTS edition page number).
Abhidh-k	*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*
AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya (Book & Sutta Number)
ARIRIAB	*Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University*
BCE	Before Christian Era
BHSD	Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*. Vol. II: *Dictionary*. [New Haven, 1953] Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972.
BMSC	Jens Braarvig (General Editor). *Manuscripts in the* Schøyen *Collection: Buddhist Manuscripts, Vols. I–III*. Oslo: Hermes Publishing, 2000–2006.
Bv	Buddhavaṃsa
CBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association
CE	Christian Era
D	Dīgha Nikāya (PTS edition page number).
D	Derge edition (Only used a few times in the notes to Bhikkhu Anālayo's essay.)
DĀ	Dīrgha-āgama (T 1)
DN	Dīgha Nikāya (Sutta Number)
Dhp-a	*Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*
EĀ	Ekottarika-āgama (T 125)
EB	*The Eastern Buddhist*
E^e	PTS edition
EnB	Robert E. Buswell, Jr. (Editor in Chief), *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. 2 vols. (Macmillan Reference, 2004).
ERE	James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Vols. I–XII, 1908–1921.
It	Itivuttaka
J	Jātaka (story number)
Ja	Jātaka (verses and commentary)
JIABS	*Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*
JPTS	Journal of the Pali Text Society
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
Kv	Kathāvatthu
M	Majjhima Nikāya (PTS edition page number).
MĀ	Madhyama-āgama (T 26)

MN	Majjhima Nikāya (Sutta Number)
PED	T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede. *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul /The Pali Text Society, 1972.
PTS	Pāli Text Society
Ps	*Papañcasūdanī*
Q	Peking edition
S	Saṃyutta Nikāya (PTS edition page number).
SĀ	Saṃyukta-āgama (T 99)
$SĀ^2$	'other' Saṃyukta-āgama (T 100)
Sn	Suttanipāta
SN	Saṃyutta Nikāya (Book & Sutta Number)
SHT	Sander, Lore et al. *Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*, Teil V, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1985.
Th	Theragātha
Th-a	*Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā*
Ud	Udāna
Vin	Vinaya-piṭaka
T	Taisho edition (CBETA)

Bodhi and *Arahattaphala:* From Early Buddhism to Early Mahāyāna[1]

Karel Werner

The event of enlightenment which made the ascetic Gotama into the Buddha of our epoch is several times described in the Pāli Canon, particularly in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (e.g. in suttas nos. 4, 19, 26, 36). We learn from these accounts that while still a bodhisatta he had already acquired proficiency in meditation practices and was able to enter concrete as well as abstract absorptions (*rūpa* and *arūpa jhānas*) at will, but recognised that none of these states of mind was in itself a solution to the riddle of existence, a permanent achievement or the final liberation from saṃsāra. The jhānic states were, indeed, satisfying in their way and highly valued in contemporary Yoga circles, but to rest content with them would mean stagnation and eventual regress into lower saṃsāric states again. The bodhisatta was now aware that what was needed was the discovery of the cause of conditioned life in saṃsāra in order to remove that cause and break the chain of conditionality.

Sitting under the tree which became hallowed in subsequent times as the Tree of Enlightenment, the bodhisatta entered the fourth jhāna and with his mind firmly anchored in total equanimity, which is the main characteristic of this jhāna, he turned his attention to the past. He succeeded in breaking through the barrier of oblivion and recollected his previous lives, one by one, by the hundreds and by the hundreds of thousands, during the whole present world period, and, still further into the past, during uncounted previous world periods. In this way he obtained knowledge of his entire past, which became to him a vivid personal illustration of the beginningless cyclic world of saṃsāra.

Next he turned his attention to the world around him, with its innumerable living beings. With his clairvoyant eye (*dibbacakkhu*) he could now see all the beings in saṃsāra with all their achievements, anxieties and endeavours and he saw how at every moment a large number of them died only to be reborn elsewhere in higher or lower worlds according to their actions. In this way he obtained another

knowledge, another vivid illustration of the vast world of saṃsāra, this time as it existed around him, simultaneously with his own life.

With these two knowledges the bodhisatta acquired a direct and concrete picture of the way the law of karma worked and he also saw the repetitiveness of saṃsāric existence. Looking back over his beginningless past he realised that he had travelled through all possible spheres of life and had occupied all possible stations in saṃsāric life several times over. Looking around himself he now saw those spheres of life and stations within them in their seemingly infinite variety occupied by other beings. So, basically, the saṃsāric life of his past and the saṃsāric world around him were the same.

