

THE BODHISATTVA AND MORAL WISDOM IN ŚĀNTIDEVA'S ŚIKSĀSAMUCCAYA

THE BODHISATTVA AND THE IDEAL OF MORAL WISDOM

IN

ŚĀNTIDEVA'S ŚIKSĀSAMUCCAYA

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ABSTRACT

In the Śikṣāsamuccaya Śāntideva, a Mādhyamika philosopher of the early eighth century A.D., builds upon the philosophy of śūnyatā (emptiness) to demonstrate its practical implications in religious life. In his portrayal of the Bodhisattva Śāntideva focuses on this religious hero's ascent from imperfection toward the realisation of prajñāpāramitā, the perfection of wisdom. Wisdom, philosophically the end of all false ideas about reality, in the sphere of behaviour is an ethical ideal characterised by compassion and altruism. The Bodhisattva is one who has mastered wisdom and whose conduct is permeated with this ethical ideal. Śāntideva's presentation of the Bodhisattva is not limited to the ideal, but also explores the many levels of achievement through which an aspiring novice-Bodhisattva must progress toward fulfilment of the ideal. Though Śāntideva refers to certain levels in a Bodhisattva's development and to certain turning points in his career these factors as presented in the Śikṣā do not explain how Śāntideva understands the novice-Bodhisattva in terms of the ideal. The concept of bodhicitta, the thought of enlightenment which all Bodhisattvas possess, parallels in its development with the Bodhisattva's development, and as a possible equivalent to wisdom itself serves to link the imperfect to the ideal. Śāntideva's use of comparison between the imperfect and the ideal suggests that his presentation of the Bodhisattva is designed to encourage novice-

Bodhisattvas to strive for perfection. The themes of teaching, example, and purpose indicate that Śāntideva's understanding of the Bodhisattva and wisdom involves the idea of the Bodhisattva's function, as the link through which the ideal of moral perfection and wisdom has effect in the imperfect world.

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INTRODUCTION

Śāntideva, who lived in India during the late seventh and early eighth centuries A.D. produced two masterful works, the Śikṣāsamuccaya and the Bodhicaryāvatāra. His works are remembered today as great contributions to the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition which, in India, was at its apex during Śāntideva's lifetime.

Śāntideva was a monk and a follower of the Mādhyamika philosophical tradition. He was a proponent of this school's philosophy of śūnyatā, translated as "emptiness" or "void". He taught the ideal of prajñāpāramitā, the perfection of wisdom, which is full knowledge of śūnyatā as characteristic of all existence. Well versed in the formal and technical aspects of this philosophy, Śāntideva built on this foundation to demonstrate its practical implications in an ethical teaching of religious self-understanding and discipline.

Śāntideva's primary concern was to teach about the Bodhisattva, the religious hero of the Mahāyāna path. The ideal of Bodhisattvahood is an elementary theme in Śāntideva's works, and the key to Śāntideva's thought. From his portrayal of the Bodhisattva in the Śikṣāsamuccaya which was written as a guide for the discipline of monks toward attainment of Bodhisattvahood, much can be learned about Śāntideva's understanding of the religious path.

The Śikṣāsamuccaya is the primary source for this paper. The Bodhicaryāvatāra is taken as a support to the first as a guide in assuring probable interpretations of Śāntideva's meaning in the Śikṣā, and to clarify his expression of certain concepts. The Bodhicaryāvatāra is the more systematic and concise work. While the Bodhicaryāvatāra is an excellent philosophical text, the Śikṣāsamuccaya is important because it teaches the practical aspect of a philosophy that can be very difficult to understand.

The Śikṣāsamuccaya is largely made up of quotations and paraphrases from a number of Mahāyāna texts. Śāntideva draws from such a wide variety of sources so frequently that it is a large task in itself to trace his path through a virtual maze of quotations and texts. For this paper it will suffice to consider all of the Śikṣāsamuccaya as Śāntideva's own. His specific source will be identified only in the footnote.

It is partly because of his eclectic use of source texts that Śāntideva's portrayal of the Bodhisattva is so rich and yet quite puzzling. While the ideal of Bodhisattvahood is presented in all its glory another dimension of Bodhisattvahood, the pursuit toward this ideal, receives great attention. The climb from mortal personhood to immortal Bodhisattvahood is the real focus of the Śikṣā. In this paper Śāntideva's presentation of the Bodhisattva ideal will be explored in contrast to his presentation of the climb toward that ideal in order to learn about Śāntideva's understanding of the Bodhisattva ideal and its significance for the ordinary person.

CHAPTER ONE

MORAL WISDOM

It is the intention of the Mahāyāna tradition according to Śāntideva that all beings may become enlightened, that all beings may achieve realisation of perfect wisdom. It is this concept of salvation which is expressed in the Bodhisattva doctrine. The ideal Bodhisattva for the most part can be understood as an enlightened being who has mastered the Buddha's wisdom, yet who elects to be reborn in the world in order to be of service to others. The Bodhisattva's contribution toward the eventual enlightenment of all beings is twofold: he undertakes to discipline himself in the way of wisdom, and he exerts himself for the benefit and guidance of his fellow beings. Wisdom, which the Bodhisattva cultivates and exercises, is the key to this religious path.

The Ethics of Wisdom

Wisdom is attained mainly through meditational practices. It is the antidote to ignorance which is the cause of desire, suffering, and rebirth. When wisdom is perfected one is free from all ignorance and, like the Buddha, is released from the wheel of rebirth.

According to the Mādhyamika understanding wisdom is a true way of seeing. It is knowledge or perception of existence in its

correct form. All factors of existence in truth have śūnyatā as their essential characteristic. Śūnyatā can be translated as "emptiness" and is often rendered "void" by Western scholars. We can begin by understanding śūnyatā as an indication of the lack of self-existence in any given factor of existence.

What is meant by "lack of self-existence" becomes clearer with a look at the doctrine of pratītya-samutpāda or relational-origination. This doctrine indicates the relational condition of all factors of existence.¹ Nāgārjuna, the renowned teacher of the Mādhyamika philosophy, says:

We declare that whatever is relational origination is śūnyatā. It is a provisional name... for the mutuality (of being) and, indeed, it is the middle path. Any factor of experience which does not participate in relational origination cannot exist.²

This doctrine of relational condition shows that nothing exists absolutely and unconditionally. Entities do have empirical validity yet they cannot be said to be truly or ultimately existent.³ As all factors of existence are subject to change and to interaction with other factors of existence, no thing can claim independence

¹Kenneth K. Inada, Nāgārjuna: Mūlamadhyamakakarika, (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1970), p. 37.

²Nāgārjuna, Mūlamadhyamakakarika, trans. K. K. Inada (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1970), 24:18-9, p. 148.

³T. V. R. Murti, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism, (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1980), pp. 7-8.

in its current mode of being. Śāntideva explains:

...if there were anything not void...it would be fixed in its own nature; it would be firm and unchangeable. It has no growth, no dwindling, no act, no cause.⁴

A common example used to demonstrate this idea is that flame depends on fuel for its existence, hence cannot be said to have an independent self-nature. The flame exists, but only in relational dependence.

The doctrine of relational condition at once affirms the existence of things and denies them absolute reality. It is called the Middle Doctrine because it rejects two opposite ideas: absolute non-being and absolute being. The interdependence of all factors of existence upon each other for existence, while no absolute reality is enjoyed, is the śūnyatā of existence.

Nāgārjuna, the great teacher who exhaustively explored the implications of śūnyatā, moved on from this refutation of the opposites being and non-being and asserted that śūnyatā does not indicate that neither being or non-being is true, nor that both being and non-being are true. Indeed, Nāgārjuna taught that it is undesirable to hold any view about reality. Any and all assertions about reality are inherently false. All such assertions involve speculative thought constructions which prove to be self-contradictory upon examination.⁵ Accordingly, Nāgārjuna produced two masterpieces

⁴Śāntideva, Śikṣāsamuccaya, trans. C. Bendall, W. H. D. Rouse, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971); "Puspakutadharani", p. 240.

⁵Murti, p. 139.

of refutation, his Mūlamadhyāmakakarikā and his Vigrahavyāvarani, in which he demonstrates with ruthless consistency the reasoning mind's inability to describe reality.

Ideation is inherently false. For example it draws arbitrary lines of distinction such as in the case of fire and its fuel. Fire needs fuel in order to exist, yet the presence of fuel does not necessarily imply the presence of the fire. Under analysis no satisfactory sense of distinction exists between these related things, yet though they are related they are not identical. This śūnyatā of the thing considered also applies to the idea of the thing considered. While fire is a relational thing the idea of fire is likewise only a provisional idea. Ideas are not adequate vehicles for knowing reality. Nāgārjuna's arguments in fact are directed against the holding of views or ideas about reality. Śūnyatā he maintains is not such a view, it is merely a word used to describe a truth which the intellect cannot adequately grasp.

The refutation of views is an important task for Nāgārjuna because ideation is the work of ignorance on all levels, from the ordinary way of perceiving objects to the philosopher's way of positing a view in order to explain reality. On the mundane level the work of ignorance can be described as follows. When an object is perceived as something concrete and tangible desire can be felt for that object. Since the object is truly of the nature of śūnyatā being subject to change, desire is thwarted and there results suffering.

This suffering is not caused by the object but is caused by a false apprehension of the object. Nāgārjuna explains that when this habit of false apprehension is abandoned, release from suffering results:

There is mokṣa [release] from the destruction of karmic defilements which are but conceptualisation. These arise from mere conceptual play (prapañca) which are in turn banished in śūnyatā.⁶

The pattern of ignorance and suffering which is broken by apprehension of śūnyatā is repeated on all levels. Murti explains this on the philosophical level:

A view is plausible because we prize it; we are enamored of its externals. We hold fast to it as truth. No doubt the process is unconscious and goes beyond empirical experience; it may even be beginningless. Nevertheless it acts as a cover (āvarāna) in hiding the real from us. In that state we do not even know that it is a view. So long as we are in illusion, we do not know it as illusion. We become aware of its contradictions, as we analyse it and know it inside out. Self-conscious reflection is not possible if anything were taken as true and unitary, as simple. When we entertain a view, we are possessed by it; we look at things in this colored way and are not even conscious of it. Only as a contrast is felt between what appeared and what it really turns out to be, there is self-consciousness. We must stand aside and perceive the inner flaw or fissure in our position. This is analysis or śūnyatā which splits up entities and exhibits their inner nature.⁷

⁶Nāgārjuna, 18:5, p. 114.

⁷Murti, p. 136.

While śūnyatā is the way reality actually presents itself, prajñā (wisdom) is the apprehension of this truth of reality, or rather it is the apprehension of śūnyatā itself. Murti explains that reality is inaccessible to reason as demonstrated by Nāgārjuna. It is intuition, direct and unencumbered by reason that perceives reality as it is.⁸ Marion L. Matics, who has done considerable work with Śāntideva's text, the Bodhicaryāvatāra, agrees but with an important qualification:

Prajñā, in the Mahāyāna, is whatever understanding of anything is left after conceptual knowledge has been discarded. Any picture which we may form in the imagination is by definition false.... It can only be said to be Emptiness--and even this, one might question, since Emptiness is an idea.... Even the term "intuitive experience" is a concept of the rational mind.⁹

Wisdom then can be spoken of as the end of all views. As apprehension of śūnyatā it is not a view in itself. It belongs to an order other than that of rationality and conceptualisation.

There is one further aspect of the śūnyatā of things remaining for discussion and it is the most important aspect as far as Śāntideva is concerned. This is śūnyatā as it applies to self and selfhood. As śūnyatā is demonstrable by reductio ad absurdum with regard to objects and concepts, so is it demonstrable with regard to the

⁸ Ibid., p. 136.

⁹ Marion L. Matics, Bodhicitta and Bodhisattva: A Study of the Bodhicaryāvatāra of Śāntideva, (Columbia University Ph.D. thesis, 1960), p. 269.

personal self and ideas about the self. Nāgārjuna says:

Grasping ceases to be where, internally and externally, (the ideas of) individuality and self-identity are destroyed. From the cessation of grasping the cessation of birth also follows.¹⁰

Hence perception of śūnyatā in things external and of oneself constitutes release from suffering, the antidote to ignorance.

This idea of no-self is central to Buddhist philosophy, and though Nāgārjuna did not expand a great deal on the theme of personal selflessness Śāntideva works it out thoroughly. Being concerned with the Bodhisattva discipline and practice in wisdom, Śāntideva fills in Nāgārjuna's outline demonstrating the psychological and behavioural implications of wisdom.

Śāntideva says: "Desire for selfhood is the chief root of all pains."¹¹ "...Hence by means of one's desire for the extinction of sorrow, let wisdom arise."¹² "This thought is with me always, night and day, sorrow is caused by the evil deed."¹³ For Śāntideva evil is not a malignant exterior force which is beyond human control. It is caused by human ignorance and can be made to cease by human effort and knowledge. In this way the notions of ignorance and of

¹⁰ Nāgārjuna, 18:4, p. 114.

¹¹ Śikṣā, p. 318.

¹² Śāntideva, Bodhicaryāvatāra in Entering the Path of Enlightenment, trans. M. L. Matics, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1971), 9:1, p. 211.

¹³ Ibid., 2:63, p. 152.

wisdom as its antedote have an ethical quality. Sorrow and its opposite are recognised as subject to the human will. They are the respective results of man's folly and wisdom. Evil, which comes from ignorance, stems from a false idea of reality and of self.

From the philosophical and metaphysical renunciation of self-ness in oneself and in things comes the expression of selflessness by the individual in action and motivation. Philosophical training in śūnyatā, the cultivation of wisdom through discipline of the mind, leads to an ethic of complete selflessness which culminates in pure altruism.

Śāntideva teaches this ethic of altruism tirelessly. Two of the most important themes with which he works are the teaching of the identity of one's self and another (parātmāsamatā) and the practice of the transference of the self and the other (parātmāparivartana). Concerning the equality of self and other he says:

One must exercise oneself in making no difference between others and self if the thought of becoming a Buddha is to become strong. Self and not-self exist only relatively, just as the hither and further banks of a river, and therefore is false. That bank is not of itself the other bank; then in relation to what could this bank exist? Selfhood is not of itself realised, then in relation to what would there be another?¹⁴

This idea is repeated in both the Śikṣā and the Bodhicaryāvatāra:

Since fear and sorrow are pleasing neither to me nor to another, what, then, is the distinction of the self that I protect it and not another?¹⁵

¹⁴ Śikṣā, "Tathāgataguhyā", p. 315.

¹⁵ BCY, 8:96, p. 202. Śikṣā (karika 1), p. 3.

Of course given the Mādhyamika position there is no such distinction to be found.

To understand the import of the teaching of transference of self and other it must be remembered that sorrow, given equality of self and other is a shared ailment. The awakened being in whom all sense of self has been overcome knows that there is complete identity between the individual and the collective good. Śāntideva uses the analogy of the parts of the body. Though they are distinct they are to be preserved as one. Likewise the world has many parts but it is to be preserved as a whole: "Another's sorrow is to be destroyed by me because it is sorrow like my own sorrow."¹⁶ Murti explains:

A man divided in himself must necessarily divide himself from others. In the spiritual realm, not only is there no such opposition, but the very possibility of it is ruled out. Self seeking egoity is totally absent. The pain of another is one's own; his troubles are mine. The good of one is the good of all beings without reservation. All spirituality is the attainment of this universal interest and the elimination of private standpoints and values.¹⁷

As long as one being suffers from his ignorant immersion in what Śāntideva calls "the heresy of individuality"¹⁸ suffering exists and it affects the whole.

¹⁶BCY, 8:90-94, p. 202. Śikṣā, pp. 316-18.

¹⁷Murti, p. 259.

¹⁸satkāyadrṣṭi, see Har Dayal, p. 73.

