



# Mapping the Bodhicaryāvatāra

Essays on  
Mahāyāna Ethics

PABITRAKUMAR ROY

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PABITRAKUMAR ROY



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY  
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His Holiness the Dalai Lama

*tadiyam vastu tubhyamaham sampradade*



# Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xiii

## PART ONE

1. Śāntideva and the <i>Bodhicaryāvatāra</i>	3
2. Buddhist Ethics: Morality and Theory	15
(i) Opening Ideas: <i>Bodhicaryāvatāra</i> : Method and Approach	22
(ii) From <i>Bodhicitta</i> to <i>Prajñāpāramitā</i>	35
(iii) Buddhist Virtues: <i>Pāramitās</i>	45
3. The Bodhisattva and his Career	52
4. The Motivational Context of <i>Maitrī</i> and <i>Karuṇā</i>	66

## PART TWO

5. <i>Dānapāramitā</i> : The Virtue of Charity	81
6. <i>Śīla</i> : The Buddhist Concept of Ethics	91
7. <i>Karuṇā</i> : The Supreme Emotion	117
8. <i>Kṣāntipāramitā</i> : The Virtue of Forbearance	137
9. <i>Samprajañya-rakṣana</i> : Guarding Mindfulness	154
10. <i>Prajñāpāramitā</i> : Human Excellence – <i>Eudaimonia</i>	171



PART THREE

11. <i>Duhkha</i> : The Human Predicament	207
12. The Problematic of Altruism and Rebirth: <i>Bodhicaryāvatāra</i> , 8:97-8	230
13. Persons and the Problem of Altruism <i>Bodhicaryāvatāra</i> , 8: 101-3	242
14. Meditation and Action: Problematic Polarities? A Piece of <i>Pṛthagajana</i> Logic	266

PART FOUR

15. The Lesson and Relevance of the Bodhisattva Ideal	275
16. <i>Bhāvana</i> and Action: Buddhist Ethics in Perspective	285
17. Concluding Thoughts: Buddhist Ethics	304
<i>Afterword</i>	332
<i>Postscript</i>	333
<i>Appendix</i>	
I. <i>Bodhicaryāvatāra</i> : IX.1 – Unity of the <i>Pāramitās</i>	339
II. The Bodhisattva Ideal and its Recent Assertions in India	342
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	345
<i>Glossary</i>	351

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The logo on the page with the title is an intermingling form, in Lantsa script of Sanskrit, of alphabets representing *prajñā* and *karuṇā*. This was made available by the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This is gratefully acknowledged.

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PABITRAKUMAR ROY  
Central University of Tribetan Studies  
Sarnath, Varanasi.

*Nahi kincidpūrvamatra vācyam  
na ca samgranthana kauśam mamāsti  
Ataeva na me parārthacintā  
svamano vasayitum kṛtam mayedam  
Bodhicaryāvatāra, I.2.*

There is nothing here that has not been explained before,  
And I have no skill in the art of composition;  
Therefore, without any pretention of edifying others,  
I write this in order to acquaint it to my mind.



## Preface

The inspiration in writing this book came from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I was blessed with the gift of an English translation of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. That was decades ago, but the seed germinated through the years. And here now is this book.

My English version of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is by Śāntideva. What sort of text is that? It is obviously a Bodhisattva text; there are several of texts of this genre: the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*, possibly by Āsanga, and the *Daśa-bhūmika Sūtra*. But I have grown comfortable with the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* through years, and came eventually to love the text.

A text, apropos J. L. Austin, seen as a speech act is either constative or performative. A constative speech act operates mainly in the expository mode, while a performative speech act enacts the very doctrine that it preaches. Both modes are discoverable in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. As a constative text, it explains and clarifies the key notions and motifs of Buddhist virtue ethics, and as a performative text it provides many examples that illustrate how these concepts are deployed in the Mādhyamika system. The chapter on *prajñāpāramitā* is argumentative, providing detailed logical analysis of some basic terms in relation to the system as a whole. In the argumentative part of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Śāntideva, in consonance with his Mahāyāna lineage, undoes many categories. At the level of language, he appears to hold that names are empty. A name is empty because the meaning of the name and the name itself are neither identical with, nor different from, each other. But what is the concept of meaning? What if a name is to be empty of an objective referent? If it is dismissed as

an objective of attachment, it should be understood as empty of both linguistic sense and objective referent. But if it is amplified by such expressions as dreams, etc., it is empty of an objective referent. The examples of the pranks of the daughter of a barren woman is not only empty of an objective referent, but yields linguistic sense, though illogical. Hence, the meaning and name are non-identical and non-different. If the name were identical with its putative meaning, we would get our mouth burned when we utter the word 'fire'; if different, we would be given a cup of water when we ask for fire. The mystery or even the persuasiveness is involved by a false analogy. The fire that burns the mouth and the association with fire induced in the mind of the listener who has heard the word 'fire' are two different things. One is the referent and the other is the concept of the name 'fire'. Buddhism offers a non-logocentric view. Buddhist texts, and the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is not excepted, anticipated much that is displayed by the post-modern writings, e.g., the primacy of the question of the sign, anti-logocentricism, deconstruction of the binary oppositions of subject and object, and naturalization of the signifier and the signified.

But the task before me was something else. I was interested in ethics, and looked for the foundation of Buddhist ethics in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. A new horizon arose in the distance: a study of Buddhist virtues or *pāramitās*, as they are called.

I found my text charting the Bodhisattva path. The person entering this path aspired to be compassionate and self-sacrificing. His path would be long, as he would need to build up moral and spiritual perfection not only for his own exalted state of Buddhahood, but also so as to be able altruistically aid others by teaching, good deeds and merit transference. While compassion had always been an important part of the Buddhist path, it is now more strongly emphasized, as the motivating factor for the whole Bodhisattva path. My task was to understand the Buddhist path, not Theravada or Mahāyāna. I found that there runs an organic continuum of method and purpose. The analytical psychology of Abhidharma enters into the later understandings of springs of action, say, in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*, or Tsong-kha-pa's celebrated *Lam rim*. Even to go by what the *Visuddhimagga*

has to say, the *arhat* is one who has finally destroyed the ‘I am’ conceit, the root of all egoism and selfishness, and can equally be described as imbued with loving kindness and as compassionately teaching others. It is acknowledged in no less a measure that the *nirvāna* of countless beings is an essential component of the path to Buddhahood. What was reckoned as a way for the heroic few only came in later centuries to be turned into a universal prescription. The charisma enshrined in the ideal elicited a conversion experience of profound psychological effect. The new dispensation was called the *Bodhisattvayāna*, or vehicle of the Bodhisattva, comprising compassionate motivation, directed at the *nirvāna* of countless beings, and the profundity of the wisdom it cultivated, as the goal, omniscient Buddhahood.

As a text, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* belongs to that class of literature which extols *prajñā*, which is a *pāramitā* and also the other perfections involved in the Bodhisattva path. To Nāgarjuna it appeared that *Abhidharma* analytical thinking was not enough; it could lead to a subtle form of intellectual grasping: the idea that one had ‘grasped’ the true nature of reality in a neat set of concepts. The Abhidharmic contrasting *nirvāna* with conditioned *dharmas* making up a ‘person’ hid a subtle form of spiritual self-seeking, the desire to ‘attain’ *nirvāna* for oneself, to *get* something one did not have. It was not realized that everything is not-self (*anātman*) or empty (*śunya*) of self. The pre-Mahāyāna persuasions or dispensations understood the non-selfness of persons (*pudgalanairātmya*), the absence of a permanent substantial self in a person, but what it did not understand was the non-selfness of *dharmas* (*dharma-nirātmya*). The earlier analysis saw *dharma* as an ultimate buildingblock of reality, with an inherent nature of its ‘own’, and held that it can be identified without reference to other *dharmas* on which it depends. This implies that it can *exist* independently, making it a virtual self. The *dharma* analysis, developed as a means to undercut self-centred attachment, falls short of its mark.

Nāgarjuna’s critique of the notion of one’s own-nature (*svabhāva*, *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā*, chapter 15) argues that anything which arises according to conditions, as all phenomena do, can have no inherent nature, for it depends on what conditions



it. Śāntideva gives an eloquent rendering of the argument in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (IX. 115-118). Moreover, if there is nothing with own-nature, there can be nothing with ‘other-nature’ (*parabhāva*), i.e., something which is dependent for its existence and nature on something *else* which has own-nature. Furthermore, if there is neither own-nature nor other-nature, there cannot be anything with a true, substantially existent nature (*bhāva*). If there is no true existent, then there can be no non-existent (*abhāva*); for Nāgarjuna takes this as simply a correlative term denoting that a true existent has gone out of existence. The *prajñāpāramitā* literature regards all *dharmas* as like a dream or magical illusion. There is something there in experience, and one can describe it well in terms of *dharmas*, so it is wrong to deny these exist; yet they don’t have substantial existence either. What we experience does not exist in an absolute sense, but only in a relative way, as a passing phenomenon. The nature of *dharmas* lies in between absolute ‘non-existence’ and substantial ‘existence’. This is what Nāgarjuna means by the Middle Way.

Śāntideva opens his chapter on *prajñāpāramitā* by referring to the twin truth of *samvṛti* and *paramārtha* (IX. 2). In saying this he is looking back to Nāgarjuna (*Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā*, chapter 24, vv. 8-9). The concept of two levels of truth already existed in *Abhidharma*. There ‘conventional truths’ were those expressed using terms such as ‘person’ and ‘thing’; and ‘ultimate truth’ referred to more exact statements, expressed in terms of *dharmas*. For Mādhyamika, however, talk of *dharmas* is just another kind of provisional, conventional truth, which the ultimate truth transcends. Śāntideva prepares us for the two-tier view in the chapter preceding that on *prajñāpāramitā*. The chapter on *dhyānapāramitā* presents the radical thesis concerning words and their objects. In two sequels, we have sought to examine two set of verses of the chapter (e.g., 97-8 and 101-3) and see their implications for ethics. The view of language presupposed by Śāntideva derives from Nāgarjuna, and may be stated as follows: The terms of language arise because, from the continuous flux of experience, conceptualization (*prajñāca*) abstracts various segments and takes them to be separate entities and qualities, with

fixed natures. These then become focuses of attachment, one's own body, in particular. The language-constructs (*prajñapti*), labels for them, are inter-related in many ways. They gain their meaning from how they are used, in relationship to other concepts, not by referring to objective referents existing outside language. Yet while language determines how we experience the world, it does not bring things into existence; it too is a dependent, empty phenomenon. Nāgarjuna equates emptiness with the principle of co-arising. *Śūnyatā* is an adjectival quality of *dharmas* – not a substance – which composes them. It is neither a thing nor is it nothingness; rather, it refers to reality as incapable of ultimately being pinned down in concepts. The view, interestingly, is similar to the story told in modern day physics. Matter turns out to be a mysterious field on interaction, with 'particles' not being real separate entities, but provisional conceptual designations. The particles are called 'quarks', whose nature is bound up with the forces through which they interact. Nāgarjuna radicalizes the older Buddhist categories and undoes their unexamined pre-suppositions. Quite a lot of them are shared by Śāntideva in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

What role does *śūnyatā* play in the scheme of *pāramitās*? Is it not adventitious to the ethical view of the Bodhisattva path? Such has been the view of one *purvapakṣa*, who argues that as *mukti* from the human predicament was possible by cultivating a direct vision of the Four Noble Truths, what is the point of cultivating a vision of emptiness: *satya darśanato muktih śūnyatā darśanana kim* (IX. 41)? The question is interesting. The Mādhyamika rejoinder is that lest there should remain traces, subtle and potent, of egoity, talk of emptiness is intended as the antidote. The discourse is a spiritual therapy to help liberate people from constricting view points. It is always possible to subvert the Four Truths (*Mūla-madhyamakā-kārika*, chapter 24) if these were viewed as possessing *svabhāva*. If suffering had *svabhāva*, it would be causeless and eternal, and could never be brought to an end. If the Path had *svabhāva*, it could never be gradually developed in a person. Only the *śūnyatā* view makes spiritual development possible. One can understand the position with an analogy: the decimal number system would collapse without the quantity zero. The virtues become *pāramitās*

only as and when these are *informed* by *prajñā*. The *ārya satyas* of *dukkha*, *samudāya* and *mārga* are truths belonging to the domain of *samvṛti*, while *nirodha* alone points to *paramārtha*. When the moon is being pointed to, it makes no sense to catch the fingers.

Nāgārjuna's undoing the binary opposition between *samvṛti*, the worldly and the nirvānic goes a long way to neutralizing the two paradigmatic classes. In one sense, there is no region where these two types can overlap, since one type has a set of attributes that the other lacks. The attributes that mark the category of conditioned factors from the category of the unconditioned are known as *utpāda*, arising, *vyaya*, perishing, *sthitayanyathātva*, or enduring and altering. The character of the conditioned is referred to as impermanence, and a conditioned factor is defined as that which arises from a context of causes and conditions, *hetupratyaya*. The unconditioned is that which is cut off from a context of causes and conditions, untouched by change and showing no sign of arising or perishing. The presence of the marks of conditioning is the sign of the worldly, *samsāra*, and the absence of them is sign of the nirvānic. The unconditioned in its pure negativity represents the true character, *bhūtalakṣaṇa* of the conditioned. The unconditioned is said to be empty only as a negation of the conditioned, or the ultimate reality, *paramārtha*, of the conditioned. An appreciation of the truth of the unconditioned is a first course in the study of Buddhist ethics. The message runs clear through all the developments of Buddhist teaching, from the classical older dispensation to later Mahāyāna. Consider the following famous sentence: "There is an unborn, unbecome, unmade, un compounded; for if there were not this unborn, unbecome, unmade, un compounded, there would be apparent no escape from here that is born, become, made and compounded." Here the features are negative, the 'is' positive. Which of the two counts more? The talk of the extinction of individuality is not necessarily negative. Perhaps we have no vocabulary for the state of mind devoted by the term '*nirvāna*'. All conceptions of *nirvāna* are misconceptions. In talking about *nirvāna*, the Pali Canon puts with consummate clarity that once reaching the felicity of the station all paths of speech are abolished, since nothing is left that could be named.

*Nirvāna* is the *raison d'être* of Buddhism, and its ultimate justification. Somewhat so is *prajñā*, but the relationship between the two terms is quite problematic. Uncognizability by logical thought may be said to be a common mark of both. Emptiness is much the best known, but the occurrences of the term in the literature of the older dispensation had been sparse. Instead, impermanence was the central text. As an adjective *śunya* means ‘found wanting’, and refers to worldly things (cf. St. John of the Cross states: “The soul is conscious of a profound emptiness in itself”); and as a noun (*śunyatā*) inward freedom and refers to the negation of this world. It thus becomes a name for *nirvāna*, if only that lacks greed, hate and delusion. It should be a mistake to regard *śunyatā* as a purely intellectual concept. It is only as a sorteriological term that *śunyatā* overlaps with *nirvāna*.

*Prajñā*, as Śāntideva intends us to believe, is both logical as well as experiential. In its logical employment, the term is an interpretation of *pratītyasamutpāda* thesis, that objects of sense and knowledge are *hetupratyayādhinā*, and in this sense, *nairātmya*, and in its sorteriological, experimental, and meditational aspect, the term spells peace, *praśāmyati* (IX. 35). It is a breakthrough to the Unconditioned, it is as yet a part of the Path—at best, a doorway to the *sanctum*—the deep unshakable stillness of ineffable *nirvāna*, as some of the icons of the Buddha, in the manner of a paradox, disclose it by the enigmatic smile fleeting across the lips.

How are we to make sense of the chapter on *prajñāpāramitā* in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*? What is *bodhicaryā*? Nothing short of Buddhahood could be its aim or goal: *buddhatvārtham caryā yā sā bodhicaryā*. Śāntideva mentions the word *nirvāna*, as the state in which a bodhisattva passes into after having accomplished the virtues (IX. 38). The statement is decisive in respect of the relationship between the felicities, namely, *nirvāna*, *śunyatā* and *prajñā*. It also appears that *prajñā* is an explicit or implicit closure-marker in its discourse of felicity. It is beckoning *nirvāna* and also the motionless and ungraspable horizon. The *pāramitās*—including *prajñā*—point toward it, the object of Path-consciousness, a reality which can be attained by the Path. It is indeed a different story from what Wittgenstein tells in the last line of the *Tractatus Logico-*

*philosophicus*. Frank Ramsey had said about Wittgenstein's line that what you can't say you can't say, and you can't whistle it either. No such oblique ridicule should not be available in the context of Buddhist discourse of the supreme felicity. *Nirvāṇa*, *śūnyatā* and *prajñā* exist in the dynamics of Buddhist ideology up to a point, and the process of speaking about it leads up to silence, a silence within the discourse which creates their meaning as such.

What happens to time and history? The common image of *nirvāṇa* is the quenching of fire. The imagery of fire is built into the vocabulary of thought in which the concept of *nirvāṇa* exists. It has a temporal dimension, embodied in the verbs or verbal notions within the image: it is of fire *going out* or being *quenched*. The image contains in seed form the movement from suffering to resolution and closure in which the syntactic value of *nirvāṇa* or *prajñā* is to be found. The image sets the logic of the concept in motion, a journey through time to the *horizon* of the timeless and deathless *nirvāṇa*. The *nirvāṇa/śūnyatā/prajñā* appear to have semantic value in concepts and imagery, and syntactic value in their role as the concluding period of an endless story of human predicaments.

There is an utterance in the *Udāna* which asserts that *nirvāṇa* exists. It is argued that if there were no Unconditioned Elements, then there would no escape from the conditioned. Since the factors of the Eight-fold Path occur with *nirvāṇa* as their object, the escape from all the suffering is made known. We may elicit the form of the argument as follows: if and only *nirvāṇa* exists can the Path be efficacious in completely removing the defilements? Since it is agreed that the Path is efficacious, then *nirvāṇa* exists in the ultimate sense. The logical form of the argument is:

(i) if and only if X (*nirvāṇa*) exists, then Y (escape from *samsāra*) also exists;

(ii) Y exists;

(iii) therefore, X exists.

The symbolic form of this is: If  $x \rightarrow y$  &  $Ey \rightarrow x$ , which is valid. In another way of understanding, the argument is analogous to a Kantian transcendental deduction. One takes an existing phenomenon, Y, and asks, "what must be the case for Y to exist?"

The answer is that the existence of X must be assumed. The *Udāna* appears to put forth certain existential assertions about *nirvāna*, and implies that the existence (*atthibhāva*) of the unconditioned could be shown by reasoning (*yuttito*).

There is another aspect, i.e., the psychological perspective of the Path to attain *nirvāna*: “For one who is attached there is uncertainty; for the unattached there is no uncertainty. When there is no uncertainty there is tranquility; when there is tranquility there is no yearning; when there is no yearning... there is the end of suffering” (*Udāna*, tr. F. L. Woodward, in *Minor Anthologies*, vol. II, London, 1935). If we take the above two *Udāna* passages, the logical and the psychological, as connected sequences, we can notice the argument for the existence of *nirvāna* as the goal of the Path. The conception of *nirvāna* as the opposite of conditioned things runs through the entire expanse of Buddhist ethics and soteriology, and for one who makes the aspiration to himself become a Buddha, the conception becomes inescapable. What Śāntideva calls *sambodhi citta* (I. 36) intensifies the awareness to a degree of acuteness that can perhaps be hardly profaned.

Is there not a paradox underlying all this? The path to the goal cannot be said to cause the goal, since that would make it part of the conditioned universe from which liberation is sought; but at the same time the goal cannot be completely unrelated to the path to it. A general formal solution would be to hold that the path is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to attain the goal. It is not possible to realize *nirvāna* without the Path; but the Path, the fourth Noble Truth is a conditioned existent, part of the conditioned world, whereas *nirvāna*, the third Truth is the Unconditioned.

Can one desire *nirvāna*? If desire is the cause of all suffering, what about the desire for *nirvāna* itself? Doesn't *bodhicitta* involve aspiration for Buddhahood with an altruistic motivation? Of course, aspiration for *nirvāna* is not to desire it. Desire has a pejorative ring about it in the Buddhist discourse. Aspiration for *nirvāna* is a purposive action, and it is intentionally oriented toward its goal rather than desiring it. *Nirvāna* is not the kind of thing towards which affective states of *desire* (craving, *tanhā*) can be directed. In the Buddhist pejorative sense, desire cannot take *nirvāna* as its

object, although desire can be directed towards the *idea* of *nirvāna*, to the concept. But to understand the nature of *nirvāna* not as a concept is to understand what affective states can and cannot take it as their intentional object. It will be a categorical mistake to suppose that *nirvāna* can be desired in the manner in which the psychological term, *tanhā* is used, because the second Noble Truth looks back to the first, and *not* to the third. When a bodhisattva makes a resolution or expresses the aspiration to Buddhahood or *nirvāna*, the term used for that is *pranidhi* (*bodhipranidhicittaṃ* in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, I. 15). *Samkalpa* occurs in the second component of the Eight-fold Path. Neither of the two could be assimilated to or used for *desire* in the pejorative sense. To do so will amount to supplying an extra semantic context beyond that which is given to the concept of *nirvāna* or *prajñā* in the text. The Hindu term *mumukṣā* should offer a similar occasion for thought.

The concept of *bodhicitta* is interesting in regard to its source or origin. The path to *nirvāna* is a gradual development of virtue (*pāramitā*), meditative concentration, and insight into the emptiness of phenomena. The idea or notion of *Tathāgata-garbha* is often overlooked in the matter of its contribution to Mahāyāna thought. According to the Chinese tradition, Indian Mahāyāna thought consisted of the Madhyamaka, Yogācāra and Tathāgata-garbha schools. The Indian and Tibetan traditions did not count the latter strand of thought as a separate philosophical school; its ideas were in some ways intermediary between theirs, and they both drew on these ideas. But there is no denying the fact it made an important contribution to Mahāyāna thought.

The first word in the term *Tathāgata-garbha* means the ‘Perfect One’ or *Buddha*, while the second means either an embryo, or a womb or a container. *Tathāgata-garbha*, thus, means something like ‘embryonic Perfect One’ or ‘matrix of the Perfect One’. This ‘embryo’ is seen as existing within all living beings, indicating that, however deluded or defiled they are, they can mature into Buddhas. The *Tathāgata-garbha*, then, represents the ‘*Buddha* potential’ within all beings. Sources such as the *Tathāgata-garbha Sūtra* or the *Ratnagotra-vibhāga* or *Uttara-tantra*, etc., indicate that *Tathāgata-garbha* is complete with virtues, and it is an emptiness



which is itself full of possibilities, resplendent with the qualities of Buddhahood. It is *Tathāgata-garbha* which aspires for *nirvāna* (*Śrīmāla-devī simhanāda Sūtra*, 13). However, the intrinsically pure *Tathāgata-garbha* is obscured by adventitious defilements: greed, hatred, and delusion. The metaphor drives home the idea of a Buddha-image wrapped in tattered rags which has simply to be uncovered. It is a potential in need of cultivation.

In both Mādhyamikā and the Yogācāra is found the notion of the brightly shining *citta*. A classical *Sūtra* (*Anguttara Nikāya*, I. 10) states that the mind (*citta*) is brightly shining, but it is defiled by defilements which arrive. The Pali word for brightly shining is *pabbassara*, and should remind us at once that one of the *bhūmis* of a bodhisattva's attainment is called *prabhākari*. The notion of a brightly shining *citta* is a key to the *Tathāgata-garbha* concept, which, in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, came to be called as *bodhicitta*. The *Aṣṭasāhśrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (5-6) states that the thought of enlightenment is no thought, since by nature it is brightly shining, and that it is a state of no-mindedness (*acittatā*) which is beyond existence and non-existence. This equates the brightly shining *citta* with *bodhicitta*, which *Tathāgata-garbha* literature sees as arising when a person becomes aware of the *Tathāgata-garbha* within. The Mahāyāna is focused on bodhisattva, the one on the path to perfect Buddhahood, whose task is to compassionately help beings while maturing his or her own wisdom. In his wisdom or *prajñā*, he knows that there no 'beings', just fluxes of empty *dharmas*, but his *upāya kauśalya*, skilful means, enables him to reconcile this wisdom with his compassion (*karuṇā*). This urges him to work for the good of all beings, for such empty fluxes do experience 'themselves' as 'suffering beings'. This is the account we get in the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (Section 3, tr. and explained by Edward Conze, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1958). Wisdom aids compassion in a number of ways. It ensures that compassionate action is appropriate, effective, and not covertly self-seeking. It strengthens the feeling of solidarity with others, by insight into the 'sameness of beings': 'self' and 'others' being equally empty, there is no ultimate difference between them. (The *Dhyānapāramitā* chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* contains a



rich number of statements in this direction.) Compassion also aids wisdom's undercutting of self-centredness, by motivating a life of self-sacrifice and active service for others.

The Bodhisattva-path begins with the arising of the *bodhicitta*, the aspiration to strive for Buddhahood for its own sake, and for the sake of helping suffering beings. It is obvious that for this momentous event to occur, a person requires merit (*puṇya*) and knowledge, generated by moral and spiritual practice in the present and past lives, along with reflections on the sufferings of beings. After the arising of the *bodhicitta*, a person takes various vows (*prañidhāna*). Some are general vows: to overcome defilements, attain Buddhahood, and to save all beings; others may be to help beings in more specific ways. The vow to save all beings is made more credible and less overly ambitious by the notion of the *Tathāgata-garbha*, and non-egoistic by the notion that beings are not different from the bodhisattva. Such vows become a powerful autonomous force within the psyche.

The bodhisattva-path is practiced by developing a number of perfections or *pāramitās*, and progressing thorough several *bhūmis* or stages. The stages are described in such works as the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*, possibly by Asanga, and the *Daśa-bhūmika Sūtra*. They look back, in more than one way to the Eight-fold Path. We need not dwell upon the description of the stages or *bhūmis*, but some remarks may be made on a few of the ethically significant among them. In the first *bhūmi*, a bodhisattva concentrates on developing the perfection of charity or *dāna*. The merit or *puṇya* from such acts is dedicated to the future Buddhahood of himself and others. Śāntideva praises the transfer, (*parināmanā*) of merit in the final chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. He prays that, by the merit generated by writing the text, humans and other beings should be free from various afflictions and be endowed with morality, faith, wisdom and compassion. In one verse, he even prays that the sufferings of the world should ripen in him: that he should take on the evil deeds of others, not just give them his merit. In the second stage, a bodhisattva perfects moral virtue (*śīla*) till his conduct becomes spontaneously pure. In the third stage, he practices

*kṣānti*, aided by meditations on loving kindness and compassion. He develops great forbearance in adversity, avoids anger, and patiently perseveres in seeking to fathom the profound *Dharma*. In the fifth stage, the focus is on the perfection of *dhyāna*. The four Noble Truths are comprehended and the ability to move between *samvṛti* and *paramārtha* is developed. In the sixth stage *prajñā* is attained. A bodhisattva, at this stage, gains insight into *pratītyasamutpāda*, *anātmya*, *śūnyatā*. He *could* enter *nirvāṇa*, but his great compassion prevents him from doing so. By *prajñāparamitā* the previous perfections become transcendent, attaining completeness and full perfection. Whatever a bodhisattva does now is done in a total freedom from self-consciousness or ulterior motive. For example, in giving, he does not perceive either ‘giver’, ‘gift’, ‘recipient’ or ‘result’; for all dissolve in emptiness.