If there had still been any doubt in him as to the desirability of leaving the saṃsāric existence behind, his double vision of the totality of saṃsāric forms of life[2] would have brought home to him that there was no point in going on and on in the same way. There was nothing new in saṃsāra to which he could look forward and which would not be a repetition of what he had been through before more than once. The temporary detachment from and equanimity towards saṃsāric life as achieved in the state of the fourth jhāna could now only become permanent and effortless for him and he thus won complete detachment from saṃsāra and any form of longing to remain within it as an involved participant. The remaining question was: Why? Why does this whole spectacle of saṃsāric life goes on and why is one involved in it?

In a way, the answer to this question was already there, known to the bodhisatta as well as to most of the other ascetics of the time, because it formed the basis and motivation of their quest. Saṃsāric life was unsatisfactory and one was involved in and bound by it because of the cankers (*āsavas*), i.e., because of the influx of sensual desire (*kāmāsava*), continued existence (*bhavāsava*) and essential ignorance (*avijjāsava*). This motivating knowledge was, however, more like a working hypothesis which had not yet been verified or a religious belief which had not yet been substantiated by personal experience. But now, when the vision of the totality of saṃsāra both in its personal and cosmic context as described above had been achieved, the bodhisatta recognised that a realistic basis had been created for the tackling of the last problem, namely the cause of it all. And so in the third watch of the night of Enlightenment he knew exactly where to turn his attention next.

From the basis of the fourth jhāna the bodhisatta now applied his mind to the realisation of the destruction of cankers.[3] He saw clearly as it actually was the truth of the unsatisfactoriness of saṃsāric life, how it arose, how it was made to cease and what the way was leading to its cessation. He also saw the true nature of the cankers, how they arose, how they were stopped and the way to their stopping. "Thus knowing and thus seeing, this mind of mine became liberated from the canker of sensual desire, liberated from the canker of becoming, liberated from the canker of ignorance. The knowledge: 'This is being liberated' arose in the liberated one. I knew: 'Birth is exhausted, the divine faring completed, what was to be done has been done, there is no other life like this to come.'"[4]

We can easily see that the knowledge of the destruction of cankers is in fact the knowledge of the four noble truths, which form the basis, the core and the goal of the early Buddhist teaching and practice. Naturally, there are a number of discourses dealing with them in detail. Very briefly summarised: the first truth asserts the unsatisfactoriness of the whole of saṃsāric existence in its four main aspects: (1) that of personality, composed of five groups of constituents to which one clings as one's own although they do not belong to one (*pañc'upādānakkhandhā*), (2) that of the conscious life of the personality represented by the six internal (*ajjhattika*) and six external (*bāhira*) bases (*āyatanas*), i.e., the five sense organs and the mind with their respective objects, (3) that of the world as constituted by the six external *āyatanas,* and (4) that of the world as analysed into its four basic forces or great elements (*mahābhūta*); the second truth obtains its elaboration in the form of the twelve links of the process of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*); the third truth is also explained in the context of dependent origination, this time contemplated in reverse order; and the fourth truth is the eightfold path with all its intricate methods of progress and realisation.

These then are, as far as we can gather from the early sources, the contents of *bodhi* which made the bodhisatta into the Buddha of our historical period. They are often referred to, in a succinct formulation, as the three knowledges: (1) remembrance of former existences (*pubbenivāsānussati*), (2) knowledge of destinations according to actions (*yathākammūpagañāṇa*) or the celestial eye (*dibbacakkhu*) and (3) knowledge of the destruction of cankers (*āsavakkhayañāṇa*). This list was later extended to six "higher

knowledges" (*abhiññās*), the three additional ones, preceding the original three, being (1) magic powers (*iddhividhā*), (2) celestial ear (*dibbasota*) and (3) the capacity to know the minds of others (*cetopariyañāṇa*).[5]

None of these knowledges remained peculiar to the Buddha, and on various occasions he gave the standard descriptions of the accomplished monk as possessing the three knowledges (e.g., DN 13) or the six higher knowledges (e.g., DN 34; MN 6, 7). This implies that there was no essential difference between the Enlightenment of the Buddha and the Enlightenment of his accomplished disciples. That applied even to the faculty of teaching the Dhamma to others. When Māra urged the Buddha after his Enlightenment to enter the final nibbāna (*parinibbāna*), the Buddha refused, saying: " I will not pass into final nibbāna, O Evil One, as long as no *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs, upāsakas* and *upāsikas* of mine become *sāvakas* and *sāvikas*—accomplished, disciplined, skilled, true hearers, preservers of Dhamma who have reached complete harmony with the Dhamma, have entered upon the proper course, are of perfect conduct, and having acquired mastership of their own, will expound, show, make known, establish, reveal, analyse and make clear the Dhamma, and having well and with logic refuted arisen adverse opinions, will show this striking Dhamma."[6] From this passage it is clear that accomplished disciples (= *sāvakas* and *sāvikas*) were foreseen by the Buddha just after his Enlightenment as becoming fully fledged teachers of the Dhamma.[7]