Śāntideva asks: "So why should the body of another not be taken as my own?",¹⁹ and he is launched into his teaching of the transference of self and other. He refers to our habit of entertaining the notion "I" with reference to ourselves though there is no essential correctness to the idea. "Why then", he asks, "could not such a notion be produced with regard to other beings?"²⁰ There is no reason why not. So he teaches: "It follows that for the sake of tranquillising my own sorrow, and for the tranquillising of the other's sorrow, I give myself to others and accept others as myself."²¹

Luis O. Gómez, working with these ideas of Śāntideva states that selflessness in the Mādhyamika philosophy by the destruction of the ideas "real" and "unreal" "...is not merely a sufficient condition for ethics, it also implies ethical values by necessity, since it destroys the only real obstacle to the exercise of goodness: self-conceit."²² In an illuminating article he discusses at length the implications of the śūnyatā teaching in ethical philosophy. On the one hand "śūnyatā necessarily leads to detachment and renunciation, which then leads to altruism in its highest forms"²³ as regards

¹⁹ BCY, 8:112, p. 204.

²⁰ Śikṣā, p. 316.

²¹ BCY, 8:136, p. 206.

²² Luis O. Gómez, "Emptiness and Moral Perfection", Philosophy East and West, XXIII, 1973, pp. 361-73.

²³ Ibid., p. 362.

the ego. On the other hand śūnyatā also applies to the idea of goodness:

...as a mere concept, the concept of good is bordering with that of evil and with evil actions themselves, which, after all, are the final outcome of grasping at concepts. But good, as an existential attitude or as existence itself, belongs to what...is beyond the grasping of conceit and concept.²⁴

This "good", equated with śūnyatā and as the fruit of wisdom has been described above as altruism. It should be understood here in a fully positive sense of active selflessness, the Buddhist term for which is "great compassion" (mahākaruṇā). Great compassion is always the counterpart of wisdom. Compassion is an idea of the greatest importance in the Mahāyāna tradition. Not only is it the partner of wisdom, it is the quality which characterises the essentially ethical way of being of the Bodhisattva.

Compassion is the crowning virtue, the hallmark of true wisdom: "In Great Compassion...all the virtues of the Bodhisattvas are included...When great compassion has arisen then all the other virtues that produce wisdom are busy in action."²⁵ Compassion and wisdom are undifferentiated in their perfected state. For Śāntideva the relation between them is quite matter of fact: "The Bodhisattva who thus sees things as they are feels profound pity towards all

²⁴ Ibid., p. 373.

²⁵ Śikṣā, "Dharmasaṅgīti", p. 261.

beings...."²⁶ This relation between selflessness and the perception of śūnyatā has been examined above. What is essential to note here is that compassion as the chief virtue and the root of all true morality is only so when illumined by wisdom. Simply everyday compassion is beclouded by ignorance. It is partial and conditional. Great compassion is illumined by perfect wisdom and is directed toward all beings without discrimination. Compassion, illumined by wisdom is the ultimate ethical virtue as an unconditional and unlimited regard for the welfare of others.

Morality per se cannot succeed without the inspiration of wisdom. In the world both lofty ideals and specific moral codes can break down in their application. Ethics becomes bogged down in casuistry, through which exercise the unenlightened intellect had little chance of finding satisfaction. The unenlightened approach to morality ultimately must end in frustration.

The Mādhyamika explanation of this inability to know the good is, that due to ignorance--the misapprehension of reality--we are helplessly subjective in our judgements. Particularly, unaware of our own śūnyatā we are unavoidably self-centered in our views and actions. This can only create division between self and other, hence conflict of interest.²⁷ Ignorance is an ethical concept as is wisdom. Ignorance of śūnyatā is the cause of all suffering.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 119.

²⁷ Murti, p. 221.

Knowing the good is an ability realised through wisdom which is the knowledge of reality as it is in truth.²⁸ The only true solution to ethical difficulties is wisdom. Śāntideva says:

This is what we mean by wholeheartedness; namely full realisation of the doctrine of the Void, which implies a knowledge of all kinds. But what is this doctrine of the Void "implying a knowledge of all kinds"? Why, it means the Doctrine of the emptiness of all existences... without giving up the practical morality of the Bodhisattva.²⁹

Murti explains this principle in this way:

The Spiritual discipline of attaining the Enlightenment of Buddhahood resolves the moral conflict between private and public good. The spiritual is the consummation of all values, it is value par excellence.³⁰

Wisdom and its partner compassion are two aspects of one thing. Murti states that "...universal love (kāruṇā) and intellectual perfection (prajñā or śūnyatā) are identical."³¹ Matics notes that śūnyatā is the expression of enlightenment "on the absolute plane, and Karuṇā is its active manifestation on the level of phenomenal relativity."³² D. T. Suzuki says:

²⁸ Edward Conze, Further Buddhist Studies, (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer Publishers Ltd., 1954), p. 41.

²⁹ Śikṣā, "Dharmasaṅgīti", p. 115.

³⁰ Murti, p. 221.

³¹ Ibid., p. 6.

³² Matics, Bodhicitta, p. 65.

These two aspects of Nirvāna, i.e., negatively, the destruction of evil passions [prajñā], and, positively, the practice of sympathy, are complimentary to each other; and when we have one we have the other.³³

There are various painstaking ways for scholars to delineate the complimentary aspects of these virtues. Śāntideva simply demonstrates that the Bodhisattva who has attained wisdom is a being of compassion:

Every case of the Bodhisattva's bodily action...
or verbal action, or mental, as it goes on,
is regarded from the point of view of his
fellow creatures, is under the constraining
power of mighty compassion....³⁴

Although this interrelationship between wisdom and compassion with its repercussions as a foundation for morality is widely recognised, there is a preference in scholasticism for treating wisdom separately. Wisdom is generally treated with emphasis because it illumines virtue. Some scholars have charged Śāntideva with ignoring wisdom in favour of emphasizing compassion,³⁵ that he subordinates meditation to the active virtues.³⁶ Even Murti who has declared that the two are identical goes on to describe compassion

³³D. T. Suzuki, Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism, (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 51.

³⁴Śikṣā, p. 115.

³⁵Har Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), p. 42.

³⁶Louis de la Vallée Poussin, "Bodhisattva" in The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 2 of 12, ed. Hastings, p. 752.

as ancillary to wisdom.³⁷ Though it is true that true compassion must be illumined by wisdom, properly speaking neither is predominant: one must always be taken as including the other.

This is not without support in the Buddhist tradition. The Buddhist path has always expressed itself as one of righteousness: the eightfold way of action is an essentially moral guideline. Good moral standing is a compulsory condition for advancement in meditation. Śāntideva says:

Here we understand that all outward acts that lead to meditation are included under virtue. Therefore if you want meditation, you must have the virtue of awakened consciousness. So also if you want virtue, you must make an effort for meditation.³⁸

Our use of the word wisdom will therefore always signify moral wisdom. Wisdom is an ethical concept, implying both a concern for the welfare of others and the apprehension of śūnyatā.

The Purpose: Collective Enlightenment

The sense of morality in wisdom does not come solely from these technical considerations about the nature of reality. There is the very large fact to consider that for Śāntideva the religious goal is to save all beings. "For it is the whole duty of the

³⁷ Murti, pp. 212, 221.

³⁸ Sikṣā, p. 120.

Bodhisattva...to win over all beings."³⁹ Because the Bodhisattva feels the suffering of others as his own, the true cessation of suffering must be universal cessation. Śāntideva says:

When living creatures are in pain there is no
means of pleasure for men of great pity.
Therefore I declare this day this sin, that
harm done to the world is done to those of
great mercy.⁴⁰

Hence true enlightenment, nirvāna, which is total release from suffering, must be collective enlightenment.

The very enormity of this final goal is a crucial factor in Śāntideva's philosophy and understanding of the religious path. First and foremost, it prevents the idea of the religious path from having too isolated and individualistic a character. While meditation and the necessary solitude for the cultivation of wisdom are of unquestionable value to Śāntideva⁴¹ the counterthrust of his teaching lies with the equally unquestionable importance of concern for the welfare of others. For, "A Bodhisattva...desires enlightenment first for all beings, not for himself."⁴²

This principle of Bodhisattvahood, that he puts others before himself finds its logical root in the identity of wisdom

³⁹ Ibid., "Dharmasaṅgīti", p. 123.

⁴⁰ Ibid., "Bhikṣuprakīrṇaka", p. 154.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 225, 188-95.

⁴² Ibid., "Dharmasaṅgīti", pp. 144-5.

and compassion. Śāntideva's teaching of the transfer of self and other is a basic exercise in this attitude. By virtue of his wisdom the Bodhisattva is compassionate. He sees that true enlightenment must include all beings therefore he seeks to share his wisdom with others. To do this, though he has great enough wisdom to leave the world of suffering, he elects to maintain his individuality in the world and is reborn.

There are two paradoxes operating here which deserve notice. One is that the Bodhisattva is enlightened but in another sense does not enjoy full enlightenment. He is himself as enlightened as any individual can be, yet he "turns back" from nirvāṇa. Hence there are two senses of the term "enlightenment", one individual, the other collective.

The second paradox has to do with the Bodhisattva's choice in the matter. To explain logically:

The Bodhisattva cannot give up his individuality by passing over into nirvāṇa because were he to do so he would exhibit a selfishness that he cannot have.⁴³

He is in some sense compelled to serve the purpose of collective wisdom by virtue of his condition of wisdom. However, this is somewhat misleading. His compulsion is more positively his freedom.⁴⁴ The Bodhisattva is free to go about the world in an enlightened

⁴³ Arthur C. Danto, Mysticism and Morality, (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1972), p. 76.

⁴⁴ Murti, p. 220.

state. He is free of ignorance which would hold him to the world of unenlightenment and which would also cause him to cling to the prospect of final release.⁴⁵ He naturally chooses to dwell in the world.

It is in a qualified sense then, "necessary" for the Bodhisattva to work toward the emancipation of all beings, both because true emancipation must be collective and because by virtue of his share in this enlightenment the Bodhisattva is "moved" to work for the welfare of others. Working toward the liberation of all beings becomes the focus of the religious way of life for the Bodhisattva. He takes the vow: "As the chain of births is endless from beginning to end, so long shall I live that holy life for the well-being of all creatures."⁴⁶

So the Bodhisattva goes about in the world. Compassion can be said to be his way of being in the world, and it is certainly his reason. There is much that can be said about his way of being in the world. Matics' formulation, that compassion is the manifestation of the ultimate truth in the realm of phenomenal relativity⁴⁷ is one way of expressing the Bodhisattva's way of living. Murti says that the Bodhisattva has one foot in relative truth and the other in ultimate truth:⁴⁸

⁴⁵Gómez, p. 367.

⁴⁶Śikṣā, "Bhaisajyaguruvaiddūryaprabha", p. 14.

⁴⁷Matics, Bodhicitta, p. 65.

⁴⁸Murti, p. 264.

Karuṇā is the active principle of compassion that gives concrete expression to Śūnyatā in phenomenon. If the first is transcendent and looks to the Absolute, the second is fully immanent and looks down towards phenomenon.⁴⁹

This formulation of two truths (ultimate and relative) is a convenient way of delineating the wisdom/compassion combination.

Nāgārjuna teaches: "The teaching of the Dharma by various Buddhas is based on the two truths; namely the relative (worldly) truth and the absolute (supreme) truth."⁵⁰ It is natural then for scholars to want to classify parts of the teaching into these categories: nirvāna is ultimate, saṃsāra is relative. Śūnyatā is ultimate, conceptualisation (dr̥ṣṭi) is relative. Of course prajñā and karuṇā have fallen into place, yet it is contrary to the spirit of the teaching to insist on clean divisions such as these. Nāgārjuna also teaches: "There is no distinction between nirvāna and saṃsāra, and also no difference in their spheres of action."⁵¹ It is best to understand these apparently contradictory truths as interdependent. Nāgārjuna says:

Without relying on everyday common practices (i.e. relative truths), the absolute truth cannot be expressed. Without approaching the absolute truth, nirvāṇa cannot be attained.⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 264.

⁵⁰ Nāgārjuna, 24:8, p. 146.

⁵¹ Ibid., 25:18, p. 157.

⁵² Ibid., 24:10, p. 146.

Our picture then of the acrobatic Bodhisattva with one foot in the relative and the other foot in the absolute is not really necessary. Rather one might say that the two truths meet in the person of the Bodhisattva. There is "no difference in their spheres of action". Wisdom and compassion are best left unseparated. Together they characterise the Bodhisattva who is wise and active in the world.

At this point it is time to return to the Bodhisattva's purpose. We have said that he wishes to share his wisdom with all beings. We already understand that the ultimate good for all beings is to increase in wisdom toward that final end, collective enlightenment. This increase in wisdom is more commonly termed by Śāntideva "increase in merit". He says, "Increase of merit is the root of all increase."⁵³ The Bodhisattva's merit is very great, he is "well established in virtue,"⁵⁴ possessed of a "root of goodness".⁵⁵ He applies this merit in pursuit of his purpose which is to "foster in all beings the will to obtain incomparable wisdom".⁵⁶ He must "make all beings happy by providing all happiness, and completely to emancipate them, by awakening in them the incomparable supreme wisdom."⁵⁷

⁵³ Sikṣā, "Sāgaramatī", p. 252.

⁵⁴ Ibid., "Dharmasaṅgīti", p. 119.

⁵⁵ Ibid., "Vajradhvaja", p. 257.

⁵⁶ Ibid., "Vajradhvajapariṇāmanā", p. 206.

⁵⁷ Ibid., "Bhagavatī", p. 183.

Purpose is a key concept in Śāntideva's work. In a chapter entitled "Increase of Good Conduct" he says: "In resolution truly... is the root of the Buddha's qualities."⁵⁸ When Śāntideva answers the objection that there is no real being on whom to bestow compassion he says:

If there is no living being on whom does one lavish compassion? On the being who is imagined by error to exist, that we may accomplish our purpose.⁵⁹

Gómez says:

This passage, a veritable justification of error, will not be as puzzling as it seems if we turn back to Śāntideva's justification of emptiness (Śūnyatā) in [Bodhicāryāvātāra] IX:47-53...⁶⁰

where Śāntideva presents emptiness as simply the antidote to ignorance and therefore as good medicine. Gómez explains quite effectively:

Thus, the purport of emptiness is the function of emptiness, not its essence; for it has no essence. Similarly, the purport of compassion is the function of compassion. Emptiness and compassion exist for the sake of enlightenment.⁶¹

Nāgārjuna, master of paradox, reprimands his opponents who cannot find justification for his philosophy:

⁵⁸ Ibid., "Dharmasaṅgīti", p. 259.

⁵⁹ BCY, 9:76-77, p. 218.

⁶⁰ Gómez, p. 366.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 367.

Let us interrupt here to point out that you do not know the real purpose of śūnyatā, its nature and meaning. Therefore, there is only frustration and hindrance.⁶²

Hence purpose in a vital sense of the word is of primary importance. The Bodhisattva understands this thoroughly, making the wish; "May all beings have one common purpose with good friends by seizing upon the common root of good."⁶³

One comment remains to be made about the goal of collective enlightenment: the saving of all beings is not a small task. Indeed it is an infinite task, for the chain of births is endless "from beginning to end."⁶⁴ The resolution of the Bodhisattva must therefore be eternal.⁶⁵ This is of the greatest importance regarding the nature of the religious path as Śāntideva sees it.

Too often Buddhist ethics is considered simply a doctrine of teleology: the aim is nirvāṇa, the means, sīla, samādhi, prajñā [morality, meditation, wisdom]. Although this might have been true of the Hīnayanistic view of the path, the bodhisattva doctrine, in displacing the goal of extinction away into eternity and reinterpreting the notion of nonself in altruistic terms, transformed Buddhist ethics.⁶⁶

⁶² Nāgārjuna, 24:7, p. 145.

⁶³ Śikṣā, p. 35.