Loving kindness and compassion (*mettā*= *maitrī*, and *karuṇā*) are seen as part of the Path-factor of right-directed thought (*samyaksamkalpa*), and as outgrowths from generosity, aids to deepening virtue, and factors undercutting the attachment to ‘I’. They are also the first two of the four ‘immeasurables’ or divine *brahmavihāras*: the qualities which, when developed to a high degree in meditation, are said to make the mind ‘immeasurable’. *Maitrī* or loving kindness is the heartfelt aspiration for the happiness of beings, and is the antidote to hatred and fear. Compassion is the aspiration that beings become free from suffering, and it is the antidote to cruelty. Sympathetic joy (*muditā*) is joy at the joy of others, and is the antidote to jealousy and discontent. Equanimity (*upekṣā*) is an even-minded serenity towards beings, which balances concern for others with a realization that suffering is an inevitable part of being alive. It is the antidote to partiality and attachment.

Compassion is the root-motivation of a bodhisattva. It is a solemn commitment which expresses the compassionate urge to aid all beings. This is done by constant practice of the *pāramitās*. Though a bodhisattva develops these to the highest degree, they are also seen as appropriate for all those aspiring for *nirvāṇa*. The Buddha taught that ‘whoever wishes to take care of me should take care of the sick’ (*Vinaya Pitaka*, I. 301-2, tr. I. B. Honer, London, 1938).

Nāgarjuna's advice for his patron king was to cause the blind, the sick, the lowly, the protectorless, the wretched and the crippled equally to attain food and drink without interruption.

Buddhist ethics has the longest attention paid to cultivating social emotions. The reason for this is not far to seek. Social emotions have the other selves as their intentional object, and by cultivating them it is hoped that one would be able to escape egoism, if selfless renunciation is the essence of the ethical (also religions) life, then the imperatives of *brahmavihāras* should engender *ceto vimutti*. These are meant to regulate our attitude to other people, and aim at the development of friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy and impartiality. These have contemporary relevance. We live in a society in which the mutual relations of people are thrown into disorder. It can be rescued only by conscious and sustained effort. Traditionally we are accustomed to view the soul of man as essentially solitary, and it is held that the decisive spiritual victories are won in solitudes, not by jostling in the street. One might even argue that the Buddha won enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, alone, not occupied with social questions. The life of the spirit, encountering the deepest forces of reality holds life in society as somewhat secondary, if not entirely irrelevant. Nevertheless, Buddhism does not believe that our relations to others can be safely entrusted to either chance or metaphysical insight. Left to chance, the weeds of natural human malice would soon choke the frail benevolence, and if guided by metaphysical insight, aloofness might ensue. Why should one care to enter into a real relation with other individuals, when metaphysical insight tells us that separate selves or individuals do not really exist?

So, why opt for friendliness? It does not figure as one of the steps of the Eight-fold Path, nor even reckoned as one of the five cardinal virtues. Unlightened friendliness might lead to greed and degenerate into *rāga*, i.e., sensuous attachment, and exclusive partial affection which finds a privileged place for some rather than others. The English word 'love' has a bewildering variety of meanings. The Buddhist concept of *maitrī*, derived from *mītra*, is more properly friendliness, because it is held to be found in a friend. The definition of friendliness has remained the same throughout

Buddhist history. It is said to consist in bestowing benefits to others, is based on the ability to see their pleasant side, and results in the stilling of ill-will and malice.

The decisive question in estimating the ethical (= spiritual) value of friendliness is whether it can lead to true selflessness. The great Christian precept says that ‘you should love your neighbour as yourself’. What does the phrase ‘as yourself’ mean? The *Bhāgavad-Gītā* too extols *maitrī* on the basis of *ātmaoupamyena* (VI. 32) logic. What makes *maitrī* unlimited? In desiring or wishing *authentically* for others exactly the same happiness one desires for oneself, by sharing friendliness wholeheartedly and with all one’s. Buddhaghosa interprets this as meaning that a man should *identify* oneself with one, be they inferior or superior, be they friends, foes, or indifferent, that he should identify them with his own self, without making the distinction that they are other beings.

The argument is that love for oneself is to be held to indicate the level to which the love for others should be raised, and to constitute the measure and pattern of our love for others. It follows, paradoxically, that, in order to love others, one ought to love oneself as well. The natural man is often far from wishing well to himself. St. Augustine thought that self-love was so natural to us that a special commandment about it was unnecessary. If he did so, so did Kierkegaard as well, he should have been inferior in psychological insight to Buddhaghosa, and even to Spinoza and Tsong-kha-pa. It seems necessary, in the practice of meditation on *maitrī*, we should also develop friendliness towards ourselves, and fervently think: may I be happy and free from ill, may I be free from hatred... etc. People often hate themselves, and much of their hatred for others is a deflection or projection of self-hate. We feel inclined to agree with Aristotle when he said that only the wise man can love himself, and he alone, because he is wise. The bad man, on the other hand, being ever at strife with himself, can never be his own friend. Here we have the paradox of *maitrī*: self-love can be maintained only by becoming less intense and exclusive, more detached and impartial, a more acceptance of the contents of one’s own self. Our ability to love others depends on our duty to love ourselves. What, then, about the demand that we

should be indifferent to ourselves? On the lower stages of ethical development self-love is one of the decisive motives for the love of others, and only on the very highest is it left behind. *Maitrī*, then, becomes *anālamvana*, as it happens in the case of *karuṇā*.

The friendly man wishes other people to be happy; it makes others so much more pleasant to live with. He impedes anger, reflecting that a man's enemies are his best friends, and deserve his gratitude, and give him an opportunity to exhibit the virtue of forbearance. Friendliness is first taught as an intelligent method of self-seeking, for the reason that virtues, ethical or spiritual, remain empty words unless effective motives are mobilized on their behalf, and self-interest is the only motive which the ethically undeveloped can really appreciate.

Yet Buddhism acknowledges that at its higher reaches friendliness is quite selfless, it does not seek its own. Thomas a Kempis says, one who possesses the true and perfect charity does not seek himself in anything. But Christianity despairs of the possibility of achieving selflessness without divine intervention. *Agape* is supernaturally inspired. Buddhism tells the story a little differently. The inherent selfishness of human beings can only be broken by contact with *paramārtha satya*. *Sīla*, aided by *samādhi* and *prajñā* are necessary to transmute friendliness into 'selfless love'. The *dhyānas* cleanse friendliness of its exclusiveness and make it illimitable, *brahma*. It is the close connection with meditational discipline which gives to friendliness the detachment and aloofness. Otherwise love, improperly so-called, is just an excuse to satisfy the social instincts, and to drown anxiety by merging with the herd. True love requires the touch of truth, and truth has to be found in the solitude of meditation.

Hence there is a link between *prajñā* and *maitrī*. We live in world of false appearances, *samvṛti*, where I myself seem to be surrounded by other persons. In actual truth I have no self, nor have they. All that exists is an incessant flow of impersonal *dharmas*. *Maitrī* properly so-called, operates on the plane of *prajñā*, it is selfless within, and also transcends the false appearance of a self in others. As *prajñā* is the ability to contemplate *dharmas*, *maitrī* as selfless love is dependent on *prajñā*.

*Karuṇā* and *muditā* belong together. One participates in the sufferings, and also in the happiness of others. *Karuṇā* makes the heart tremble and quiver at the sight and thought of the sufferings of other beings. Unable to bear the sufferings of others, one strives to lead them away from ill, and it is based on seeing the helplessness of those overcome by suffering, and results in abstention from harming others. We suffer along with other people and, unable to endure their suffering, make efforts to make them happier. *Karuṇā* is a virtue which uproots the wish to harm others. It makes people sensitive to the sufferings of others and causes them to make these sufferings so much their own that they do not wish to further increase them. The compassionate individual feels that the harm done to others is harm alone to himself. And that is naturally avoided. Left to itself, the virtue of compassion may degenerate into gloom. It is quite possible that if we identify ourselves with all the pain of the world, with all its frustrations, miseries and calamities, we may be threatened with irremediable melancholia. Why then, is, *karuṇā* placed before *muditā*? Is it easier to achieve? Experience tells us that to the natural man the suffering of his fellow-creatures is hardly repellent; at times it attracts him. It could be that *karuṇā* is closely allied to cruelty. People often derive pleasure from contemplating the suffering of others. The compassionate and the cruel are sensitive to the suffering of others. The only difference between them is that the compassionate derives pain, while the cruel ones derive pleasure from what they see. The division between pleasure and pain is also not unambiguous. Masochistic pleasure is an instance. Keeping the human capacity for self-deception, our true motives can rarely be ascertained with any degree of certainty. It is possible that a man is secretly drawn to the calamities of the world and to derive—unknown to himself—a hidden satisfaction from gloating over them, which he genuinely believes to be actuated by pity. When Buddhism insists that *maitrī* should precede *karuṇā*, the reason is largely non-arbitrarily psychological. *Maitrī* purifies the heart of hatred and ill-will, both manifest and latent.

*Muditā* or sympathetic joy is expected to overcome the negative side of compassion, namely, despondency and cruelty. *Muditā* sees the well-being condition of others, is glad about it, and shares their

happiness. Despite our misanthropic natural inclinations, *homo homini lupus*, we should welcome the happiness of our fellowmen more than their misery. *Muditā* is the concept of generous admiration for good fortune of others, of achievement that goes beyond our own. Though rarely admitted, in the deeper layers of their mind, people harbour a definite aversion to dwelling on the happiness of others. Envy and jealousy are strong and deep-seated counterforces. We jealously compare our lot with that of others, and grudge them the good fortune which eludes us. Even one's spiritual pretensions may militate against feeling sympathy with the happiness of others, and to look upon it with a mixture of derision and pity. The fact remains that to rejoice with the happiness and prosperity of others requires a rare spiritual perfection.

*Muditā* has another dimension. There is and can well be spiritual happiness which evokes sympathetic joy. Mahāyāna recommends dwelling lovingly on the great achievements of spiritual heroes, be they Buddhas, Bodhisattvas or saints. *Muditā* in this dimension lifts us above the negativities of compassion, and enables us to share to some extent in the victory of the spiritual heroes. To sympathize with the happiness of the saints anticipates the stages of bliss, and helps us to regain the zest and courage to persevere.

The higher levels of *muditā* prepare us for *upekṣā*. The term, etymologically, means 'to overlook' that which does not concern one. *Upekṣā*, with an eye on the Buddhist categories and virtues, can be said to have different meanings. No one term would be enough to capture its richness. *Upekṣā* applies to neutral feelings, which are neither pleasant nor unpleasant, to an attitude of serene unconcern. This is described as *cittasamatā* or unwavering sameness of thought, not losing its self-identity. It is also zest, undirected towards any object. The meditator remains mindful and in full possession of himself. Again, *upekṣā* is *evenmindedness* towards all conditioned things. Finally, it is equanimity of the saint who never abandons his natural state of purity when presented with either desirable or undesirable objects. *Upekṣā* is preceded by intelligent reflection, which is absent in the case of the dull *indifference* of a foolish person. As the fourth of the *brahmavihāras*, *upekṣā* is an attitude of impartiality having living beings for its object. It removes aversion

(*pratigha*) to them as well as the desire to win their approval. It has the advantage of permitting the continuance of undisturbed quiet calm within oneself. *Upekṣā* is the antidote to both ill-will and to sensuous greed. This impartiality results from two intellectual achievements: seeing the equality in all beings, who as *beings* are all essentially the same, i.e., non-existent, and then ignoring the effect which beings have on oneself, and considering the reason why they act as they act and endure what they endure. This may be called a moral interpretation of *pratītya-samutpada*, Śāntideva expresses the point in VI. 31-33 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. The insight leads to an understanding that whatever is so because it must be, that everyone must manage his own affairs, and that no one can discharge him from this responsibility. In consequence, the moral aspirant becomes a disinterested onlooker of the social scene and does not busy himself with events over which he has no actual influence. The *brahmavihāras* outline a graded training of social behaviour. The highest possible point is the achievement of an impartial non-interference. Śāntideva puts the state of impartiality in connection of *kṣāntipāramitā* in the following verse:

*Yadyasteyeva pratīkāro daurmanasyena tatra kim,  
Atha nāsti pratīkaro daurmanasya tatra kim.*

(VI. 10). Why be unhappy about something, if it can be remedied? And what is the use of being unhappy about something, if it cannot be remedied?

Does the cultivation of the social emotions and attitudes become a-social on reaching the point of perfection? The question does not admit of an easy answer straight away. Conclusions in Buddhism are based on quite definite meditational experience, and call for positive appraisal. Apropos of the teaching that *saṃsāra* and *nirvāna* are one, it is the defilements that are rejected, but *saṃsāra* is not abandoned, as Asanga says in the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* (IX. 1). From self-interest a bodhisattva has *prajñā*, so the defilements have no power over him, and out of concern for others he has *mahākaruṇā* and does *not* cease to live among the beings who need him. When the point is reached where *saṃsāra* and *nirvāna*,



both equally empty, are just the same, then one sees no reason to either leave *saṃsāra* or to obtain *nirvāna* distinct from it. It is in the practice of the six *pāramitas* that a bodhisattva learns to lean on nothing whatever, since he carried them out in a spirit of complete disinterestedness and inward freedom.

The virtues and social emotions get on a new emphasis in Mahāyāna. *Maitrī* and *karuṇā* become cardinal virtues. *Karuṇā* impels a bodhisattva as strongly as *prajñā*, and provides the motive why, not content with personal achievement of *nirvāna*, does he strive to advance to Buddhahood in insuperable (*anuttara*) and complete (*sambodhi*) modalities. There need not be an opposition between *maitrī* and *karuṇā* on one side, and *prajñā*, the highest virtue, on the other. The conflict between *prajñā* and the social emotions is only apparent. There are three stages of ethical ascent: the thought of enlightenment, *bodhicitta*, is intentional, and has beings for its object, *sattvā lambana*. After having further progress a bodhisattva has *dharmas* for its object, *dharmā lambana* and, finally, shall have no object at all, *anā lambana*. With those whose hearts overflow with friendliness and compassion which just radiate outward, and who search for something or somebody to give expression to the ‘love’ that is within them, their ‘love’ then does not owe its existence to the ‘persons’ on whom it is directed, but to an inward condition of the heart which is one of the manifestations of ethical maturity. *Muditā* is enriched with the altruistic component called *parināmnā* or dedication of merit. This is a corollary to a bodhisattva’s compassion. Even after he has solved his own personal problems, he continues to do good deeds. The merit from his acts of no use to him, and he transfers it to others, thereby facilitating their enlightenment.

*Upekṣā* is defined as including *maitrī* and *karuṇā*. It entails the desire that comes of its own accord to do good to all beings without the least craving for their love. It may be hard to believe, but paradox is inseparable from statements that can be made about selfless behaviour. A bodhisattva practices compassion, but is not given to petty kindnesses; he practices friendliness but is not given up to attachments; he is joyous in heart but ever grieves over the

sight of suffering beings. He practices indifference but never ceases benefiting others. Paradoxes such as these cannot be translated into the ordinary logic of common sense, because that is based on self-centred experiences which are here set aside.

*Upekṣā* is not a purely intellectual concept, it is a soteriological term. The moment it is detached from its practical basis it becomes a travesty of itself. The manifold meanings of it can be apprehended only in so far as it unfolds itself in the actual process of transcending greed, hate and delusion, in short, ethical alienation, through wisdom.

What, after all, is *bodhicaryā*? It is *Imitatio Buddhae*, to adapt Thomas a Kempis' phrase, *Imitatio Christus*. There is an ontological side of the teaching of the *pāramitās*. They are intended to produce a new type of a person, a bodhisattva. *Bodhicaryā* is described as *buddhātvārtham caryā yā sā bodhicaryā*, or *buddhatvārtham caryā yā sā bodhicaryā*. What is needed is a total transformation, a new birth, of the personality. This cannot take place without the emergence of such cardinal virtues as faith, vigour, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. In passing, a few points may be made about faith or *Śraddhā* as virtue. Its importance in Buddhist thinking is undeniable. *Śraddhā* or faith is said to be the seed without which the plant of ethico-spiritual insight cannot start growing. It is much more than the acceptance of unproved beliefs, and is made up of intellectual, volitional, emotional and social components. Aśvaghosa's *Mahāyānaśraddhotpādaśāstra* underscores the awakening of *śraddhā* as a prerequisite of Mahāyāna life in ethics. *Prajñā* knows that which *śraddhā* takes on trust and longs to know them. A long time elapses before *prajñā* becomes strong enough to support insight into the nature of reality. Its objects include belief in *karma* and rebirth, such teachings as *pratīyasamutpāda*, *anātmaya*, *śūnyatā* and *nirvāna* as the final way out. If faith consists in striving after realizing these by concentrating on the powers of the mind, it should imply a resolute and courageous act of will. The opposites of this aspect of faith are timidity, cowardice, fear, wavering and a mean calculating mentality. Faith combines the steadfast resolution that one *will* do a thing with the self-confidence that one *can* do

it. Śāntideva elaborates these psychological points in his chapter on *vīryapāramitā* in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

As a virtue, *śraddhā* can be cultivated, though a person's capacity for faith could vary with his constitution and social circumstances, which would either foster it or generate unbelief. Our present-day society tends to promote a distrust for tradition. It puts a premium on intellectual smartness, and faith is taken as a sign of a weak head and lack of intellectual integrity. Prestige of technology, the lure of a high standard of living and the disappearance of institution of uncontested authority are enemical to cultivation of faith as a virtue and moral life of self-denial and altruism. Hence, *śraddhā* remains to be strengthened and built up by self-discipline. It is a matter of character as to how the inescapable doubts are tackled. Doubts are effectively silenced not by argumentation, but by purifying oneself to such an extent that one becomes worthy of greater knowledge. The balance of the powers of the mind is essentially a Buddhist virtue. Only *prajñā* can teach what is worth believing. The ethical writings of Buddhism warn us that faith and vigour, *śraddhā* and *vīrya*, when driven to excess, and must be restrained by their counterparts, *prajñā* and *dhyāna*. Mindfulness should be strong everywhere. The virtue of mindfulness, which Śāntideva calls, *samprajanyarakṣana* (Chapter V, *Bodhicaryāvatāra*) or guarding awareness, or even alertness, protects the mind from excitedness and indolence. The mind finds refuge in mindfulness and mindfulness is its protector. *Samyaksmṛti* is the seventh factor of the Eight-fold Path. In the *Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra* too the Buddha admonishes those around him in the closing hours of his life to achieve the goal with never-failing vigilance. In Buddhism, mindfulness occupies a central position, almost a distinguishing mark of the way, the third of the *pāramitās*, and on occasions, as in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, almost equated with Buddhism itself.

The function of the virtue of mindfulness and its theoretical assumptions may be briefly mentioned. The mind is assumed to consist of a depth which is calm and quiet, and a surface which is disturbed. The surface is perpetually in agitation and turmoil. Even modern psychology understands the bottom of the mind

to be the still centre. This deep calm is, however, overlaid with turbulence. In Buddhism, mindfulness and concentration are the two virtues concerned with the development, or reconquest of inward calm. Mindfulness, says Śāntideva, is *cittarakṣā* (V. 1); it consists of the measures taken to protect the inward calm, to keep watch at the boundary of the tranquil domain from trespassers: the sensuous passions, afflictions, *kleśas* associated with the ego and discursive thinking. Mindfulness finally deepens into *samādhi*, the final component of the path. There occurs a great shift in attention to subaltern realms, an increased introversion. Those who are concentrated regain the inward calm. *Samādhi* bestows a certainty greater than anything the senses can teach. It is a precondition of *prajñā*. Śāntideva's chapter in *dhyānapāramitā* precedes that on *prajñā*. He who is concentrated knows, sees what really is. Just as *samyaksmṛti* and *samādhi* assume a duality in the mind, between its calm depth and its excited surface, *prajñā* too postulates a duality in all things, between their surface and their depth, *saṃvṛti* and *paramārtha*. Reality is covered up by the commonsense appearance of objects, and *prajñā* enables us to discard the deceptive appearance, to penetrate to the true reality of *dharmas* as they are in themselves. The unfaltering penetrating concerns itself exclusively with that true reality on contact with which the meaning and conduct of life are held to depend. The judgements of value are not just subjective opinions, which vary with the moods of people, or their tastes or social conditions, but they are, in Buddhism, rooted in the structure and order of objective reality itself. If the value of life depends on contact with a high level of reality, it becomes important to ascertain what reality is in its own-being (*svabhāva*), and to be able to distinguish that from the lesser realities of comparative fiction which constitute our normal world of experience. *Prajñā* is regarded as the highest virtue, because it is ignorance (synonymously, delusion, folly, confusion and self-deception), and not sin, that is the root evil. Amongst the connotations of *prajñā* given in the *Dhammasangani*, two of them stand out: *Prajñā* as virtue is strength, because ignorance cannot dislodge it, and it is sword-like in cutting through defilements,

affective, conative and intellectual. It pervades the entire Path, beginning with *samyakdṛṣṭi* to *samādhi*. Prajñā alone can set us free.

Having stated thus far an overview of intentions and ideas in the context of my understanding and appreciation of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, I have a feeling of fulfilment. I have taken no sides, and ignored the *Theravāda*-Mahāyāna divide. I have taken an organic view of Buddhism, and have found grounds enough for maintaining it. I have sought to locate the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* in the cartography of Buddhist moral thought, across centuries of its development and refinement. I have not concerned myself with epistemology, nor ontology in particular, though I do believe that in the context of Buddhism, along with soteriology, they go hand in hand. Again, epistemology and ontology cannot perhaps be distinguished, in the context of Buddhism, in the modern manner. Estrangement from reality, epistemology taking the place of ontology is the mark of much of European thought. Ontology differentiates between reality and appearance, and epistemology between valid and invalid knowledge. Since William of Occam, who set the tone for all later phases of modern philosophy, things by themselves have no relations to one another, and a mind—unrelated to them—establishes all relations between them. Ontology now has lost its objects and all questions concerning being *qua* being seems to be merely verbal. Science does not concern itself with the things themselves, but with their signs and symbols, and its business now is to give an account of appearances, *salvare apparentis*, without bothering about the existence *in esse et secundum rem* of its hypothetical constructions. As a result, thinkers seek successful fictions, and ‘reality’ has become a mere word. The worthwhileness of life has no scientific foundation, because ‘science’ is said to have no eye for quality, but only for quantity.

Aspects of Buddhist thought declare their estrangement from reality and look for the *dharma* element itself. To Nāgarjuna, such views indicate a serious logical flow. In commending Buddhism to the present age, some scholars have overstressed its rationality and its kinship with modern science. On the basis the Buddha’s remark that none should accept anything on his authority alone, but examine and test it for oneself, and accept it only when one has

oneself cognized, seen and felt it, enthusiasts appear to conscript the Master as a supporter of British empiricism. Many protagonists of such views may not be mistaken in so far as they honestly intend, not fashionably indeed, but they often forget what width and maturity of insight would be needed to *know* that the decisive factor in every event is a *moral* one, or that *nirvāna* means the end of all *ill* or *duhkha*. The qualifications are existential and not merely intellectual, and the terms are numinous and multivalent. To ignore this aspect of Buddhist discourse would generate thoughtlessness and linguistic insensitivity. The multivalence of terms in Buddhist discourse may be due to the fact that they were meant for discoursing with like-minded people, who understood one another's mental processes. When they heard these terms they simply *knew* what was meant. A soteriological doctrine like Buddhism becomes *philosophy* when its intellectual content is explained to outsiders, and might involve a huge loss of substance. The terms *śunya* and *upekṣā* may be held out as examples. *Anātmya* is another. The two pieces elsewhere in this book on *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (VII. 97-8 and 101-3) should illustrate the predicament. An outsider's criticism from the idea as if a Buddhist thinker like Śāntideva were an European analyst is often unfair, and serves no serious purpose in understanding a text that does not belong to the milieu. Nor is it a rewarding task. A text discloses its secret only to a wooing hermeneutics.

I have used mostly Sanskrit terms because I feel comfortable with them, and the Pali ones only occasionally. The Tibetan terms are bought in for their semantic exactitude. I only wish I could make a greater use of them.

My text is composed in the form of essays, the topics being selected from the extensive area of Buddhist moral thought and psychology. But, as I am inclined to believe, the focus on virtue ethics with reference to *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, has never been bedimmed. On every occasion the text is mapped in the context of kindred ethical thought at home and abroad. No significant thought occurs in a vacuum. The interrelationship between philosophical traditions and human beings is itself an exciting affair. Provincialism in the matter of knowledge and inquiry demonstrates either ignorance

or prejudice. If traditions are juxtaposed and studied together, it becomes easier to explore the possibility that there are philosophical positions and arguments that are truly universal. This possibility is one in favour of which I myself incline.

To many readers, my pointing to similarities between Buddhist thought and Western moral thought may be disquieting. But I have taken them as living in some intellectual neighbourhood. They are often a complementary pair, and they pair well with other creative activities, literature in particular and art in general. To the extent that these activities are distinguishable from one another, they flow in and out of one another like streams that join, mingle their waters for a time, then diverge, and then mingle again. In human thought their stringent separation is artificial. A philosopher cannot be merely individual, Indian, Greek or German, or other traditions or subtraditions cannot belong solely to their geographical, temporal, or human limits. Even though every individual human being, philosophy, and philosophical subtradition and tradition is bound to a local context, every individual, philosophy, subtradition, and tradition is also bound to humanity at large. This is obviously because human thought everywhere, like human perception, exhibits similar capacities and is responsive to similar needs. To be similar is *never* to be just the same. Every philosopher is an unrepeatable individual who reasons within a unique subtradition at a distinct moment of historical development. This important point had not been profaned while I was in the company of Śāntideva.

One who opts for treading the path of virtues, after having woken up to No-Self and generated the wisdom-heart, will have to balance oneself delicately between dispassion and compassion, and keep prepared to undergo a change arrived at by meditative concentration and intellectual insight. This, in short, is the story. But it may be granted that a bodhisattva is no less a person who wants to emulate a distant ideal; he always one of us, in our midst.