Thus originally there was to be no difference between the *bodhi* of the Buddha and the *bodhi* of his accomplished disciples. They were all equally enlightened as to the causes of saṃsāric existence and therefore equally free from them, having reached nibbāna. They had the three knowledges or the six higher knowledges and they had a capability to teach the Dhamma which practically equalled that of the Buddha himself. The Pāli Canon comprises a number of discourses on various aspects of the teaching and practice given by accomplished disciples which do not differ in style or contents from those ascribed to the Buddha. Moreover, each of these discourses was subsequently endorsed by the Buddha when reported to him.[8] One difference, however, remained clear: the Buddha was the first one to attain *bodhi* and he did it by his own effort; he was also the first and most skilful one to teach the Dhamma. On account of this he was

hailed as the perfect teacher and his Enlightenment as the incomparable perfect Enlightenment. (*anuttara sammā sambodhi*).[9]

But of course, once a difference is admitted in any aspect, it tends to be widened and extended to further aspects. And that happened very early, although in one respect the Pāli tradition has remained consistent: however superior the Buddha was to his arahants in teaching skill and however incomparable his Enlightenment may have been, this had no bearing on the fact of being freed from saṃsāra, having reached final nibbāna. Liberation was the prime aim and that, essentially, was what made one an arahant. Those seeking a quick shortcut to liberation soon discovered that it was the third knowledge, that of destruction of cankers (*āsavakkhayañāṇa*), which was the decisive factor for the attainment of nibbāna. The knowledge of one's own past lives and of the comings and goings of other beings may have been important to a solitary truth seeker to demonstrate to himself the futility of saṃsāric involvement and motivate him for the final effort to destroy the cankers, but a disciple of a fully enlightened teacher may have found enough motivation for his struggle in accepting the teaching of his charismatic master in full without personal verification and yet have been able to complete his struggle and destroy the cankers on the basis of his grasp of the four noble truths.

So, as the number of the accomplished disciples grew, fewer and fewer of them were known to have all the three knowledges in full, let alone all the six higher knowledges, and some of them apparently possessed only the one which was indispensable for liberation, i.e., the third knowledge or the sixth higher knowledge (*āsavakkhayañāṇa*). Later Pāli tradition therefore classifies it as supramundane (*lokuttara*) and the remaining two or five as mundane (*lokiya*), since they could be acquired to a certain degree by anybody without bringing him nearer to final liberation; they still belonged to and kept one within saṃsāra. They greatly enhanced, of course, the possibility of liberation when properly used, but they also represented a danger, since they could be misused or prove a distraction or diversion, if the last, supramundane, knowledge was not developed simultaneously or soon afterwards.

Thus we have at a quite early stage in the Pāli canonical tradition several types of liberated ones who had attained nibbāna, but who were not equal to each other in the attainment of higher

spiritual powers. Yet they were recognised as arahants who had destroyed their cankers. The foremost arahant was the Buddha, who had all six higher knowledges and the supreme skill of an incomparable teacher; next came his great arahants who also possessed all[10] or nearly all these qualities, although perhaps in a slightly smaller measure, and whose teaching skill was not their own, but derived from their being the disciples of the Buddha; then followed arahants who fully possessed only the third knowledge (the sixth higher knowledge) and one or two of the other faculties; and last we find arahants who possessed only the third knowledge (sixth higher knowledge) of the destruction of cankers which they had obtained through their understanding of the four noble truths and particularly of the chain of dependent origination. This amounted to acquiring wisdom and therefore they were called wisdom-liberated (*paññāvimutta*).[11] They did not even have to become proficient in the attainment of absorptions (jhānas). Those who did achieve jhānas as well as liberation through wisdom were described as "both ways liberated" (*ubhatobhāgavimutta*). It does not, however, follow that they always used their jhānic proficiency for the attainment of further knowledges; they could have rested content with their supramundane knowledge of the destruction of cankers. But the matter is far from being entirely clear. Later Pāli tradition elaborated the path to liberation which bypasses jhānas and develops only the one supramundane knowledge into a method known as "dry" or "pure" insight (*sukkha* or *suddha vipassanā*).[12]

From what has just been said we can see that the Pāli tradition has tended from quite early times to narrow down the contents of the fruit of arahantship (*arahattaphala*) so that—although it represented full liberation—it does not quite merit the designation of "enlightenment" (*bodhi*) which is too reminiscent of the events of the night of Enlightenment. It was therefore hardly ever used to describe directly a disciple's final achievement. (The Sanskrit Buddhist tradition, however, did use the term and in Mahāyāna texts the term *śrāvakabodhi* is current, denoting the limited achievement of Hīnayānists, but it percolated into Pāli writing in the twelfth century with a somewhat upgraded meaning—see later). The reason for this was probably the urgency of winning liberation as quickly as possible without spending time and energy on developing jhānas and mundane knowledges.