⁶⁴ Ibid., "Manjusribuddhakṣetraguṇavyūhālakāra", p. 15.

⁶⁵ Ibid., "Akṣayamati", p. 258.

⁶⁶ Gómez, p. 370.

The result is the understanding that there will always be a "field of activity" in which wisdom/compassion may have influence through the activity of the Bodhisattva. The displacement of the goal thus enhances the ethical quality of wisdom, for the purpose of collective enlightenment is by no means abandoned because of the difficulty of its accomplishment. As Śāntideva adamantly campaigns, the bodies of all lifetimes are wasted without resolution toward the weal of all.⁶⁷

Practice

Purpose can be a hollow concept unless it is accompanied by action. Śāntideva is no stranger to a host of ideas about the actual practice of wisdom. Wisdom is not a passive quality. It is highly dynamic. As Śāntideva says, "what good is a mere medical treatise to the sick?"⁶⁸ His Śikṣāsamuccaya is an instruction manual in the enlightened way. He takes pains with specific and practical considerations as to the behaviour of Bodhisattvas, for example concerning the collection of alms.⁶⁹

One dominant theme in the Śikṣā is the application of merit. Śāntideva says that the essence of the preservation of merit is the application of merit to enlightenment.⁷⁰ This application of merit is a comprehensive practice for the Bodhisattva:

⁶⁷ Śikṣā, p. 253.

⁶⁸ BCY, 5:109, p. 172.

⁶⁹ Śikṣā, "Ratnarāśi, Patnamegha, Ugraparipṛcchā", pp. 127-30.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 156.

In him, whatever acts are concerned with robes, alms-bowl, lying or sitting, the needs of sickness, medicine, going to and fro, standing or sitting by the body and so forth, in the sphere of daily life, steadiness in deportment and inexcitability, acts of feeling, voice and mind, good conduct, closure of the six senses, acts of clothing, rubbing and bathing one's person, eating, drinking, and chewing, service of one's body, in stretching out or drawing in, looking and watching, sleeping and waking,--in all this there is no act that is not applied to acquisition of omniscience for the Bodhisattva whose thought is busy with the good and profit of all beings....⁷¹

When he makes his solemn aspirations "...this phrase, 'I apply',... is to be used everywhere,"⁷² for to be of significance the Bodhisattva's wisdom and merit must be applied.

The application of merit and wisdom for the sake of all beings involves interaction with these beings. It is of significance that the perfections (pāramitā) have a great deal to do with the skills of interaction. The perfections are the supreme virtues which the Bodhisattva cultivates. Śāntideva uses the scheme of six perfections --namely, generosity (dāna), moral conduct (śīla), patience (ksānti), strength (vīrya), and wisdom (prajñā),--in the organisation of his presentation in the Bodhicaryāvatāra.⁷³ There are four additional perfections--skillful means (upāyakauśalya), resolution (pranidhāna), power (bāla), and knowledge (jñāna),--which are important themes in

⁷¹ Ibid., "Vajradhvajapariṇāmanā", p. 206.

⁷² Ibid., "Daśabhūmaka", p. 268.

⁷³ Matics, Bodhicitta, p. 113.

the Śikṣā.

Of these ten virtues almost all possess some aspect of interaction. Dāna, giving, is an obvious case. Śīla, moral conduct is similar. Kṣānti, patience, acts largely as an antedote to anger. These three are virtues which directly involve others. Prajñā, wisdom, jñāna, knowledge, and upāyakauśalya, skill in means, are related to each other. Jñāna is the knowledge of all kinds that accompanies the perfection of wisdom. Upāyakauśalya is skill in means (largely in teaching) and it depends on omniscience (a combination of prajñāpāramitā and jñāna). Skill in means is the wonderful ability to do and say the right and most helpful thing in all cases.

Śāntideva specifically highlights two of the perfections, patience and strength (or energy) in Śikṣāsamuccaya, devoting a chapter to each. He is particularly inspired on the theme of energy which is an essential resource of the Bodhisattva. He says:

What is the increase of activity? The same as increase of energy as it is described in the Sāgaramati Sūtra: "The Bodhisattva, Sāgaramati, must always practice energy by sustained effort. Keen of will must he be, and he must not drop the yoke. When the Bodhisattvas practice energy, Sāgaramati, it is not hard for them to get perfect supreme enlightenment. Why is this? Where energy is, Sāgaramati, there is enlightenment. But when men are lazy, enlightenment is far far away. The lazy cannot be generous, ...the lazy has no understanding and no benefit for others.⁷⁴

As wisdom is the enlightening virtue, chief in that it allows the other virtues to be perfected, energy is a chief virtue in that it

⁷⁴ Śikṣā, p. 252.

is the resource of sheer vigour that supports the practice of the other virtues.

The practice of every perfection is of such difficulty that the quality of character which prompts the undaunted practice of any one of them is itself a perfection: vīrya.⁷⁵

The Bodhisattva's purpose and resolve are infinite and if he is to practice wisdom he must have an endless store of strength.

One of Śāntideva's greatest concerns is that through lack of strength the Bodhisattva will become despondent in the face of his overwhelming responsibility. Śāntideva describes a variety of methods to be used in preventing such a catastrophe. Of himself in the Bodhicaryāvatāra he says: "I am stupid only because I make no effort."⁷⁶

A very typical example of Śāntideva's kind of encouragement toward energy and effort is as follows:

Even those who formerly were gnats, mosquitos, flies, and worms have obtained the uttermost enlightenment, so very difficult to obtain, by reason of resolution and effort. How much more am I, having been born a man, able to know advantage and disadvantage?⁷⁷

Collective nirvāṇa and the increase of merit on which it depends are hard won. They are dependent on the effort, practice and diligence

⁷⁵ Matics, Entering the Path of Enlightenment, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1971), p. 59.

⁷⁶ BCY, 4:41, p. 161.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 7:18-9, p. 157.

of the Bodhisattvas.

We cannot leave a discussion of the Bodhisattva's practice, however brief, without emphasising Śāntideva's insistence that the Bodhisattva be possessed of the practical skills of teaching. The Bodhisattva is expected to preach the Good Law. He "should liken himself to the physician and the Law to medicine, and the hearers of the Law to patients...."⁷⁸ The Bodhisattva should make a favourable impression on his audience. He should be clean, friendly, tireless and ready with myriads of examples.⁷⁹ This is one instance where the Bodhisattva's skill in means comes into play. He is instructed:

Speak not hastily to them, but examining the recipient, if you discern a fit recipient then preach even uninvited. If you should see wicked persons many standing in the assembly, do not preach austerity, but praise the virtues of giving gifts. If there should be persons of moderate desires, pure, established in virtue, you should win their friendship and preach austerity.⁸⁰

These skills are the basic tools of the Bodhisattva's trade. Unless he can impart his wisdom to others his own enlightenment accomplishes nothing. He is resolved:

So must I apply my root of good that all creatures may gain exceeding great happiness, the happiness of all-knowledge. I must be charioteer, I must

⁷⁸ Sikṣā, "Sāgaramati", pp. 312-13.

⁷⁹ Ibid., "Saddharmapūṇḍarīka", p. 311.

⁸⁰ Ibid., "Candrapradīpa", p. 312.

be guide, I must be torch-bearer, guide to safety, one who has obtained lucky times, master of resource, knower of good, I must take the place of the boat of all-knowledge amid the ocean of transmigration, I must be able to apply merit, I must be the guide to the other shore....⁸¹

The Importance of Perfection

The highest achievement for the Bodhisattva is to achieve the perfection of wisdom (prajñāpāramitā). Only when wisdom is perfected are its benefits fully enjoyed. The greatest compassion is the partner only of perfect wisdom. Full and complete understanding of śūnyatā enhances the Bodhisattva's ability to achieve perfection in the other virtues:

All the other pāramitās are meant to purify the mind and make it fit to receive the intuition of the absolute (prajñā). It is prajñā-pāramitā again that can complete them, make each of them a pāramitā--a perfection....Without the realisation of the ultimate, no virtue can be practiced fully.⁸²

Śāntideva states quite bluntly that a Bodhisattva who wishes to purify his thought⁸³ or to defeat the powers of evil or to please the Buddha⁸⁴ "must learn the perfection of wisdom. That is the substance of it."⁸⁵

⁸¹ Ibid., "Vajradhvaja", p. 257.

⁸² Murti, p. 267.

⁸³ Śikṣā, p. 242.

⁸⁴ Ibid., "Bhagavatī", p. 226.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 226.

The significance of perfection comes to light in this example.

The Bodhisattva says:

If any persons should uproot me out of life, then I must not feel hatred or anger; I must not offend even against them...; thus by me at that moment will be fulfilled the perfection of charity, the perfection of virtue, the perfection of compassion; and the supreme and perfect enlightenment will be attained.⁸⁶

Only one who truly sees śūnyatā could make this complete sacrifice, maintaining compassion even for his own murderers. The perfection of charity for example is possible only when wisdom is perfected:

When he has this renunciation in giving, renunciation of the passions of all creatures by knowledge of wisdom, non-abandonment of all creatures by knowledge of expedients, so young sir, the Bodhisattva becomes self-sacrificing in heart, and his gifts are like the sky [pure].⁸⁷

When the Bodhisattva has perfection of wisdom his actions are pure, causing no harm to creatures,⁸⁸ and "purification of religious action comes from behaviour pervaded by the Void and by Pity."⁸⁹

The purity that is associated with the perfection of wisdom is useful to the Bodhisattva when he practices the application of merit. The application of merit for the good of others is called transfer of merit, or parināmanā. This concept is central in the

⁸⁶ Ibid., "Prajñāpāramitā", pp. 308-9.

⁸⁷ Ibid., "Gaganaganja", p. 247.

⁸⁸ Ibid., "Akṣayamati", p. 248.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 247.

Mahāyāna tradition. In Śāntideva's Śikṣā we see that the Bodhisattva who is pure has great resources of merit to give to others:

When the Bodhisattva has the law-body [wisdom] all beings distressed by passions, faults, delusion, who touch his body, no sooner do they touch it than all their passions are calmed...; that is, by the purity that comes from this Bodhisattva's former devotion. For this is the reason the person must be purified.⁹⁰

This power that works toward the increase of merit is a quality of Buddhahood. A Buddha

is a gate of merit for the three worlds, cleansing all creatures; a field full of great merit, a gladsome circle of wisdom, illuminating the infinite world increasing the mass of merit....⁹¹

This excellence in virtue is the Bodhisattva's goal. "The Bodhisattva must in every way make it his object that all may feel confidence as soon as they see him",⁹² for "he increases infinite merit by whom enlightenment is attained."⁹³ Thus, to achieve his end the Bodhisattva must achieve the perfection of wisdom.

Transferring of merit and inspiration of confidence are not the only benefits accruing to perfection. The Bodhisattva is also a preacher of the doctrine, or law. The gift of the law is the

⁹⁰ Ibid., "Tathāgataguḥya", pp. 157-8.

⁹¹ Ibid., "Gaṇḍavyūha", p. 277.

⁹² Ibid., "Dharmasaṅgīti", p. 123.

⁹³ Ibid., "Gaṇḍavyūha", p. 277.

greatest gift the Bodhisattva can give.⁹⁴ To open the eyes of his listeners to the law the Bodhisattva must be a skillful teacher. He "must first know the bent of disposition in his fellowmen, and only then must preach the Law to them according to their disposition in due order."⁹⁵ This means that the Bodhisattva must have upāyakaūśalya, skill in means. With this skill he knows the thoughts of each creature and can say or do the very best thing for bringing about the awakening of his audience. "When a Bodhisattva has pure resolve, from his own imagination come forth teaching and instruction."⁹⁶

Skill in means is counted as one of the perfections and is certainly among the highest achievements in the Bodhisattva's career. Its usefulness goes beyond the practice of preaching and it is associated with the miraculous powers of fully realised Bodhisattvas.⁹⁷ In their skillfulness Bodhisattvas become whatever or whomever is needed to help and to guide others. "Whenever there is need of endless training and endless practice, they have endless knowledge and release endless creatures."⁹⁸ Skill in means then is the

⁹⁴ Ibid., "Prajñāpāramitā", p. 311. Har Dayal, p. 248.

⁹⁵ Ibid., "Ākāśagarbha", p. 63.

⁹⁶ Ibid., "Dharmasaṅgīti", p. 259.

⁹⁷ D. T. Suzuki, On Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968), p. 76.

⁹⁸ Śikṣā, "Vimalakīrtinirdeśa", p. 291.

operation of omniscience and of miraculous transformation in the Bodhisattva's pursuit of his great purpose.

Perfection--in wisdom, compassion, skillful means, and the other virtues--is without question the ideal toward which all Bodhisattvas strive. With perfection he becomes truly effective in his purpose through preaching, example, gifts of merit, and a score of other miraculous abilities. In all of these activities the perfection of wisdom is the Bodhisattva's root asset as the condition for the flowering of the other virtues without which the Bodhisattva would have little influence in the world. Prajñāpāramitā and mahākārunā are the support and force behind upāyakaśalya, the means. These three combine in the person of the Bodhisattva who lives for a purpose and who has striven for perfection in its pursuit.

CHAPTER TWO
THE BODHISATTVA

According to the philosophical background, we have seen that the Bodhisattva is a being of moral wisdom. Naturally the perfect Bodhisattva has perfect moral wisdom. Indeed wisdom and the Bodhisattva are most easily considered in a perfected state. As we have seen, perfection is the raison d'être of the Bodhisattva, yet to simply conclude that the perfect Bodhisattva is a being of perfect wisdom is hardly sufficient. The Sanskrit word "Bodhisattva" is a compound word of two parts. Bodhi means perfect wisdom or enlightenment; sattva means being. The relationship of meaning between these two words can be interpreted in more than one way. The first accords with our discussion thus far: The Bodhisattva is a being of perfect wisdom, or whose essence is perfect wisdom. Another, which expresses a new possibility is that the Bodhisattva is a being whose intention is (to achieve) perfect wisdom.¹ In other words there are two possible kinds of Bodhisattva, the perfect and the imperfect, the novice and the advanced.²

The evidence in Śāntideva's Śikṣāsamuccaya does not favour

¹Vallée Poussin, "Bodhisattva", p. 752.

²Ibid., p. 743.

one or the other meaning. For every description of a perfect Bodhisattva Śāntideva also mentions an imperfect novice-Bodhisattva. According to Śāntideva then, perfection itself is not the only criterion for using the title "Bodhisattva". Śāntideva presents quite a variety of Bodhisattva types. Some are so miserably weak that they seem to defy any sense of their title. One can't help but wonder what Śāntideva's common denominator among them would be. Of the two main types, perfect and imperfect, the perfect is the most easily recognized and defined. Imperfect novice-Bodhisattvas in the Śikṣā are of two further kinds: there are sincere beginners and there are fallen novice-Bodhisattvas. Neither of these is perfect but there is a notable difference between the two.

TYPES OF BODHISATTVAS

The Ideal Bodhisattva

The perfect Bodhisattva in Śāntideva's words,

...never delights in sensuality, he is heroic, pure in morals, good in virtuous conduct; he takes the vow and dwells on the air of the forest, devotes himself to meditation and attains excellence. No diminution of knowledge is there for him, he loses not anyhow the thought of enlightenment.³

He is never fearful even in the face of torture.⁴ His wonderful

³Śikṣā, "Avalokanā", pp. 272-3.

⁴Ibid., "Praśāntaviniścayaprātihārya", p. 18.

qualities receive endless praise from Śāntideva. These sons of Buddhas are spiritual heroes who embody the ideal of perfect wisdom.

In Prajñāpāramitā literature the perfect Bodhisattva is the dominant figure. He is presented as a celestial being whose good will shines benevolently down into the world. In the Śikṣā-samuccaya the ideal Bodhisattva is not as often portrayed in his celestial abode as in the worldly sphere. Nevertheless his godliness and miraculous abilities are duly portrayed by Śāntideva.