The message of compassion that such Buddhist works as the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* emit is an ontology of hope in a world where the centre cannot hold and things fall apart. I would like to recall a scene in Bhishma Sahani's novel *Tamas*. Iqbal Singh and his wife Jasbir Kaur are fleeing, as their house has been set on fire in

course of communal disharmony by the rioting hordes. The couple is unaware of the fate of their children, but remain firm in their belief in the universal message of welfare to all and everywhere. Their pet *mynā* was set free before they left the house. The *mynā* continues to fly along with them even after being freed from its cage, and repeating the message of love contained in the supplicatory prayer of Sikh religion.

It has been a matter of great satisfaction to me that this book is completed when celebrations to mark 2550 years of the Buddha's *parinirvāna* are being held. What could be a more auspicious occasion for bringing to a close a project on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*?





# Part I

- I.1 Śāntideva and the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*
- I.2 Buddhist Ethics: Morality and Theory
  - I.2.1. Opening Ideas: *Bodhicaryāvatāra*
  - I.2.2. From *Bodhicitta* to *Prajñāpāramitā*
  - I.2.3. Buddhist Virtues: *Pāramitās*
  - I.2.4. The Bodhisattva and his Career
  - I.2.5. The Motivational Context of *Maitrī* and *Karuṇā*



## Śāntideva and the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*

Śāntideva is a hallowed name in the Mahāyāna Buddhist discourse, and his work, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, is a philosophical poem, just as the Bhagavad Gītā, and the theme of the poem is the ethicized consciousness of a bodhisattva, the one who vows to dispel the misery of the human kind, and for that noble purpose alone he wishes to attain Buddhahood.

Śāntideva, a scholar and a poet, belongs to early eighth century. Among his works, *Śikṣāsamuccaya* and *Sūtrasamuccaya* are of compendious nature, collections of Buddhist teaching and discourses. But the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is a classic, and it is incorporated in the Tibetan Buddhist canon, the *Tangyur*. It was translated into Tibetan by Sarvajñadeva and revised by Dharmasrībhadra and Sumatikīrti. The enormous authority that the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* enjoyed in the Mahāyāna lineage in Tibet can be seen from the fact that citations from it could be found in the works of the Dalai Lamas, beginning from the first to the present fourteenth.

Śāntideva was born as a prince in Gujarat, and was for some time a teacher at the Nalanda University. As the legend goes, he disappeared in a cloud of spiritual ecstasy.

The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is a composition in *anustubha* metre, and there are 913 *Kārikās* divided into ten chapters. Of these, the first two chapters—*Bodhicittānuśānā* and *Pāpadeśanā*—reflect the Mahāyāna devotionism. The first chapter is a hymnal in praise of *bodhicitta*, compared to the mythic wish-fulfilling jewel. It is an actual revolutionary event which occurs in the trainee bodhisattva's mind, an event which is a fundamental switch in the orientation from self-concern to concern for others, to compassion. The implications

of such a thing occurring, in effect the *real* deep wish and intention to be kind in every way to all without discrimination, and the importance of preserving it are hymned by Śāntideva. There is also a distinction made between really wishing to travel somewhere and actually undertaking the journey. Śāntideva notes, so too we can distinguish two types of *bodhicittotpāda*, awakening Mind; the Mind resolved on Awakening; and the Mind proceeding towards Awakening (I: 15-16). The second chapter is frankly devotional and confessional; there is prayer for pardon and protection. The trinity mentioned in the chapter is a little different from the usual one. Refuge is sought in the Buddhas of the past, the assembly of *bodhisattvas*, and in the *Dharma*. The act of taking refuge in the jewel Triumvirate (*tri-ratna*) is a serious matter. It is a matter of deep commitment. In the point of fact, it is *dharma*, which is the actual object of refuge. The members of the assembly of the bodhisattvas are one's companions on the path (*mārga*) and the Buddha is said to be the teacher who shows one the path. A deep commitment to *dharma* is a precondition for developing faith in the Buddha and the *Sangha*. In the *Pramānvārtika*, Dharmakīrti has argued that *Dharma* (i.e., the four Noble Truths and all that they imply) can only be the basis of one's recognizing the Buddha as a genuine teacher, and only secondarily refuge may be sought in the *sangha*, the unbroken continuum of the travelers on the path. And, more importantly, the Buddha's teaching is reliable, grounded as it is on *both* reasoning and valid personal experience. The point is that one will have to first appreciate the truth of *Dharma*, and only on that basis recognize the Buddha as a teacher. This is a complex process of reasoning. One is actually required to proceed from our own conviction in the reliability of the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths. When we have gained personal insight into the truth of these, we develop a deep conviction in the reliability of the Buddha as a teacher. Taking refuge in the Three Jewels, therefore, derives its full meaning from the act of taking refuge in the *Dharma*.

Śāntideva speaks in the first person, and his confessional mode of speaking makes all the difference. He devotes the second chapter towards disclosure of evil or sin. Early Buddhism has

three basic defilements or afflictions (*kleśa*): lust, hatred, and delusion. They are man's animal nature, they are not simply the absence of good, but a positive defilement. The *Dhammapada* has an entire discourse (*pāpavaggo*) on the evils, and warns not to take them lightly. A fool becomes full of evil if he gathers it little by little. Śāntideva is quite frank in admitting his failures in the past, but vows to transcend them by cultivating an altruistic attitude (II. 9). In Buddhism, the defilements are called poisons, the residues of sin. There are six universal defilements, namely, delusion (*moha*), heedlessness (*pramāda*), laziness (*kausīdya*), lack of faith (*āśraddha*), torpor (*styāna*), arrogance (*auddhatya*). Lack of shame for oneself (*āhrīkyā*) and lack of consciousness for others (*anapatrāpyā*) are both universally unvirtuous. Vāsubandhu details these in his *Abhidharmakośa*. Āsanga talks of two destinies, *sugati* and *durgati*. The former is the fruit of the training in morality *adhiśila*, and the fruit of violation of morality is called *adhiśila-vipatti*. Śāntideva too, in the context of mindfulness (V. 27-28), looks back to the distinction. The Buddha's teaching is a therapy, and is intended to counteract and eliminate the poison of defilement. He is the great healer. This, of course, is a Mahāyāna notion, and Śāntideva invokes it too (X. 57).

Here is a point that deserves to be noted. In the Buddhist meditation theory, the defilements are like weeds in the mind. The visible tops of the weeds are removed by calming the mind or *śamatha*, a concentrated meditation on the defilement's opponent, (e.g., on *maitrī* to counteract hate or *dveṣa*). It is capable of temporarily displacing the defilement from the field of consciousness, thus cutting off merely the top of the weed. Its roots are extirpated by insight or *prajñā* led up to by the training in discerning the real. Thus *prajñā* came to be symbolized as a sword, sometimes a fire. It is prevalently associated with vision, *vipaśyanā*, and is said to see voidness *śūnyatā*, i.e., seeing an entity as it really is devoid of its mental impositions, both *parikalpita* and *paratantra*.

These, of course, belong to the vocabulary of *Yogācāra*, and yet have found wide berths in the Mahāyāna mode of apprehending and describing the real in terms of the inner differentiations within the

domain of *samvṛti*. What is of moment is that Buddhism recognizes both intellectual and affective vices, and defilement of the either sort is as unwholesome as the other. Śāntideva mentions this point with an edge of remorse for his past and hope for the future (II. 29). We may note in passing that apropos of the Yogācāra theory of the mind the defilement is figured by the metaphor of a stained mirror, or one that has collected dust on its surface. The metaphor suggests that it could be wiped off or washed by moral discipline and philosophical vision, *śīla* and *prajñā* moral and intellectual virtues.

The Buddhist way seeks to bring into light the dark forces of the mind. It is hoped that when they are examined, the evil withers when so exposed. But it must not be supposed that defilements cease merely by being seen. They are to be seen with the kind of eye which sees the void. The Buddhist masters, Dharmakīrti, Āsanga and Vāsubandhu, agree in allowing *avidyā*, the deception about the meaning of reality (*tattvārtha*), to be chief opponent to insight or *prajñā* which understands *nairātmya*. All this may be rather technical, but necessary, nonetheless, for appreciating the Buddhist position which holds that vices arising from the intellectual dimension of man's being are as pernicious as those from his affective life. Enwrapped and blinded by *avidyā*, the nescience entrenchment, we tend to miss the meaning of reality, and get invaded by the three impurities of attachment (*rāga*) hatred (*dvesa*) and delusion (*moha*). The first step towards their elimination is the calming of the mind, and finally by *prajñādrsti* (IV. 46). Śāntideva says, 'When forsaken by the eye of wisdom, deluded conceptions are dispelled from the mind, they will have no place to go and injure us'. But he admits it too that the flesh is weak, even if the spirit be strong, and hence the remorse (*paścāttāpena tāpitah*, II. 29) for having strayed away in the past. It is the resolve not to commit the mistakes in the future that makes a confession worth its name, and Śāntideva leaves us in doubt about that (II. 35).

The third chapter, *Bodhicittaparigraha*, opens with the note of altruism: *anumodé pramodena sukham tisthantu dukkhitāh*. May the suffering ones dwell in joy (III. 1). Here occurs the noun *anumodanā*, and it is crucial for our understanding. It derives from

the verbal root *mud*, which means to lengthen, and derivatively, to make someone happy, and also approve of something. It could also be taken in the sense of assenting to an imperative, the neustic part as it is analyzed by R. M. Hare in his *The Language of Morals*. However, should one care to take into account the Mahāyāna confessional ritual itemized in the *Dharmasaṃgraha*, we notice *anumodanā* occurring in the sense of sympathetic joy, and that Śāntideva follows the pattern at more than one instance. We notice *anumodanā* occurring in the sense of sympathetic joy (recall *muditā* of the *brahmavihara*).

What is the joy for? It is made clear in III. 2-4. The joy is three-fold: in the gathering of virtue, in the Awakening of the Buddhas, and in developing an Awakening Mind. Together it is called *Bodhitraya*. All these three are paths of virtue and their practice leads to merit or *punya*. To the extent they teach the method of alleviating human suffering, they are instrumental in conferring joy on the sentient beings, technically called *sattas*. In this context, it should be noted that Śāntideva, in speaking of the *Triratna* or the *Refuge*, does not mention the *Sangha*. Instead, he mentions the assembly of the bodhisattvas (II. 26) as the guardians of the moral aspiration, and embodiments of compassion.

In point of fact, Śāntideva's chapters II and III complement to each other, forming parts of one confession ritual. *Pāpadeśanā* and *punyānumodanā*, confession of evil and commendation of virtue, should go hand in hand. When he prays that may he be made capable of assuaging the sufferings of all beings (III. 6) or may he become the medicine, the physician and also the nurse for all sick beings in the world (III. 7) or during the aeon of famine may he change himself into food and drink to clear away the pain of thirst and hunger of those afflicted, (III. 9) or may he become a treasure for those who are poor and destitute (III. 10), and he resolves to give up his body as well as his virtues, without any sense of loss for the sake of benefiting all (III. 11), he gives the secret of attaining the state of sorrowlessness: by giving up everything, sorrow is transcended (III. 12): *sarvatyāgasca nirvānam*. In giving expression to the feeling of altruism, Śāntideva attains such a height as a nobler one is hardly to come by elsewhere.



These prayers prepare us for the supreme act of charity, *dāna*, as it is understood in Buddhism. The usual statement of Buddhist virtues opens with *dāna-pāramitā*, but Śāntideva does not follow the pattern. On the contrary, he mentions it in V. 9 to bring out its spiritual significance. He defines it in the *Kārikā* that follows (V. 10) and says that it is giving away of everything along with the thought of its fruit for the sake of all beings. Charity is no physical act; it verifies an act of the mind, *cittamevatu*. Tsong-kha-pa explains the point in his *Lam Rim Chen Mo*, quoting Śāntideva, and says that the charity is not the giving of materials to others in a concrete sense: it is the volition of giving. Charity as a *pāramitā* arises from the complete making part of one's nature the mentality of consignment to sentient beings. Even for complete Enlightenment, the virtues will have to be consigned. This is what constitutes the theme of Śāntideva's final chapter, entitled *parināmanā*. One should cut off the covetous grasping towards the body, possessions, and roots of virtues as all belonging to one's own wealth, and should tie one's resolve to others and give those away. There can be such a resolve when the state of mind is meditational. In Mahāyāna, the practice of consignment becomes a way of approaching non-self (*anātman*) through non-self-belonging (*anātmīya*).

It is the sense of mine that comes under fire in Buddhist moral criticism. The first person form of verbs used for vows (as in the refuge performatives, *gacchāmi*, I go) are not dislocated. The *Dhammapada* (V. 15) suggests that only the fool sells himself into spiritual slavery. Condemnation of pride is one of the characteristics of Buddhist moral discourse. The *SamyuttaNikāya* has the account of one who was nicknamed *mānattbaddha* or pride-stiff. *Māna*, which is the usual word for pride has its perverse kind in *mithyāmana* (the other forms are mentioned in Vāsubandhu's *Abhidhamakośa*, V. 10). Pride originates with *asmimāna*, "I am", and grows pretentiously, into 'mine'. One of the most telling passages in this regard occurs in the *Anguttara-Nikāya*, where the Buddha tells Sariputra that toward the body together with its set of perceptions there should be no clings of 'I', 'mine', or pride. A training such as this is a pathway of the liberation by mind (*cetas*), and finally by insight or *prajñā*. To see one's possessions as they really are is to realize that

they are not mine, ‘I am not this’, ‘this is not self’. To think *etam mama*, this is mine, is to be in the grip of craving. To think *eso aham asmi*, I am this is to be in the grip of pride, and to think *eso me attā*, this is my my self, is to be in the grip of wrong views. It is a requirement of altruism that whatever one has or accumulates, be it material possessions or spiritual merits, *punya*, will have to be put at the service of others.

Śāntideva has several terms to connote altruism. They are used interchangeably, e.g., *hitāśaya* (I. 21), *parāthāśaya* (I. 25), *sattvahita* (II. 9), etc. A bodhisattva goes out of his way to alleviate the misery of others, unsolicited, *avyāpāritasādhu bodhisattvah* (I. 31). What does this suggest? Mahāyāna does not allow a bodhisattva to think that the sufferings of the sentient beings are their retribution for past sins. Thus, he resolves to relieve their sufferings as though he could do it. A perusal of the tenth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* would show that Śāntideva, to an extent, deflects from the Abhidharmic view on suffering. Śāntideva appears to suggest that by virtue of his aspirations, the sentient beings could be relieved of their sufferings, no matter what caused their sufferings. It does not matter whether his aspirations would help the sentient beings or no. It is to be taken to heart that *parināmanā* does work, and a bodhisattva must practice on the basis that it works, whether it does so or not. To resort to the metaphor of therapy, even if it be conceded that some illnesses are due to one’s sins, the physician could be expected to have the requisite knowledge to detect this situation. So he must present remedies on the theory that they might help persons over their illness. And if such remedies do not ‘work’ then perhaps some other remedies would ‘work’. And, if despite his intelligent attempts to cure someone’s illness, if he does not succeed, this does not prove that the illness was a retribution.

It should be noted that from *bodhicittotpāda* to *parināmanā*, there is one full cycle of meditational praxis, or *bodhicaryā* (X. 1). It is also significant that the chapter on *parināmanā* is placed immediately after that on the *prajñāparamitā*. The consignment of virtues includes or sums up all the perfections or *pāramitās*, and it implies the *finale* of one’s *bodhi*-career. The entire effort is

to be achieved at the level of the mind in meditation, and follows from what was previously called the right view or *samyakdr̥ṣṭi*.

What distinguishes Śāntideva as a Mahāyāna thinker is his innovation of a meditational practice along with the other that originates with Tsong-kha-pa in Tibet. The problem is viewed as to how the orientation from self-concern to concern for others, to compassion is to be stabilized. Or, how the arising of the Awakening Mind, i.e., *bodhicitta* is to be preserved? The meditation pattern that has its source is Śāntideva can be traced to the eighth chapter of his *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (verses 90 and 120). The significant key notions are *parātmāsamatā* and *parātmaparivartana*. The chapter dwells on the perfection of meditation, *dhyānapāramitā*. We are asked to make an effort to meditate upon the equality between self and others: One should protect all beings as one does oneself, because we are all equal in wanting pleasure and not wanting pain. And further, whoever wishes to afford protection to both himself and other beings should practice the holy secret: the exchanging of self for others. This meditation pattern may be termed equalizing the self and others and exchanging self and others. It is taken for granted by Śāntideva that if we are talking about morality, then we require no special pleading. We must be completely objective. Now, all are equal in wanting happiness and the avoidance of suffering (VIII. 95-6). As regards the need to treat everyone equally, that is all there is to it. Viewed objectively, there is nothing special about me so that I strive for just my own happiness and the avoidance of *my own* suffering. I should, says Śāntideva, dispel the suffering of others because it is suffering like *my own* suffering. I should help others too because of their nature as beings, which is like my own being (VIII. 94). To begin with, one sees all as of equal weight. Then one actually exchanges one's self and others by seeing all the problems that arise, cherishing oneself and the benefits that accrue from cherishing others. One is to meditate that all those who suffer in the world do so because of the desire for their own happiness. All those who are happy in the world are so because of their desire for the happiness of others. The result is an imperative to always put others first. Śāntideva's reasoning is based upon a

sense of equality, since all are equal in wishing for happiness and the avoidance of suffering.

There is, of course, another tradition of meditation with moral implications. This comes from Atiṣa's *Bodhipathapradīpa*. If we take cognizance of one's previous lives then throughout the infinite series of previous lives all sentient beings have been one's friends many times. Atiṣa also notes that all sentient beings have been one's mother in previous lives and from this reflection arises the wish to repay their kindness. That is called 'love' or *maitrī* and from that, in turn, arises compassion or *karuṇā* for one's mother sentient beings that are suffering so much. From all this, Atiṣa hopes to help them in all possible ways but ultimately through attaining full Buddhahood for their welfare.

Both the above meditation praxis are recommended by Tsongkha-pa in his *Lam Rim Chen Mo* as alternative methods. The mother meditation, it may be mentioned in passing, has been worked out in a dependent origination way and it looked back to the meditation of *brahmavihāras*, with *upekṣa* expected, although compassion, *bodhicittotpāda*, altruistic aspiration, etc. feature commonly in both. There has been the image of the mother in the famous admonition in Pali: 'Even as a mother, as long as she both live, watches over her child, her only child, even so should one practice an all-embracing mind unto all beings'. The message of a boundless goodwill is indeed there, but the image of the mother has undergone a change in Atiṣa's meditation praxis. In the Pali text cited above, the mother is in the form of a simile. In Atiṣa's precept, one actually thinks of the mother. He could be said to have fathomed the secret of love, namely, that love begets love, and one wonders if the Buddha could have used it at all.

*Bodhicittāpramāda* is the title of the fourth chapter of Śāntideva's text. The crucial word in it is *apramāda*, and the term also occurs in the *Yoga-sūtras*. The *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* employs the term *yogin* for a bodhisattva and *apramāda* is the negation of *pramāda*, which means negligence. The phrase *bodhicitta apramāda* implies steadfastness or non-negligence in holding on to the bodhicitta. The bodhisattva vow, once taken, implies that

one should always exert oneself, and never stray away from the conduct. In the opening verse, Śāntideva refers to the preceding chapter (note the word *evam*) in the matter of accepting (*parigraha*) the vow. The vow may not be broken, for one commits oneself by taking it. Therefore, just as one has promised, one should accord one's actions. Being born as a human being is a rare privilege, and one should conduct it wholesomely, since existence is precariously contingent, *āyuh kṣanam viśamvādi* (IV. 16). Moral life is fraught with the pulls of opposing forces: *bodhicitta* on one side, and the emotional afflictions on the other. The ascent to the stations (*bhūmi*) of moral excellence are difficult as the afflictions get on the way. In this context, carelessness on the part of the moral aspirant would amount to spiritual suicide (IV. 24). Moral life, as Śāntideva portrays it, is not a pleasure trip, but a battle. Who are the enemies? These are one's own unwholesome mental states or *kleśas*, and they reside within. These enemies within, the disturbing conceptions, are formidable. They are said to have neither a beginning nor an end (IV. 32), and are ever present in the mind. The most telling description of man's evil propensities occurs in IV. 47. Common enemies when expelled from one country, simply retire and settle down in another. But the enemies within are not like that. They do not exist within the objects, the sense organs, between the two, nor elsewhere. They are to be forsaken by the eye of wisdom and dispelled from the mind. Therefore, vigilance alone (*apramāda*) can guard *bodhicitta*. The enemies are identified as hatred and craving, *trṣṇā dveṣa* and (IV. 28), they have neither any arms nor legs, but are invincible for those who are slothful and engage in self-deception.

*Kleśas* or mental defilements are the seeds of suffering, and obscure moral intentions. A bodhisattva seeks to remove the cover of mental defilements or delusions (affective and intellectual vices) from all eyes, his as well as others. The foremost task, however, is to dispel one's own delusion and mental defilements by steadily looking at the truth of life and existence. Only then can other beings' path be enlightened. This is the precondition of altruism.

Śāntideva never alienates himself from the lot of ordinary mortals in their moral perplexity in warring against the inner enemies. The

honest sincerity of his manner of speaking and resolve are indeed remarkable for a moral philosopher. The confessional ring about his admission of weaknesses in fighting against the hordes of *kleśas* makes Śāntideva a fellow of ours. The bodhisattva vow is difficult, but there is no going back on the commitment. He reminds us that *apramāda*, steadfastness and perseverance are needed for carrying on the struggle. He further resolves that he would fight for the vow, rather than ever bowing down. The drama of moral struggle consists in the fact that one knows that the enemies are rootless (*nirmūla*) and insubstantial (*tattva-śunya*), and yet keep one on tenter hooks. A moment's negligence would let whatever territory recovered pass into the hands of the enemy. This paradox or problematic state of moral life can be resolved on the plane of conduct. A strict code of conduct will not be enough, but conduct itself—precepts put into practice—will also have to be there. This is what *apramāda* implies. If the doctor's instructions are ignored, how will a patient in need of care be healed by his medicines? (IV. 48). It is clear that defilement in man has to be removed by man himself, no one else can do it for him. This has been the prevalent position of Buddhism from early times. And we have a wonderful statement of the position in the *apramāda* chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Śāntideva resolves on all our behalf, and his call is sharp and clear: the task that is to be accomplished is the appearance of a new personality, a bodhisattva out of an ordinary person, a *prthagjāñā*. What is intended is the dissolution of a way of looking at the world, to set the stage for a new way of looking. Even if *prajñā* is a philosophical or intellectual virtue (*ala* Aristotle), the entire thirst is not a matter of philosophy. It is a sequence of *yoga* or meditation with the premise that a person can radically change his nature, from not being a saint to being a saint.

We have thus far undertaken a rapid survey of the themes and contents of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, while the rest of the *pāramitās* will be taken up for a fuller consideration in the sequels to follow. With a view to rounding off the present context, certain points should be in order.

Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, along with the *Sikṣā-samuccaya*, is based on the ethical parts of the *Sūtras* in relation to the way

of a bodhisattva. The discussion is concerned with the ethics of living in the world. The study of virtues or *pāramitās* was carried out primarily by the school of Āsanga, and only later by the Mādhyamīkās. The theory of a bodhisattva on his way to Buddhahood is quite ancient and can be met with in the *Tripitaka* as referring to the Buddha before his enlightenment. One could take the *Jātaka* accounts of the former lives of the *Buddhas*. But these are all descriptive. For Mahāyāna the training of *bodhisattvas* is prescriptive. The earliest Mahāyāna *sūtras*, collectively known and called the *Ratnakūta Sūtra*, refer to and are mostly concerned bodhisattva and his training. It is important to note that they refer by name to the *Bodhisattvapitaka* for the basic doctrine of the six perfections or *pāramitās*. Asanga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi* is a late classic, though the term *bodhicitta* had already occurred in the *Ratnakūta*. *Bodhicitta* is a thought peculiar to a bodhisattva. When one has it, it means one has set out on the long way of the bodhisattva towards Buddhahood. *Cittotpāda* is the first step in a his career.

A bodhisattva, having fulfilled the conditions of *bodhicittotpāda*, commences his *caryā*. The word *caryā*, derived from the root *car*, means 'course', behaviour on conduct. It denotes the duty of a bodhisattva, all that he has to do. It covers his complete discipline and career. This should help one to get at the intention of Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. He, writing in the first person, puts us into touch with the bodhisattva ideal. And that is a matter of great charm.

## Buddhist Ethics: Morality and Theory

The Buddha, it is well-known, attained the solution of his mental struggles concerning emancipation from worldly sorrows and pains in the enlightenment of the Four Noble Truths. The infusion of practical needs with theoretical knowledge and the stress laid upon the ascetic life as against the worldly make up the keynote of Buddhist morality. As its religion is inseparably connected with its philosophy, its morality is based upon its ethical theories. In close connection between, or identification of, the practical and the theoretical sides, Buddhist ethics bears a clear Hindu inheritance. But unlike the Brahminic morality, Buddhist ethics does not adhere to the social institutions and traditions. It seeks the basis of morality immediately rather in the universal truths, which are to be realized is every one's wisdom and attainment. Practical morality, in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions, is founded on the *Dharma*. With the Brāhmanas *dharma* is the Divine ordinance incorporated in the legal code (*smṛti*), while the same word, for the Buddhist, means the truths taught by the Buddha and to be realized in every individual's wisdom. The fundamental feature of Buddhist morality consists in its autonomic and personal principle, in contrast with the legal and social principle of Brāhmanism. There is then the significance of the Buddha's personality. He is revered not only as the founder of the religion, but also as the revealer of final truths and the guide of all beings to the same attainment as his own. In him personal perfection is united with universal truths. "One who sees me sees the truth", is a famous assertion. The Tathāgata's body is said to be made up of truth, *dhamma bhūta*. In him, personal perfection is united with universal truths. He is said to be the light of the



world, or the eye, *lokachakkhu*; but every one should discover the same light in himself, *atta-dīpa*. The master being the revealer of the light and not an intruder from the outside, one takes refuge in the Buddha, in order to take refuge in himself (*atta-sarana*), as the Master has done. This autonomic principle and personal basic of Buddhist morality was a new departure in the history of Indian religion, and laid the foundation for the universal religion of Buddhism.

The prominence of personality is associated with esteem for individual liberty, or at least for the spirit of toleration and liberalism. The Master's practical and thematical precepts are not expected to be followed in the letter but only in the spirit. This comes out clearly in the *Mahāparinirvāna Sutta*. In the last sermon of the Buddha, he urged that his disciples should leave minor precepts and be themselves their own light. The value of this admonition can never be over-estimated. The tradition is preserved among both the Theravadins as well as the Māhayanists. The liberalism stands in close connection with the esteem shown for the Middle Path, which formed the introduction of the Buddha's first sermon at Sarnath. It has remained the leading spirit of Buddhism through various forms in the history of the religion. This liberal spirit distinguishes Buddhism from the formal asceticism of the Jains. It is in virtue of the liberalism that the religion was able to achieve its development in inexhaustible forms adapted to the needs of the times and people.