However, there is a pitfall in this development. Through forsaking the experience of the totality of saṃsāra as provided by a complete knowledge of one's past lives and the comings and goings of all other beings, there arises the problem of the reliability or otherwise of a would-be arahant's knowledge of the destruction of his cankers. As mentioned earlier, by definition this knowledge is supramundane and whoever possesses it is in no doubt and cannot deceive himself. But this does not prevent those who do not possess it from deceiving themselves and thinking that they do have it. During the Buddha's lifetime, with his power of knowing the minds of others (*cetopariyañāṇa*), his confirmation of the achievement of a newly born arahant gave it absolute authenticity both for him and other members of the Buddhist community, and other great arahants could do the same even when the Buddha had passed away, although perhaps with less acceptable authority for some. But the time would inevitably come when no one could provide this service and the danger of self-deception as to one's own achievement, and deliberate deception on the part of false monks going undetected, must have been recognised. The Buddha himself seems to have anticipated the problem and gave a discourse in which he enumerated the criteria of arahantship in the form of questions to be put by others (obviously unable to confirm the achievement by their direct knowledge) to one who made the declaration of arahantship (MN 112). These criteria concern the unshakable freedom of the mind from the influence of senses, from the constituents of personality, from the elements constituting the world, from the sixfold internal and external sense spheres and from the bias of the notion of "I" and "mine".

Still, it could easily happen that a devout follower leading an austere life and practising diligently could reach a state of inner balance and detachment resembling, to him, the final attainment as defined by the third knowledge while his cankers would still exist in him in a latent form. Examples of this happening can be found in commentaries, e.g., the stories of the *theras* Mahā Nāga and Mahā Tissa (*Manorathapūraṇī*) who believed for sixty years that they were arahants until Dhammadinna, a pupil of theirs, reached arahantship together with four higher knowledges, and seeing that his teachers were only learned worldlings, helped them recognise it and complete their path.[13]

From this we can see that there was enough ground for starting to look down upon *arahattaphala* in comparison with *bodhi* unless one painstakingly discriminated the types of arahantship and remained entirely clear about the point that it was the third knowledge which made for final liberation and that in this respect there was no difference between the Buddha and any type of arahant. The Theravāda tradition scrupulously guarded this position, but outside it the situation was different. Perhaps the confusion brought about by instances of seeming attainments of arahantship such as those referred to above (but with a less fortunate outcome) contributed to the development of the view that arahants were liable to fall away from nibbāna, as held by Saṃmitīyas, Vajjiputtakas, Sarvāstivādins and some Mahāsaṅghikas.[14]

The nature of the attainment of arahantship was further made questionable by the very issue which brought about the schism of the Saṅgha to which the Mahāsaṅghikas owed their origin and which concerned the status of the arahant. The impression one gets from the scanty accounts of the event in the fragmentary sources is that at the bottom of it all was a desire to make the proclamation of arahantship more easily available. One can wonder why this should be desired when arahantship meant the destruction of cankers and consequent freedom from saṃsāric life after death and total equanimity towards it while still alive, so that the question of status inside and outside of the Saṅgha was totally irrelevant to it. However, we have to allow for the fragility of human nature even on the part of ordained monks if they are not liberated. *Arahant* originally meant "worthy", which implies that, like the whole *sāvakasaṅgha*, he is "worthy of offerings, worthy of hospitality, worthy of gifts, worthy of salutation, an incomparable field of merit to the world," as the standard description goes. Although the word *arahant* or any of its derivatives is not used in it, the implication is clear and the *Vimānavatthu Aṭṭhakathā* spells it out when it defines the *arahant*, among other things, as deserving requisites, such as food, etc. (*paccayānaṃ arahattā*).[15]

Thus, it is easy to imagine that in the climate of decline of standards in the Saṅgha of Maurya time, when richly endowed and well supported monasteries became desirable places to inhabit, a substantial proportion of their residents had rather more mundane reasons for becoming monks than the quickest way to final

liberation, while the acquisition of the status of an arahant in the eyes of others, particularly lay patrons, would be highly desirable to them.