In chapter eighteen these Bodhisattvas are seen emitting "miraculous rays".

They, because of the world's welfare, emitting glory beyond thought, shedding rays of glory, convert all creatures; to those creatures who see the glory there comes a beautiful and fruitful and transcendent source of wisdom.⁵

The miraculous rays are many in number, among them are included rays such as the ray of Brilliant Wisdom, the ray of Accumulating Merit, the ray Causing Delight, and so on. Each ray acts as an antidote or medicine in the world. Finishing his discussion of the miraculous rays Śāntideva says:

Those masses of Rays create a beautiful lotus as large as the universe of three thousand worlds; they [Bodhisattvas] appear seated upon this blossoming lotus; such is the magical display of this meditation. They raise up other lotuses as many as the atoms of dust in ten fields of Buddha, together with a surrounding company; for they are surrounded with the sons of the Buddhas, some in a state of meditation

⁵ Ibid., "Ratnolkadhāraṇī", p. 296.

and some not. Beings who have been ripened by these sages, and perfected by them in a Buddha's virtues, surround the great lotus, and stand in the celestial regions with outstretched hands.⁶

Above is the type of depiction commonly read in Prajñāpāramitā literature.

Śāntideva feels that it is necessary to demonstrate that these miraculous displays are literally existent. He says:

Sun and moon moving in the sky show their reflection in spring, lake, pool, well, or tank, in vessel, jewel, ocean, or river, of all parts. In the same way, these heroes show their bodies infinite in all ten regions, knowing all ways of meditation and deliverance, where the Tathāgata is visible in his own essence.... Clouds born of the wind give rain; again, clouds are dispelled by the wind; by the wind the corn grows in the world, wind brings blessings to all creatures in the world. And this wind is unpracticed in the highest perfections, unpracticed in the Buddha's virtues. Why should not they who show infinite ripening for the world who have obtained the best, show miraculous transformations?⁷

These are the Bodhisattvas who, using the skillful means of perfect wisdom, reach all beings. It is before this celestial brotherhood that the beginning Bodhisattva must declare his vows.⁸ With these great beings the unenlightened may take refuge and seek protection. Śāntideva says:

⁶Ibid., "Ratnolkadhāraṇī, pp. 303-4.

⁷Ibid., pp. 305-6.

⁸Ibid., pp. 12-13.

May the Bodhisattvas endowed with the powers of mercy that walk the earth for the good of all creatures, mighty, protect me, always a sinner. I take refuge with the many Bodhisattvas.⁹

Like the Tathāgata (Buddha) Bhaiṣajyaguruvaidūryaprabharāja, whose name if used in worship protects from misery,¹⁰ Bodhisattvas who respond to propitiation are mentioned by Śāntideva. The Bodhisattva Ākaśagarbha hears the confessions of sinners, appearing before his supplicants in a dream, indicating the sins and teaching skill in means.¹¹ When a woman remembers the names of the four Bodhisattvas-- Jñānottaraprabhāketu, Prañidhānamati, Śāntendriya, and Mañjuḥṣa-- that woman will be reborn as a man in furtherance of her religious aspirations.¹² The great Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara appears in the Śikṣā. He expounds on compassion, being a specialist in that virtue.¹³ Whoever worships his name is reborn as a god or in Avalokiteśvara's paradise where enlightenment is much nearer.

These fully realised Bodhisattvas, named or unnamed are referred to frequently by Śāntideva. As he speaks of their many virtues, Śāntideva speaks of them as perfect, as a full Bodhisattva

⁹ Ibid., p. 167.

¹⁰ Ibid., "Bhaiṣajyaguruvaidūryaprabharāja", p. 170.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 68-9.

¹² Ibid., "Bhaiṣyaguru*", p. 171.

¹³ Ibid., "Dharmasaṅgīti", p. 261.

would embody them. The reader is fully aware that for Śāntideva these perfected beings are not only important but that they are numerous as well. There is a great spiritual community offering guidance and protection, on which the novice-Bodhisattva can depend.

The Novice-Bodhisattva

These are the Bodhisattvas who are earnestly working through the early stages of their careers. They are both highly praiseworthy for their intentions and precariously near to the danger of sin. Some are householders though most are monks. They are likely to become despondent or afraid in the face of their enormous task. Māra the evil one takes special effort against them. None is perfect, but each has formed the intention to become perfect. One may liken Śāntideva himself to this type based on his words in the Bodhicaryāvatāra: "I go to the Buddha for refuge until Enlightenment is reached."¹⁴

It is with this group that Śāntideva has the greatest interest. The Śikṣāsamuccaya is a guide for these imperfect novice-Bodhisattvas who are desirous of improvement. Śāntideva tells them of meditational practices,¹⁵ of the Mādhyamika philosophy,¹⁶ he leads his readers through confession of sin,¹⁷ and informs them of the benefits of a

¹⁴BCY, 1:26, p. 149.

¹⁵Śikṣā, p. 304.

¹⁶Ibid., chs. 13, 14.

¹⁷Ibid., ch. 8.

worshipful frame of mind.¹⁸ He teaches them in detail how to avoid evil-doing and other pitfalls they are likely to encounter.¹⁹ Even the more obvious points of demeanor are explicitly advised: "Do not fill the mouth in eating, or make a noise, and stuff the cheeks; sit not with dangling leg; chafe not the surface of the arm."²⁰

Above all advice, the value of the perfections is most emphasised.

Most of those addressed are monks, as much of Śāntideva's advice concerns the monastic order, for instance the collection of alms. Especially in chapter four the monks' duties to his brothers and sisters in the order are discussed. On occasion Śāntideva refers to Bodhisattvas who are householders:

...the Bodhisattva who lives in a household must eschew partiality and hostility, unspotted by the eight worldly conditions. If he has property, if he has wife and son...he must not be puffed up, he must not be excited.²¹

In this world, householder, the house-owning Bodhisattva seeks his enjoyments rightly and not wrongly, fairly not unfairly; he is right-living not wrong-living.²²

Thus Śāntideva includes in his audience householders who embrace

¹⁸ Ibid., ch. 17.

¹⁹ Ibid., chs. 3, 4, 5.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 125.

²¹ Ibid., "Ugradattaparipṛcchā", p. 176.

²² Ibid., "Ugradattaparipṛcchā", p. 245.

the Bodhisattva ideal, though it is quite clear that the monk is his proper student:

There never was a Buddha aforetime, nor shall there be in future, nor is there now, who could attain that highest wisdom whilst he remained in the household life.²³

Whether in the household or in the order, these novice-Bodhisattvas by virtue of their religious aspirations are highly praiseworthy. Śāntideva points out that the novice-Bodhisattva, though he may have a long way to go is certainly not to abandon his purpose just because of this:

The Tathāgata saints of supreme and full enlightenment in the past present or future gain it in each case by a way or method such as this, in fact by this self-same energy they gain it, until they become Tathāgatas and attain to supreme enlightenment. So I too will strive and endeavor by the energy which is the common attribute and the support of all beings to gain the incomparable and perfect enlightenment.²⁴

The novice-Bodhisattva who has just formed the intention for enlightenment is described in this way:

A tiny sparrow cast forth from the egg-membrane without the shell fully broken and without as yet having stepped forth from the egg, utters a sparrow's cry; even so, a Bodhisattva wrapt in the membrane of ignorance, without breaking the heresy of a self, or stepping forth from the triple world, utters the cry of a Buddha, the cry of void, unconditional and untrammelled.²⁵

²³ Ibid., "Candrapadīpa", p. 188.

²⁴ Ibid., "Ratnamegha", p. 55.

²⁵ Ibid., "Ratnakaraṇḍa", p. 6.

Though the inceptor in some sense "utters the cry of a Buddha" his being "wrapt in the membrane of ignorance" is not an incidental problem. The novice-Bodhisattva is training in earnest for the supreme achievement. He needs guidance, supervision, and must discipline himself according to rules until such time as he is able to judge for himself what is the best course of action in every circumstance. The novice must go through endless processes such as this: If it be only by such considerations as: "Whether I give this thing up or no, I shall come to be without substance, whether I will or no, I must someday submit to death, and then that object will leave me, and I shall leave it..." and so on, that the novice-Bodhisattva is able to give something away, then he must frankly avow:

I am but a weak vessel, and goodness is but stunted in me. I am but a beginner in the Great Vehicle. I have no command over my heart to give it up. I am full of the heresy of attachment to this world; for I am sunk in pride and selfishness. Be patient with me, good sir, and be not wroth. I will act, perform, and exert all vigour to fulfil thy desire and that of all mankind.²⁶

Such is the acute discipline of the zealous beginner .

Not only is the novice-Bodhisattva weak in goodness, he is terribly likely to commit sins. Māra the evil one is the beginner's greatest foe. He works on the novice-Bodhisattva's weaknesses and incomplete virtues. Śāntideva devotes three chapters to the avoidance of evil. He lists the Hooks of Māra among which are included false

²⁶Ibid., "Ugradattaparipṛcchā", p. 22.

friends and hypocrisy. Other evils include despondency, want of devoted enthusiasm, over-enthusiasm, preaching to unripe audiences, boasting, sloth, falling into heresy, stealing the goods of the stupa (shrine), expressing anger to another Bodhisattva, and so on. These are largely human frailties which are easy to imagine in the beginner Bodhisattvas. One can also imagine that these problems were very real in the monastic community for Śāntideva to make these warnings against them. Beginner Bodhisattvas we see are plagued by faults, and for each fault enlightenment moves farther away. Therefore the novice-Bodhisattvas must be watchful and concentrate in increasing their stores of merit.

Śāntideva's advice to these novice-Bodhisattvas is very sound: he suggests that they perform their duties according to their abilities. It is the greatest sin against the world to profess to be of the Great Vehicle or to be in pursuit of the highest enlightenment and then not to keep even one course of good conduct.²⁷ If the novice-Bodhisattva overlooks the duties of his station even for a moment he is guilty of sin.²⁸ Śāntideva indulgently includes this statement however: that "there is no sin as concerns matters that are beyond one's power."²⁹ Even so:

²⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

...there are two cases of sin on the part of the Bodhisattva: first, where he commences his action without having first considered its adaptability or the reverse to his powers,... the second is where he has fully weighed the act on its merits yet transgresses and incurs the reproach of even the pariah slave.³⁰

In the Bodhicaryāvatāra Śāntideva has this to say of taking the

Bodhisattva path: "First all conditions are to be considered.

One should begin or not begin, for indeed, not beginning is better than having begun and turning back...."³¹ Hence we see that it is most important that since a novice's ability is uncertain, he must be careful not to overreach himself:

...man must have due regard to his own powers in undertaking even one meritorious act and then keep to it.³²

The Fallen Novice-Bodhisattva

These novices have at one time begun to undertake the Bodhisattva discipline and have since fallen away from goodness. To have seen the advantage of the religious path and then to fall away from it is simply inexcusable. The causes are manifold. Māra is blamed for the loss, though Māra is only active with the vulnerable. He is therefore only a personification of human weakness itself. As Śāntideva says: "Owing to the faultiness of human nature one

³⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

³¹ BCY, 7:47, p. 190.

³² Sikṣā, p. 14.

might take a wrong path."³³

It is difficult to say how numerous these fallen novice-Bodhisattvas are. If we understand them to be the false Bodhisattvas who profess the way hypocritically they seem to be numerous.

Śāntideva's real concern is with the novice-Bodhisattva's who have been able to recognise the value of the religious life but for some reason have actually fallen back.

That a Bodhisattva could fall back is a fearful danger in Śāntideva's eyes, for "every transgression of the Bodhisattva is of extreme gravity, since, as he transgresses, the welfare of all beings is destroyed because of it."³⁴ Śāntideva constantly warns of the dangers of sin, painfully aware of the novice-Bodhisattvas' vulnerability. It is their merit that is endangered, and even roots of good, great heaps of merit, can be lost in one fateful moment of weakness. The "five root sins of the annointed prince" are listed, by which all the roots of merit which he has laid up from of old are destroyed. These are: stealing, reviling the Law, defrocking a monk, murder, and heresy.³⁵ Another eight root sins of young beginners are listed, most of which involve egoism and overenthusiasm.³⁶ These also destroy merit.

³³ Ibid., p. 16.

³⁴ BCY, 4:8, p. 158.

³⁵ Śikṣā, "Ākāśagarbha", pp. 61-2.

³⁶ Ibid., "Ākāśagarbha", pp. 62-8.

While murder seems an unlikely sin for a novice-Bodhisattva to commit, merit can be lost through more ordinary vices. "Anger indulged in again and again destroys a root of good heaped up through a hundred ages."³⁷ Another cause of loss is to overestimate one's abilities: "If a man whose aspirations are immature should undertake a difficult task such as giving his flesh, by his fatigue the seed of enlightenment would be destroyed."³⁸ A novice-Bodhisattva's untimely desire for such a feat is the work of Māra. One very serious but very likely cause of loss is disrespect for the Law, the Order, and for fellow beings. "The Bodhisattva who is uplifted and puffed up with pride, who does not bow and do reverence before teachers and those worthy of gifts...is pierced by the hook of Māra."³⁹ This theme of respect for the Law and its teachers appears repeatedly throughout the Śikṣā.⁴⁰ Above all, fellow novice-Bodhisattvas must be respected, and must by no means be hindered in their path. It is the surest way to hell for anyone to show contempt for a Bodhisattva.⁴¹

Finally, heresy will destroy all merit:

Whosoever...holdeth not fast, neither studieth
the Great Vehicle, but hath intercourse with

³⁷ Ibid., "Manjusrīvikrīdita", p. 148.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

³⁹ Ibid., "Ratnamegha", p. 150.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 39, 44, 46, 61, 97.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 93-4.

such as follow the Disciples' Vehicle,...and readeth their doctrine, and maketh his study therein, and proveth it...he thereby becometh dull of wit, and is torn away from the Road of the Highest Wisdom.⁴²

So we see that it is possible for a novice-Bodhisattva to plunge into sin and error and to lose his foothold in the path toward perfection, as did Jāyamati:

...the earth opened her jaws for the Bodhisattva Jāyamati, and...he being dead fell into a great Hell: for that he had not set his faith on the doctrine of the Void, and showed hatred against him whosoever confessed it.⁴³

In the Bodhicaryāvatāra Śāntideva writes:

Only the All-knowing One understands the inscrutable course of action which releases those men (even) after the Thought of Enlightenment has been forsaken.⁴⁴

LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT

There are levels of development through which a Bodhisattva must progress before he reaches perfect enlightenment. Though there is general recognition in the tradition of these stages (bhūmis), there is little agreement among the various schemes describing them to be found in Mahāyāna literature. Each source

⁴² Ibid., "Niyatāniyatāvatāramudrā", p. 7.

⁴³ Ibid., "Sarvadharmāpravṛttinirdeśa", p. 6.

⁴⁴ BCY, 4:7, p. 157.

differs from the other. Of the following four major Sanskrit sources the Daśabhūmika Sūtra is the most systematic, presenting ten distinct bhūmis or stages while the Mahāvastu and the Śātasāhaśrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra present schemes of ten bhūmis. The Bodhisattva Bhūmi presents seven bhūmis and thirteen vihāras (also stages or levels) ten of which coincide loosely with those of the Daśabhūmika scheme.⁴⁵ Two other sources, Kāmaśīla's Bhāvanākrama and the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra present unclear schemes of eleven or twelve, and eleven respectively.