The Buddhists have never distinguished sharply between ethical theories and moral practice. The practice is regarded as incomplete without the thematical foundation and the basic of moral training, and *vice versa*. The whole discipline (*sikkhā*) is divided into the three branches, which are to be assisted and accelerated mutually: Morality (*śīla*), mental training (*samādhi or citta*) and wisdom (*paññā or prajñā*). We may consider the *Dhammapada* 183 as a concise resume of the entire teaching of Buddhism. 'Not to commit any sin, to do good' is the first part, and is the kernel of every system of morality. The latter half, 'And to purify one's own mind', calls for mental purification and consummation by the belief in the teaching of all the Buddhas. One will have to realize the communion

of the enlightened. A similar relation between morality and the attainment of Buddhist perfection is shown in terms of the group of the five branches, viz. morality (*śīla*), contemplation (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā* or *prajñā*), deliverance (*vimutti*), and insight into the knowledge of deliverance (*vimuttiññāna dassana*). *Dassana* is more than insight, and may be understood as ‘realization’. Herein is an inseparable connection of morality with wisdom or mystic attainment. Morality finally helps open the wisdom eye or *prajñācaksu*. Even the cultivation of the *pāramitas* presupposes and culminates in *prajñā*. Buddhist morality, both in its discipline and in its perfection, forms a part of the religious ideal of complete enlightenment. It loses its value and significance apart from these perfections. Morality is not merely a means to perfection, it is an integral part of the perfection, and hence one of the epithets of the Buddha: ‘abounding in wisdom and goodness’. Mere knowledge or a solitary immersion in mystic contemplation, without practical moral actions, is not perfection. In a like manner, morality without insight into depth of truth is baseless. Morality has to be associated with enlightenment in metaphysical truths and their realization in one’s own life, it is *bodhicaryā*. Thus, moral and intellectual perfection of a personality is—spite of the doctrine of *anātma*, the non-ego—the highest aim of Buddhist morality.

Let us now consider the Buddhist metaphysics of the good. The fundamental principle of Buddhist ethics and morality is expressly stated in the very opening of the Buddha’s first sermon, to consist in the middle path, the way to the realization of the ultimate end, the extinction of the pains arising from egoism. Here the Middle Path is recommended; therein lies the right or perfect (*sammā, samyak*) way for realizing the ideal in accordance with the truth. In contrast with the false or base, it leads to the perfect enlightenment, *sambodhigāmin*. But what is the content of that enlightenment? The answer is given mostly in a negative way, in the denial of the phenomenal, of human weakness, illusions, and passions. In short, it consists in the teaching of non-ego (*anattā*), extinction (*nirodha*) of pains, and the well-known *nibbāna* or *nirvāna*. Schopenhauer faced perplexity concerning the ultimate nature of the Buddha’s nothingness (*Nichts*). But the difference between the

Buddha and Schopenhauer lies in the fact that the former was not content with the merely theoretical attitude of the later, but, having himself realized the experience of transcending the phenomenal and of entering into height of mystic illumination, tries to lead his followers to the same attainment. This ideal of the same attainment is expensed in the term ‘One Way’ (*ekayāna*), treading in which is the very essence of Buddhists morality, and the basis of which is found in the stability of truths. We might say that the highest aim of Buddhist morality is in entering into the communion of all the Buddhas through realizing the oneness and eternity of truth in one’s own person. Not only insight and wisdom, but morality and mental training are also possible on the ground of this assumption, and all virtuous acts flow from this metaphysical source.

In the *Brahmajāla* the connections between practical morality and philosophical speculations are shown most vividly. The Buddha contrasts, mere works—however good and excellent—with his attainments and purpose. He asks his disciples not to be anxious about trifling matters, the minor details, of mere morality (*śīla māttaka*). The reason is not because morality is a trifling matter in itself, but because it is vain unless founded upon profound knowledge and high attainments. He says: “There are other things, profound, difficult to realize, hard to understand, tranquillizing, sweet, not to be grasped by mere logic, subtle, comprehensible only by the wise. These things the Tathāgata, having himself realized them and seen them face to face, hath set forth.” (Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, London, 1899, i, 26). Here we can see the close connection between morality and enlightenment in Buddhism.

In another dimension, Buddhist morality is closely related to its ideal of universal salvation. This universal ideal is expressed by the Mahāyāna saying that every being is a Buddha in his essential quality. On this account, the standard of a perfect Buddhist was transferred from an *arhat* to a bodhisattva. The foundation of Buddhist morality rests on the essential capacity of every person for Buddhahood, and the criterion of true morality lies in the tending to *bodhi*, as attested by the one road (*ekayāna*) trodden by all the *tathāgatas* of the past as well as of the present and future.

Abandon the false and base conduct of common man and adopt the methods of a Buddha—that is the cardinal maxim of Buddhist morality. This may sound somewhat vague and self-evident, but it could be made sense of if we remember that the good and the holy life is not to be merely talked about, but to be tested by personal touch, and realized in the exercise of the methods of disciplines as well as by the perfections or *pāramitās*. The essential aim is to touch the immortal region by the body. *Kāyen amattam dhātum phassayitva*, i.e., by personal experience and actual realization, as the *Itivuttaka*, 51 puts the matter. The guide to this end is found in the person of the Buddha.

The questions as to the nature and origin of sin and ills, and the opposition of man's moral nature to the good should naturally arise at this point. The doctrine of the source (*samudāya*) of pain tries to explain the origin and genesis of ills. And Buddhism has no story of Adam's fall, nor does it teach that sin is a transgression of Divine law in consequence of free will. The causation, or genesis of ills is traced to the one root of thirst (*tanhā*), and the source of all vices is sought can be passion and greed (*kāma and rāga*). These may again be traced to, or associated with ignorance (*avijjā or avidyā*) or delusion (*moha*). These are interdefinable or interchangeable terms, and hence express nearly the same thing in different aspects. Taken together, they amount to egoism, this is the original sin, so to speak, and the root of all evils. In Buddhist ethics, no distinction is made between sin and ills, and their sole origin is sought not in the objective world, but in our own mind and actions (*kamma or karma*).

Doesn't the Buddhist encounter the problem as to the cause of the course of the individuation of will? Schopenhauer was quite vexed at this issue. The conclusion in either case would be that no reason could be sought in this domain. The question, we might say, has to be left theoretically unanswered, or is it unanswerable? The problem has surfaced in Leibniz's *Theodicee*, and even with Vāsubandhu. Are ills the imperfect reflections of the one universal mind? Whatever might have been tried, the fundamental trait of Buddhist ethics consists in its practical nature. It has had a vivid sense of the vices of *human nature* in its actual conditions, and of

the ills arising from them. Both are the irrevocable consequences (*vipāka*) of the *karma* without beginning.

It is possible to argue that the identification of sins and ills, the basis of which has in the theory of *Karma* (as in Rhys Davids, *Hibbert Lectures, 1881*) weakens the moral sense of responsibility. This idea is very strong in the Jewish and Christian religions. But the point with Buddhist morality is somewhat different. Its sole aim is the abandoning of egoism and entering into the vast communion of the enlightened mind. In its principles, Buddhist morality is completely free from hedonistic elements. And the wide-ranging love for all beings, as experienced in the four aspects of the infinite mind (*appamāna-chetovimutti*), becomes possible only on this basis.

The full realization of the holy way (*ariya magga*) and the attainment of enlightenment (*bodhi*) are necessarily associated with the final uprooting of fundamental vice. This condition is said to be of *arhat*ship, when birth is extinguished and purity is perfected, and all is done that is to be done. So the expressions go. An *arhat* so qualified is the Tathāgata. A distinction is often made between a *pratyekabuddha*, a solitary moral achiever, a self-content self and the teacher and benefactor of all beings. Since the Buddha is one of the *arhats*, every Buddhist is expected to aim at *arahatta* or saintship. The Buddha is the most significant type of *arhat*, or the only standard. In this respect, it should be possible to say that Buddhist morality consists in the imitation of the Buddha. And this is the reason why faith in the Master is so strongly insisted upon, for both moral and intellectual perfection.

It is quite possible to have the moral ideal consisting in the imitation of the Buddha, and yet deem oneself unqualified for that perfection, and cherish the hope to finish one's journey on the way to *bodhi* in the time of the future Buddha, Metteya or *Maitreya*. This type of ideal marks the Theravāda way of life. But there arose a way of thinking, more enduring and emphasizing the importance of following the Buddha's footsteps in spirit. The difference resulted in the division of the Hinayāna and Mahāyāna.

This division involved a rupture between the ideal of *arhat* and that of bodhisattva. The latter term means a being seeking for

*bodhi*, and it was an appellation of the Buddha in his former births, preparing for his Buddhahood. In course of time, the bodhisattva came to be distinguished from the arhat and pratyekabuddha and *śrāvakas*. It signalled a departure in favour of a freer development of Buddhist moral ideals, and it entailed important consequences for morals.

Before we proceed further, we may deal with the Mahāyāna Theory of the *bodhichitta*. It means the primordial essence of our mind, which, itself consists in the supreme *bodhi*, i.e., the very essence of Buddha's enlightenment. This essence is present in every mind, but lies dormant or covered by the dust of ignorance and infatuation. When it is awakened and developed by training, we may see in ourselves the eternal Buddhahood in its full illumination, and in this way, the communion with all the Buddhas may be realized. Morality, associated with wisdom and mental training, is the way to this realization, and makes us tread the one and same way (*eka-yāna*) of the Buddhas. Morality becomes possible on the foundation of our essential fellowship with Buddhas and of the substantial identity of our mind with theirs. Morality is actualized *bodhichitta*, which is, again, the *universalia aute rem* of morality. To put in other terms, the *bodhichitta* is the stability of truths translated to the inner heart of man. It is *bodhi* seen not as an attainment or acquisition, but as the original possession of man's mind. Viewed in this light, the contrast of good and bad, noble and base, amounts to the contrast between the primordial *bodhi* and the fundamental *avidyā*. The Jewish contract of God and Satan is transferred to the heart of our own mind, which at the same time is substantially identical with that of all beings, including Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and common men, as well as animals and even spirits in hell. The contrast between the *bodhichitta and avidyā* is the ultimate point of Buddhist theoretical ethics.

## I. Opening Ideas: *Bodhicaryāvatāra* Method and Approach

It is arguable that one's grasp of the Buddhist moral tradition will remain deficient without a better understanding of Mahāyāna ethics, and that aspect of Buddhist ethics is significantly represented in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. It is a masterpiece of ethical text, taking the path of the Mahāyāna moral and spiritual virtuoso, the bodhisattva as its object. The text is identified as the ancient authority of the Buddhist human ideal and moral paradigm. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* provides a perspective on Mahāyāna Buddhist morality.

The purpose of this study is to delineate the moral position of Śāntideva, and the task will incorporate both descriptive ethics and meta-ethics. Descriptive ethics is concerned with giving an account of moral presumptions, norms, and values, and their application, whereas meta-ethics or analytic ethics involves the attempt to understand such judgement. I shall offer an account of both first-order issues having to do with Śāntideva's views on what to do and how to behave, and second-order issues dealing with the concepts, methods, and reasoning underlying these views.

On the level of descriptive ethics, the analysis of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* begins with the question, how does the ideal Buddhist practitioner, the bodhisattva, behave? In answering this question, the moral development of a bodhisattva is traced, and the moral weight of the *pāramitās* and other moral goods or values, e.g., the *brahmaviśhāras*, are considered. How these perfections and values are supposed to be reflected in the bodhisattva's conduct is then described. Another aim with regard to descriptive ethics is to contextualize moral norms and values within the overall structure

of the Buddhist path, so that the place of morality in Buddhist soteriology is made clear. This question, of the relationship between ethics and enlightenment, *śīla* and *nirvāna*, is a key dispute in the literature. There is the transcendence thesis, the idea that moral precepts have only instrumental value in achieving *nirvāna*, which is understood as a non-moral, nihilistic state. I am, in fact, inclined to view *nirvāna* as a state of ethical perfection for which morality is not only a means but also a necessary part. Consequently, an important focus will be *Śāntideva's* understanding of the nature of *nirvāna* and the relationship of morality to this state. Because the Mahāyāna spiritual ideal is a being, a bodhisattva, who embodies compassion (*karuṇā*) and altruism, as well as insight (*prajñā*), it is apparent that morals cannot merely be of instrumental value for *Śāntideva*. To understand the precise nature of the morality that characterizes a bodhisattva and the relationship of moral norms to his enlightenment, I offer a description of the path of the *pāramitās*, and analyze the key concepts such as the term *śīla*. This examination of the meaning of terms forms an essential step in the meta-ethical analysis of the values and reasoning behind *Śāntideva's* moral judgements.

There is a wide disagreement about how to formally characterize Buddhist moral thought in terms of Western ethical theories. Suggested classifications have ranged from non-hedonistic utilitarianism to a modified deontology, situational ethics, and even to a form of teleological virtue ethics. While the primary aim of my task is to describe *Śāntideva's* moral position in Buddhist terms, of the role of ethics in his soteriology, with an articulation of the moral norms, concepts and logic underlying his views, I too have ventured a formal characterization of *Śāntideva's* ethics in terms of Western moral theories. But I have been diffident in my venture. I have not sought a unifying theory of Buddhist morality. Without resorting to one moral theory, I have tried to follow the contours of ethics of both Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions, and even recalled their alignments with the Hindu systems of ideas. I have not assumed that there will be one moral theory that will adequately describe all Buddhist traditions. I have remained open to the possibility that no one ethical category may be sufficient to



account for all the moral data. Moreover, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is less a treatise on ‘doctrine’ than a manual for *practice* (*caryā*) and, hence, it seems promising a proposal to view Śāntideva’s thoughts as a form of virtue ethics. Whether this virtue ethics is pure or of a hybrid variety (the view that the *pāramitā* are the *parikaras* of *prajñā*, hence a kind of utilitarian hybrid of virtue ethics could be said to be implied) is another story altogether.

For long have I travelled in the realms of gold of Western ethical literature, and resemblances and similarities have struck me spontaneously with Śāntideva’s thought and ideas. I found them innocuous, unexceptionable and philosophically innocent. I propose to state some points on the value of comparative ethics. The idea of connecting the study of Buddhist ethics to ethical reflections elsewhere seemed to be exciting as well as illuminating. Incorporating Buddhist ethical notions within the comparative study of ethics holds the promise of appreciating the universals of ethical truth and ethical reasoning that underlie them. The lure must not, of course, obfuscate the fact that ethical reasoning cannot fully account for the ethical data of a tradition. For example, distributive justice is not a problem for Buddhism. It is also a fact that different texts and different communities in different historical periods may employ different lines of moral justification and make different moral judgements. We must also not forget that there are logical tensions within a tradition, and that no one type of moral reasoning can designate an entire system. Comparative ethics and the holistic approach are synchronic, and no tradition can be so summed up. There is the need of diachronic studies of particular texts and thinkers. The continuities and discontinuities between Buddhaghosa and Vāsubandhu, between the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and the *Lam Rim Chen Mo* can hardly be brought under a unitary focus or one conceptual umbrella. Synchronic approaches and diachronic studies need be supplemented. None of these by itself would yield a satisfactory understanding of Buddhist ethics. Ethicists and historians ask different kinds of questions of the same material. One is concerned to discover the connection among religion, ethics and culture, while the other tries to reveal them.

The historian favours an empiricist view, which takes all human understanding as culturally and historically embedded, so that moral reasoning, like all forms of human reason, is socially constructed. The comparative ethicist is aligned with formalism, and holds on to the idea that moral reasoning is epistemologically autonomous, i.e., a distinct kind of reasoning which can be compared to other types of reasoning. Despite the underlying philosophical dispute, the two are not necessarily antagonistic, nor are they mutually exclusive. To apply a typology of moral reasoning to any tradition of Buddhism, Theravāda or Mahāyāna, one will have to rely on both particular studies as well as holistic characterizations of the tradition in question in order to make the moral analysis. Again, to offer descriptions of Buddhist ethics as a whole, one may need Western ethical categories in one's assessment. This suggests that a certain amount of ethical translations is inevitable when a non-Buddhist category is used to approach Buddhism. It indicates that in using a holistic method it may be found useful to use the terminology of philosophical ethics. The foundation of both types of research is the work done on particular groups, historical periods, and texts. The real issue, then, is not which method should be used to study Buddhist ethics, but where and how to employ them. I have sought to conduct a particular study of Śāntideva, a Mahāyāna Buddhist thinker, and describe norms of conduct and character according to Śāntideva, outlining the indigenous moral categories at work. The proposed ethicist study opens the possibility of describing Śāntideva's ethics within a broader scheme of moral reasoning. I have looked for analogies between Śāntideva's moral views as also Hindu, Christian and Western theories. This has helped me in determining whether Śāntideva's morality could be adequately described in using, at times, non-Buddhist categories. First comes the descriptive exercise, a textual study has provided an account of moral prescriptions, norms, values and their application. Secondly, there is meta-ethical exercise, where I look at the meaning of moral terms and concepts and the type of moral reasoning in Śāntideva's work in order to provide an overall typology. In all this I remain open to the possibility, that existing typologies are inadequate to capture Śāntideva's views. Finally, there is comparison of

Śāntideva's moral theory to existing literature, and an attempt to answer the question: Can Buddhism be subsumed under one moral theory? In mapping *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, I have always reminded myself that the map is not the territory.

What assumptions are involved in adopting the category of ethics to approach a Buddhist text? A review of some of the terms reveals the following. The term "ethic" (greek *ethikos*) is from *ethos*, meaning "custom" or "usage". Based on Aristotle's use, it also includes the sense of "character" and "disposition". The Latin term *moralis*, from which we get the word "moral", was Cicero's translation for *ethikos*. Because of this equivalence the terms "ethics" and "morality" are often used synonymously. However, sometimes "ethics" is used in a way that distinguishes it from "morality", in which case, it can have one of the two senses. It can either be used as a more comprehensive term than morality, making morality a subdivision of ethics, or it can refer to the philosophical study of morality. The first sense defines "ethics" very broadly to be the systems of value and custom instantiated in the lives of particular groups. "Morality" is then to be a subdomain within ethics that can be defined and characterized variously, but is at the least associated with notions of right and wrong, guilt and shame, etc. The description of ethics in its broadest sense largely falls within the realm of anthropology, and is not generally what is meant by "ethics" within the field of Buddhist ethics. It is more common to use "ethics", when distinguished from morality, in the second sense, as referring to the philosophical analysis of morality. Here ethics involves the systematic and rational reflection on morality: the attempt to address questions like: What constitutes morality? What are the moral principles? What gives beings moral status? What is the relationship between morality and reason? This kind of ethics is also called "philosophical ethics" or "moral philosophy". For a systematic analysis of morality, four terms are available. The word "ethics" on its own can be taken to be synonymous with "morality", and both "ethics" and "morality" may be understood as the object of study of philosophical ethics.

The subject of morality (or ethics) can, in turn, be understood either broadly or narrowly. At the general level, the subject of morality is, as Socrates reportedly said, the way we ought to

live (*Republic*, 352d). This, as he said, is no small matter, for it concerns notions of human well-being and what constitutes the best life for humans. In the narrow sense, morality is about assigning value to human conduct and determining how humans should act in regard to other individuals and society. In this way, morality is associated with notions of right and wrong, blame and guilt, good and bad, etc. Again, stemming from the Aristotelian use of *ethos*, this will include judgements about character. The two senses of morality, general and narrow, are not unrelated, for an answer to the question of what constitutes “the good life” will have implications for morality *qua* norms of conduct and character, and behaviour and personality norms do, in turn, depend on notions about human well-being.

There is a tension between the sense of morality related to other-regarding action-guides and norms, and norms regarding character and personality are itself problematic issues. Used adjectivally, “moral” signifies concern with the principles of right and wrong behaviour and the goodness and badness of human character. Thus the adjective “moral” may indicate something about behaviour or character, and both. The scope of one’s understanding of morality will have something to do with the scope of one’s study of Buddhism as well.

The alleged tension in defining morality is related to regarding how to characterize morality. Should morality be understood in terms of a function, such as social and interpersonal cooperation, or in terms of certain moral sentiments, feelings or emotions central moral agency? If one understands morals to be related primarily or exclusively to conduct and not character, that would characterize morality according to a function such as cooperation. If morality is characterized as a system of value judgements about conduct aimed at furthering social cooperation, then the scope of one’s study of morality will be different if one characterizes morality in terms of moral sentiments, since it would lead one to focus on the emotions and feelings important for moral agency, and thus on character.

We may now consider the implications of the definitions of ethics and morality at work in the field of Buddhist ethics. Apropos of the functional definitions of morality, morality is other-regarding,

focusing on the effect of actions upon other people. So defined, morality may guide character, attitudes and emotions in so far as these may affect cooperative behaviour. This characterization of morality implies that cooperation happens to be one of the effects of morality, but also a claim that social cooperation is what morality is for. This entails that the ability of beings to get along well is an end in itself, it is the *telos* of morality, rather than either a happy side-effect or the means to a higher goal. The assumption that cooperation is the function of morality will colour one's approach to Buddhist morality, suggesting that one should focus solely on those aspects of Buddhist teachings which bear obviously and directly on social cooperation. But is it not inadequate or inappropriate for the Buddhist context? It is telling that, for Buddhism, the morally significant category of what is unwholesome (*akuśala*) includes mental factors such as greed, hate and erroneous views. These appear to have no direct effect on other people. They do not have to be acted upon to be considered unwholesome. The notion of *akuśala* goes beyond the functional definition of ethics, and shows that the definition is hardly sufficient; there are quite a few constituents of Buddhist morality that have a direct bearing on social cooperation, and certainly not taught *for the sake* of social harmony. They include the importance of intention (*cetanā*) and the idea of wholesome and unwholesome (*kuśala* and *akuśala*). On some significant readings, character seems to be the key aspect of Buddhist normativity. Hence, morality in the Buddhist context should include normativity with regard to both conduct and character. In the context of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the definition of ethics should be widened to include both other-regarding action-guides and character-guides and norms of conduct.

Buddhist teachings in general can be understood as a response to the question, how do we ought to live? This centres on a notion of human well-being, of what constitutes the best life for humans. Here, one may be reminded of G.E. Moore, who found the view that morality was restricted to what is good and bad in human conduct, and intended to use 'ethics' to cover the general inquiry into what is good (*Principia Ethica*, p.2). Morality, in the Socratic sense, largely overlaps with Buddhist teachings. This broad definition

also overlaps with religion. If one defines ‘religion’ as intended to resolve the ontological problem of understanding life, death and suffering, or about what Paul Tillich speaks about as the “ultimate concern”, then religion and morality are not easily isolated from each other, while, of course, there would be aspects of religion which are not moral and vice versa.

The Socratic definition of morality recommends itself in a fair manner, should one’s objective of studying Buddhist ethics be to get a sense of Buddhist morality. This may wipe off the distinction between Buddhist teachings and Buddhist morality, say, from any study of Buddhist thought or teaching. What is unique about this study of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is approaching the Buddhist tradition with questions derived from philosophical ethics.

The task of philosophical ethics, as I understand it, is to explain the relationship between standards and ideals of conduct and character, including reason, virtue, morals, etc., and what is considered “the good life”, or human well-being. Any theory of ethics will articulate the relationship between these two things, the relationship between right and good. Philosophical ethics defines the relationship between morality understood as norms of conduct and character, and morality understood as how one ought to live. This is the overall aim of this study: to explain the relationship between Śāntideva’s notions of “the good” (associated with *Bodhicaryāvatāra*), and conduct and character norms. This will also involve carrying out a meta-ethical analysis of the meaning of moral terms, and the attempt to define what constitutes morality for Śāntideva. My humble attempt to explain the moral theory at work in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* begs to be deemed a work of philosophical ethics.

Does this category of ethics appear in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*? Or is it etic or emic to Buddhism? Defining ethics/ morality as the domain of “how we to live and why”, there will be a sense in which it is not alien to the Buddhist tradition. The very name of Buddhaghosa’s work, *Vissuddhimagga*, has the built-in normativity. So is Tsong-Kha-pa’s *Lam Rim*. One should bear in mind that ancient Buddhist thinkers, including the author of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, did not feel compelled to address the kinds of

questions which philosophers of ethics now given to ask. It is a horrible bias that is obliquely suggesting that non-western traditions do not or cannot systematically think about morality separating it from other aspects of reality. It is never the case. Further, it is important to bear in mind that Buddhism had not tended to divide moral reasoning from other types of reasoning. The concept of *dharma* is notoriously difficult to translate incorporating, as it does, religious, moral, and legal teachings which are not easily teased apart, and hence, systematic thought regarding any of these categories is likely to include the other two. The Indian worldview, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, seems to conceive the moral and natural orders as one. The Vedic *Rta* and the Buddhist *pratityasamutpāda* (psychology and physical phenomena are both *hetopratyayādhinā*) do not vary in this regard. This may be one of the reasons that morality as separate from other aspects of religion may not be easily found in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Nor, it may be noted, is it there in the writings of St Augustine either.

In a sense, the question whether philosophical ethics is etic or emic to Śāntideva's intentions could be viewed as non-serious. The fashionable ways of asking some kinds of questions may be etic, but the subject of the questions is not. If one sees philosophical ethics as explaining the relationship between a view of the "good" and norms of character, then it may not be available with Śāntideva, but ideas about good character and a sense of human well-being are obviously there. He does indeed have ideas about the relationships between these things. If so, then there is a moral theory latent in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. In this study, I use "morality" and "ethics" synonymously to that subsystem of values and customs concerned with notions of right and wrong, guilt and shame, good and bad. Of this subsystem I engage myself with "morality" understood in its wider sense, associated with normative guides to human conduct and character. I understand the adjective "moral" or "ethical" to mean both concern with principles of right and wrong behaviour and the goodness and badness of human character, refined, of course, according to Śāntideva's interpretation of the equivalent terms. For Śāntideva, the overall question to answer is: What is the relationship between norms of conduct and character, i.e., the kinds



of motives, tracts, and actions that are considered good or right, and “the good” defined in terms of the overall well-being of humans? The answer to this will form the basis of my contention that the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* does represent Śāntideva’s thought and ideals, and in this way the text is an excellent source of understanding his morality.