The tendency to revise the criteria of the attainment of arahantship undoubtedly also existed among genuine monks who did not belong in the fold of Theravāda—with good reason. The image of the Buddha had by this time undergone a considerable change. He was no longer seen by most as a mere man who had found the way to and attained Enlightenment and preached it to others to enable them to reach the same, but more of an embodiment of the cosmic principle of Enlightenment; and with this view was changed also the idea of the contents of Enlightenment. The first two knowledges in their original form were no longer impressive enough. The cosmic principle of Enlightenment as manifested in the person of the Buddha caused him to become omniscient in every conceivable respect. Claims of omniscience had been made in the time of the Buddha for other ascetic teachers, e.g., Mahāvīra (MN 79), and it is understandable that such a claim would eventually be made also for the Buddha, but it is clearly absent in the early discourses, and the claim of omniscience in leaders of non-Buddhist sects was moreover rejected in them.

Yet when this claim was made of the Buddha in the process of later development of Buddhist sectarian views, it was transferred also onto the arahant; this shows that the original tradition—according to which the achievement of the arahant was practically identical with that of the Buddha not only in the certainty of liberation, but also in the other knowledges—was still very much alive. It also shows that the Theravāda tradition allowing for final liberation of an arahant through the third knowledge only (*paññāvimutti* of a *sukkhavipassaka*) was not universally shared and may have been a very early, purely sectarian Theravāda development. It probably saved the Theravādins from the dilemma faced now at this later stage by the other sects, for the requirement of omniscience for the attainment of arahantship appeared to many, quite naturally, as unacceptable.

At the occasion of the schism, both these revisionist tendencies were incorporated—together with a third one—into five points by the monk Bhadra (or Mahādeva) who sought to redefine the concept of arahantship as totally distinct from the attainment of Buddhahood

or Enlightenment. He claimed that an arahant (1) could still be seduced by deities in dreams and have seminal discharge while asleep, (2) might be ignorant of some matters, (3) might have doubts, (4) might be instructed by other persons, and (5) could enter the path as a result of the spoken word.[16]

Points 2–4 apparently arose from confusion about omniscience. Clearly, even genuine arahants lacked knowledge of all matters and facts of saṃsāric reality, e.g., expert knowledge of sciences and crafts, had doubts and were uncertain as to the outcome of ordinary events, e.g., whether they would obtain almsfood in a certain village , and needed instruction or information from others, e.g., to find their way in a strange locality. The Theravādins who dealt with all the five points in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka (Kathāvatthu II, 1–6) would concede points 2–4 in this form not only for arahants, but also for the Buddha. But they would carefully make clear that these points did not apply to the knowledge of the Dhamma which both the Buddha and the arahants possessed in full. They had no doubt about it and could not be instructed in it by anybody with lesser achievement. Bhadra's deviation from the early canonical view was twofold: he would ascribe, wrongly, but in agreement with the tendency of the time, omniscience to the Buddha in all matters, both mundane and supramundane, while denying it, rightly, to arahants; but he would further allow, wrongly, for some measure of ignorance and doubt in arahants even in questions concerning the Dhamma, i.e., in their supramundane (third) knowledge of being liberated, and for the possibility of arahants being instructed in these questions even by non-arahants.[17]

As indicated above, these points (2–4), although arising from conceptual confusion about supramundane and mundane forms of knowledge, could be regarded as stemming from genuine problems experienced by earnest monks and they might have been solved in an enlightened discourse between Bhadra's party and the *theras*.[18] The first point, however, was one which undoubtedly aroused suspicion as to its motivation and betrayed eagerness to acquire an external status rather than an internal realisation. At best it showed deep ignorance of the nature of the third knowledge, namely the destruction of cankers. This by definition transcended the normal knowledge of the surface consciousness and penetrated the entire mind with all its layers freeing it from cankers completely. Bhadra's

first point would allow monks who had acquired equanimity in their daily life by the routine practice of renunciation to consider themselves and be acknowledged by others as arahants even if their cankers were suppressed only partly by being driven into the unconscious, from where they could influence dreams. Such achievement, however, if not further perfected, has to be regarded as relative and not final, and could be lost in the face of powerful impetuses from the outside. Undoubtedly this must have happened to monks who regarded themselves and were regarded by others as arahants, and that would be one of the factors leading to the development of the view that arahants could fall away.

The Theravādins were very clear about all this and, remaining adamant about the true nature of arahantship as the final and supramundane achievement of liberation, i.e., nibbāna, they refuted the first point outright.[19] As it seems, however, they were in a minority, and from then on their influence in India declined, though they have continued to flourish in Sri Lanka till the present day. In India the Mahāsaṅghika concept of the omniscient Buddha as the embodiment of the cosmic principle of Buddhahood became the basis for further elaboration of Mahāyāna Buddhology, which led also to the birth of great schools of Buddhist philosophy, thereby enriching the whole field of Indian philosophical and religious thought.