The similarities among these schemes are few. The ten bhūmis of the Daśabhūmika coincide with the ten perfections. They progress from ordainment as a monk to attainment of perfection, with virtues accumulating in each stage. The vihāras (also "stages") of the Bodhisattva Bhūmi roughly coincide with this. The first two vihāras are pre-bhūmi stages, gotra and adhimukti. The third vihāra has the same name as the first bhūmi, pramuditā (joyful). The similarities end here except for the obvious theme of progression toward perfection. The schemes of ten bhūmis in the Mahāvastu and the Śātasāhaśrikā are similar to the standard ten only in number. The names of the stages in the Mahāvastu do not coincide with any others and the descriptions of the stages are repetitive and uninformative. The Śātasāhaśrikā does not name its bhūmis at all and is also repetitive. The only consistency among these schemes is that the last few stages

⁴⁵Har Dayal, p. 270.

are highly advanced, the perfection of knowledge or other signs of omniscience having been reached somewhere around levels seven and eight. It is also generally notable that the first stage is already on a somewhat advanced level in which many virtues are practiced successfully. The Dāśabhūmika scheme is taken as the standard as it seems to have set the trend in the tradition for the listing of ten stages.⁴⁶

Scholars have produced their own ways of synthesising the various bhūmi schemes. Vallée Poussin working from the Dāśabhūmika, the Aṣṭasāhasrikā and Śāntideva's works divides the stages into three categories.⁴⁷ The first, he says, is preparatory, including the gotra and adhimukti bhūmis (or viḥāras) in which the future Bodhisattva increases in merit and gradually forms the aspiration to enter the path. In these stages his good works are imperfect and he is uncertain of success. The insight of meditation is lacking entirely. By long continuance his aspiration strengthens. In the second category the first seven bhūmis are gained. This is the Bodhisattva's active career. In the third category bhūmis eight through ten are realised. This is the Bodhisattva's career in knowledge and supernatural virtues.

D. T. Suzuki makes a scheme of six levels. The first in this scheme is the formation of bodhicitta, the desire to become

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 271.

⁴⁷ Vallée Poussin, pp. 745ff.

Buddha. Second is practice of the perfections for aeons. Third is the stage of wisdom and compassion. The fourth is realisation of enlightenment. Only at the fifth level in which the Bodhisattva is already a celestial being do the bhūmis begin. Bhūmis one through six are for the perfections, seven through ten are effortless, the tenth constituting full perfection. Suzuki's sixth level, "realisation of the triple body" is the level of Buddhahood.⁴⁸ Conze adds in contradiction that bhūmis one through six are human levels leading up to nirvāṇa while only seven through ten are celestial levels.⁴⁹

The gotra (family) and adhimukti (aspiration) stages seem to be late additions. As the Bodhisattva career formally begins with the production of the thought of enlightenment (bodhicittotpāda), these preliminary stages explain the development of a predisposition for Bodhisattvahood.⁵⁰ Gotra means family. It is used in the sense of belonging to the spiritual family of Gautama Buddha.⁵¹ It can also mean predisposition or tendency.⁵² Some persons are firmly in Buddha-gotra and will surely become Bodhisattvas. Others are of lower gotras. A future Bodhisattva with excellent gotra, though

⁴⁸ Suzuki, On Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, p. 23.

⁴⁹ Edward Conze, Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), pp. 66-7.

⁵⁰ Har Dayal, p. 50.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 51.

⁵² Ibid., p. 52.

he is not infallible has a certain protection against the consequences of his evil actions.⁵³ In brief, good gotra is a protective accumulation of merit. The adhimukti stage is not clearly separable from the gotra. It has the same sense of being the future Bodhisattva's conscious aspiration toward improvement and eventually to become a Bodhisattva. In brief it can be understood that in an adhimukti stage the future Bodhisattva is facing in the direction of increase in merit.

One thing that appears to be of significance in most schemes is the concept of irreversibility. At some point in his career the Bodhisattva is said to be no longer subject to the danger of regression. At level seven he is liberated, and level eight is named acalā, immovable (Dāśabhūmika). The Mahāvastu also lists the quality "not turning back" at level eight.⁵⁴ In the Śātasāhaśrikā's ninth level the Bodhisattva has infinite resolve and aspiration, and the guarantee of excellent rebirth.⁵⁵ Level five in the Bodhisattvabhūmi is the level of "certainty". Vallée Poussin concludes nevertheless that any Bodhisattva who has entered the stages, even just the first, is assured of success.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid., p. 53.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 275.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 277.

⁵⁶ Vallée Poussin, p. 745.

Śāntideva refers to the idea of bhūmis very infrequently in the Śikṣā and not at all in the Bodhicaryāvatāra, but in such a way as to show that he takes them for granted. In the first chapter of the Śikṣā Śāntideva is found quoting the Dāśabhūmika concerning the first bhūmi, pramuditā.⁵⁷ He continues: "In these and other sūtras we find the rules of conduct declared for the Bodhisattva who has entered the stages."⁵⁸ Then he goes on to discuss the rules for Bodhisattvas "in general", as opposed to those few who have entered the stages. In another context he again makes a distinction between ordinary Bodhisattvas and those who have entered what he calls the "stages of perfection". One who has entered the stages of perfection has a firm thought of enlightenment and does not have the fault of despondency, while ordinary men waver in thought and become despondent.⁵⁹ It would appear that Śāntideva considers a Bodhisattva of the stages to be over the worst of his difficulties in the path.

It is evident that Śāntideva's interests lie with the earlier stages of the Bodhisattva's career. He is concerned with how the novice-Bodhisattva is to enter the level of the stages.⁶⁰ He says:

⁵⁷ Śikṣā, "Daśabhūmika", p. 11.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁹ Ibid., "Trisamayarāja", p. 137.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 137.

"Success may be attained by one who desires to get the state of investiture and illumination, to come from great darkness into light, yea even by one who has fallen into sin." The text [above] means to condemn the despondent spirit who says, how can I, so weak in merit, succeed?⁶¹

He advises: "The preliminary stage will be achieved if one stands immovable in the moral precepts without doubting...."⁶² The only other specific mention in the Śikṣā of concepts relating to the bhūmi schemes occurs in chapter one. Here Śāntideva says:

...the absence of conviction that the world is but void...is generally not observable even in a Bodhisattva who has not completed the stage of aspiration, much less in a Bodhisattva of intense aspiration.⁶³

He mentions the idea of gotra frequently, usually in connection with preliminary accumulation of merit and its reward, rebirth in the Buddha's family.⁶⁴

Śāntideva has his own ideas about how to divide the early stages of the Bodhisattva career. He allows that "the mention of intense aspiration implies also the categories middle and weak."⁶⁵ In discussing the production of the thought of enlightenment he

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 137.

⁶² Ibid., p. 137.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁴ Ibid., "Daśabhūmika", p. 8.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

bridges the gap between the stage of aspiration and the first bhūmi, asserting: "...the thought of enlightenment has two stages: (1) the resolution thereunto; and (2) the advancement toward the same."⁶⁶ He recognises a qualitative difference between the stage of resolution and the stage of advancement, while allowing the thought of enlightenment a place preliminary to the stages of perfection. Thus he shows that there is a gradual development from the accumulation of merit, birth in Buddhagotra, weak, middle, then intense aspiration, and finally into the stages of perfection where the growing thought of enlightenment finally begins to find expression.

With Śāntideva's concern for the preliminary stages where the monk must work diligently to attain the stages of perfection, we are left wondering how these ordinary monks and householders deserve the title "Bodhisattva":

Now we ask: What is the connexion between the follower of the Great Vehicle who aspires to Buddhahood, but who is, properly speaking, only a future Bodhisattva residing in the gotra or adhimukticārya bhūmi, and the real Bodhisattva in possession of one of the ten stages and to what extent does the former participate in the "perfect virtues"?⁶⁷

The growth of wisdom is a phenomenon found in the stages of perfection. The full rewards of wisdom--all-knowledge, skill in means, infinite compassion--are qualities found in Bodhisattvas of the higher

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

⁶⁷ Vallée Poussin, p. 748.

bhūmis. To rephrase the question, how are we to understand wisdom as a characteristic of an imperfect novice-Bodhisattva?

TURNING POINTS IN THE CAREER

In reading the Śikṣāsamuccāya we see that there are three major events in the Bodhisattva's career: his conversion to the path, the taking of the great vow, and the point at which he achieves irreversibility. Each of these events should shed some light on our question. Seeing what it takes to convert a person to the Bodhisattva path, what is required before the vow may be made, and what constitutes irreversibility should clarify our concept of a Bodhisattva's imperfection.

Conversion

Har Dayal in his book The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature says that three events mark the conversion of an ordinary person into a Bodhisattva: the production of the thought of enlightenment (bodhicittotpāda), the making of certain vows, and a prediction of future greatness by a living Buddha.⁶⁸ According to the scheme of bhūmis this is supposed to happen upon entry into the first bhūmi. However, as we have already noted, Śāntideva extends the use of the term Bodhisattva so that it applies to stages preceding this moment of what we may call 'formal' conversion. When Śāntideva

⁶⁸Har Dayal, p. 50.

deals with conversion he is really dealing with the conversion of an ordinary person to the Great Vehicle, hoping to produce in him the first formulation of the thought of enlightenment.⁶⁹ For Śāntideva the question of conversion is the teacher's concern, which is to have others recognise the Buddha's way in the Great Vehicle as worthy of pursuit. The formation of even a tiny or embryonic thought of enlightenment seems to be the minimum qualification for conversion.⁷⁰

Where the teacher is concerned there are found many levels of receptivity on the part of those with whom he deals. These levels of receptivity can be understood in relation to the idea of gotra. Har Dayal suggests that the gotra theory was developed in Buddhism to explain why some persons are not interested in becoming converted to the Bodhisattva path.⁷¹ In any case these sub-levels of spiritual development have a full range. There are the unreachable low who Suzuki describes as "morally and religiously a corpse difficult to resuscitate."⁷² There are those who are ripe for conversion with ears to hear and eyes that see:

It is difficult to find worldly men who believe such doctrines: but they who have done good deeds and gained merit, they believe in the Buddhas by the force of merit.⁷³

⁶⁹ Śikṣā, "Akṣayamati", p. 258.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 2, 312.

⁷¹ Har Dayal, p. 51.

⁷² Suzuki, Outlines, p. 311.

⁷³ Sikṣā, "Ratnolkadhāraṇī", p. 5.

There are also those who form a strong thought of enlightenment, who belong to the Buddha's family:

...when a man has attained this assemblage of favorable conjunctures...desiring the happiness of extinction, inasmuch as such a mighty being has his lot in the spiritual family of the Buddha,...he makes firm the root of faith and fixes the spirit firmly on enlightenment.⁷⁴

In the Śikṣāsamuccāya we find all types described. Śāntideva of course favours the Buddhagotra class. It is noteworthy that he is more optimistic than Mr. Suzuki about the unreachables, though they are a disturbing group.⁷⁵ Śāntideva is boldly certain that even gnats and mosquitos can become Buddhas,⁷⁶ though he is less than definite as to when and where the seed of Buddhahood actually begins to grow.

Śāntideva's attitude toward the likelihood of persons being converted actually fluctuates between optimism and disappointment. He despairs over those who don't know of the Buddhas:

...delievered over to Māra those beings must be judged, who hear not and know not, and do not feel this joy, that infinite is the merit of this rejoicing in the Bodhisattvas.....⁷⁷

He is at one time confident that all beings are capable of supreme enlightenment and of being converted, and at another time he regards

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 148ff.

⁷⁶ BCY, 7:18, p. 187.

⁷⁷ Śikṣā, "Prajñāpāramitā", p. 280.

this "seeing" as miraculous:

As one born blind sees not the sun, yet does
the sun not cease, yet he rises upon the world,
but he that hath eyes sees its rising...even
so is the Ray of the Great Ones; there it is,
but the vulgar see it not....because they are
plunged in falsehood, without aspiration. Even
for the high-minded these rays are hard to obtain.⁷⁸

Śāntideva's general attitude though is optimistic, sure that where there is merit there will be recognition and aspiration.

Merit is in most cases the prerequisite for conversion. In the greater scheme of things merit is the stepping stone toward favourable birth, toward accumulation of virtue, and finally toward full enlightenment. Śāntideva makes it clear that a certain amount of merit is required for birth as a human being, for only as a human being can a being form the thought of enlightenment and embrace the Bodhisattva path.⁷⁹ Whence comes merit? Śāntideva is not full of answers to this question. He is quite content to rejoice when merit is there. We see from his descriptions that often Bodhisattvas are at work providing opportunities for merit to take root.⁸⁰

The exact degree of merit required for conversion is not specified. Though merit is certainly a measuring stick for determining receptivity or non-receptivity to conversion there are other factors

⁷⁸ Ibid., "Ratnolkadhāraṇī", p. 303.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 2. BCY, 4:15, 17, 20. Pp. 157-8.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 154-5, 157, 164, 167, 173, 256, 286, 290-4.

at work such as the work of the Bodhisattvas themselves. The Bodhisattvas with miraculous powers can reach any being and help him toward virtue, or bring him to conversion.⁸¹ This factor somewhat undermines the notion of a natural order of merit and demerit qualifying persons for conversion. In Śāntideva's first chapter of the Śikṣā we find the thought of enlightenment produced in quite infertile ground:

When one has caused the heresy of individuality to arise as high as mount Sumeru, even then the thought of enlightenment can arise; thus can the qualities of a Buddha grow.⁸²

The beginnings of the Bodhisattva career can be spurred on by such casual means as deception and by simple acts of kindness.⁸³

Before we can learn more about the early stages of Bodhisattvahood from Śāntideva's idea of conversion some questions would have to be answered. As we have seen, though merit is a factor in receptivity, conversion can happen at many levels of receptivity despite this rule of thumb. It is not clear whether recognition of the Buddha's way is the same thing as the first formulation of the thought of enlightenment. We do know that Śāntideva perceives that the thought of enlightenment can be at least partially formed in the stages before the first bhūmi. Hence it is formed initially well before wisdom and the virtues become firmly established.

⁸¹Ibid., "Vimalakīrtinirdeśa", p. 291.

⁸²Ibid., "Vimalakīrtinirdeśa", p. 291.

⁸³Ibid., "Bhadrakalpika", p. 9.

Whether "hearing" and "seeing" can be equated with the immature formulation of the thought of enlightenment is a question that is simply not clarified by Śāntideva, and we are left to puzzle it out for ourselves. In any case it is apparent that conversion, though it is the teacher's aim, is not a clearly defined concept. It simply must at some time occur in the ascending path from the obscure life of the gnat to the flowering of the Bodhisattva. It can happen at different levels in each case, so to say that a person is converted to the Great Vehicle does not reveal anything very specific about him.

The Vow

According to the general tradition it is formally in the first bhūmi where the taking of the vow occurs. In this case Śāntideva would appear to agree.⁸⁴ Śāntideva's main point concerning the vow is that it be taken only when the Bodhisattva has the strength to fulfill it. The Bodhisattva should take the vow in the presence of a spiritual guide:

well weighing the vow and his own strength:
 otherwise he might break faith with the Buddhas
 and Bodhisattvas and the world and the devas.⁸⁵

Hence the Bodhisattva should be well advanced in merit and in strength so that he may take and uphold the vow. This puts the Bodhisattva

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

with a vow in a class above his fellows who are struggling against their weaknesses and who depend on the celestial Bodhisattvas for help. Of these stronger Bodhisattvas Śāntideva says:

But the great man who has not only heard of but fathomed for himself by wisdom the difficulty of the walk of the Bodhisattva, and yet dares to bear the yoke of the salvation of afflicted mankind, such an one, when he has achieved homage, worship, confession of crime, delight in virtue, solicitation and entreaty of Buddha, application of the merit to the attainment of enlightenment, should then say...⁸⁶

the vow.

This taking of the vow by a worthy Bodhisattva candidate corresponds to the second stage of the thought of enlightenment. The novice-Bodhisattva has formed resolution unto enlightenment (stage one) and now with the vow he begins upon advancement toward the same (stage two). Śāntideva continues with reference to the vow-taking Bodhisattva: "Beginning with these words [the vow] he must produce the thought of enlightenment."⁸⁷ He must say: "Let us produce the thought of enlightenment in the presence of our leader."⁸⁸ It seems that the thought of enlightenment is partially formed after conversion and is fully formed at the time of taking the vow. At this more advance stage the thought of enlightenment--"may I

⁸⁶ Ibid., "Bhaiśajyaguruvaiddūryprabha", p. 14.