I did not have much to do with Śāntideva’s other work, namely, the *Śīkāsamuecaya*, which has been relatively overlooked. Along with the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, both of these works describe the nature and path of the bodhisattva, the altruistic spiritual ideal especially exalted in Mahāyāna literature. There are correspondences between the two works in terms of arguments and design. The foundation for altruism is laid in the *Śīkāsamuccaya* in the very beginning of the text, i.e., at the *Kārikās* 1 and 2: If everyone similarly dislikes pain and fear, on what basis can one worry about one’s own pain and not that of others? The question has implicit reference to the concept of *anātman*, and the idea that because “I” am empty of any inherent nature, there is nothing essentially distinctive (*viśeṣa*) about me that I can justify providing my own pain over others. For this one will have to wait till chapter VIII of this book on *dhyānapāramitā* in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. From the outset, as in *Kārikā* 2 of the *Śīkāsamuecaya*, the assumption is made that because suffering is by its very nature unpleasant, one will desire the cessation of suffering, and because there is no ground to seek one’s own happiness and not that of others, one should adopt the bodhisattva path to help *all beings* realize the end of suffering. To do so, one will have to establish the altruistic aspiration for *bodhicitta*. *Bodhicitta* is a moral term, and it means the aspiration to become a Buddha for the sake of all beings. It is commended as the root of everything that is, good, *kuśala mūla*, and it is through this root of goodness that one can earnestly desire to become a refuge for all beings. The bodhisattva path commences with the arousal of *bodhicitta* and adoption of appropriate vows (*praṇidhi*). It is to be followed by the practice of the *pāramitā*, and concludes with the cultivation and transference of merit. However, the distinction between two types of *bodhicitta*: *praṇidhi* and *prasthāna*, the mind consisting of the resolve for awakening, and is not unique to the



*Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Śāntideva charifies the difference in the first chapter of the *Śiskāsamuecaya*, and refers back to it in the final chapter. In the light of the distinction, we may say that the first three chapters of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* are related to the resolve or wish for awakening: *bodhipranidhicitta*, while the final one (chapter X) is directed towards the bodhisattva who has the second type of *bodhicitta*: *bodhiprasthāna-citta*. The course of bodhisattva's conduct leading to enlightenment—from the arousal of the first type of *bodhicitta* to the second—has been called *bhadracaryā*. The term occurs in the *kārikā* 25. of the *Śiskāsamuecaya* as a matter of emulation. *Bhadracaryā* may be taken as entailing the arousal of *bodhicitta*. *Bodhicittotpāda* is mentioned at the beginning of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. In chapters two and three, it comes at the end of the *Śiskāsamuecaya*, as part of the final aspect of a bodhisattva's training. All these suggest that the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* could be classed with the *genre* of *Imitatio Christi*, wherein Christ is the model for behaviour. Śāntideva's morality is based on the aim of cultivating the character and life of a bodhisattva, remotely perhaps even of the Buddha, for Siddhārtha was such a one prior to his enlightenment. There is, of course, the view of Kant, who discourages any role model or ideal in ethics, and also quotes St Mark (20.16) in his support. No model can supply the prime source for the concept of morality, nor even the holy one of the gospel. What shall the Buddhist ethicist say of it? First, he can point to the Buddha's injunction to his disciples to live as islands unto themselves, being their own refuge (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, 2:26). Secondly, he might show that it is *Dharma* that is the most important refuge rather than the historical Buddha, who only pointed to the Path. Lastly, a bodhisattva lives in devotion, not to God but to others. What, after all, is it to be the Christ, if it is not to give oneself freely and utterly to other? A bodhisattva is closer to the Christ in that respect. However, there is a wide conceptual distance between Mahāyāna ethics and Kant's duty-based ethics. deontological moral theory has eclipsed virtue ethics in Western traditions. That is a different but interesting story. However, Kant's passion for the *a priori* prevents him to see the important point about the place of models in moral life, even in *regulative* functions.

“What kind of person should I be?” appears to be the focus of Śāntideva’s thought rather than “what is the right thing to do?” and it goes along with virtue ethics. Hence, the emphasis on role models can be easily appreciated. This differentiates Śāntideva from both deontologist and utilitarians. Again, association with *kalyāṇamitras* is encouraged. The emphasis on the one’s social circumstances and the community also echoes the virtue ethics tradition. The norms of conduct and character reflected in the *pāramitās* and *śīla* are like the colour and contour of a fully awakened being. One cultivates the perfections in order to make oneself in the likeness of a Buddha. A bodhisattva walks in the path of the Buddha’s conduct.

In the context of *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the relationship between ethics and enlightenment is key to discerning Śāntideva’s moral theory, since a moral theory offers an explanation of the relationship between norms of conduct and character, and the good. The good is *nirvāna*, a state of freedom from suffering. On the Mahāyāna conception, the good is understood to incorporate freedom from suffering not only for the individual, but for all sentient beings. For Śāntideva, the way for an individual to realize this highest goal is by eliminating the habitual physical, verbal, and mental behaviour that reinforce the barriers to *nirvāna*, and cultivating those that are conducive to it. The primary obstacle to this state is delusion, *moha*, or a failure to see things the way they really are, and for Śāntideva this implies a failure to see that they are empty of any inherent nature (*svabhāva śūnya*). Aversion or hatred, *dveṣa* and attachment or greed, *lobha* are what result from this failure to see the true nature of things. Together, greed, hatred, and delusion from the three root poisons or defilements or afflictions, *kleśa*, which block us from the state of freedom. When one has realized freedom, one overcomes the three defilements. Eliminating delusion, *moha*, implies that one has insight, *prajñā*, and can see the true nature of things as *śūnya*. This insight is the ultimate basis for compassion. Without hatred and greed, one is necessarily non-greedy and non-hating, traits which are positively expressed in qualities such as generosity and loving-kindness. In short, the assumption appears to be that if one is without the delusion of an inherently existing self, and has eliminated the habits of mind, word and deed that

arise from that illusion, one becomes “selfless” in the altruistic sense of the term. As such, one who has realized the good or the awakening of a perfect Buddha, *samyak sambuddha*, would be considered “good” in the moral sense. One realizes or actualizes the good by modelling oneself on one who has already realized it. The first step is to establish the motive or mind-state as of a Buddha: that mind-state is *bodhicitta*, the intention to become fully awakened, not for one’s own sake, but in order to benefit all beings. The next step entails guarding against the unwholesome or unhealthy, *akuśala*, qualities and harmful or fruitless actions, *pāpa*, which will impede this endeavour, and then eliminating such actions and the defilements, *kleśas* that fetter them. Thereafter one should cultivate the “healthy” qualities, *kuśala*, and virtuous habits, *śīla* in their stead. The norms of conduct and character, the *pāramitās* and *śīla* are something that one follows in order to make oneself in the likeness of a Buddha and to walk in the path of a Buddha’s conduct.

The description of the bodhisattva path has two components. “The good” is the state of enlightenment or awakening or *bodhi*, of which the epistemic component is insight or *prajñā*. The practical component is compassion or *karuṇā*, sometimes called *upāya* or means. Thus, “ethics”, i.e., norms of conduct and character include not only *śīla* and *pāramitās*, but also insight or *prajñā* into the nature of reality, because insight is an equally important feature of an awakened, and therefore “good” being. The reason one has to practice ethics, or cultivate a moral character, then, is the same reason why one must cultivate insight into the nature of reality. *Prajñā* is essential to the bodhisattva path, which is both a way to and an expression of awakening.

## II. From *Bodhicitta* to *Prajñāpāramitā*

One might try to capture the uniqueness of the Buddhist notion of moral life by phrases such as the daily, hourly, minutely purification of consciousness. This is what could be taken as the central and fundamental area of the Buddhist morality. It is not merely the good life that marks the Buddhist philosopher's concern. It is, of course, the image of a good life based on the practice of virtues that the Buddhist ethicist talks about. But, more than that, whatever he does or practices are not mere 'virtues' in the Western sense of the term, rather the concept of *pāramitā* has some thing more to tell. The *pāramitās*, i.e., the Buddhist virtues are usually six in number, of which the last is *prajñā* or illumination or wisdom. How is one to relate the virtues like charity or forbearance, etc to *prajñā*? And how do the five *pāramitās* lead to *prajñā*? Or shall we say that *prajñā* from the very beginning of the *bodhicittotpāda* keeps informing the virtues, till their practice matures and become *prajñā*? This is what could be called the problematic of the Buddhist ethics. Is the practice of the *pāramitās* a deontological affair, or a matter of teleological reaching out for moral illumination?

Before we can answer questions as those above, we need to look into the interrelation of the *pāramitās* with reference to *prajñā*.

Apart from *prajñā*, the virtues are not *pāramitās*. It is for the sake of attaining *prajñā* that the cultivation of *pāramitās* are admonished. Their status are that of *parikara*. This point is made at the opening verse of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. *Prajñā* is the supreme perfection. Charity or *dāna* is the first step towards *sambodhi*. In this manner, *śīla* and *ksānti* too are rungs on the ladder of wisdom. Now wisdom consists in asperceiving all phenomena *yathābhūta*. This mode of

apperception has been *jñānapāramitā*. If this state of awareness remains unachieved, the practice of virtues would be a labour lost. *Prajñā* is defined as characterized by *yathāvasthita pratitya samutpanna vastu tattva pravicya lakṣaṇā*. *Prajñā* differentiates and distinguishes the *samvṛti* and the *paramārthikā* levels of truth. Just as a good harvest can only be had from a well-cultivated field, so when consciousness is purified by the basic moral discipline or *śīla*, it yields *samatha* which, in its turn, generates *vipaśyanā*. *Vipaśyanā* is the achievement of the power to see the real nature of all phenomena, *yathābhūta darśanam*. When one has achieved such a mode of seeing through appearance it gives rise to a great compassion for sentient beings, or *mahākaruṇā*. This, at least is the Mahāyāna position apropos of Prajñākara mati's elucidation.

Further, *prajñā* is distinguished into causal and effectual sorts like the causal or *hetubhūta prajñā*, which is bifurcated into marking off one who desires release, *adhimukti caritāh*, and the other that makes one a bodhisattva, firmly poised, *bhūmi praviśtah*, that is, as having attained the ascending stages of metaphysical insight. The effectual or *phalabhūta prajñā* is the resultant awareness or rather the cognition of the ontological void or *śunuatā*, permeating everything that is there. This requires the removal of or rending the veil, *āvaraṇa* of notions (*kleśas*) and ignorance. Without rending the veil, *bodhicitta* cannot be generated. And only the arousal of *bodhicitta*, can render one a bodhisattva end he would then resolve to dispel ontological frustration or *dukkha* of all sentient beings. Hence, in the journey from the arousal of *bodhicitta* to the attainment of *prajñā* there is a perfect circle in the Buddhist moral discipline.

For the Buddhist thinker, the achievement of a good is task hard, indeed. We are presented with a world of terror and anguish, always in danger of being overwhelmed by the forces of *kleśas*, internalized in the blind passions. Hence the blueprint for the good life informed by *bodhicitta*, and *prajñā*. One has to begin with a resolve to develop the right altitude *vis-a-vis* the enemies of the good life. A *kleśa* is a disturbing conception or mental defilement. It might either be an evil indination or the mistake of taking what is not the case to be the case. Both obfuscate the mind. Our ways

of acting and evil dispositions serve to give rise to ontological frustration or *dukkha*. Since mental defilements or *kleśas* are necessary conditions of the frustration, it can only be warded off only by cleansing the mind of such delements as desire, avarice and ignorance concerning the real nature of things. It is with the mind that morality begins. The foremost task, therefore, is to dispel one's own delusion and mental defilements, thereby realizing the inherent vacuity of the existents. The bodhisattva, having attained the status, devotes himself to enlightening the path of other beings.

The purification of consciousness on the part of a bodhisattva is not for his own sake. On the contrary, he vows to achieve the moral status for the sake of others. This is what differentiates a bodhisattva from such moral personages as *śrāvakas* and *pratyekbuddhas*, who are like windowless nomads in their moral strivings.

Śāntideva has something important to say about the nature of the *kleśas*. They are the enemy within. *Prajñādhṛsti* alone can vanquish them. This is so owing to the peculiarity about their locus. The *kleśas* do not exist in the objects of the senses, nor in the sense organs, nor in between two, nor elsewhere. Ontologically speaking, the disturbing conceptions in the mind are illusion-like. Once their illusionary nature is revealed, they are gone forever. Forsaken by the eye of wisdom, dispelled from the mind, they exist no more. The *kleśas* are said to be *pratītya mātrato nistatvā eva prakāśate*. It is in the conscience or *avidyā* as regards the composite nature of objects as well as the ego that breeds the defiling illusions in the mind. The five *skandhas* of *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saṃjñā*, *saṃskāra* and *viñāna* are the modes of their being. Physical forms, feelings arising from physical and mental contact, cognition or perception, mental dispositions generated by actions, and awareness of objects are the causal factors of whatever exists. It is to the unanalytic mind, oblivious of the five existential components that apparitions appear. Once viewed discriminatingly, they remain no longer. So one has to strive resolutely for *prajñā* or wisdom.

Let us return to *prajñā*. How does *prajñā* render the practice of virtue into *pāramitās*? What sense shall we make of the *parikaravī* view of the *pāramitās*? It is said that the five *pāramitās* are led by *prajñā*. Only then do they attain eyes or vision. It is then that

they are called *pāramitās*. The practicing of a *pāramitā* like *dāna* or charity requires an element of *prajñā*. One has got to know that an act of *dāna* involves three factors, namely, one who gives, that what is given, and the one who receives. These three have to be perfect, and there cannot be perfection of the factors unless there were *prajñā* about the motive and intention about the action of charity. The giver must be humble without a sense of the ego. No element of pity for the receiver should enter into the act, or else the act becomes polluted. Now the humility or the absence of egoity can only be in the act guided by *prajñā*. It is not that the one at the receiving end is the only one who benefits; rather, the act sanctifies the giver in the spiritual or ethical sense. The act of *dāna* proceeds from the giver's realization of ego-lessness. He can part with anything, since he owns nothing, even his body, if need be. Only on the wisdom that there is no owner-self that an act of charity could be possible. In this manner, all virtues can be said to be attendant (*parikara*) perfections, *prajñā* being the highest. Ordinarily, the virtues of *dāna*, etc., are *sambhāra* or preparatory on one's way to *prajñāpāramitā*.

It is of interest to note how in the Buddhist ethics the life of virtues—the ethical—touches the ontological. Beginning with the resolve to generate the *bodhicitta*, the virtues practiced steadfastly in the light of *prajñā* become *pāramitā*, and more importantly, the moral aspirant fulfills himself, in an ardent and vigilant manner in becoming a bodhisattva. It is in this sense that Śāntidevā speaks of two levels of *bodhisattvahood*, one who is solicitous (*pranidhi*) of *bodhi*, and the other who ventures (*prasthāna*) after *bodhi*. One is the mind that which aspires to awaken, while the other is one that ventures to do so. The distinction is between aspiring to go and actually going. The former is not without its rewards, but one who is actually going, never to look back is greatly meritorious (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*, I.15-17)

Appropriately, the bodhisattva is said to be one who is on the way to the attainment of perfect knowledge. Etymologically, of course, the bodhisattva is one whose essence is perfect knowledge, since *sattvā* is essence, one's nature or *svabhāva*. The two meanings—one historical and the other etymological—could be taken as

answering to Śāntideva's distinction between *gantuhkāma*, and *gantuh*, between one who desires to go to a destination, and one who is already on the way. The latter is one who has already set out on the journey, while the former is one who wishes to reach the goal, but does not make the required move. Similarly, to wish for the cultivation of *bodhicitta* is hardly enough. What matters is to take to the road. The distinction is subtle and should remind one of the distinction between *wish* and *will* in the Western moral psychology. The *prasthāncetaḥ* is a person of moral resolution, and *bodhisattva* is another.

The Buddhist ethics puts a value even for the wish it is not bereft of merit. As the *Gītā* has it, *svalpamysya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt* (II.40). Virtuous action, even if fractionally performed, rescues one from great fear. To be solicitous of and aspiring for *bodhicitta* is surely to have an edge over the *prthagjanāḥ*, the vulgar lacking even aspiration. To have *bodhipranidhicitta* is to go a way ahead, even though one may not be capable of cultivating and practicing all the *pāramitas*. As Kant had likened the goodwill to a jewel that shines in its own glory, Similarly, the awareness of *bodhicitta* does not lose its gem-like character, be it mounted on an ornament of precious metal, or remain by itself. A *śravaka* or a *pratyekabuddha* may not dedicate himself for removing the sorrows of all sentient beings, yet the awakened mind in him becomes instrumental in removing his mind's grasping at the objects of the empirical world. From the Mahāyāna point of view, *bodhicitta* is the adamantine germ, other virtues are subject to decay, or tend to lose their value but the value of *bodhicitta* is ever-abiding, proliferating ever more (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*, I.12). There is an admission of human weaknesses in the moral scheme of life. It could be impossible for one to perform *dānapāramitā* in a proficient manner, far less to speak of *prajñāpāramitā*, yet the arousal of *bodhicitta*, the moral intention to benefit others, should be greatly assuring for a weakling. A moral theory must also take into account the case of weak willing. In Western moral thought Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics and Epicureans attempted to cope with the recalcitrant forces of the passions. For many it has been natural to turn to philosophy for guidance. Many philosophers saw



it as a main part of the purpose of philosophizing to reach a view on how to achieve fulfilment in life. The Buddhist idea of *prajñā*, enlightening the practice of virtues, appears to be a variant of the aspiration of philosophy to help humans lead happy and worthwhile lives. But there is a difference too. The idea that philosophy can help us with how to live has come to be resisted on many a front. Few probably now expect much help from philosophers in the task of trying to live fulfilled lives. If people are miserable or find their lives in a mess, they are much more likely to turn to psychotherapy than to philosophy for guidance. It is worth exploring the characteristic modern loss of confidence in the power of ratiocentric philosophical system to cope with understanding the human predicament. The aspiration of philosophical reason to lay down a blueprint as to how we should live tends to run aground when trying to deal with that side of our human nature, which is largely opaque to the deliverances of reason, that affective side which has to do with the origins and operation of the emotions or passions. The concept of the unconscious is largely ignored by most moral philosophers. But the concept of the unconscious turns out to have profound implications for the traditional task of ethics to seek out the conditions for human fulfilment. The age-old problem of the relationship between reason and the passions is yet to be solved, and in that respect the Buddhist ethics promises to fair well. It holds on to the view that to act well one has to judge well, and whoever sins does so in ignorance. This view shares with Plato and Stoics the importance of an informed rational evaluation of our projects.

The opening elements a *bodhisattva's* life are far from transparent; there is an opacity of passions with which he begins his moral life. The *bodhisattva's* journey is one of trials and tribulations. The *bodhisattva's* penance as seen in the life of the Buddha himself, is an allegory for every man. Victory in morals is never easy, and it has to be won with vigilance, perseverance and indomitable will. There are temptations all the way that remain to be overcome. It is not that the *bodhisattva* does not fail or fall, what matters is that he does not give up. He is said to have a life, career or course (*caryā*) that continues through numerous re-births, animal

and human, a hundred thousand years have to go before one attains the *bodhi*. The chapter “*pāpadeśanā*” in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is a confessional to all intents. Tortured with remorse for having acted out of ignorance, the aspirant confesses that these unwholesome actions have proved to be suicidal for his moral self (verses 28-29 of II). Acting out of delusion one not only harms oneself, but he abets others in committing unwholesome acts. In the discourse of *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the journey of life is likened to walking over a precipice (verse 57), and calls for alertmindedness all the while, if one should like to escape a fall. In terms of another metaphor, the worldly existence is a disease, a sickness of ontological frustration. The moral language in therapeutic, and hence it prescribes unending vigilance. *Bodhi* dwells in those who exert themselves. Enthusiasm or *vīrya* is finding joy in what is wholesome. The virtues are to be protected against factors such as laziness, despondency, idleness, etc. The ontological frustration could be transformed into an opportunity for attaining *prajñā* (verse 23 of VII). Śāntideva contrasts *vīrya* and *māna*, enthusiasm with self-conceit. Self-conceit or self-importance or *māna* deludes one to posit an ego, which, in Kant’s phrase, is a transcendental illusion. *Vīrya* on the other hand, is not self-importance as *māna*, rather, it implies one’s confidence in the possible overcoming of disturbing conceptions, or *kleśas*, as they are called. One might recall Hume’s distinction between being proud and being vainglorious. Pride, as Hume defines it, has reasons to back it, while one who is vainglorious does not have reasons to support his point of pride.

The Buddhist moral philosophy, at least in Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, is spelt out in terms of the paradigms of *bodhicitta* and *prajñā*. The paradigms are psycho-ontological. In morality, aspiration is not less important than achievement. Morality begins in the mind, *sīla* and *pāramitās* are not matters of routine, they need to be infused with an aspiration that is authentic is so far as it is enlivened by an urgency for escaping the ontological frustration called *dukkha*.

We have raised the issue of the relation of philosophy with the good life. Now it remains to be seen how *prajñā* helps one achieve the end held in view with the arousal of *bodhicitta*.

Even according to the conservative statement, between *śīla* and *prajñā* there comes *samādhi*. Virtues are to be practiced in an unwavering fashion. Actions, according to the Buddhist moral psychology, originate in the mind in the form of desire to grasp at the objects of the senses. The basic intentional character of thinking has got to be trained to be reflexive. A mind grasping at objects is relationally transitive in its operation. The transitivity of mental operations has to be turned upon itself. Buddhist psychology recommends two modes of such inversion. *śamatha* and *vipaśyana*. *Śamatha* is defined as *cittaikāgra lakṣanāh samādhi*. It forms the first step towards pacifying agitations of mental states. The process could be likened to stilling the ripples from arising on the surface of a lake. The process may also imply that one has to strike at the root of the mental tendency of grasping at objects. There is a causality at work, the grasping at objects is explained in terms of *grāhyagrāhaka sambandha*. It is on account of the relation obtaining between the *grāhya* and the *grāhaka* that all existential sorrows originate. If the operation of the causal process is done away with, the sorrows and sufferings will come to an end. This is the Buddhist explanatory model *par excellence*. *Samādhi* could be understood as the power of keeping the *grāhya* and *grāhaka* asunder. The concept and the requirement of *samādhi* appear to follow from the general statement of the Buddha that action is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture which lead to the rebirth of a being. Action or *karma* is one of the contributory factors in the evolution of the human personality. Hence, it becomes imperative that wrong objects are not grasped, and get oneself bound in turn and frustration ensued. As *Śāntideva* puts the case, *viksiptacittastu narah kleśadamstrāntare sthitah* (VIII.I), a person of distracted mind dwells between the fangs of disturbing conceptions. Therefore cultivate detachment between the person-formers or *skandhas* as they are called. *Samādhi* collapses the supposed ontological continuum between the psyche and the world and the objects therein. In order to get away from frustrations and boredom of the world, the moral agent or the bodhisattva in the making has to be endowed with calm abiding, ushering joy therewith.

When the calm abiding matures into another poise of the mind, called *vipaśyana*, there occurs *yathābhūta tattvaparjñāsvabhāvah prajñā*. *Vipaśyana* is incisive insight that knows the nature of all phenomena. Prior to attaining *śamatha*, we keep pining for what is not. After the withdrawal from the objects of the senses, in the abiding calm, one is no longer distracted by conceptions, and restfully reflects upon the nature of the phenomena.

From the moral point of view, *vipaśyanā* brings about a new set of perceptions, rather insights. There may be stated as under:

- a. The phenomena are ephemeral, *anitya*, i.e., subject to *utpād* and *vyaya*. Phenomenality of existence consists in conditionality, whatever exists is *pratīyasamutpanna*, comes into existence owing to the presence of conditions, and passes out of being when the conditions are no longer there. Things are impermanent not because they are momentary, but because they are characterized by arising and passing away. This may be an empiricist account of change, but that does not rule out the possibility of a metaphysical or even mystical intuition of the given state of affairs.
- b. From the fact of impermanence of the world, it follows that all things are unsatisfactory, not worth desiring for. Ordinarily, the classic term *dukkha* is rendered as ‘ill’, ‘suffering’, ‘pain’ and so on, which may be correct in certain contexts. But there are other contexts, such as the one which states the five aggregates of grasping are *dukkha*, the term being obviously used in the sense of the unsatisfactory. The point is that the nature of man is such that he craves for eternal happiness, though the things from which he hopes to derive such happiness are impermanent to the core. Satisfaction derived from ephemeral things would surely be temporary and, therefore, fall short of one’s expectation, i.e., permanent happiness. Hence follows *suffering*. The things from which one tries to derive satisfaction may therefore, in the ultimate analysis, be *unsatisfactory*. Thus, it seems that human suffering is due to attachment (*moha*) to things that are themselves unsatisfactory.

- c. Yet there is a common denominator, that is, joy and suffering are common to all sentient beings. Contemplating on the human predicament the realistic of *parātmāsamatā* (VIII. 90) would dawn upon. The feeling of equality with other beings. And only then could one think of removing other's sufferings as eagerly as he would wish to remove his own. Avoidance of suffering and attainment of happiness is what marks off the domain of the sentient lot, *Parātmāsamatā* makes altruism possible. The moral motivation for alleviating the sufferings of others is possible only if one were convinced of the fact that all the different sentient beings, in their pleasure and pain, have a wish to be happy that is the same as mine. The conviction is to generate in course of constant unwavering meditation, *dhyānapāramitā*.

Śāntideva has offered arguments in support of the moral motivation for altruism, or the rationality of the Buddhist view of altruism. Here he touches the issue of practice philosophical ethics. It is to the problematic of his endeavour we may now turn. We propose later, of course, to examine his ontological position as regards the falsity of the two categories of the continuant (*Santāna*) and the whole (*Samudāya*), and see if, on his grounds, altruism should be possible.

### III. Buddhist Virtues: The *Pāramitās*

There is a sense in which Buddhist morality may be called bodhisattva morality and its virtues are the *pāramitās*. We shall endeavour to explain the efficiency of morality on the basis of the *bodhicitta*, which is identical in all beings, and show how it lays a foundation for the practice of sympathetic acts in the essential quality of the *bodhicitta*. This ethics, in conjunction with the teaching of the *pāramitās*, makes morality capable of being applied to various conditions of life. It has broadened the people's moral ideal so as to admit all beings to their spiritual communion, and to extend their sympathy toward even animals and plants.

Virtues and rules form the basis of practical ethics. It also involves the contradistinction between virtues and vices. Buddhist classification of virtues and vices are both binary and practical in intent. The point always is that one of them is present, the associated ones are to be enticed or guarded against.

There is the fundamental classification of Buddhist discipline: the three branches of *sikkhā* or morality (*śīla*), mental training (*samādhi* or *chitta*) and wisdom (*praññā* or *paññā*). This is clearly stated in the *Digha Nikāya* and the *Anguttara*. The three branches are to be assisted and accelerated mutually. Closely connected with this classification is the division of actions (*kamma*) into body (*kāya*), speech (*vācha*), and mind (*manas*). Among these the mental is the root of actions, but all the three have great influence upon another. Both for repression of the bad and for acceleration of the good, the three are associated and help mutually.