However, the outcome of the redefinition of arahantship cannot be looked upon as successful. The relaxed criteria would have enabled many monks of lesser attainment as well as status-seeking monks, whose general conduct and knowledge of the Dhamma were observably insufficient to meet the strict criteria adhered to by Theravādins (MN 112), to proclaim themselves arahants. We need not doubt that many took advantage of this opportunity, so that a profusion of arahants may have occurred in the India of the time. We do not know to what extent this status helped them to acquire the desired benefits, at least in the short term, but the long-term downgrading of the criteria was counterproductive. In the creative climate of religious fervour and quest for perfection which became conspicuous a century or two after the Mahāsaṅghika schism and led to the appearance of new sūtras which reformulated the soteriological message of the Dhamma, the achievement of arahantship ranked low, was not seen to be final and was even

compared to a children's toy (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* III, 70–90). In its devalued form it simply could not satisfy the spiritual aspiration of those who sought the realisation of the ultimate goal.

Thus it was necessary to look again to the achievement of the Buddha himself, and in the absence of the original concept of the arahant who is practically equal in knowledge and teaching activity to the Buddha, it was the Buddhahood itself with its perfect Enlightenment and capacity to save innumerable beings through teaching which became the goal. So, instead of following the eightfold path, the aspirant now embarked on the path of a bodhisattva in order to develop perfections (*pāramitās*) and to become the Buddha of a future age.[20] This, of course, is no innovation, for that is what the last Buddha had to go through and so had his predecessors and so will those who will come in the future, like Metteyya. What is new is the prescription that this path to full Buddhahood be followed by everybody, a requirement which could not but eventually be felt to be unrealistic. After all, there is no need for so many Buddhas, even if worlds are innumerable. Yet the goal to be achieved could not be devalued again, and there was no way in which arahantship could be rehabilitated—an arahant simply no longer was seen to be truly enlightened, as a Buddha was. The thought of Enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) became the most powerful motivation, and so the designation *bodhisattva*, a being intent on Enlightenment, was the only one acceptable, even though the original aim of the path of a bodhisattva, namely to become the Buddha of a certain world period as its perfect teacher, was abandoned. Thus was developed a concept of *bodhisattvas* as a class of enlightened beings in their own right who need never become Buddhas yet are very close to them, both in the quality of their Enlightenment and in their capacity to teach and generally help other suffering beings. As these bodhisattvas are usually in the retinue of a Buddha, they have a position which is virtually equivalent to that of the great arahants in the retinue of the historical Buddha.

Further development followed, but at this particular point the evolution of Buddhist ideas came full circle. The debasement of the original ideal of spiritual accomplishment of arahantship—which, in a way, had started quite early with the introduction of the concept of *paññāvimutti*, defined as lacking all the enlightening knowledges but

one, and which reached its nadir with Bhadra's reform—was made good for Buddhism in the north by a reformulation of this spiritual ideal under the label of *bodhisattvayāna*. The fact that the Theravādins in the south have preserved the ideal of arahantship virtually unscathed when it was devalued in the north gives them the right to refuse to fit neatly under the heading Hīnayāna and to brush aside the Mahāyāna criticism of the goal of arahantship as they understand it. The criticism of the Mahāyāna sūtras was justifiable, prompted by the debased image of arahantship in the wake of Bhadra's reform and does not in the least apply to the great enlightened arahants of early Buddhism, with their proficiency in attaining jhānas, three *ñāṇas* or six *abhiññās* and many other qualities, as contained in the standard descriptions in the *suttas*, including the capacity of giving enlightened discourses and leading scores of disciples. Thus arahants are fully comparable to Mahāyāna bodhisattvas. Since the reputation of the great arahants of early Buddhism never entirely vanished, arahants still play a certain role in some sects of Mahāyāna and are regarded at least as equal to bodhisattvas of the sixth plane, *bhūmi*.[21]

The Theravāda tradition of Sri Lanka later tried, after some centuries of interchange with Mahāyāna, to hammer home the point of equality of the *bodhi* achievement of the disciples and the Buddha by introducing the Mahāyāna terms *śrāvakabodhi* (*sāvakabodhi*), with a much higher meaning than the Mahāyāna sūtras allow for it; it underlines it even more by calling accomplished disciples *sāvakabuddhas*.[22] But these terms never became current.