⁸⁷ Ibid., "Bhaiśajyaguruvaiddūryprabha", p. 14.

⁸⁸ Ibid., "Manjuśrībuddhakṣetragaṇavyūhāḷaṅkāra", p. 15.

become Buddha"--and the vow--"may I save all beings"--are practically indistinguishable.⁸⁹ They merge in the concept of resolution toward full enlightenment which resolution becomes purified and hardened as the Bodhisattva reaches perfection.

The vow however, can be taken prematurely and, depending on circumstances, can be broken. The vow is only a promise. As Śāntideva says: "Whatever is undertaken in haste, whatever is not properly considered, may be accomplished or it may not be accomplished, even if a vow has been taken."⁹⁰ The vow does not of itself transform a weak novice-Bodhisattva into a heroic Bodhisattva. The strength of the vow therefore depends on the strength of the Bodhisattva. "The Son of the Conqueror, having grasped the Thought of Enlightenment firmly, must make every effort, constantly and alertly, not to transgress the discipline."⁹¹ By inquiring whether or not a Bodhisattva has said a vow, we will not learn about his status. Only if he fails to fulfill it will we know that he is a novice-Bodhisattva who is not well advanced in his career.

Irreversibility

Some Bodhisattvas qualify as irreversible and some do not. This is readily apparent if we recall that some are perfected

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

⁹⁰ BCY, 4:2, p. 157.

⁹¹ Ibid., 4:1, p. 157.

celestial being while others like Jāyamati have fallen from the heights of the Bodhisattva path into the depths of hell. The idea of reversal is a disturbing one for Śāntideva. For scholars it is a difficult concept to pinpoint. Vallée Poussin says that falling back is the most complicated problem of Buddhist scholasticism.⁹² Conze suggests that the irreversible Bodhisattva "was invented to satisfy a longing for permanent achievement in a world of impermanence where Māra can reverse a Bodhisattva."⁹³ Suzuki says that reversal can occur whenever prajñā and upāya are not perfected.⁹⁴ According to the bhūmi schemes irreversibility is definitely a quality of the most highly advanced celestial Bodhisattvas who have obtained omniscience. It is also probable that Bodhisattvas who have entered upon the stages of perfection are assured of success.

Whatever can be said by scholars about irreversibility, Śāntideva does not present a clear picture. On the one hand he cautions all Bodhisattvas against the dangers of reversal, while on the other hand he expresses sublime optimism with regard to beginner Bodhisattvas who he feels are destined to succeed. We have already covered in some detail the phenomenon of reversal in the section on fallen novice-Bodhisattvas. The novice-Bodhisattva is surely in danger. The vow can be broken, and the recently converted

⁹²Vallée Poussin, p. 743.

⁹³Conze, Thirty Years, p. 133.

⁹⁴Suzuki, On Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, p. 77.

are ready to fall. Even the Bodhisattva who is well advanced in his career is not completely infallible if we take Śāntideva's cautions as applicable to all Bodhisattvas. Certainly his verses in the Bodhicaryāvatāra concerning the vow indicate that a Bodhisattva's lot, even during his progression through the stages of perfection, is one of constant battle against imperfection.⁹⁵ Indeed some scholars prefer to define the Bodhisattva as a warrior who is aspiring toward perfection.⁹⁶

With all this about reversal and struggle added up against it, one might think that irreversibility would have trouble finding a place for itself. We might be tempted to conclude that there is no Bodhisattva this side of the celestial spheres who is assured of success. There is, however, a great deal of evidence to the contrary in Śāntideva's Śikṣāsamuccaya. We find Śāntideva adamantly assuring that the Bodhisattva who gives the gift of the law obtains such a root of good that:

Possessed of such a root of good, it is impossible and out of the question that the Bodhisattva, the Great Being, should turn away from the supreme and perfect enlightenment. That is not possible.⁹⁷

Well advanced Bodhisattvas are quite capable of achieving irreversibility. The Bodhisattva who practices the perfections of

⁹⁵ BCY, 4:1-2, p. 157.

⁹⁶ Har Dayal, pp. 4-9.

⁹⁷ Śikṣā, "Prajñāpāramitā", p. 311.

patience even to the point of enduring torture with a feeling not of pain or indifference but of pleasure, praying that those who "entertain" him thus will find enlightenment, receives "the spirit of contemplation that find happiness in all things." At that time he becomes imperturbable, "not to be caught by all the deeds of Māra."⁹⁸ Śāntideva says that there must be no doubt raised that there may be a violation of the vow. "One birth must be diligently made pure by the enlightened sage; the other births that same birth will purify down to the time of enlightenment."⁹⁹

Far lesser members of the Great Vehicle are also given assurances by Śāntideva that their merit will not decrease but only grow. Whoever hears the analysis of the miraculous rays and has:

...faith, aspiration, and contentment, for him there must be no more doubt, no more anxiety, nor indeed will he fear anymore, saying "I shall never be a great banner of virtues."¹⁰⁰

Whoever of the faithful who keep the eightfold path of virtue for one or three years, who dedicate this good to rebirth in Amitābha's region will be thus favourably reborn. "When they have arrived there the former root of good does not dwindle."¹⁰¹ Even a feeble acceptance

⁹⁸ Ibid., "Pitāputrasamāgama", p. 78.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 303.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., "Bhaiṣajyaguru vaidūryaprabharāja", p. 171.

of the law is highly effective against Māra. He who accepts the law "...has the nature of the high minded...and in birth after birth he joins the Order....Even by a hundred ages what is good in him is not effaced."¹⁰²

In the very extreme of his optimism Śāntideva lists the rewards coming to those who perform ever so simple acts of worship. For one who places a banner in the Blessed One's shrine it is not possible that his glory and life should be weakened.¹⁰³ He who throws a single flower in the air thinking of the Buddha produces a root of good which issues in nirvāṇa.¹⁰⁴ Finally, though the list goes on, he who brings a net for a shrine never loses the thought of enlightenment.¹⁰⁵

The impression one has from these bold statements is that perhaps all merit is irreversible. Merit, after all, is the basic ingredient of the Bodhisattva recipe. Merit begets merit for it is by the force of merit that one believes in the Buddhas. The increase of merit both personal and collective is the raison d'être of the Bodhisattva discipline. It could be that Śāntideva pictures a world where merit faithfully accumulates and where the sins of weakness must be atoned for, but not by the destruction of roots of merit

¹⁰²Ibid., "Sāgaramati", pp. 44-5.

¹⁰³Ibid., "Avalokana", p. 272.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., "Mahākaruṇāpūṇḍarīka", p. 276.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., "Avalokana", p. 274.

laid up beforehand.

This is tempting but Śāntideva directly contradicts this formulation when he says that roots of good, heaps of merit, can be destroyed. We are left looking at two contradictory messages in the Śikṣāsamuccaya. One, that merit wins easily over sin, suggesting that even conversion is in some way irreversible, the other that the power of sin destroys merit, suggesting that any Bodhisattva must be on his guard against weakness. We are left vacillating as to what we may say about Śāntideva's understanding of irreversibility.

There appears to be an endless variety, a practical continuum, of Bodhisattva types who enjoy different degrees of status. It is unclear whether there is a dividing line between the future Bodhisattva who has yet to be reborn to be converted to the Bodhisattva way, and the ordinary householder who embraces the Bodhisattva path however imperfectly. Among the more established members of the Bodhisattva brotherhood there is little criteria available for determining which are true Bodhisattvas and which are still too imperfect to be assured of success.

CHAPTER THREE

BODHICITTA

Bodhicitta, the thought of enlightenment, is something that Śāntideva speaks of repeatedly. In our discussion of the Bodhisattva we have come to mention this idea frequently. Indeed Śāntideva is fascinated by it and for good reason. It is to bodhicitta that we are receptive in conversion. It is to bodhicitta that we owe the Bodhisattva's vow. In the Bodhisattva career from its beginnings in aspiration through to the taking of the vow and finally in fulfillment, bodhicitta figures in some way. The arising of bodhicitta, its cultivation and its maintenance are key themes in the Śikṣāsamuccaya. Simply put, Bodhisattvas have bodhicitta. If we can understand what Śāntideva means by bodhicitta we should be able to understand his Bodhisattvas more fully.

What is Bodhicitta?

The Sanskrit word bodhi means perfect wisdom or enlightenment. It is the enlightened intellect of a Buddha.¹ Citta means thought, thinking, attention, and also desire, intention, aim. It can be used as a synonym for mati, mind. It can also mean heart, as

¹V. S. Apte, The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 3rd ed., 1963), p. 704.

the seat of the intellect, so also it means reason, intellect.²

The compound word bodhicitta is usually translated as "thought of enlightenment".

Scholars have explored the meanings of bodhicitta and have understandably differed as to their interpretations of the term.

D. T. Suzuki chooses to emphasise the "heart" sense of citta. He translates the term "enlightenment-heart" or "wisdom-heart".³ With this translation he is able to say that bodhicitta is the Buddha nature inherent in every being, a metaphysical essence of enlightenment or wisdom which needs only to be awakened or uncovered. On the other side of the coin Har Dayal says that such philosophical ideas as Suzuki's are not necessary in order to explain the simple term bodhicitta.⁴ He says, though citta can be translated as "heart", "soul", "mind", it should properly read "thought" in the compound "thought of bodhi". Making reference to the root form of citta, cit, meaning "to form an idea in the mind" he rests his case.⁵

Marion L. Matics however, who has done considerable research into Śāntideva's uses of the term would allow it more complexity of meaning. She explains the connection of citta with the idea

²Ibid., p. 434.

³Suzuki, Outlines, pp. 303, 311.

⁴Har Dayal, p. 59.

⁵Ibid., p. 59.

"heart" (hrdaya). "Citta is the word for introspection and self-examination: it overlaps "heart" and has sometimes been loosely and misleadingly translated by that symbolic term, because it experiences emotional pleasure and pain...."⁶ She also notes that citta has many synonyms, manas (mind), buddhi (intelligence), viññāna (consciousness), hrdaya (heart), all of which relate to the mind but with different emphases.⁷ She has found that in the Bodhicaryāvatāra Śāntideva uses these words but prefers to use citta when speaking of the mind.⁸ Hence she finds the compound bodhicitta in Śāntideva's text is particularly rich in meaning. Matics suggests that Śāntideva uses citta in three ways, as (1) simple idea, (2) consciousness, and (3) quasi-universal mind.⁹ Bodhicitta shares these three nuances of meaning according to Matics. It can mean (1) the single idea of simple thought of enlightenment, (2) consciousness permeated with this idea of with enlightenment, and (3) a force of good in the universe.¹⁰

To a certain extent we can build upon this three tiered scheme and apply it to the Śikṣāsamūccaya. In the Śikṣā we see

⁶Matics, Bodhicitta, p. 35.

⁷Ibid., p. 33.

⁸Ibid., p. 35.

⁹Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 54.

Śāntideva using the term bodhicitta in the first simple meaning: "Yea, even a single thought of enlightenment...bears in itself... countless good; how much more shall we say this of producing such thought in many cases?"¹¹ This first meaning, the 'idea' of enlightenment corresponds to Har Dayal's preferred meaning. We may add that this 'thought' need not be a passive conception of an idea but should be understood in relation to the "intention, desire, and aim" sense of citta as well. Hence bodhicitta is the "mental attitude which aspires to Buddhahood of Bodhisattvahood."¹² This element of intention is generally recognized. Murti strongly emphasises the role of the will in the concept bodhicitta.¹³ Har Dayal notes that "earnest wish" (prañidhāna) is both a cause and an effect of bodhicitta, so intertwined is intention with bodhicitta.¹⁴ He attests to the general appreciation of will as a factor in spiritual progress in the Buddhist tradition.¹⁵ It is reasonable then to associate the factor of willing and intention even with Śāntideva's simplest use of the term bodhicitta. This simple sense of bodhicitta, as having enlightenment as the object of thought and of intention is connected with the phenomenon of

¹¹ Śikṣā, "Rājāvavādaka", p. 11.

¹² Matics, Entering, p. 32.

¹³ Murti, pp. 244ff.

¹⁴ Har Dayal, p. 65.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

conversion in the Śikṣāsamuccaya, where the future or novice-Bodhisattva first conceives of a desire to become a Buddha, which desire will eventually develop into firm resolve.

Matics explains the second aspect of meaning in the word bodhicitta, which is the mind permeated with this intent or with enlightenment, as follows. The mind is like a pool that normally is agitated by emotions and the like. Bodhicitta, the mind whose essence is wisdom, is a quieted pool, stable and serene.¹⁶ It is this quality of mind that Bodhisattvas cultivate and which characterises the perfectly enlightened mind. It is in this sense that Śāntideva most frequently uses bodhicitta in the Śikṣāsamuccaya. For Śāntideva this quality of mind is the seed of all good,¹⁷ it is, when fully developed the mind which perceives śūnyatā as characteristic of all things and which is capable of no evil. Śāntideva describes the Bodhisattva's mind as tranquil, unhindered by passion and delusion.¹⁸ Thus he says: "He whose thought of enlightenment is firm, and his mind free from attachment, he need have no doubt, and his aim is always accomplished."¹⁹ Murti also uses bodhicitta in this way, referring to it as a mind permeated with prajñā and karuṇā,²⁰ the

¹⁶Matics, Bodhicitta, p. 64.

¹⁷Śikṣā, p. 5.

¹⁸Ibid., ch. VII, pp. 197-9.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 137.

²⁰Murti, p. 264.

mind of wisdom. Significantly, in the Śikṣāsamuccaya the sense of intent, of willing, is carried into this aspect of bodhicitta in association with karuṇā, the compassion which incites the Bodhisattva to progress for the sake of all beings.

Matics' third sense of bodhicitta, that it is somehow an existing force of good in the cosmos, a quasi-universal mind of enlightenment, can be read into both of Śāntideva's texts especially given Śāntideva's teaching concerning self and other which blurs the distinction between the individual and the collective. This is the meaning which Suzuki feels is indicated in Śāntideva's texts. When Śāntideva speaks of the sparrow's cry of the void while still wrapt in the membrane of ignorance,²¹ and of the predestined Bodhisattvas who have yet to develop the thought of enlightenment,²² it is tempting to consider bodhicitta as an enlightenment-essence which need only be uncovered and which when fully awakened is a power shared by Bodhisattvas in the form of a quasi-universal mind. However, as a Mādhyamika philosopher Śāntideva would refute any such idea about bodhicitta, and this idea should not be read into the text. Nevertheless, apart from strict philosophical discussion, Śāntideva sings the praise of Bodhicitta. Along with his contemporaries and also with Murti, Matics, and Suzuki, Śāntideva asserts that bodhicitta is a source of goodness in the world. It has "dynamic potency",²³ it

²¹ Śikṣā, "Ratṇakarāṇḍa", p. 6.

²² Ibid., pp. 87-94.

²³ Matics, Bodhicitta, p. 64.

is a "fount of energy",²⁴ and its influence in the world is great.²⁵

Śāntideva's Ideas about Bodhicitta

Śāntideva is not short of words in describing bodhicitta. It is "the seed of all qualities of a Buddha,"²⁶ it is a "diamond gem".²⁷ It forms the basis of the deliverance of all creatures.²⁸ It is a chariot that goes from happiness to happiness.²⁹ It is the germ which develops into an embryo Buddha.³⁰ In his Bodhicaryāvatāra Śāntideva devotes his first chapter to praising the thought of enlightenment. There he equates bodhicitta with goodness: "By what other goodness could evil be conquered if it were not surely the Thought of Enlightenment?"³¹ He asks, how, indeed can the merit of this "seed of the world's joy" be measured,³² for it is the benevolent desire "to remove the infinite ache of every single being and for each one to create infinite virtue!"³³

²⁴Suzuki, Outlines, p. 285.