Let us consider the vices to be guarded against and, in doing so, we shall look back to the Pali sources. The radical vice of

human nature consists in egoism. Egoism manifests itself in lust (*kāma*), desire (*chhanda*) and intention (*adhippāya*). These passions manifest themselves in greed (*rāga*), seeking for pleasure, hatred (*dosa*) of pain, stupidity (*moha*), and hopeless indifference. These are cardinal vices, and are called the three roots of the bad (*akusala mūlāni*), depravities (*upakkilesa*). Without going into further subdivisions of the vices, it may suffice to say that they fetter, afflict, or stir the human mind, and incite one to commit bad actions. If we compare them with the vices enumerated in the *New Testament*, we notice that Buddhist classifications had more psychological analysis in view than the Christian, which is thoroughly practical. The Buddhist ones are called hindrances (*nīvarana*) or covers (*āvarana*). They are given different names according to the points of view from which these vices are said to fetter, afflict, or stir the human mind, and incite an individual to commit bad actions.

Now, coming to virtues and virtuous practices, we note that they are classified into groups and are called the divisions of the way, *mārgānga*. Virtues and virtuous practices are found arranged in seven groups, of which four may be described under the head of mental training, and the remaining three are groups of virtues combined with the methods of mental exercise. The virtues or *bala* are also called organs (*indriya*) of moral practice. Their practice consists in the Eight-fold Holy Way, *ariyamāgga*. The virtues or organs are faith (*sadhā*), exertion (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), contemplation (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*). The *Samyutta Nikāya*, (64.4) describes the virtues by similes, and one may recall St Paul's doing so in the *Epistles*. Among these, faith, contemplation and wisdom are the three cardinal virtues of Buddhism, and are included in every other group of virtues. To the five above, such virtues as shame (*hiri*) and fear of sinning (*ottappa*), or blamelessness or clear conscience (*anavajja*), sympathy or altruism (*saigha*), deliberation (*saikhā*), etc., are added. The practice of sympathy could be four-fold: alms giving, kind word, beneficial act and all-identification (*samānattatā*). These virtues, applied to practical life, make up the Eight-fold Way, which consists in the perfection of opinion (*ditthi*), decision (*sankappa*), speech (*vācha*), actions

(*kammanta*), livelihood (*ājīva*), effort (*vāyāma*), mindfulness (*sati*), and contemplation (*samādhi*). What needs to be noted that in these virtues, mental training plays a great part. Buddhism lays more emphasis on the intellectual side than has been done in Christianity. Buddhist virtues may be compared with Greek or Confucian virtues (such as wisdom, love and courage).

Buddhist virtues are the *pāramitās*, the virtues, which bring us to perfection or take to the other shore of *nirvāna*. The aim of Buddhist morality is to bring us to the attainment of saintship (*arahatta*) or to Buddhahood, to the final goal of perfect enlightenment. In this every virtue is a *pāramitā*. In *Pāli* texts, the term is applied exclusively to the moral acts of the Buddha in his past lives in preparation for his Buddhahood. In one of his earlier incarnations as the Brāhmin Sumedha, the future Buddha promised to himself to exercise the virtues, leading him to the attainment of Buddhahood (*buddhakāre dhamme*). As stated, the virtues are charity (*dāna*), morality (*śīla*), resignation (*nekkhamma*), wisdom (*paññā*), exertion (*virīya*), forbearance (*khanti*), truthfulness (*sacca*), persistency (*adhitthāna*), love (*metta*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*). It is significant that the way of virtues that lead to enlightenment is also called *pāramitāyāna*. The *Saddharmapundarīka* contains a resume' of the virtues, and is regarded in Mahāyāna as containing the three fundamental maxims of Buddhist morality: abiding in love to all elements (*sarva-sattva-maitri-vihāra*); the delight in an immense forbearance (*mahaksānti-sauratya*); and the entrance to the vacuity of all laws (*sarva-dharma-śūnyatā praveśa*). These virtues are called the footsteps of the Tathāgata, meaning thereby that the *pāramitās* are intended to be cultivated in a life that imitates the Tathāgata.

One who imitates the Tathāgata is a bodhisattva. Among the virtues of the bodhisattva more consideration is paid to those virtues that are other-regarding. The essence of sympathy or love is more prominent than others. This had been a very important point in the departure of the Māhāyana. The Hinayana egoism is often contrasted with the Māhāyana altruism. This need not be wholly true. There is, in fact, the difference between two ideals, that of the *arhat* and that of the *bodhisattva*. One sees in self-



culture the first requisite of morality, while the other insists on the necessity of altruistic actions and thoughts even for the sake of self-culture. This could be seen in the former lives of the Buddha. The Māhāyāna moral ideal lays special stress on the realization of the *bodhichitta*. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* opens with the chapter named *Bodhichittānuśaṃśā*, in praise of *bodhichitta*. That is the way of entering into the communion of the saints through the exercise of altruistic virtues. The ideal may be said to be an extension of the fundamental virtue of love or sympathy. The emphasis of this point gives rise to the important idea of dedication (*parināmanā*) of all merits and works for the sake of others. Accordingly, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* closes with the chapter on *parināmana*. The intention has been to lead others to the same enlightenment as one's own. Thus, it makes possible for all beings to help each other on the way to salvation and the realizing of the communion of spiritual fellowship.

It is often remarked that Buddhism teaches a two-fold system of morality, drawing a distinction between the laity and the monastic disciples. Of course the vow of taking refuge (*śaraṇa*) in the Three Jewels, *tri-ratna* and the Five Commandments are common to all members of the order. In The Sermon to Singālika (in *Digha Nikāya*, 31), a detailed description of worldly morality is given. But this is not specially Buddhist. The practice of filial piety, respect towards teachers and harmony between spouses are but generally human. There could be some point in the argument that to be perfectly moral all the conditions of the *śīla* should be fulfilled, and for the monastic life *anāgāra* is a necessary condition. It is also true that the Buddha recommended the life of an ascetic as the fittest for perfect morality. But the point that the householder's life (*sāgāra*) is not totally excluded from salvation also needs be noted. The Buddhist communion includes four classes of members, monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen. The four make up one body and are equally praiseworthy. The *Mahāvachchhagotta* episode in *Majjhima Nikāya* (73) tells us of a Brahman Vachchhagotta praising the Buddha's laws for their universal application to all his followers, without any distinction of the conditions of life. The *Samyutta Nikāya* (55, 54) states that no difference exists between a laymen and a monk,

when they had realized perfect purity. It may be safely said that the Buddha did not make a fundamental distinction between the two classes of his disciples as to the qualification of their moral and spiritual perfection. But it remains a fact that owing the nature of the Buddhist moral ideal, it can be attained with less difficulty by many be means of the homeless life than by householders. It may be recalled that St. Paul recommended, almost on similar grounds, celibacy to the followers of Christ. The pre-eminently monastic character of Buddhist morality would yet remain an issue at hand.

The Mahāyāna exalts lay life and the female sex. This may have been a consequence of the Bodhisattva ethics. If one takes the former lives of Śākyamuni as models of morality, then that should be at the same time every one's preparation for Buddhahood. The life of householders is no way then incompatible with the practice of the *pāramitās* and the attainment of *bodhi*. The Mahāyāna Buddhist communion consists of all kinds of beings, both human and angelic, including bodhisattvas and monks and ascetics. There are plastic representations of Bodhisattva Maitreya in Gandhara sculpture with garlands and other decorations as found in Bharhut and Sanchi. Both Bodhisattvas and lay-saints are exalted in Mahāyāna literature. One could mention the names of Vimalakirti and Śrīmālā. The former was a contemporary of the Buddha, and lived in Vaiśālī. The superiority of his moral perfection and dialectic power forms the subject of the *Vimalakirti-nirdeśa-śūtra*. Perfect practice of the *pāramitās* in the worldly life was his aim, for which he is said to have been highly praised by the Buddha. Again, Śrīmālā, the daughter of King Prasenjit, is well known in Pali books. She was imbued with the deep insight of Buddhist wisdom. Her bodhisattva vows, which she kept to perfection, and the dialogues between her and the Buddha serve to show the capacity of lay morality, when associated with true wisdom, to take up the essence of all the rules enjoined upon monks and nuns. Such has been the elevated and broadening character of the Mahāyāna morality. For Mahāyāna, the moral ideal consists in practicing all the precepts of morality, in their essence and spirit, regardless of the circumstances and conditions of life. *Tāhsien*, a Korean monk of the eighth century, shows the compatibility of lay morality with the highest ideal of

a bodhisattva in the following verse (The words being taken from various Mahayana texts and works of Nāgarjuna, Vāsubandhu, etc):

“His mother is wisdom (*praññā*), his father tactfulness (*upāya*), his kinsmen all beings, his dwelling place the vacuity (*śūnyatā*), his wife joy (*prīti*), his daughter love (*maitrī*), his son truthfulness (*satya*), and yet his household life makes him not attached to existence”.

The dialectic of moral ideals should now have our attention. The ideals of *arhat* and bodhisattva may be said to have given rise to the tending to self-seclusion on the one hand, and the daring emphasis on the sanctity of lay morality on the other. Even within Mahāyāna, a similar difference can be said to have arisen. The more quietistic morality came to be represented by the adorers of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and the activities for the salvation of all fellow beings by the followers of the *Saddharmapundarīka*.

Whatever be the case, the close connection of Buddhist morality with spiritual exercises can hardly be understated. Morality is enumerated side by side with contemplation. They form one whole. Wisdom is imperfect apart from moral practice.

The cardinal vice of human nature lies in egoism. It manifests itself most conspicuously in the attachment to sensual pleasures and in the fetters that bind our mind to various thoughts and impressions. There is the four-fold fixation of mind, *sati-patthāna*, which aims at the extirpation of egoism. The mind is fixed on the body (*kāya*), and its foulness, instability, etc. Then one has to think of the senses (*vedanā*) and of the pains and pleasures arising from them. Further, the mind (*citta*) is closely examined, and finally the ultimate nature of things (*dhamma*). In a similar manner in the exercise of the right exertion the aim is to prevent sinful conditions arising (*samvara*), to put them away when they have arisen (*pahāna*), to protect and cherish good conditions as they arise (*anurakkhā*), and lastly, to retain and develop good conditions in existence (*bhāvanā*). These qualities are arranged as follows: the mindfulness (*sati*) of all that is morally desirable; discrimination between things (*dhamma-vicaya*) good and bad; exertion (*vīrya*); joy (*prīti*) in what one has attained; satisfaction (*pasaddhi*); contemplation (*samādhi*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

A similar kind of meditation is extended to all beings, in order, firstly, to prepare in the mind, and then to practice, the virtues of love (*metta*), compassion (*karunā*), joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*). These go to bring about the great release of the mind (*ceto vimutti*).

The Buddhist system of virtues and the ideal of moral life are modelled on the person and life of the Buddha. The close association of the spiritual exercises and moral actions is shown in the personal example of the Buddha himself. He could be said to be a mystic visionary, but he lived fifty years of his ministry in constant activities. Significant were his activities as the teacher and benefactor of mankind, the Pali books record him visiting sick people, itinerating in the regions of pestilence, mediating combatants, consoling mothers afflicted by loss of children. He cared for the health of his disciples, instructed them in the number of meals to be taken, in the method of bathing, and even in the minutiae of using the toothpick. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* reiterates the points about etiquette as prescriptions under the head of *Samprajanyaraksana* (chapter V). The two sides of training: self-culture and actions found a perfect union in the person of the Buddha. This is a point worth remembering in the context of making any assessment of Buddhist ethics.

## The Bodhisattva and his Career

### I

The Bodhisattva ideal has come to be associated with Mahāyāna, even though the concept can be traced back to early Buddhism. But the flowering of the doctrine waited for the Mahāyāna writers. Early Buddhism upheld the twin ideals of *arhatva* and *nirvāna*. The Buddha's first disciples were called *arhats*, and he himself was described as one. His early teaching consisted of the Four Noble Truths, the Eight-fold Way and the transitoriness and non-substantiality of all constituents of human personality. The teaching was ethical from the beginning. An *arhat* was expected—among possessing other virtues and disciplines—to free himself from hatred, a root of evil. Its antidote was love. Hatred was looked upon as a fetter. Further, the *arhat* was to know well the four sublime states of love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, technically called, *maitri*, *karunā*, *muditā* and *upeksā*. Another important point is that the Buddha as he loved his fellow creatures and had pity on them, exhorted his disciples to wander and preach the truth for the welfare and liberation of the multitude, It could be that the monks had become self-centred and too contemplative and neglected the Master's ideal and teachings. It is conceivable that the Bodhisattva doctrine was promulgated as a protest against the lack of spiritual fervour and altruism among the monks. The Bodhisattva ideal requires to be understood against the background of spiritual selfishness that had become prevalent among the monks to the neglect of the gospel of saving all creatures. The *Dhammapāda* exalts the absence of hatred along with an attitude of contempt for the common people and remoteness from their interests. The

note of personal salvation without speaking of the duty of helping others rings through Pali literature. The ideal of *pratyekabuddha*, one who is enlightened by himself, aiming at the destruction of his own pain and sorrow, is met with in the *Milinda-Pañhā*. A *pratyekabuddha* dies without proclaiming the truth to the world. It must have been thought that one could be wise and holy through personal self-culture without fulfilling the equally important duty of teaching and helping suffering humanity. The Bodhisattva idea could have been taught to counteract the tendency to a cloistered and inert monastic life. A Bodhisattva criticizes and condemns the spiritual egoism of *arhats* and *pratyekabuddhas*. He is clearly distinguished from them.

The new ideal held that mere cessation of *dukkha*, pain and evil, was not enough. The earliest records of the Buddha's sermons do not mention the word *nibbāna*, what occurs there is *anuttara sammā sambodhi*, perfect supreme Enlightenment. The *arhat's* ideal did not include intellectual perfection and supreme Wisdom. There is the plausible view that the Bodhisattva ideal was promulgated as a protest against the theory of *arhatship*.

Bodhisattva is an ancient term. It occurs in the *Yoga Sūtras* (I. 47) and is also as old as the Pali *Nikāyas* (*Majjhima*, I. 17.6 and *Samyutta*, II, 5, 8). It may be taken to suggest both existence and the struggle implied by it as a moral ideal. The bodhisattva is a heroic being, a spiritual warrior. The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* declares that a bodhisattva does not take delight in the idea of *nirvāna*. Rather, he is averse to it, *nirbāna vimukhen vihāratavyam*. Yet he has Buddhahood as his goal. For Mahāyāna, *bodhi* is the most important component of the concept of bodhisattva. The ideal of the *arhat* may be accommodated in the preliminary stages of a bodhisattva's career; even the ideal remains unattainable without *prajñāpāramitā*, which alone can destroy the fetters that the *arhat* seeks to free himself from. What is of importance is that the two ideals are described in two different sets of words, so radically different was the new ideal.

If the *arhat* is a meditative ascetic, the bodhisattva is more compassionate and active. His body and mind are suffused by friendliness (*maitrī*) for all creatures. The words like 'friendliness'

and ‘liberator’ (*santāraka*) do not occur in the passage that describes an arhat in the *Saddharmapundarīka* (2, II). The text goes on to further state that the arhats and pratyeka buddhas exert themselves for *ātma-parinirvān-hetoh*, while the *bodhisattvas* aspire to the attainment of *bodhi* for the welfare and happiness of many beings. They wish to help all creatures to obtain liberation (*sarva-sattva-parinirvāna-hetoh*) because they love and pity the whole world, and their wisdom serves to liberate all beings. The good of others (*parārtha*) and the good of one’s own self (*svārtha*) divide the two classes of the saints.

It is not only the spiritual goal of *nirvāna* that a bodhisattva helps all beings to attain, but also to obtain the material advantages of happiness and welfare in the world. The old ideal was austere and unworldly, while the new ideal was greatly humane. Again, since a bodhisattva wishes to help all beings to attain *nirvāna* he, therefore, refuses to enter it himself, for he cannot any longer render any services to others after his own *nirvāna*. This is his great sacrifice for others.

*Bodhi* and Buddhahood are integral elements of the Bodhisattva ideal. In Buddhist thought, *bodhi* signifies supreme knowledge or Enlightenment. Two qualifying adjectives are commonly associated with *bodhi*, namely *samyak* (right or perfect) and *anuttarā* (unsurpassed). The usual appellation is *anuttarā-samyak-sambodhi*. The prefix *sam* brings out the excellence and completeness of a *bodhi*. It is *sambodhi* that is the *summum bonum* of a Bodhisattva, and it is equivalent to omniscience. *Bodhi* is incomprehensible for the ratiocinative intellect; it will suffice to say that *bodhi* is pure, universal and immediate knowledge, it is absolute and identical with Reality and Suchness (*tathatā*) and embraces all that exists. It is this wisdom that a bodhisattva seeks. *Bodhi*, in short, is *Buddhajñāna*, knowledge of a Buddha.

The definition of a Buddha also states that he is distinguished from others by his deep and great pity, love, mercy and compassion for all beings (*karunā*). *Karunā* is the great word that keeps recurring in Mahāyāna literature. A Buddha is endowed with *mahākarunā*. The *Mahā-Vyutpatti* discusses a Buddha’s *karuṇā* under thirty-two aspects. But it had been argued, as we are informed

by the *Kathavatthu*, that a Buddha could not feel compassion, since he was free from all passion or *rāga*. This view is vigorously combated by Mahāyāna. It would be a sacrilege to hold that a Buddha should lack the perfection of feeling that *karunā* stands for. And more importantly, a bodhisattva, in aspiring for Buddhahood, would naturally emulate the attitude of compassion preceding his altruistic actions.

In the history of Buddhism—considered as a faith and religion—the bodhisattvas culminated in the apotheosis of Avalokitesvara, a Saviour, with *Tārā* in importance. They were looked upon as possessing or endowed with super-human powers, just as the Master himself. They become Buddha-makers, in helping others to acquire Buddhahood, while themselves remaining eternal *Bodhisattvas*.

We may distinguish two phases in the development. In the early Mahāyāna, *prajñā* and *karuṇā* were considered equally important. A bodhisattva was required to have both wisdom (*jñāna sambhāra*) and merit (*punya sambhāra*). But there was an emphasis on *prajñā* as being somewhat more important. The glorification of *prajñā* reached its climax in the Mādhyamika school founded by Nagarjuna, while *karunā* was as a little profaned. But the later Mahāyāna, being more emotional than argumentative, appears to ignore *prajñā*, and declared *karunā* as the one thing needful for a bodhisattva. The point is that the ethical ideal of the bodhisattva, in course of time, was transformed into the adorable saviour Avalokitesvara. As a matter of living faith, the quest of *bodhi* was relegated to the background, while active altruism came to be regarded as an end in itself. A bodhisattva personifying *karunā* is Avalokitesvara. He is the Lord of Mercy, and occupies the supreme position in the religious life of Mahāyāna.

Any great religion is never a static or dead formula of salvation and ethics, it is always a living, dynamic, self-evolving and self-adjusting spiritual movement. The history of Mahāyāna shows it disambiguously. The bodhisattva doctrine, it is held, rightly perhaps, was the necessary outcome of two movements namely, the growth of *bhakti*, meaning devotion, faith and love, and the idealization and spiritualization of the historical Buddha. *Bhakti* was earlier directed towards the Buddha, but his utter transcendence



rendered him unsuitable for the pious as the object of adoration. A bodhisattva is always with us with his compassion to redeem our sorrows and suffering. Some such deep feeling projected the bodhisattvas as the religiously adorable ones for the faithful. As a technical religious term, *bhakti* had been an integral part of Buddhist ideal from the earliest times. The *Theragāthā* speaks of it. It is also there in the Pali *Nikāyas*. Another term of equivalent import is *śraddhā*, and it has been important too. Faith in the Buddha is declared to be essential for spiritual development of the monks and the laymen. One takes refuge first in the Buddha, and then in the Doctrine (*Dharma*) and the Co-fraternity (*Sangha*). It was the greatness of the Buddha's personality that would have given rise to the cult of *bhakti* for him. The disciples of a teacher, wise and virtuous, come to love and revere him personally, even though he should modestly declare, as the Buddha did, that his personality was of no importance. It is the personality of the teacher that secures the triumph of a religious movement. His ideas and teachings shine in the light of his person. Even the metaphysicians of the *Upanisads* were not as great as the Buddha as teacher with an irresistible influence of personality. Again, for a religion to develop, logic is not enough, the human heart cannot be denied its rights.

In and through the decades and centuries, the Buddha lost his personality as a result of universalization, or reification, and became the cosmic law or *Dharma*. Hence there was the need—in the place of a remote metaphysical Buddha—for a charitable, patient and compassionate bodhisattva. He appeared as a more humane and lovable figure. He could be prayed to for health, wealth and mundane blessings. Buddhahood was too distant a goal. The *bodhisattvas*, thus, came to be chosen for worship and adoration, and fulfil the needs of the devout and pious followers of the Buddha's way.

The development from the Buddha to bodhisattva also maps also the flowering of an ideal. In the earlier history of Gautama Buddha, we have a charitable, patient and wise bodhisattva. The tendency towards *bhakti* together with the new conception of *Buddhahood* came to have the inevitable outcome in the Bodhisattva doctrine. The followers of Hinayāna did not de-humanize and universalize

the Buddha; and as a result, they also did not feel the necessity of projecting and adoring the bodhisattvas. The emergence of saint-worship in Islam and Christianity had similar causes as led to the cult of bodhisattvas in Buddhism.

But it should not be forgotten that a bodhisattva personifies the virtues and attributes of Goutama Buddha's personality. The epithets, once applied to Goutama Buddha were converted into the names of *Bodhisattvas*. The two chief *Bodhisattvas* of the Mahāyāna pantheon, Manjuśrī and Avalokitesvara are personifications of *prajñā* and *karunā*. Maitreya typifies *maitrī* or friendliness. The great Teacher was spoken of as *Samantato bhadraka*, i.e. excellent or auspicious in all ways. Latter in history, a bodhisattva came to be known as *Samantabhadra*.

We may have noticed in the meanwhile that a religion is defined and distinguished by its spirit or typology as it is now called in the phenomenology of religion. In that respect, the early and the later Mahāyāna can be easily distinguished in terms of the difference of spirit. Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu attached equal importance of *prajñā* and *karunā*, and even stressed the former more than the latter. Compared to that Śāntideva could be said to profane *prajñā*, even though there is an entire chapter on it in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. His ideal of perfection is different from that of the earlier teachers of doctrine. It would make no sense in likening the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* to Thomas á Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, which is more Christian in spirit than Śāntideva's manual is Buddhist in respect of Buddhism being a way to the attainment of *bodhi*.

## II

What makes one a bodhisattva? Which event converts an ordinary individual into a bodhisattva? According to the *Daśa-bhūmika-Sutra*, the production or arousal of the thought of *bodhi* marks the turning point in a bodhisattva's career. This arousal of the aspiration is called *cittotpāda*. Śāntideva, belonging to the later phase of Mahāyāna, opens the issue of *cittotpāda* in a devotional manner. He sings a hymn of love and adoration for the Buddhas

and the great *bodhisattvas* in order to attain to the *cittotpāda*. Let us hear him:

*Buddham gacchāmi śaranain*  
*Yāvadābodhi mandatah,*  
*Dharma gacchāmi śaranain*  
*Bodhisattvaganam tathā*

Translated, the verse (II. 26) is a supplication that he takes refuge in all Buddhas until he possesses the essence of awakening. Likewise, he seeks refuge in *Dharma* and in the assembly of *bodhisattvas*. It may be noticed that Śāntideva mentions a few *bodhisattvas* by name, besides Avalokiteśvara, of these one is Manjuḥso. The word was used earlier as an epithet to describe the Buddha's voice, but by the time of Śāntideva it had become the name of a bodhisattva. The verse quoted above is significant in another way. The three cardinal refuges are mentioned in the Mahāyāna fashion. There occurs the group of the *bodhisattvas* for the old term *Saṅgha*. The Buddha and his *Dharma* are mentioned in a direct manner.

Śāntideva strikes a novel note by means of a piece of confessional verse. *Pāpadeśanā* is a hitherto unencountered with in Buddhism, either Himayāna or Mahāyāna. The two classes of sins that he confesses are *Praktisāvadya* and *Prajñāptisāvadya*. To the former class belong the sins committed through ignorance and unknowing, and to the latter those that are the results of breaking a vow. The two classes of sin together constitute unwholesome (*akuśala*) actions, and these are to be refrained from on entering the Buddha's way. Then Śāntideva calls on the *bodhisattvas* to save him. He says that he is consumed with remorse for his transgressions through body, speech and mind. This is *de profundis* of a Buddhist monk. But the question is, is not the ideas of sin, of confession, repentance and extraneous protection alien to the spirit of Buddhism? The Master had exhorted his followers to redeem themselves by their own efforts, by remaining ever vigilant over their mental states. Then what about the law of Karma? Does the law come to be relaxed in favour of an alternative device to escape pain and attain felicity? Repentance and confession are held to absolve the sinner

from the sin and its punishments, and this is to be met with only in later Buddhist literature.

The last stage on the way of one's becoming a bodhisattva *cittotpāda* is described as *parināmanā*, i.e., the application of one's merit to the welfare of all, including renunciation of one's body, or of oneself, *ātma bhavādi parityāgah*. *Cittotpāda* and *parināmanā*, taken together, reveal the spirit that animates and inspires the one who would become a bodhisattva. Since Śāntideva speaks in the first person, he brings us into touch with the living soul of the Bodhisattva ideal instead of enumerating lists of his qualities and powers. The verses of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* are magnificent as a canticle of love and charity. The *Parināmanā* chapter (X) is a remarkable declaration of altruism and self-denial. The verses 52 to 57 are especially significant and greatly moving. The verse 55 excels as poetry as well.

*Ākaśasya sthitiryāvad yavacca jagatah sthiti,  
Tavanmama sthitirbhūyāj jagadduhkhāni nighnatah*

For as long as space endures, and as long as living beings remain, until then may I too abide to dispel the misery of the world.

### III

*Bodhicittotpāda* is a decisive step in the career of a bodhisattva. At the level of aspiration, *bodhicittotpāda* marks the perceiving or forming an idea of *bodhi* in the mind. The compound term *bodhicitta* is simply the thought of *bodhi*. Apropos of the bodhisattva doctrine, *bodhicitta* is a technical term. To resolve to become a bodhisattva in order to help and save all creatures is itself a precious achievement. One could compare it to what Kant speaks of the goodwill. Mercy, love and compassion are at the root of the *bodhicitta*, the thought of Enlightenment. A bodhisattva produces this thought in himself for his own good and for the welfare and liberation of all living beings. With this resolve, one becomes a bodhisattva. The concept of *bodhicitta* appears in the form of a prayer in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. The two *ālambanas* or

causative props of the thought are *bodhi* and *sattvartha*, the good of the living beings.

The state of mind inclined towards attaining *bodhi* is of such immense value and importance that Śāntideva goes to the extent of suggesting that it is capable of annulling all sins and transgressions of one's past, rendering even the law of *karmā* infractuous. It should not be taken in a literal sense. It is, in point of fact, an *arthavāda*. The state of mind, *bodhicitta*, is praised so highly just in order to bring home the idea of its purity and freedom from egotism, *Bodhicitta* thus is a root of merit, *kuśala-mūla*.