In any event, the conclusion, I believe, must be that the historical controversy between Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna, justified at a time in India when the ideal of early Buddhism was obscured and its inheritors were truly "*hīna*", is pointless if applied today to the whole of early Buddhist tradition as preserved in the Pāli Canon and to the surviving schools of Mahāyāna. It further appears clear that the whole Buddhist tradition is vested in the concept of *bodhi* as defined by the Buddha's attainments in the night of Enlightenment and matched by the achievements of the great arahants. That means that the contents of *arahattaphala* must equal or be very closely comparable to *sammāsambodhi* (*samyak saṃbodhi*), since, as soon as it started being narrowed down, its further debasement could not be stopped, and a reformulation of the ideal of the ultimate

accomplishment became necessary. In so far as the Theravāda school has preserved the early understanding of the nature of *arahattaphala*, it is not a lesser vehicle, since it offers the ultimate Buddhist realisation, namely nibbāna, to all beings—which is exactly the proclaimed aim of Mahāyāna, too. Open to question remains the tendency to rest content with *sukkhavipassanā* practice, a development within Theravāda which is nowadays favoured in many quarters of that school.

Notes

1. This is a slightly revised version of the essay published in the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 4, 1981, 70–84. Reprinted in: *Buddhist Studies; Ancient and Modern* (*Collected Papers on South Asia* No. 4, Centre of South Asian Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London), ed. by Denwood, Philip and Alexander Piatigorsky, Curzon Press, London, 1983, 167–181. Reprinted with permission of the author.

2. Cf. Karel Werner: 'The Indian Experience of Totality', pp. 229–231, in: *Wege zur Ganzheit. Festschrift zum 75. Geburtstag von Lama Anagarika Govinda*, Almora 1973, pp. 219–232.

3. *āsavānaṃ khayañāṇāya cittaṃ abhininnāmesiṃ*. MN 4/M I 23.

4. Ibid.

5. Cf. DN 34; MN 3, 6 and 77.

6. DN 16/D II 104–105. I have abridged my translation by including the four types of disciples in one single paragraph, while the Pāli original gives four parallel paragraphs.

7. Technically, a *sāvaka* or *sāvikā* is *ariya puggala*, i.e., one of the eight types of holy persons, starting with the one on the path to stream-entry and ending with the one who has acquired the fruit of arahantship. All together they form the *sāvakasaṅgha*, comprising both ordained and lay disciples, as distinct from *bhikkhusaṅgha*, comprising only ordained monks who may have attained the state of *sāvakas* = holy disciples = *ariyapuggalas*, or may still be ordinary "worldlings"—*putthujanas*. Cf. Walpola Rāhula: "The Problem of the Prospect of the Saṅgha in the West", in: *Zen and the Taming of the Bull*, London 1978, pp. 55–57.

8. E.g., Sāriputta's discourse with wanderers of other sects in SN 12:24/S II 31–34.

9. For the epithet *anuttara* cf. EnB vol. III, p. 179 and DN 30/D III 159.

10. E.g., Kassapa, see SN 16:10–11/S II 216–222.

11. MN 70: M I 477–478; SN 12:70/S II 123–124.

12. See *Visuddhimagga*, chapter XVIII; cf. Also references in P. Vajirañāṇa's *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice*, Colombo 1962, p. 141, note 1.

13. A free rendering of these episodes was published in *Stories of Old*, Kandy 1963, pp. 8–11.

14. Cf. EnB, vol. II, p. 47.

15. Ibid. p. 42.

16. See A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi 1970, pp. 214–218; cf. E.J. Thomas, *The History of Buddhist Thought*, London 1967 (repr. of 2nd edition; first 1933), pp. 33, 173; E. Conze, *Buddhism, its Essence and Development*, London 1957 (3rd edition; first 1951), pp. 119–120; also *Buddhist Thought in India*, London 1962, p. 197.