²⁵Murti, p. 265.

²⁶Śikṣā, "Gaṇḍavyūha", p. 5.

²⁷Ibid., "Maitreyavimokṣa", p. 9.

²⁸Ibid., "Rājāvavādaka", p. 11.

²⁹BCY, 7:30, p. 1881.

³⁰Śikṣā, "Gaṇḍavyūha", p. 105.

³¹BCY, 1:6, p. 143.

³²Ibid., 1:26, p. 145.

³³Ibid., 1:22, p. 145.

In the Śikṣāsamuccaya Śāntideva's mention of bodhicitta is more sporadic, occurring wherever his other themes require. Śāntideva repeats in the Śikṣā most of the ideas he sets forth in the Bodhicaryāvatāra. The thought of enlightenment should not be relinquished.³⁴ It instantly consumes evil like the fire at the end of a world cycle.³⁵ Śāntideva's most explicit message concerning bodhicitta is spelled out in both texts:

This Thought of Enlightenment is to be understood as twofold. Briefly, it is the idea of dedication to Enlightenment (bodhipranidhicitta) and then the actual pilgrimage towards it (bodhiprasthānacitta).³⁶

Moreover the thought of enlightenment has two stages: 1) the resolution thereunto; and 2) the advancement toward the same.³⁷

In the Bodhicaryāvatāra Śāntideva explains that the difference "is that between a traveler and someone desirous of traveling."³⁸ This he says has been taught for the sake of beings of lesser aspiration,³⁹ presumably novice-Bodhisattvas and lay persons. In the

³⁴ Śikṣā, p. 248. BCY, 1:8, p. 144.

³⁵ Śikṣā, p. 173. BCY, 1:14, p. 144.

³⁶ BCY, 1:15, p. 144.

³⁷ Śikṣā, p. 9.

³⁸ BCY, 1:16, p. 144.

³⁹ Ibid., 1:20, p. 145.

Śikṣā Śāntideva follows his mention of the twofold scheme of bodhicitta with a discussion of the merit of the thought of enlightenment even when it is deficient in corresponding conduct.⁴⁰ He says: "Even without practice the thought of enlightenment is to be recognised as a helpful thing."⁴¹ He exhorts his reader to learn and practice desire for enlightenment, to cultivate faith and earnest aspiration.⁴² Murti notes that this first stage of bodhicitta's development is preparatory wherein the devotee makes his resolve and defines his ideal, while the second stage is the actual starting of the journey.⁴³

We have found that a novice-Bodhisattva develops from an obscure and imperfect beginning into a Bodhisattva who has achieved perfection, with many chances for failure along the journey. The same is true of bodhicitta: its beginnings can be quite obscure yet with diligence it can soon be firmly grasped to form the basis for the Bodhisattva's actual practice. Bodhicittotpāda, the arising of the thought of enlightenment in tradition is held to be a moment of unique importance on the Bodhisattva's career. This moment marks the conversion of an ordinary person into a Bodhisattva, and the vow is taken.⁴⁴ For Śāntideva however, in the preparatory period before

⁴⁰ Śikṣā, p. 9.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 10.

⁴² Ibid., "Rājāvavādaka", p. 10.

⁴³ Murti, p. 265.

⁴⁴ Har Dayal, p. 50.

bodhicitta is firmly grasped the novice-Bodhisattva is nourishing an undeveloped bodhicitta. We can say therefore that there are two instances of the arising of bodhicitta. The first is its arising in conversion to the Great Vehicle imperfect though it may be. This would correspond to Śāntideva's first phase of bodhicitta (bodhipraṇidhicitta), a period of aspiration and formation of resolution. The second is the moment when the aspirant firmly grasps the thought of enlightenment and is ready to take his vow⁴⁵ corresponding to Śāntideva's second phase of bodhicitta (bodhiprāsthānacitta), when bodhicitta is well developed and ready for action.

Even though the thought of enlightenment has been seized its maintenance is still a crucial and difficult task for the Bodhisattva.⁴⁶ As is abundantly clear in the Śikṣā, bodhicitta can be obscured⁴⁷ and it can be lost.⁴⁸ Śāntideva devotes many pages to warning Bodhisattvas against the pitfalls of weakness. Danger is there for well advanced and novice-Bodhisattvas alike. Bodhicitta is dependent, at any level this side of perfection, upon the strength of the Bodhisattva.

We have seen Śāntideva teach two contradictory messages regarding merit: that merit wins easily over sin and that sin

⁴⁵BCY, 4:1-4, p. 157.

⁴⁶Ibid., 4:1, p. 157.

⁴⁷Śikṣā, pp. 7, 153.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 54.

destroys merit. This same pattern emerges with regard to bodhicitta. Though Śāntideva adamantly warns that bodhicitta must be diligently guarded he also sings its praise and strength. He says: "Yea, even a single thought of enlightenment, in that it forms the basis of the deliverance of all creatures...bears in itself the accumulation of boundless, countless good."⁴⁹ "Even a novice is worthy of honour by virtue of the thought of enlightenment."⁵⁰ Even when it has not been produced, a being capable of producing it must be respected.⁵¹

In the case of bodhicitta the scale balances in favour of this optimism. Indeed bodhicitta itself is the opposite of despondency. Bodhicitta is a foundation for action⁵² while the despondent Bodhisattva thinks: "Hard to attain is enlightenment....I am not equal to bearing such a load."⁵³ In the Bodhicaryāvatāra Śāntideva writes:

Having obtained the chariot of the thought of enlightenment, which removes all depression and fatigue, going from happiness to happiness, who that is intelligent would be despondent?⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ibid., "Rājāvavādaka", p. 11.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 96.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 93.

⁵² Ibid., "Ratnakūṭa", p. 54.

⁵³ Ibid., "Ratnamegha", pp. 54-5.

⁵⁴ BCY, 7:30, p. 1881.

Śāntideva's use of "bodhicitta" is widely varied and can be confusing. He speaks of the "mere" thought of enlightenment⁵⁵ and of the "total" thought of enlightenment⁵⁶ which only the Buddha can cause to arise in others by a single gesture. It can be undeveloped, it can arise in a worldling amid the heresy of individuality⁵⁷ and it even comes in numbers, being produced once or in many cases.⁵⁸ The explanation that bodhicitta has three distinct meanings offered by Matias can be helpful. In some cases it can be understood as a single idea or intent, in others as an attitude of mind or quality of mind which tends toward enlightenment. In still other cases it is praised by Śāntideva as a source of virtue which has effect in the world. From small beginnings to its full blossoming, bodhicitta has many shades of meaning for Śāntideva.

Bodhicitta as Enlightenment

In the Bodhicaryāvatāra Śāntideva dwells on the theme of bodhicitta's benefit in the world. It is a "happiness banquet",⁵⁹ whose benefit "overflows to an immeasurable flood of humanity."⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Śikṣā, p. 8.

⁵⁶ BCY, 10:13, p. 228.

⁵⁷ Śikṣā, "Vimalakīrtinirdeśa", p. 6.

⁵⁸ Ibid., "Rājāvavādaka", p. 11.

⁵⁹ BCY, 3:32, p. 156.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1:1, p. 144.

The tree of bodhicitta bears fruit that never decays.⁶¹ Though in the Śikṣāsamuccaya Śāntideva dwells more on the effect of bodhicitta for the particular Bodhisattva, its worldly benefit is recognised there too, for the Bodhisattva and his thought of enlightenment are responsible for the welfare of all beings.⁶² Bodhicitta is a kind of goodness to which persons can be attuned. Thus it is bodhicitta that Bodhisattvas strive to awaken in others so that they too may become vehicles of the increase of merit.

Enlightenment, like bodhicitta has different meanings and occurs in varying degrees. We have already found two senses of enlightenment, (a) collective, and (b) individual. We can now tentatively add a third, (c) individual intention to become fully enlightened, as opposed to the realised enlightenment of the individual. This third kind of enlightenment in the form of intention corresponds to bodhicitta as the attitude of mind which strives for enlightenment. It is quite conceivable that pre-perfection bodhicitta, Śāntideva's bodhipraṇidhicitta of aspiration and resolution could be a lower form of enlightenment. This is particularly inviting given Śāntideva's two-phase scheme of bodhicitta, and his presentation of the early stages of the Bodhisattva path as particularly meritorious.

Professor Murti writes: "Śūnyatā and Karuṇā are the two

⁶¹ Ibid., 1:12, p. 144.

⁶² Śikṣā, "Ratnamegha", p. 51.

principal features of the Bodhicitta."⁶³ Hence he identifies bodhicitta with wisdom, or in other words with enlightenment. This is most easily comprehended when these factors are considered in their complete and perfected state. Bodhicitta, wisdom, enlightenment, in their fully realised sense surely partake equally of prajñā, karuṇā, śūnyatā. Śāntideva however persistently presents an imperfect counterpart to these ideals. There are perfect bodhisattvas and imperfect novice-bodhisattvas, there is total bodhicitta and undeveloped bodhicitta, full enlightenment and partial, and so perfect wisdom and partial wisdom. Each of these elements has an obscure beginning and develops into an active form of virtue and finally becomes perfected. Therefore the equation between bodhicitta and enlightenment or wisdom can conceivably be carried throughout this whole spectrum.

⁶³Murti, p. 264.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FUNCTION OF THE BODHISATTVA

There is not only a whole spectrum of levels in the Bodhisattva career, but the landmarks of that career also are difficult to pinpoint. There are perfect Bodhisattvas. This is one type of Bodhisattva whose status is quite clear. Imperfect novice-Bodhisattvas however are in the majority, for Śāntideva declares:

Rare, my son, in all the world are such beings
as make resolution towards the highest illumina-
tion, yet rarer than these and rarest are
they that have started toward the same.¹

Śāntideva's portrayal of this more numerous group as often contradictory, and ambiguous at best. To understand these novice-Bodhisattvas in terms of their status--that is in terms of where they belong on a relative scale from poor to perfect--is extremely difficult. With status proving to be such an elusive concept we are faced with the alternative of finding a different way to understand Śāntideva's Bodhisattvas. To do this we can look at a few themes which are presented in the Śikṣāsamuccaya.

Comparisons

Śāntideva has a decided penchant for making comparisons.

¹Śikṣā, "Gaṇḍavyūha", p. 9.

He loves extremes, especially when they involve good Bodhisattvas and those who have failed to meet the ideal. He says:

Wisdom belongs to the Bodhisattva who is properly employed and even-minded, not to him who is disturbed and improperly employed; wisdom belongs to him who is consistent, not to the inconsistent.²

This pattern of comparison is used repeatedly upon many themes throughout the Śikṣā.

Concerning training and application Śāntideva says:

They are not true Bodhisattvas...who have no application, no power of meditation ecstatic and concentrated, no studiousness, no eager pursuit of learning....The gospel of the Tathāgata...arises from earnest application: it does not arise from subservience to the usual ends of the householder's actions. For such action belongs to those whose application is misapplied....And if India be full of these [whose application is misapplied] one Bodhisattva devoted to profound and secluded meditation is worthy to receive from them all homage and respect.³

Again, we find one Bodhisattva who gives countless Buddha-worlds to Buddhas for numberless ages. Another Bodhisattva hears the doctrine and decides to train in it. "The latter, although untrained, engenders in the process of training a far larger merit than is the merit that consists in the mere giving of gifts."⁴

²Ibid., "Ugradattaparipṛcchā", p. 21.

³Ibid., "Adhyāśayasamcodana", p. 112.

⁴Ibid., "Praśāntavinścayaprātihārya", pp. 17-8.

On giving and ownership he writes:

The one helps the path of enlightenment, the other the path of the Evil one. The one is lasting, the other impermanent....The giver is the true hero, the miser the coward.⁵

In a passage comparing the relative value of various gifts he establishes that if all who are part of the Great Vehicle were kings, and they each should give all the flowers in India to a Tathāgata's shrine, and if a single Bodhisattva who has left the household life should place one flower on a shrine, "That aforesaid gift is not one-hundredth part of this,...there's no comparison between them."⁶

We learn that rejoicing in the application of merit is greater than abiding in the Four Ecstasies, for even if all beings enjoyed the Four Ecstasies, a single Bodhisattva who applies his merit to enlightenment and then rejoices over it has infinitely greater merit... "there is no comparison between them."⁷ On the other hand, worship of the Tathāgata is a thing beyond which there is nothing greater.⁸ A Bodhisattva who worships sets an example for others, his thought of enlightenment becomes firm and his root of good is established. There are, above this, three unrivalled

⁵ Ibid., "Ugradattaparipṛcchā", p. 21.

⁶ Ibid., "Ratnarāśi", p. 279.

⁷ Ibid., "Prajñāpāramitā", p. 281.

⁸ Ibid., p. 279.

ways of worshipping the Tathāgata: to develop the thought of enlightenment, to comprehend the law, and to develop the thought of great compassion towards all beings.⁹ This greatest worship in other words is to become a Bodhisattva.

While worship is exalted on one page, other virtues are praised elsewhere. Śāntideva also says:

All the worship of many kinds, immeasurable,
which is found in countless millions of fields.
If one perform all that worship always towards
the noblest man, yet he of compassionate heart
is out of all comparison by counting.¹⁰

A gratified king cannot give the equal of Buddhahood--which is gained by kindness done to living creatures. An angry king cannot create the pain that hell can cause because of unkindness.¹¹ Where such punishments are concerned:

We hear of banishment to the Preta-world as the punishment for refusing to give some trifle spontaneously, and to hell for refusing what one has promised. How much more, then, when one has promised the weal of all the world and then does not carry it out?¹²

This phrase, "how much more?" is a steady favourite of Śāntideva's.

It will do the reader of the Śikṣā no good to attempt to arrange the virtues in order of their importance. As is briefly

⁹ Ibid., "Anupūrvāsamudgataparivarta", p. 279.

¹⁰ Ibid., "Candrapradīpa", pp. 155, 285.

¹¹ Ibid., "Bhikṣuprakīrṇaka", p. 155.

¹² Ibid., "Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna", p. 13. BCY, 4:6, p. 157.

demonstrated above, the comparisons are inconsistent: first one virtue and then another takes precedence. A single beginner Bodhisattva who possesses one virtue is declared to have greater merit than his celestial cousin, who presumably has achieved perfection! It is clear that in his comparisons Śāntideva is exalting the ideal in his own exercise of skill in means. Śāntideva always has his ideal in mind: the Bodhisattva who feels pleasure in torture, who lives on air, who abides in the celestial spheres and whose miraculous powers are active in the world.

Such a presentation of an ideal by virtue of its very greatness is an incentive-creating device. Śāntideva says:

A difficult thing is this to get, the getting of wisdom. High, higher than all, exalted above all the three worlds, exceeding marvellous: therefore...the Bodhisattva whose aim is self-discipline, whose longing is manly effort, must earnestly strive for wisdom.¹³

The formation of resolve requires the defining of an ideal,¹⁴ and we begin to see Śāntideva's design in presenting the ideal in contrast to the ordinary. He is seeking to incite new or better followers of the way.¹⁵

Śāntideva encourages fledgeling novice-Bodhisattvas to have heart, and also admonishes them for their shortcomings. He is no

¹³Śikṣā, "Adhyāśayasamcodana", p. 113.

¹⁴Murti, pp. 265-6.

¹⁵Śikṣā, p. 2. BCY, 1:3, p. 143.

easy taskmaster, nor is he overly harsh. Though he presents the ideal in sometimes an incredible and overly enthusiastic way, he also makes concessions for "beings of lesser aspiration" who are expected to achieve only what is within their powers to achieve.¹⁶ These concessions are only meant to prevent despondency however, for once they have been made Śāntideva again picks up the thread of encouragement, urging the novice-Bodhisattvas to forge ahead. Like a good coach he pushes his athletes to the limits of their abilities. Śāntideva's main purpose is to encourage. It does not matter where his listener starts, only where he is going,¹⁷ and that is towards perfection.