*Bodhicitta* is not an ineffectual resolve, it entails responsibility. If it be mere resolution then it is simply wish and desire. Such a state of mind is called *bodhi-pranidhi-citta*. This does not lead to liberation, it can turn back or regress, either temporarily or irrevocably. But there is another species of *bodhicitta*, called *bodhi-prasthān-citta*, the state of mind which is actually on the way or starting towards *bodhi*. The distinction between the modes of *citta* may be taken to correspond to the distinction between mere *wish* or desire and *will*. An act of will calls forth all the powers at its command to execute the action willed.

Two further terms used by Śāntideva for the two posies of *bodhicitta* are self-explanatory. The *bodhipranidhicitta* is *gantukāmah*, that is desirous to move or undertake the journey towards *bodhi*. On the other hand, the *bodhiprasthān citta* is *gantuh*, it is already on the move. There is obviously a qualitative difference between these two, but the very arousal of the *bodhicitta* is of immense spiritual moment. Prajñākaramati, in his *Parjñikā*, has quoted from an earlier text saying that *bodhicitta* in itself, or intrinsically speaking, is the seed (*vīja bhutam*) of all the qualities of the Buddha (*sarva Buddha dharmanām*). He compares it to the mythical gem (*cintāmani*) that at once bestows every boon (*sarvārtha sam sādhanataya*). Even though the distinction of the aspiring mind and the venturing mind persists, yet the benevolent intention is not without its own excellence and value.

## IV

The bodhisattva is a possible ideal. Even a worldly person, with proper predisposition, can acquire the *bodhicitta*. Once the *bodhicitta* is attained, it remains to be rendered firm and adamant. This calls for *caryā*. The word *caryā* denotes the whole duty of a bodhisattva, all that he has to do. *Caryā* covers his complete discipline and career. The idea of *caryā* was subsequently amplified into *bhūmis* or stages which a bodhisattva progressively occupies. Such *bhūmis* are spoken of in different treatises. The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* summarizes the *caryās* into four beginning with *bodhi-paksa-caryā*, the principles conducive to Enlightenment running through *pāramitācaryā*. Śāntideva concentrates on the practice of *pāramitās*.

The perfection of the *pāramitās* takes an incredibly long pilgrimage. A bodhisattva cultivates the right mindfulness. *Smṛti* is the *sine qua non* of moral progress for him. *Smṛti*, it may be noted, is reckoned as the seventh of the eight items of the Eight-fold Way. *Smṛti* implies being vigilant and ardent. It is never to falter and disappear. Śāntideva has described, analyzed and classified *smṛti* in the fifth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. There are four fields of mindfulness, and accordingly, *smṛti* should be applied to the body, feelings, thoughts and the phenomena. Śāntideva speaks of the body and mind, *kāya* and *citta* together. There occur *viparyāsas*, four in number, corresponding to the four fields of *smṛti* as and when vigilance is absent. *Viparyāsa* may be taken in the sense of perversions. Meditations on the four fields of *smṛti* are antidotes of the four *viparyāsas*. Vāsubandhu has remarked that the four meditations help a bodhisattva to understand the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-fold Way, and they promote the cultivation of the *pāramitās*. In short, a bodhisattva has to guard him against the four possible errors in looking at the life and the world.

The bodhisattva should see the body within the body. He is a *kāye kāyānudarśī*. According to the Buddhist view, the body is to be condemned, reviled and despised as the source of evil, filth and sin. Its only value lies as an instrument of altruistic service and final perfection. The body is a merely composite structure; it cannot

be really said to exist, as the name corresponds to no reality. The body is the outcome of one's past actions. The diatribe against the body and meditations on its intrinsic vileness, prepare a bodhisattva for self-sacrifice. He regards the body as impermanent. But there is also a constructive idea about the body. One's body could be conceived as a boat, a support for coming and going, and in order to benefit all others, it can be transformed into a wish-fulfilling body. Śāntideva concedes that the body will have to be paid its wages, and thus engage it in making life meaningful (see verses 69-70, chapter V, *Samprajanyarakṣaṇa*). A bodhisattva should be indifferent to the body and even to his life.

We come now to mindfulness in respect of *vedanā*. It is something which is both feeling and sensation. The Tibetan pictorial representation of the twelve *nidānas* has a couple of lovers, as symbol of *vedanā* and this is suggestive of feeling, and not mere sensation. The Buddhist does not regard feeling and sensation as mutually exclusive terms. If one has to make sense of *vedanā* as a field of mindfulness, it should be interpreted as "feeling". Speaking of mindfulness in respect of sensations does not make much sense.

In practicing mindfulness with regard to feeling, the bodhisattva learns to restrain and control all feelings. Happiness is possible when feeling does not exist. In terms of the Buddhist analysis, feeling can be either pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant. The bodhisattva prescribes the negative attitude towards feeling and tries to sublimate the three kinds of feelings into universal compassion. He reflects upon his feelings in such a manner as to feel deep compassion for all creatures, and keeps his control over such negative feelings as *rāga* (sensual desire), *dveṣa* (hate or ill-will) and *moha* (delusion). He notices that people's hearts are darkened by such emotions, positive and negative, and pities them. He abides poised in neutral feeling, *upeksā*, calm and serene. He comprehends, abiding in this manner, that there is no enduring self behind the feelings, no Ego that feels. Feelings do not have a locus, nor do they have a owner, *asvamikāni*, as Śāntideva puts it (VIII, 102). Again, pleasures and painful feelings can only be distinguished at a secondary level. The point of distinguishing

pleasure from pain is raised in IX, 88-90, and it is argued that pleasure, improperly co-called, is a subtler form of pain. At base, they are indistinguishable, and suffering abides as the reality of feeling.

The bodhisattva applies mindfulness to *citta* or mind as well. The mindfulness as regards to the body is external, but as for the feelings, it is internal, while for *citta*, it is both external and internal. This is what constitutes a bodhisattva's *citta smṛtyupasthāna*. In the Buddhist philosophy of mind, the word '*citta*' is always used in the singular. It is held to be luminous in nature, like *ākāśa*. At least such has been Vāsubandhu's teaching. Other writers, of course, regard *citta* as produced and conditioned by external objects, perceived by the senses. The debate concerning the relationship between knowledge and its objects need not detain us. The illusory and non-existent nature of *citta* is derived from its being related to Time, which is ever-fleeting. The past is gone, the future is still unborn, and the present cannot stand still. If *citta* is dependent on Time, then it must be unreal and impossible. The relation of *citta* and the external world too would lead one to a similar conclusion. Śāntideva constructs a dilemma on the vexed issue of *subject* and *object* of knowledge. If *citta* exists prior to the object, on what does its origination depend? And if it arises with the object, the same question would surface again. The problem is insoluble. Furthermore, self-cognition too is impossible, mind cannot be introspected, analogically speaking, just as a sword-blade cannot cut itself (IX. 18). Hence, the *citta* does not exist, it is false notion, and an illusion. So does a bodhisattva look upon *citta*.

And as for the *dharmas*, a bodhisattva looks upon them (the word, in this context, is used in the plural) just as they are. He is *dharmasu dharmānudarsi*. By *dharmāh*, we are to understand 'phenomena'. Along with *kāya*, *vedanā* and *citta*, mindfulness is to be directed towards the phenomena. Having reflected on the elements of his personality (the body, the feelings and the mind) a bodhisattva will now turn his thoughts towards the outer world in general. Thus, both the Ego and the non-Ego are included in the operations of mindfulness. This is the natural climax, and it completes the entire practice of *samyaksmṛti*.



Mindfulness to the phenomena makes a bodhisattva realize that they are adventitious and merely accidental adjuncts of space. They arise from causes and are thus relative and inter-dependent. The Buddhist analyzes the phenomena in terms of *hetu* and *pratyaya*. In themselves they are unintelligible. The thesis of *pratītyasamutpāda* implies that the phenomena do not arise or originate in and through themselves. They are *hetupratyaya sāpekṣa*. This is the *ajātivāda* formulated by Nāgarjuna in the *Mādhyamika Kārikā* (I.1). Whatever it be, a bodhisattva realizes that the phenomena are void within and without, they do not really do exist. And if at all they exist, they exist only in terms of the *samvrti* mode of being, they are *pratītyasamutpanna*. A bodhisattva, by mindfulness, will guard himself against every possible delusion, physical, mental and the worldly. *Smṛti* consists of a two-fold discriminatory meditation or mindfulness. Śāntideva calls them *kāyacittaviveka* (VIII. 2). As a moral agent, a bodhisattva is absolutely free, since he remains *ayukta* (VII. 100), without having a sense of the Ego, nor its alleged objects. A state such as this is not easy to attain.

## V

A bodhisattva's life is a struggle. He has to strive, put forth energy, control his mind, and exert himself well. Following the image of the spiritual warrior given by Aśvaghosa, a bodhisattva fights his enemies in the form of the sins and passions and ascends gradually to the stages of spiritual growth.

Without going into the theological accounts of a bodhisattva's achievements, we may note that he has to guard himself against a host of possible faults of characters (*kleśas*) and more metaphysical and fundamental sins and errors (*āsravas*). He has to eradicate or even destroy them. He lives in the world of *āsravas*, but he is not soiled and polluted by it. He is, thus, in the world but not of it. He works in and for the world of sin and sorrow, but transcends it in spirit. This is a bodhisattva's glory and his duty. The *Samyutta-Nikāya* image of such abiding of the bodhisattva is worth quoting in this context: "as a blue, red, or white lotus, though born in the water, grown up in the water, when it reaches the surface stands

there unsoiled by the water, even.... a Truth-finder though grown up in the world, having overcome the world, live unsoiled by the world?"

A bodhisattva is not going to be a sorrowful person. *Priti* is to become one of his mental content. It is one of the indispensable qualifications of a bodhisattva. He is faultless in etiquette, soft-spoken and bears the smiling countenance as of a good friend. These form a part of his discipline concerning protection of *citta* (V. 18. Śāntideva devotes the entire chapter in elaborating the manners and etiquette becoming of a bodhisattva). It may be recalled the *maitrī* or friendliness is a disposition to be cultivated as a mode of great abiding or *brahma vihāra*. One of the *brahma vihāras* is *upeksā*, the poise of unbiasedness or equanimity.

*Upeksā* is an important term in Buddhist philosophy. It is said to be an excellent state of mind, and one is admonished to preserve it in all circumstances, in joy and sorrow, in fame and obloquy, and in gain and loss. The *Bhāgavad Gītā* mentions such a state of mind as one of the marks of the *sthitaprajña* person. *Upeksā* is rightly counted as a perfection or *pāramitā*. A bodhisattva cultivates *upeksā* as a factor of Enlightenment. Equanimity is neutral between pleasure and pain, and as such a bodhisattva, thus poised, can endure pain in the service of others. This marks a transvaluation. The alchemy of altruism transmutes evil into good. It may not be exceptional to say that with the ideal of the bodhisattva the centre of gravity shifts from *dukkha* to *karunā*, and the four Truths of existence no longer remains the central doctrine of Mahāyāna religion.

## The Motivational Context of *Maitrī* and *Karuṇā*

To ask for the motive of a certain course of action or an attitude is to ask for the reason that puts the action in the light of a generalizable schema. There cannot be explanations without reasons. Viewed in this manner, motive is a backward-looking cause, while intention for doing something, contrastingly, is forward-looking. In one case we resort to the ‘because of’ model of explanation, in another, there comes the ‘with a view to’ model.

*Maitrī* (friendliness) and *karuṇā* have been extolled as virtues of great merit since ancient times, in both orthodox and Mahāyāna dispensations. It is worth one’s while to ask, why *maitrī*? and why *karuṇā*? What are their motivational context?

Exegetical accounts of the four great abidings or *brahmavihāras* are more or less known widely, but what is not known, as it should have been, is Tsong-kha-pa’s deliberations on *maitrī* and *karuṇā* in the bodhisattva section of his great work *Lam Rim Chen Mo*. It is a classic and a treasure of ethics. Śāntideva has been one of Tsong-kha-pa’s masters, and in order to getting to know the motivational contexts of *maitrī* and *karuṇā*, it makes sense to go to the Tibetan master thinker.

Like the Kantian idea of spontaneity of the rational faculty, we notice a similar notion of altruism on the part of ethicized consciousness of morally perfect persons, bodhisattvas or the Buddhas. Altruism, for them, is no individual’s aim at all. It is a matter of human perfection to exert oneself to work for others. Engaging oneself in the aim of others *per se* distinguishes the ethical mode of Mahāyāna. There is the thought to be generated

(*bodhicitta*) and then practicing a career (*caryā*). The thought and magnanimity of conduct mark the *bodhisattva-yāna*.

Mahāyāna is not a quiescent view of life, it inculcates activism. Enlightenment (*bodhi*) and altruism (*parātha*) are the two aims (*arthaka*) of the bodhisattva's career. Tsong-kha-pa looks up to Candrakīrti's assertion in the Madhyamakāvatāra that compassion is the beginning, the middle, and the end of Mahāyāna. A bodhisattva accepts as one's own burden to give happiness to, and rid suffering in all the sentient: "One should tie the heart to the burden... and carry it by oneself". Compassion is to be made part of one's nature.

Tsong-kha-pa deliberates on *upeksā* in a greater detail and prescribes evenness of thought towards sentient beings. One has to cut out the one-sidedness of attraction to some beings and aversion to others. Evenness of thought or *upeksā* is three-fold: motivational (*sanskāra-upeksā*), feeling impartiality (*vedanā-upeksā*), and boundless impartiality (*apramāna-upeksā*). The guiding principle is derived from Kamalaśīla's adage: "Since all the sentient beings equally desire happiness and do not desire suffering, it is not proper to be close to some, providing them benefit, and to be distant from others, harming them." Śāntideva's prescription of *parātma-samātā* (VIII. 90) encapsulates this resonating idea.

As for the cultivation of *maitrī*, the meditative object or *ālambana* is the unhappy sentient being. The thought, "May that person meet with happiness", is the mental aspect, which is accompanied by the resolve, "I must make him meet with happiness." No piety or sincere surrender would ever excel the merit of this thought. The steps of cultivating love are first its cultivation towards one's kinsfolk, then its cultivation toward enemies, after that, its cultivation toward all the sentient beings. The practice is needed, and the idea is that love is never empty as it is always directed towards sentient beings in sorrow.

The meditative object of *karuṇā* is the sentient beings in misery. The sequence of cultivation is the contemplation first of one's kinsfolk, next the neutrals, and then the enemies, and at the same time of equipoise of the mind towards enemies in the manner of kinsfolk, one gradually also contemplates all the sentient beings in all directions.

Tsong-kha-pa has followed Kamalaśīla's suggestion for distinguishing the objects of impartiality, love and compassion. The intentionality of the mental states, based upon distinguishing the meditation objects, renders the contemplative praxis effective, and not merely a semblance of love. What is important is the linkage of thought and resolution. It is not enough to think with love and compassion. One needs to generate the love and compassion that are capable of drawing forth the resolve to perform the benefit and happiness of all the sentient beings. And more importantly, the thought (*bhāvanā*) is not to be an isolated ritual, it has got to be cultivated toward all sentient beings at all times.

Tsong-kha-pa refers to Śāntideva's notion of *parātma-parivartanā* (VIII. 120), exchanging one's own happiness with the suffering of another, viewing oneself like another and another oneself. The interchange requires exchanging the two attitudes, namely, attitude of holding the other as oneself, and neglecting oneself as though one were the other. One is exhorted to regard oneself and the other to be a mutual notion. To have Tsong-kha-pa's metaphor, the mutuality is like the other side and this side of a mountain, and *not* like this side and the other side of a river (as Śāntideva had said in *Śikṣāsamuccaya*). One might recall Descartes' metaphor of a mountain and its valley in this context of mutuality. Tsong-kha-pa had argued in the possibility of the exchange of the attitudes in the following manner: Oneself is a mental series and the corporeal group is momentary, they lack self-nature. The viewing of oneself as dear has been a matter of habit through numberless life-cycles, and, hence, "There is not tolerance when one's own suffering occurs. Similarly, if one repeatedly holds another as dear, there is also non-tolerance when his suffering occurs". Therefore, one should not hold to one's own side and not uphold another direction. The point is that self-serving thoughts have so far brought about suffering. The imperative that follows is that one should always exercise to benefit the sentient beings. The motivational context of empathy with the suffering of others then lies in the fact that equity is not self-evident, it is only disclosed in relativity with the other, and the aeons long search for happiness

for oneself has only brought in unceasing suffering, Self-serving thoughts have been harmful and, hence, one should exercise to benefit the sentient beings.

There is another text of singular importance, and that is by Nāgarjuna, the *Prajñā-paramitā-upadeśa-śāstra*. It was translated by Kumārajīva into Chinese as *Ta-chih-tu-lun*. The original Sanskrit is lost and it is extant only in that language. However, I shall glean Nāgarjuna's ideas as they are presented in Venkata Ramanan's work on that text, and consider the motivational context of the Buddhist virtues of love and compassion.

Nāgarjuna presents three motivational contexts of love and compassion which encompass the entire range of material and spiritual fulfilments of human happiness and well-being. He summarizes them as follows: (a) the love and compassion that is motivated by the similarity of one's self with other selves. This is termed *satta-ālambana*, and may be taken as *parātma-samatā* that Śāntideva speaks of. (b) The love and compassion that is motivated by the sameness of the psycho-physical elements which forms the basis of human existence, i.e., five *skandhas*, and is designated as *dharma-ālambana*; and (c) the love and compassion that is motivated by neither of these two contexts, i.e., independent of motivational context. This is the *anālambana* state, a spontaneous overflow of *maitrī* and *karuṇā*.

As for the first motivational context, i.e., the *satta-ālambana* context, it is important to note that *ālambana* is an epistemic term to signify the object to be experienced by sense faculties. Human love falls into such affectional systems as maternal love, peer love, heterosexual love, parental love, etc. These are the basic bonds of love, and may be taken as foundational to human interaction that create the bonds of family, neighbourhood, community and society. It develops ethical principles or normatives of action that regulate human interaction at all levels of human organization. Neighbourly love is a universal phenomenon, almost a self-evident moral principle. But one rightly may ask for its justification as a norm in practical ethics. The Buddhist answer to the question would be that since one's self is dearest to every person, and that

the love of one's self is common to all, it follows that no one would wish to be harmed by another, and neither would anyone wish to harm anyone else on account of the similarity. This mode of explanation does not need any metaphysical or theological principle to serve as a foundation of neighbourly love. What is required is the admission of the fact that one's self and the self of others are the same, equally giving rise to suffering and rejoicing in their very humanness.

The Buddhist thesis or outlook appears at the stage of *dharma ālambana* context. Given the insight of non-self, an individual person is a construction, a composite entity comprising multiple phenomenal elements. There is nothing that abides as any core substance like "self". The "self" is a fictitious designation. Viewed in the light of *dharmas* (the word now being used in the plural), there is no longer an individual person in the wider and universal landscape of physical, biological and mental data. One may recall the fact that in Spinoza's metaphysical schema, the *modes* get cancelled at the stage of the *attributes*. The orthodox dispensation of Buddhism celebrates this manner of seeing on the part of the *arhat*. He is liberated and independent of affective and intellectual and, therefore, of social and cultural entrapments, and sees only the *dharmas* at work. Could we take it as the message of the Buddha's first turning of the Wheel of the Law?

The Mahāyāna mode of looking at the matter is at variance with the orthodox view. There has been a tradition of locating a *second* turning of the Wheel at such *Sūtras* as the *Prajñāhṛdaya*. In point of fact the reality of empirical self is negated by exposing only the *dharmasvabhāva*, the reality of the psycho-physical elements. A human person is rendered as unreal as a cart constructed, and given just a name. By a second move in the history as of Buddhism, the Mahāyāna insight of *śūnyatā* repudiated even the reality of the psycho-physical elements, and it went down in history as *dharma-niḥsvabhvatā*. In a way, Buddhism retained its dynamism by combating the natural human tendency in order to create dogma. The dual structure of the transcendent and the phenomenal along with the negations surfaced with the insights expressed as *prajñā* or *śūnyatā* or *pratīyasamutpāda*.

The second motivational context of *dharma-svabhāva* is the ultimate universality common to all humans, beyond all differences of religion, culture and society. In the second motivational context, the moral man is supposed to reassess the world and the meet follow humans with love and compassion. But this was not enough for Mahāyāna persuasion. Nāgarjuna presented a non-motivational context for explaining the Buddha's love and compassion. The mind of the Buddha does not abide either within the domain of ordinary consciousness or within that of the transcendent. To him, the motivational context (both the first and the second) are illusory, and the mind of the Buddha does not depend upon either of the motivational contexts. Ordinary people do not know how transcendently unreal the sensory and mental elements are and consequently, they stray into all walks of life and its cycles. They are unable to see things as they really are. The Buddha's virtue of love and compassion helps humans acquire the same insight, and make them achieve the independence from motivational context. Retrospectively speaking, the repudiation of the orthodox *dharma-svabhāva* represents the non-motivational context of the Buddha's virtues. As Nāgarjuna has argued, the insight of *śūnyatā* is the basis of the Buddha's love and compassion.

A bodhisattva too sees the truth of *śūnyata*. What then is the difference between the Buddha and a bodhisattva because both are able to see the truth?

A bodhisattva is said to inherit the activist virtues of the Buddha and exercises the two-fold expediency, *prajñā* and *karuṇā*, to help humans escape from sufferings. Nāgarjuna, raises the question in terms of the similarity of the lotus arising from mud. The flower is pristine, but the mud is dirty. Similarly, the Buddha, motivated by compassion for his fellow humans should be in communication with their minds which are defiled. Communication becomes possible between minds which share the same convention. Hence, the Buddha's love—as far as its origin is concerned—must be of the defiled nature. In order to have this skeptical view answered, we may consider the following.

The definition of a “Buddha” consists of the enumeration of his attributes. Among these are: that he wisely knows, as they really



are, the various dispositions of other beings and persons, that he wisely knows, as they really are, the higher and lower faculties of other beings and persons. Seen in the light of the attributes of the Buddha in the *Prajñā-pāramitā* literature, the skeptical doubts should appear to be specious, since *prajñā* entails an attitude of friendliness and compassion towards all beings. A Buddha not only vanquishes his own greed, hate and delusion, but the greed, hate and delusion of others too. Having been poised in *prajñā* himself, he out of compassion—knowing the dispositions of other beings and persons—acts to establish them in *prajñā*. This is what compassion means. On the part of a bodhisattva, indefatigable fortitude for the sake of all beings is the manifestation of compassion. It is a matter of generating altruistic will and living in pursuance of acting out the will. A Buddha lives in terms of his moral achievement, having nothing to look forward to. He has accomplished every moral intention, and is poised in perfection. A bodhisattva progresses from one *bhūmi* to another. A Buddha is a *regulative* image, while a bodhisattva aspires, by practice of the *pāramitās*, to the *constitutive* status of the moral ideal of Buddhahood. Hence, it should be possible to say that a Buddha is a trans-phenomenally holy will, a bodhisattva wades his way through phenomenality. The practice of *pāramitās* makes sense only in respect of the domain of *samvrti*, a Buddha is one who has beyonded it in rooting himself in gnosis, i.e., *prajñā*. The compassion of such one can only be non-contextual, beyond convention.

Nāgarjuna has a reconceptualization of four aims of life or *siddhāntas*. The perusers of the goals, are also then four in number. There are those who seek happiness through fulfilling their desire, love and self-preservation as shared by all species. This is called *lokasiddhanta*. Secondly, there are those who seek happiness in terms of good conduct according to their individual inclinations and circumstances as adequate to themselves. This conduct of life is termed *prthagjana-siddhānta*. There is the third, those who seek happiness in the pursuit of the eradication of defilements, resulting in unwholesome or wrong action. They follow *pratipakṣika-siddhānta*. From its inception, Buddhism

has upheld *samyakdr̥ṣṭi* as the fundamental theoretical virtue. Practical virtues are peripheral, and depends on the similarity of human nature above and beyond temporal or spatial differences. The first three *siddhāntas* are contextual and guided by practical contingencies. But the *pāramārthika* or the theoretical virtue goes beyond conventionalities of life. The humanism of Aristotle has a lot of offer as an analogy. His concept of *eudaimonia* is a close parallel, though not similar in intent. *Eudaimonia* secures happiness with the scope of logic and language. But the Buddhist does not go by the general convention about the logic and language as faculty of seeing things as they are, or *yathābhūtam*. The Buddhist meta-psychology holds that the symbolic process of the mind operates referentially and configure an object as if it were out there, while simultaneously, operates tendentiously to search for a predication through memories of past experiences. Even a spontaneous perception is interpretative and an unconscious version of what we have perceived. Perceptual and conceptual errors are likely occur in the subliminal remains of human consciousness. Yet, inspite of the difference, the Buddhist of the Aristotelian notions of theoretical virtue, perhaps agree in meaning disengagement from the propensity of the referential and tendentious forces of the mind. None of course disregard or abandon the place of reason in life. Buddhist mysticism, if it is at all, is always logically illuminated.

Nāgarjuna is unambiguous is maintaining that a bodhisattva would remain unaccomplished in his vow and task if he does not take along with him the rest of the beings across the sorrowful domain of phenomenality. By virtue of his compassion he returns to “the vast vale of tears”. The essential nature of bodhisattva’s wayfaring consists in comprehending the *samvṛti sub specie paramārtha*. We live a divided life of the inner and the outer, and this state of affairs requires to be integrated, in the real, which is the undivided being, *advaya*. Ignorance and passion are the roots of the divided life. A bodhisattva seeks to overcome the division.

Nāgarjuna appears to suggest, or even argue, that the unconditioned is the ground of the conditioned and the contingent. To work for integration at the mundane level on the basis of and with

the full awareness of the ultimate is a fundamental aspiration of a bodhisattva, to enable everyone in putting end to forces of ignorance and passion, to transform these forces into wisdom and compassion. Wisdom and compassion are different phases of *prajñā*. They are the two-fold in which the sense of the unconditioned functions in the wise. One constitutes insight, knowledge and understanding, while the other constitutes feeling, emotion and action. Intellect and feeling are not to fall apart, there is a centre that holds them both. Understanding and action are only distinguishable in logical thought; they are the ways of realizing the values of life, or the ways in which a bodhisattva may and would seek to awaken in everyone the sense of the unconditioned. The way of compassion consists in widening one's kinship, essential bound-up-ness, with all that exists, through one's feeling, emotion, work and service. The ultimate basis of sympathy is the ultimate undivided-ness of oneself with others. Extinction of ignorance and passion, when rightly cultivated, issues in wisdom and compassion.