17. See Louise de la Vallée Poussin, 'The Five Points of Mahādeva and the Kathāvatthu', *JRAS* 1910, pp. 413–423.

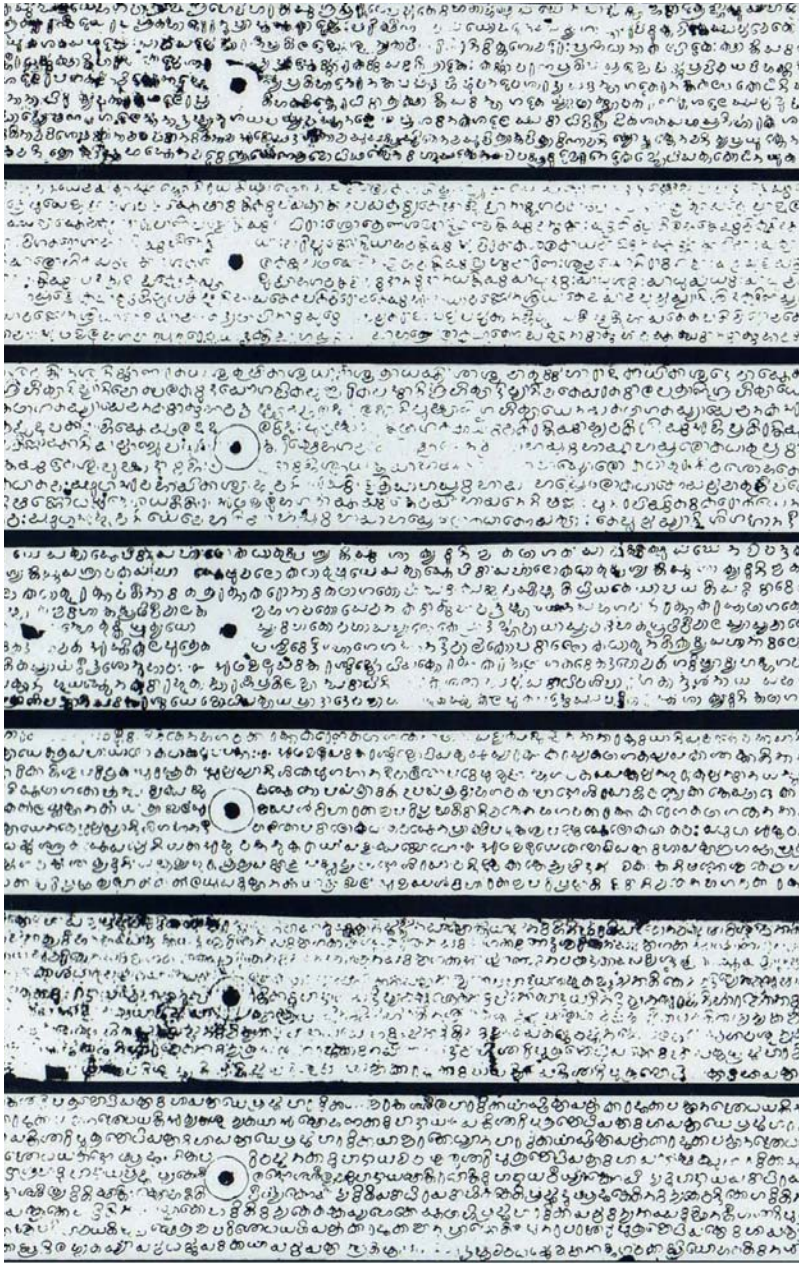
18. One can understand that there was confusion about arahants' knowledge of the Dhamma as expressed by Bhadra's points 2–4 in face of the division of vocation among ordained monks, some specialising in learning, teaching and interpretation of suttas, others seeking quick emancipation through intense practice after a brief instruction in meditation. This allows that a monk of the latter category, who might have attained arahantship, might be less knowledgeable conceptually about the teaching, and therefore willing to accept explanation from a monk of the former category who may not have been himself an arahant. The commentarial *Stories of Old* (see note 11) do contain such cases.

19. Again, one has to allow for confusion in the minds of ordinary monks even in the Theravāda fold, which makes Bhadra's first point understandable, although not justifiable. One example of monks thinking that an arahant can still enjoy sensual pleasure is furnished by *Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā* in the story of the rape of Uppalavaṇṇā. This young nun became an arahant and then lived alone in a forest hut near Sāvatthī, where one day she was ambushed and raped by a young brahmin. Later monks discussed the case in this way: "Even those that have rid themselves of the depravities (*āsavas*) like the pleasure of love and gratify their passions. Why should they not? They are not kolāpa-trees or anthills, but are living creatures with bodies of moist flesh. Therefore, they also like the pleasures of love and gratify their passions." When the Buddha learned of it, he instructed them: "Monks, they that have rid themselves of the depravities neither like the pleasures of love or gratify their passions. For even as a drop of water which has fallen upon a lotus-leaf does not cling thereto or remain thereon, but rolls over and falls off, even as a grain of mustard-seed does not cling to the point of an awl or remain thereon, but rolls over and falls off, precisely so twofold love does not cling to the heart of one who has rid himself of the depravities or remain there." E.W. Burlingame's translation in his *Buddhist Legends*, Harvard U.P. 1921, part 2, p. 129.

20. Cf. Warder, *op. cit.*, pp. 355–358.

21. Cf. EnB, vol. II, p.46, note 1.

22. See Walpola Rāhula, *op. cit.*, p. 75 (article "The Bodhisattva Ideal in Theravāda and Mahāyāna"). On the other hand, some Pāli commentaries confuse the matter even further by using the term *buddha* with qualifications also for minor achievements: those learned in Dhamma are called *bahussutabuddhas*, although—one can presume—they might even be *putthujanas*, and arahants are termed *catusaccabuddhas*, meaning apparently those who became free through the third knowledge; the Buddha himself is ascribed omniscience as a *sabbaññubuddha*. For references see EnB, vol. III, p. 357.



Golden manuscript of the Long Prajñāpāramitā, found at Jetavana, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. After von Hinüber.

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