Teaching and Example

The Bodhisattva's duty is to win over all beings. He must cultivate the ability to inspire confidence in others.¹⁸ As he increases in wisdom his effect on others will improve. Perfect wisdom is a very potent presence in the world:

Just as one lamp in whatever house or room it enters, dispels the blinding darkness of a thousand years...even so one lamp coming from the thought of omniscience, in whatever creatures' thoughts it enters...as soon as it enters it dispels the blinding darkness of the hindrances of sinful acts...and makes a blaze of knowledge.¹⁹

¹⁶ Sikṣā, pp. 6, 8-12, 14, 16.

¹⁷ Matics, Entering, p. 61.

¹⁸ Sikṣā, "Dharmasangīti", p. 123.

¹⁹ Ibid., "Maitreyavimokṣa", p. 1731.

Even hearing of a Buddha works for the increase of merit, how much more the sight of him, who having understood all things is a "gate of merit" in the world.²⁰ He illuminates the world. "Wide is the thought of those who behold the chief of men; a force of wisdom arises incalculable and bright."²¹ The Bodhisattva who is penetrated by the Law-body works good just by showing it, "just by hearing and touch" he brings benefits.²²

The Buddha's force of wisdom is the greatest for he can illuminate a mind by a single gesture.²³ The celestial Bodhisattvas are also a powerful source of wisdom and goodness. Their miraculous rays beam down into human hearts to awaken many virtues. They undergo miraculous transformations, becoming any sort of being in order to work for the good of all beings.²⁴ They point out the Buddha's greatness and by practicing the Buddha's virtues they work the good of the world.²⁵ They teach, provide services and are praised for their wisdom.²⁶ Even by deceit or by well-timed acts

²⁰Ibid., "Gaṇḍavyūha", p. 277.

²¹Ibid., "Gaṇḍavyūha", p. 277.

²²Ibid., "Tathāgataguḥya", p. 157.

²³BCY, 1:5, p. 143, 10:13, p. 228.

²⁴Śikṣā, "Vimalakīrtinirdeśa", pp. 290-1.

²⁵Ibid., "Vimalakīrtinirdeśa", p. 294.

²⁶Ibid., "Vimalakīrtinirdeśa", pp. 294ff.

of kindness they cause the thought of enlightenment to arise.²⁷

Novice-Bodhisattvas are not exempt from similar duty. They are expected to begin their task of teaching and of setting an example right away. Śāntideva instructs them in the art of preaching, teaching them how best to present themselves for the sake of furthering the spread of the doctrine. Even an unworthy brother can in some ways be beneficial to others; "he still may foster many a root of good in his neighbours and show the way to salvation."²⁸

Everyone in fact is to be regarded as a teacher.²⁹ This theme is very important in the Śikṣā for it points out that all creatures are deserving of respect. They are all potentially helpers on the path towards enlightenment. It is explained: "How many Bodhisattvas can be credited with faculties that will mature enlightenment, and how many cannot? We in our ignorance...might meanly regard such, and thereby be injured."³⁰ Here certain ideas converge to create interesting possibilities. Bodhisattvas "have identified themselves with all the world...there is no doubt of that; indeed they are seen in the form of beings: these are the only lords."³¹

²⁷ Ibid., "Sūraṅgama, Bhadrakalpika", p. 9.

²⁸ Ibid., "Kṣitigarbha", p. 72.

²⁹ Ibid., "Sūraṅgamasamādhi", p. 94.

³⁰ Ibid., "Sūraṅgamasamādhi", p. 94.

³¹ Ibid., "Bhikṣuprakīrṇaka"; p. 94. BCY, 6:126, p. 184.

The question must be asked: How are we to recognise those who are established in the path?³² Certainly they are virtuous--yet they are impossible to recognise!³³ With this problem the answer simply is to regard all fellow-creatures as teachers and as helpers along the path.

Furthermore all beings, however low or devoid of beauty are capable of apprehending righteousness.³⁴ What is presented here is a milieu where spiritual development can be assisted by anyone, and where all others are affected by one's example. The opportunities for teaching are endless and the opportunities to learn are likewise endless. Śāntideva declares himself to be the pupil of all.³⁵ His enemy is like a treasure as the occasion for the practice and strengthening of virtue.³⁶ Here we see Śāntideva's teachings about self and other in application.³⁷ In respecting others he both demonstrates and practices virtue, thus teaching and being taught.

³² Śikṣā, "Dharmasangīti", p. 145.

³³ Ibid., "Ratnolkadhāraṇī", p. 293.

³⁴ Ibid., "Sāgaramati", p. 150.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 319.

³⁶ BCY, 6:107-12, p. 182.

³⁷ Ibid., 6:113-16, p. 183.

Purpose and Function

Most of the features of Bodhisattvahood involve in some way purpose and function. Wisdom involves compassion which compels the Bodhisattva to act for the sake of others. The perfections include charity, morality, patience and effort which are important skills of the Bodhisattva who goes about in the world. Bodhicitta itself is the opposite of despondency. It is a quality which carries with it a sense of purpose: it is at once a conceived desire for Buddhahood, a state of mind conducive to the gaining of an increase in merit, and a power of goodness by which many beings benefit. The application of merit is a chief responsibility of the Bodhisattva. Enlightenment in its ultimate conception must include all beings, and the Bodhisattva labours for its realisation.

It is crucial that a Bodhisattva be able to act in a positive way toward his goal. The goal is to be reached. The Bodhisattva must be actively functioning toward his end. He is a being of intent, working toward the realisation of an ideal. No matter where he may sit in terms of his own level of perfection we can best understand him in terms of his activity.

The Buddhas and the celestial Bodhisattvas are fully versatile in the means by which they can enlighten others. In comparison the novice-Bodhisattvas who are not omniscient nor fully wise would be accordingly less, and less often, effective as Bodhisattvas. Though this makes sense, it is not entirely necessary to stay within a scheme where Bodhisattvas are rated on a scale such as this. What

is important for a Bodhisattva is the growth of wisdom, first his own and consequently its general presence in the world. This is the activity which contributes toward the goal, as Śāntideva has so tirelessly declared. When performing this activity a Bodhisattva is willfully trying to function as a Bodhisattva, whether he is sitting in meditation, exercising miraculous powers of transformation or simply struggling to act in accordance with basic rules of morality in the earliest stages of his career.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Ethics and Philosophical Framework

In the Śikṣāsamuccaya Śāntideva presents an essentially ethical philosophy and religious practice. His concern is that the Bodhisattva's interaction with others will further the increase of merit. Śāntideva applies the ideal of the perfection of wisdom to the moral sphere of everyday life.¹ He emphasises the Bodhisattva's moral nature:

One should not be injured by others, and...one should not injure others. This essence of a world of texts must always be kept in the heart of the Bodhisattva.²

This emphasis does not diminish the importance of the perfection of wisdom for the Bodhisattva. Though the preponderance of the text is devoted to the themes of correct behaviour and the sharing of merit, these elements of the Bodhisattva's discipline are understood to be practiced interdependently with the practice of meditational insight as to the nature of things and other disciplines of the mind.

¹Matics, Entering, pp. 28-9.

²Śikṣā, p. 126.

When perceived, śūnyatā as the essential 'selflessness' of all things, leads to detachment and renunciation and finally to altruism in its pure form.³ Concomitant with insight into śūnyatā the ethical obstacles of possession, attraction to things, and selfishness disappear as untenable and insupportable attitudes. Particularly, when śūnyatā is perceived in application to oneself in relation with others, great compassion arises. As Śāntideva teaches, where pain and pleasure are concerned there is no division between men of great pity and their fellows. Goodness follows truth spontaneously; wisdom carries with itself a "voluntary compulsion" to act for its increase, i.e. the welfare of all beings. Nāgārjuna says: "Self-restraint, kindness towards others, and benevolence are the ways of the dharma (i.e. the truth of the nature of things)."⁴

The significance of śūnyatā is that it is just another static concept when held merely by the intellect. It bears fruit only when internalised through willful discipline and practice. Complete perception of śūnyatā at once involves the whole person; his attitudes, his motivations and his actions. Wisdom is a potent force. Nāgārjuna declares that unless the nature and meaning of śūnyatā are considered as involving its purpose there is nothing gained by it.⁵ Perception of śūnyatā functions as a freeing and a

³Gómez, p. 362.

⁴Nāgārjuna, 17:1a, p. 105.

⁵Ibid., 24:7, p. 145.

motivating force. The philosophy of śūnyatā is involved inextricably with motivation toward an ethical ideal.

Characterised by forceful optimism and keen insight into the ethical purport of the Mādhyamika philosophy Śāntideva's Śikṣāsamuccaya is a wonderful expression of this dynamic philosophy. "Dynamic" is perhaps the most suitable description of his Mādhyamika vision. In refusing to abide in such notions as essence and permanency he allows only purpose and change. There is activity in existence; cause and effect, relational-origination, is the truth of existence. "The doer is dynamically related to the deed and the deed to the doer in order to arise."⁶ A self-existent doer could not produce change. Doer, deed, and doing are functions of cause and effect,⁷ of relational-origination, and only as functions do they partake of the nature of śūnyatā.⁸ Śāntideva explains:

consider how the waggon is put together part by part (i.e. has no abiding essence), and yet there is activity in it. And I have described action, yet no doer is to be found in the ten regions.⁹

Mādhyamika philosophy has been charged with the denial of ethical values by its opponents who fear that there can be no abiding

⁶ Ibid., 8:12, p. 74.

⁷ Ibid., 8:4, p. 73.

⁸ Ibid., 7:16, p. 108.

⁹ Śikṣā, "Puspakūṭadhāraṇi", p. 240.

good in the world without the existence of an absolute metaphysical substratum as its support. Nāgārjuna and his followers however refute these champions of ethical absolutism with a sure hand. The śūnyatā philosophy affirms the fact of interpersonal interactions. Where its practical implications concerning the individual are considered it has decidedly ethical repercussions. Furthermore, it maintains that it is the only ontology which can support the concept of moral improvement and spiritual growth. Nāgārjuna says:

According to your assertion (for self-existence), anyone who is not a Buddha in virtue of self-existence cannot hope to attain enlightenment even by serious endeavor or by practice of the Bodhisattva way.¹¹

The notion of an abiding essence of goodness in the person might perhaps explain some of the ideas that are found in the Śikṣāsamuccaya. That all beings can apprehend righteousness, that ordinary worldlings can produce the thought of enlightenment, that this bodhicitta is sometimes as yet undeveloped yet is foreknown by the Buddhas; these ideas lend themselves easily to the interpretation that there is indeed an abiding essence of goodness in all beings which need only be uncovered.¹² Though compatible, this notion is technically untenable and hardly necessary as a support to Śāntideva's

¹⁰ Nāgārjuna, 24:6, p. 145.

¹¹ Ibid., 24:32, p. 151.

¹² Suzuki, Outlines, pp. 61, 299.

ethical philosophy. Śūnyatā though far more difficult is much farther reaching as a philosophical and perceptual basis for ethics. Śūnyatā stands as a vital source to an ethical system of unquestionable magnitude.

The Bodhisattva and the Ordinary Person

We are still faced with Śāntideva's presentation in the Śikṣāsamuccaya of a virtual continuum of levels of moral development, from the being who is capable of perceiving righteousness through those who have accumulated merit and finally to the Bodhisattva career which culminates in the perfection of moral wisdom. Much of this confusion can be attributed to the nature of the text itself, for it is a collection of quotations from many sources which do not always agree. It appears at times as though Śāntideva is inconsistent, seeing things from many divergent points of view. He has created a mosaic: the many pieces fit loosely at close range, yet there is a picture of some consistency here. Although his sources are varied and numerous, it is one man who has put them together in what strikes the reader as the product of enthusiastic self-expression. It is up to the reader to seek the contentment with the discordant elements which Śāntideva himself must have enjoyed.

We have set out to view Śāntideva's picture of the Bodhisattva and have found a blurred image. Is the Bodhisattva worthy of his title in potential, or in the actual? From the potential to the actual, the Bodhisattva, bodhicitta, and enlightenment are expressed

in different degrees of meaning from a mundane sense to the highest. Wisdom, which is the key to understanding Śāntideva's Bodhisattva, must also proceed in stages. It is at first undeveloped, then partially developed, and finally it is fully developed.

Imperfect, undeveloped wisdom is however quite different from perfect, hidden wisdom-essence. Śāntideva does indeed acknowledge the presence of the raw materials in men for ethical behaviour. It would be inconsistent were he to deny this potential. In one devastating example he shows the parallel between natural compassion and the compassion of the Buddha:

In the world when a son is impaled in view of mother and father, they do not think of attachment to their own welfare by reason of their natural pity, [likewise] the Tathāgata when formerly living as a Bodhisattva, and seeing people afflicted with the three kinds of calamity, in need, felt [no] satisfaction, or peace of mind.¹³

Ordinary persons are capable at times of selfless acts of kindness, charity, and so on. We might say that there is wisdom in this, but there must be a qualification. Ordinary virtue is beclouded by ignorance. It is conditional and so is easily overcome by an equally natural self-interest. This mere shadow of pure wisdom boasts no insight. It is not characterised by a steady resolve and a stable mind.

It is nevertheless this instinctive, blind, unconscious

¹³ Śikṣā, "Candrapradīpa", p. 163.

moral sensibility in others to which the Bodhisattva addresses himself and which he tries to awaken. With the conviction that others can respond he seeks to inspire them toward a conscious wisdom. The Bodhisattva's wisdom is different from ordinary morality in this one very significant sense. His is cultivated. He has a conscious intent to further the cause of collective enlightenment. At a certain point he has chosen to undertake the discipline of cultivating prajñāpāramitā, to seek insight into the nature of reality, through which efforts his practice of the virtues increases in effectiveness. It is best to renounce the householder's life in order to undertake this discipline, though householders who are engaged in training may be considered as novice-Bodhisattvas as well. The major difference between the ordinary person and the Bodhisattva remains--cultivation of prajñāpāramitā.

The idea that we are all at least in some sense novice-Bodhisattvas continues to linger. Indeed human birth is a basic prerequisite for Bodhisattvahood and so theoretically we are all in a position to take up the discipline. In this way a text like the Śikṣāsamuccaya is equally as meaningful to the lay Buddhist as it is to the ordained. There is unquestionably a link between the merit-accumulating ordinary person and the Bodhisattva. Merit gradually increases until it bears the fruit bodhicitta. Bodhicitta gradually increases until it blossoms into the perfection of wisdom. But true to the Mādhyamika style of analysis the relation between these phases of development does not imply sameness. All men are

to be treated as future Bodhisattvas; for how else could the goal of collective enlightenment be entertained seriously? Yet, for Śāntideva the Bodhisattva is special. He is set apart from the multitude. He has a conscious awareness of the significance of merit in the world and he trains diligently so that he may contribute to the good of the world.

The beginning of the Bodhisattva career cannot be pinpointed from Śāntideva's presentation in the Śikṣāsamuccaya. Moreover, strictly speaking, the Bodhisattva is an ideal being, who has immovable resolve and whose activities and services spring from the exalted virtue, prajñāpāramitā, knowledge of śūnyatā. This lofty ideal is saved from being too remote from the ordinary person because śūnyatā and wisdom overcome barriers and distinctions. Śāntideva successfully makes the ideal meaningful by demonstrating that there is an important link between the mundane and the ideal. This link consists in the idea that progress toward final collective enlightenment is possible at any level through willing that it be so. While the ideal is very sublime and seemingly remote, its test is in its ability to reach into the imperfect world and to have impact there. The wisdom of the Bodhisattva is an ethical ideal which must seek fulfillment as is so skillfully demonstrated by Śāntideva.

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