Coming to the issue of distinguishing a bodhisattva from the Buddha, Nāgarjuna comments that since the former cultivates the way to realize *prajñā*, to cross over to the other shore, it is called *pāramitā*, and his *prajñā* is *prajñāpāramitā*. While in the case of the Buddha, who has already crossed over to the other shore, the *prajñā* is called *sarvākārajñatā*, the knowledge of all forms. The knowledge of this sort belongs only to the Buddha, and called integral experience, it is all-comprehensive understanding, and termed, metaphysically, as the eye of the Buddha.

The closing sections of Nāgarjuna's *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-upadeśa-śāstra* deal extensively with notions of a bodhisattva and the Buddha. As Nāgarjuna puts it, a bodhisattva seeks to achieve exhaustively all the merits of the Buddha, and this thought of his is firm like a diamond (this is a mystic Mahāyāna symbolism). The very thought or *citta* is called the (*bodhi*) *sattva*. The etymological derivation of *sattva* given by Nāgarjuna is as follows: the *dharma* that is extolled is what is meant by "sa (t)", and the salvific character of the *dharma* is the meaning of "tva". The *citta* of a bodhisattva benefits itself and benefits others. It is the *citta* of a bodhisattva

that Nāgarjuna mentions as *anutpattika-dharma-ksānti*. This means that a bodhisattva comprehends the world as *śūnya* and remains completely non-clinging at heart. Being firmly established in the true-nature of all things, he does not any more cling to the world with passion. It also implies the fulfillment of the practice of the *pāramitās*, and entails the rise of *prajñā*. Having comprehended the true nature of things, he realizes that all beings suffer pain out of ignorance, and hence, apropos of his vow, he feels compassion for them. It is a part of his skillfulness that he does not abandon beings. He is in the world, but not *of* it. He does not cling to his sense of compassion for all either. He steers clear of both negativism and of being overwhelmed by the suffering that he sees around him. By the power of skillfulness he keeps an equanimous stance in regard to the two extremes.

The basis of a bodhisattva's compassion is the *anutpattika-dharma-ksānti*. He does not efface his individuality, nor does he abandon beings. His realization of the essential relatedness with all the rest implies his understanding of the *śūnya* nature of things (on the cognitive plane) and his compassion (on the plane of feeling) in his relationship to others. The latter is the objective obverse of the former.

What finally is the difference between a bodhisattva and the Buddha? Nāgarjuna offers the following analogy: The Buddha is like the full moon, there can be no doubts about His completeness. Although the moon of the fourteenth day is also bright, still its brightness is not equal to that of the fifteenth day. The difference between the two is that the one is on the move towards fulfillment, while the other has already achieved fulfillment.

The issue concerning motivational context keeps changing from one stage of human development to another. This is evident from Nāgarjuna's remark that a bodhisattva's way to Buddhahood does not disdain the achievements of the *śrāvaka* or the *pratyekabuddha*. They contain certain valuable elements. A bodhisattva's way is not exclusive of anyone or of anything. It is the way of all beings. When the way is compared to *ākāśa*, it means that it is founded on the principle of accommodation, and works for peace and

harmony in the world through the rejection of exclusive clinging. The motivational context for the ordinary people, and for the *śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha* cannot be the one and the same. They are inspired by different insights or *siddhāntas*. Only in the case of the way of a bodhisattva the ideal of Buddhahood and great compassion is made its defining feature. The self-absorbedness or self-enclosedness marks the aspirators of the other ways. On the other hand, a bodhisattva, grounding himself in *prajñā* or the wisdom of non-ultimacy of everything, is spontaneously, rather non-contextually, compassionate. Extinction of ignorance and passion in him results in wisdom and compassion. The Buddha's love and compassion are not defiled elements, as the skeptics of Nāgarjuna have thought. He can keep himself free from clinging to individuality, and yet help all in the spirit of great compassion. And finally, extinction of ignorance and passion, without remainder, in his own person, is the necessary means to root out their seeds everywhere.

The above account of the way of a bodhisattva and non-contextual motivation of the compassion of the Buddha does not in any manner imply moral negativism or ignoring the world of *vyavahāra*. That would be an instance of perversion or clinging from the Mahāyāna point of view. It is as wisdom and compassion that *paramārtha* is relevant to *vyavahāra*, in regard to a bodhisattva's wayfaring. This is brought out by a graphic image of Nāgarjuna, which would help us understand the issue of motivational context of love and compassion. The wise, says Nāgarjuna, are like the dragon (*nāgā*) that keeps its tail in the ocean and its head in the sky and brings down showers on earth.

**Note:-** Nāgarjuna's *Mahā-prajñā-paramitā upadeśa-śāstra* is not much in use or vogue as his other celebrated works. It has been found immensely useful in connection with my understanding of Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. I came across a reference to it in Shohei Ichimura's *Buddhist Critical Spirituality: Prajñā* and *Śūnyatā* (2001, Delhi) in connection with his discussion of the bodhisattva cult in China. But it was a wonderful experience to have K. Venketa Ramanan's *Nāgarjuna's Philosophy* (1971, Varanasi) come my way. This book is exclusively based on

the Chinese translation of Nāgarjuna's above mentioned work translated by Kumārajīva. There are long extracts from the book on the Bodhisattva and the Buddha. I am so happy to have made as good a use of the work as I could. It has given me great delight in doing so, since Venkata Ramanan was an esteemed colleague of mine at Visva-Bhārati, Śāntiniketan.



## Part II

- II.1. Dānapāramitā: The Virtue of Charity
- II.2. Śīla: The Buddhist concept of Ethics
- II.3. Karuṇā: The Supreme Emotion
- II.4. Kṣāntipāramitā: The Virtue of Forbearance
- II.5. Samprajanya raskṣana: Guarding Mindfulness
- II.6. Prajñāpāramita: Human Excellence: *Eudaimonia*





## *Dānapāramitā*: The Virtue of Charity

Sometimes, and it is not without a reason, the Mahāyāna way of life is said to be *Bodhisattvayāna*. It should be equally unexceptionable to say that the Way is *pāramitāyāna*. A bodhisattva practices the *pāramitās*.

### I

The *pāramitas* are Mahāyāna virtues in their perfection, or perfect virtues. The *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* connects the concept with the term *parama*, meaning supremely pure in their nature. They are so called because they mature over a long period of time, for their supreme purity: *paramena kālena samudāgatāh* and *paramāya svabhāva viśuddhya viśuddāh*. The career of the bodhisattva runs through their practice and maturation and leading, thereby, to the highest ethico–ontological result in *prajñā*, the insight into nature of Reality. Since the goal of Buddhahood is ever kept in view, and never lost sight of, the movement or progression through the practice of the *pāramitās* is teleological, and if they are perfections-in-themselves, the ethical view could be conceived as deontological as well. There is a sense in which a bodhisattva, apart from the feat of the opening of the wisdom eye, his attainment of *bodhicitta*, he defines himself by the practice of the *pāramitās*. These are *constitutive* of his bodhisattvahood, while *prajñā* is the *regulative* ideal. As regulative, *prajñā* infuses the *pāramitas*; it turns the virtuous actions into *pāramitas*. Borrowing the Kantian mode of speaking, one might say that without *prajñā* the *pāramitās* are blind, and without them *prajñā* would be empty. It matters less what is

done, what matters more is the spirit in which an action is done. The motive and the intention are equally important.

## II

The basic *pāramitās* are six in number, though in certain texts they are mentioned to be ten, and it is held that a bodhisattva practices one of the *pāramitās* in each of the ten *bhūmis* of his career. There is an overlap of *pāramitās* in Hinayāna and Mahāyāna accounts. For example, *ksānti*, *vīrya*, and *dhyāna* are common to both. *Maitrī* and *upekṣā* are enumerated as *pāramitās* in the Hinayāna inventory, while Śāntideva does not mention it. The *Bodhisattvabhūmī* gives the names of six *pāramitās* in a canonical fashion. They are *dāna*, *śīla*, *ksānti*, *vīrya*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*. The first five are skilful means or *upāya* – *kauśalya*, while the status of *prajñā* is unique in being the end.

The early Buddhist accounts had the triad of virtues, namely, *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*. These constituted the three-fold *Śīlksā* or training and disciplines. It may be noted that the Eight-fold Way also ends with *Samādhi*. There have been the various methods in classifying and coupling the *pāramitās*. At times, *śīla* went with *samādhi*, at another, with *ksānti*. However, *dāna* and *śīla* make a significant pairing, since it constituted the laymen's special duties. *Dāna* was the first step that an ordinary man was taught to take, though logically, *dāna* is comprehended by *Śīla*. Of the six *pāramitās* mentioned above, the first three correspond to the category of *adhi-śīla*, the fifth goes under *adhi-citta*, the sixth is called *adhi-prajñā*. The fourth, *vīrya* belongs to all the three classes. Hence there are three classes of *pāramitās*. The prefix *adhi* indicates their importance. According to another classification in terms of *sambhāra*, meaning equipment or requisite ingredients, the *pāramitās* are classified into *puṇyasambhāra* and *jñānasambhāra*. The first comprise the first five, while *prajñā* is regarded as *jñānasambhāra*. The first set of *sambhāra* contains merit acquired by good deed in social life, and second, knowledge by concentration and wisdom. Vāsubandhu, who argued for this classification, sought

to unify and sublimate social action and ascetic meditation in the one ideal of the quest for *bodhi*.

### III

The *pāramitas* distinguish a bodhisattva from *Śrāvakas* and *Pratyekabuddhas*, who follow negative moral ideals. The *pāramitās* are positive in the matter of moral development. They also bridge the gap between the righteous householder and the ascetic meditative monk. It further implies that a bodhisattva is not to forsake practicing charity and forbearance even when he has ascended to higher stages of concentration and wisdom. The virtues of *dāna*, *śīla* and *kṣānti* are absent from the Hinayāna inventory of monkish virtues. Does that mean that social sympathy and altruism are not duties of a monk? Under Mahāyāna dispensation, charity and moral conduct assume as much importance as concentration and wisdom. They are classed together as indispensable factors in the attainment of Enlightenment.

Another characteristics of the *pāramitās* is that they are so placed as to imply one another, and form a progressive scheme of action. The practice of each *pāramitā* is not possible without the cultivation of the preceding one. Each is a stage leading to the other.

According to the motive and intention of performing, the *pāramitas* admit of degrees. When a *pāramitā* is practiced by an ordinary worldly person its value is lowest owing to the selfish motive behind it. The same *pāramitā*, when practiced hoping for *nirvāna*, becomes extraordinary. But it acquires the highest degree of value if and when it is practised by a bodhisattva for the welfare and liberation of all beings, it acquires excellent worth. An ordinary person is motivated by personal ends like a happy rebirth in view, a follower of Hinayāna will have the intention of achieving *nirvāna* for himself. But a bodhisattva's action of charity will have no reference to his self or ego, he would pull all his powers and direct his attention beyond his ego, and his action is altruistic in motivation. Such actions alone can have the highest possible moral worth. In the matter of worthiness of action, it is

the intention, rather than the motive, that decides the moral worth of the deed performed. Beyond the fact of its performance, the question, why is it being performed, becomes a matter of greater concern in making the moral judgement. Hence, a *pāramitā* can be cultivated only by means of attentive thought, resolute purpose, self-mastery and wisdom in the choice of means. The regulative image of Enlightenment, however distant it may be, helps keep the moral agent, a bodhisattva, on the right tract, always protecting and not letting him abuse the *pāramitās* by boastfulness, pride and arrogance. The awakening of *bodhicitta* at the beginning of all moral endeavour and Enlightenment to be achieved at the end render the career of the bodhisattva into an arduous pilgrimage, he is ever-awake (*jāgrata* as the *Kathopanisad* says) and stops not till the end is achieved. In this context, Śāntideva's distinction between *gantukāmah* and *gantuh* discloses its significance. It avails not, finally, if one is a *gantukāmah* individual, what counts is one's unswerving progress, stage by stage, towards the goal. There is a logical linkage between the *samyakasamkalpa* and *samyakdṛsti* of the Eight-fold Way. If we take *samyaksamkalpa* to indicate renunciation, goodwill and kindness or right intention for that matter, then it has to issue forth in terms of appropriate deeds and action. It is not a component of the way, but is *contained* in the way. It has to be reinforced by *samyakdṛsti*, the knowledge of things as they are, the comprehension of the four Noble Truths all the time. The enunciation of the Truths is never an idle statement. Indicating the way, it is a call to be on the move. If we ignore the order of their enumeration, it could safely be asserted that *samyaksamkalpa* and *samyakdṛsti* coimply each other, they are logically interrelated. Knowledge *is* virtue, this is at least so for the moral agent, if only he is a bodhisattva. The next component of the way is *samyakkarmānta* or conduct itself or action proper. It means *acting*, working out what one really intends to do. It seems to club the three components of the way together in order to appreciate the insight of the Buddhist philosophy of action in general, and specially in the context of a bodhisattva's career. The Jains uphold the formula *samyag-darśana - jñāna - caritani*. The suggestion that the Buddhists had taken it over from the Jains may

be persuasive. But I have comments to make on that, what strikes us most is the import of the term *samyak* in either context. *Samyak* should not be taken in the sense only of ‘right’, rather ‘perfect’. For example the phrase, *samyaksambuddha*, does not mean ‘the right Buddha’, on the contrary, it is intended to bring home the idea of one who had attained ‘perfection in Buddhahood’. ‘Right’ may be a part of the meaning of *samyak*, but it connotes more than that. It suggests ‘proper’ and ‘justice’ as well. In that case, the epithet or the qualifier word *samyak* behoves one to think of Aristotle’s definition of justice as the *mean* between two extremes. Justice, as a virtue, is the mean between two vices, one in extreme, the other in defect. The middle approach (*madhyamā pratipāda*) so preferred and approved by the Master himself is recommended not only for the monks alone, but also for the laity no less. A bodhisattva is an endearing figure, since he is one of us, a fellow-traveller on the way. This is indicated by the prayer that Śāntideva says in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. In his spiritual excellence, a bodhisattva does not forsake us; on the contrary, he remains with us, as we cannot go or have gone as far as he has, yet he gives us his august company at time of our need and crisis. Not only does he resolve to attain Buddhahood or Enlightenment for us all, but wishes, prayerfully, that as for long as space endures and for as long as living beings remain, until then he too will remain to dispel our misery (X. 55).

#### IV

We may now turn to considering the perfections, and see how and why are they so extolled to be practiced by a bodhisattva. The first in the list of the *pāramitās* come *Dānapāramitā*.

It is not difficult find equivalents of the term *dāna*. They could be generosity, renunciation, charity, a variety of things that a bodhisattva gives away. The Hindu term *tyāga* is almost synonymous with *dāna*. We have also the ideal of enjoyment through renouncing in the *Īśa Upanisad*. There are striking passages in the Pali canon praising the acts of charity. Charity, it appears, is a universal religious duty. St Paul praised charity as one of the three cardinal features of the Christian life, the two others being

hope and faith. In Islam, too, charity finds an important room. But in the Buddhist way of life, charity or *dāna* assumes the form of a moral imperative. Mahāyāna, as for the objects that may be given away in charity, includes even one's body and limbs as charitable. Śāntideva even goes to define *nirvāna* in terms of renouncing everything that may possess: *sarvatyāgaśca nirvānam* (III. 11). Among the charitable objects one's body, enjoyments and all the merits acquired too are included, if the act benefits all. There is an argument to back the imperative to charity. As Śāntideva puts it, by giving up all, sorrow is transcended. This idea is striking, and it can be traced back to Candragomin's adage that pain endured for the sake of others is happiness: *par-ārthe dukkham sukham* (*Śisyalekhā*, 98). It is through shift from *dukkha* to *sukha* that *karuṇā* comes to have the ascendancy of importance. Instead of the self-regarding motive of attaining *nirvāna* or *bodhi*, it came to be taught that *dāna* should be based solely on the feeling of mercy and compassion. The idea of gifting one's merits accrued in life came to be inculcated to save others and all creatures. Merit, of course, is spiritual merit, and the word *puṇya* is employed for it. A bodhisattva needs to possess the double equipments of knowledge and merit, *jñānasambhāra* and *puṇyasambhāra*. The idea of *puṇya* is one of the basic ideas of Buddhist ethics. Actions motivated by charity and morality (*śīla*) generates *puṇya* in some measure. It is the causal power of virtuous deeds or actions of moral worth, and it leads to welfare in the present life or hereafter. *Puṇya* has a synonym in the word *kuśala*. One can talk about the accumulation of merit and form a mass, such as in the phrase *puṇyaskandha*. *Puṇya* is supposed to be an invisible force, like that of *apūrva* of the Mīmāṃsakas, it is cosmic in character and operation, and confers what is due on the individual to whom it belongs. The quantitative notion of *puṇya* culminates in the doctrine of *parināmanā*, or transfer of one's merits acquired to others for their benefit and weal. Śāntideva prays that may all beings everywhere plagued with sufferings of body and mind obtain happiness and joy by virtue of his merits (X.2). It may be that the concept of *puṇya* is a corollary of the law of *karma*, and the motive of altruism (*parārtha*) renders

the accumulated merit or *punya* to be given over to others. And it becomes an act of charity.

*Parināmana* may be either reflexive or transitive. One may use or apply the merit accrued by his own good deeds for his own Enlightenment, as a *śrāvaka* or *pratyekabuddha* may do, or in the case of a bodhisattva, it may, and as the courtesy of the Way requires, be dedicated for the welfare and spiritual progress of all creatures. In some of the dominant moods Mahāyāna prefers altruistic activity of that sort even to the ideal of Enlightenment. Looked at it in this manner, *parināmana* is an act of *dāna*, and thus renders it a *pāramitā*.

In the history of development in Mahāyāna ideals, there has been a gradual shift from the self-regarding motive of attaining *nirvāna* or *bodhi* to *dāna* based solely on the feeling of mercy and compassion (*karuṇā*). And the idea of gifting of merit, *parināmanā*: “Give all thou hast” has to be the first of the *pāramitās*.

*Dāna* is classified and analyzed in various manners, into kinds and parts or categories. The domain of *dānapāramitā* comprehends the *arthī* or *yācaka* including a bodhisattva’s friends and relatives, the poor and the sick, monks and priests (*śramana-brāhmaṇa*). In some treatises, the poor are described with great sympathy and insight. Kṣemendra writes that a bodhisattva’s heart melted with pity as he saw the afflicted and helpless farmers. Their hands and feet were torn and rent, they suffered from hunger, thirst and fatigue (*Divyāvadāna*). Śāntideva has even gone to the extent of recommending that a monk should share his scanty alms with the poor (*Sikṣā-Sammucaya*).

There is also the idea that the merit of a charitable deed depended on the spiritual status of the recipient, apart from his need or the nature of the social service rendered by the doer. A Buddha is the worthiest recipient of a gift. This should be obvious keeping in view the fact that the monks depended for their subsistence on the alms of the laity.

One could be reminded of Polymarchus’ definition of ‘justice’ in Plato’s *Republic*, and Socrates’ response to it, when we are told that a bodhisattva would not give anything which may be used to



inflict injury on other living beings, or refrain from supplying others with the means of gratifying their sensual appetites and passions. Nor would he also gift poisons, weapons and intoxicating liquor, instruments for suicide or self-torture. The wealth, given in charity must be acquired righteously, pace *samyakājīva*.

The question how to give is no less important than what to give. This relates to the art of charity. A bodhisattva will be courteous to the supplicant, receive him with respect and deference. He should be happy and joyful in giving. The etiquette of charity requires that the donor will have to be happier than the recipient, and would never repent his generosity after the gift has been bestowed. Nor would he talk about his charity, and should be humble about his act. In the act of charity a bodhisattva would be impartial, without differentiating between friends and enemies. But this does not mean that he should lose his sense of proportion. His acts of mercy will have to be informed by wisdom.

A bodhisattva understands *why* he should be charitable. The motives that might actuate a donor are various. One of the reasons for practicing charity is that the act confers fame on the donor; it leads him to a happier rebirth, generates peace of mind. The causal potency of the acts of charity is never called for doubt. Apart from ordinary utilitarian considerations, charity itself is an commendable act, as it partakes of the character of renunciation, and liberates one from the vice of niggardliness. Thus, by charity a bodhisattva matures himself and edifies others. The *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* mentions charity as a virtue as intrinsically worth practicing, while niggardliness (*mātsarya*) is a sin. So in the end, a bodhisattva comes to practice charity without any motive whatsoever, in a disinterested manner, since he knows that the benefits of charity here or hereafter are in the long run impermanent and without worth. His altruism is unselfish, and without the thought of reward. In all this he is aided by wisdom.

## V

A bodhisattva progresses by stages on his way to *bodhi*. There have been texts delineating the stages of the bodhisattva's maturation.

The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* and the *Daśa- bhūmikā-Sūtra* are well-known in this regard. He vows to practice quite a few of the delineations correspond to the *pāramitās*. The stages are called *bhūmis* or *vihāras*. Our point in taking these texts into account is the occurrence in them of the term *pāramitā*. According to the *Daśa- bhūmikā-Sūtra* a bodhisattva cultivates one of the *pāramitās* in each *bhūmi*, and just as gold gets purified more and more, becomes gradually free from dross being heated in fire, so does a bodhisattva matures in his moral achievement. It is to be expected that he would begin by practicing charity on the *bhūmi*, called *pramuditā*. We may take *pramuditā* to be the *bhūmi* for practicing *dānapāramitā*. Charity is one of the preparatory virtues that a bodhisattva will take along on his long way to Enlightenment. There is a sense in which all the *pāramitās* are to be practiced simultaneously. It is not that one virtue is to be practised at each *bhūmi* to the exclusion of others. The idea of *bhūmi* only serves to indicate that a bodhisattva strives to live upto his twin or two-fold vow to attain Enlightenment for the benefit of all living beings by degrees. His moral life is a process of development along a way. He remains steadfast by unwavering self-examination and meditation.

The *pāramitās* are two-fold in import. They are virtues as well as assets. By practicing the virtues a bodhisattva collects on his journey the assets of perfection, called *saṃgrahavastu*. Charity or *dānapāramitā* is a perfection worth attaining at the joyful *pramuditā* stage of a bodhisattva's career. In may be asked, why does he seek to perfect his act of charity at the very first stage of his development? One may conjecture that charity is the first of the ways of coming out of the hard shell of the ego, and thus it is an other-regarding act, and thus, charity may be looked upon as an act that matures, and when perfected, into unselfishness and disinterestedness. It is in this form that charity could be called a *saṃgrahavastu*.

Through charity a bodhisattva makes the transition from *svārtha* to *parārtha*. The *dānapāramitā* is a necessary requisite of the ideal of altruism. In exerting himself of the good of others he does not think of his self at all, filled as he is with love, and love alone. Śāntideva puts this ideal in the form of a paradox (VIII. 173): If I wish to be happy I should not be happy with myself, and if I wish

to be protected I should ever protect all others. Egoism and altruism are one and the same for a bodhisattva. When he thinks of others in the same way as he thinks of himself, *svārtha* and *parārtha* become synonymous, there remains no distinction between them. Egoism and altruism are merged in *karuṇā*.

It appears that altruism thus requires *karuṇā* to motivate itself. If one is left with apathy no question of altruism would arise. Is *karuṇā* *natural* or *inmate*? Is it the outcome of merit acquired in a former existence? Or does it depend on practice? Mahāyāna regards compassion natural and inmate in all creatures. Love is creation's final law, mercy and pity remain to be discovered and developed through practice. And *dānapāramitā* is a way of doing that, till it matures in one so as to become spontaneous in one of the two forms of *śīla*: *satta-anuagrāhaka śīla* or *sattva-kriyā-śīla*, i.e., *śīla*, which consists in rendering service to the living beings. In the latter form, *śīla* is identical with *dāna*, while the former abides as the psychical background or spring of altruistic action. Together they amount to the attitude of benevolence, including motives and ideas. One aspect of *śīla* or moral conduct is absence of hatred (*dvesa*). A hateful person finds the other as a threat, he cannot love, and if he cannot love, can he practice *dānapāramitā*? A heart left hard without love is morally incapable of any virtue.

## *Śīla*: The Buddhist Concept of Ethics

### I

Even though there are streaks of deontology and teleology in the Buddhist thinking, yet it should be unexceptional to say that it is primarily a type of virtue ethics. In other words, Buddhist ethics is agent-based, that is, moral evaluation, concepts, if not in all cases, are either based on or derived from judgement about inner states of agents. It puts virtue first, before analyses of acts or consequences. Virtues, be it *śīla* or *pāramitā*, are traits of character which are judged to be morally valuable. Before I address myself to the concept of *śīla* in the context of Buddhist ethics, I would consider certain issues relating to virtue ethics.

Virtue ethics is a theoretical perspective (available in ample measure in the writings of Buddhaghōṣa and Vāsubandhu), which hold that judgement about inner lives of individuals, their traits, motives, dispositions, and character, rather than judgements about the rightness or wrongness of external acts and / or consequences of acts, are of the greatest moral importance. It should be noted in this context that a general virtue ethics perspective represented the dominant outlook in both Western and Eastern schools of moral thought. Since C.D. Broad proposed to divide ethical theories into teleological and deontological types, the dichotomy became standard in ethics. Teleological theories hold that the moral rightness of an action is always determined by its tendency to promote certain consequences deemed intrinsically good. Deontological theories, denying this claim, hold that certain acts exhibit intrinsically right-making features in themselves, regardless

of the consequences that may come after them. Broad's dichotomy was widely accepted as being exhaustive. But there are two fundamental classes of normative moral judgements that do not fit easily into it. First, it focuses on rightness or obligation, excluding moral judgements concerning what is admirable, good, excellent or ideal. The Buddhist term would for such properties is *kuśala*. Second, it concerns only actions and their consequences, saying nothing about moral judgements concerning persons, character, character traits, or motives. In the Buddhist parlance, the objects of *smṛtyupasthāna*, the elements of psychic existence, *kleśas* like *lobha*, *dvesa* or *moha*, *māna*, or even *āśravas* are to be got rid of or transmuted into such ones as *śraddhā*, *vīrya*, *kṣānti*, *prīti*, *upekṣā*, etc., in short, the body of *bodhi-pakṣa-dharmāḥ*. Virtue ethics, in our times, as inaugurated by Elizabeth Anscombe, requires us to do ethics by looking for moral norms not in duty concepts but within the virtues or traits of character that one needs to flourish as a human being. The point is: what are the traits of character that define the morally good or admirable person, a bodhisattva, to take as a moral paradigm?

Questions about the virtues occupy a much more prominent place in ancient and medieval moral philosophy than in Western moral theories developed since the Age of Enlightenment. Virtue ethics took root as a reaction against the underlying common assumptions of both teleological and deontological ethical theories and has achieved its greatest critical success as a protest against the accepted ways of doing normative ethics. One way of viewing virtue ethics is to see it as having a constructive programme in which a value-oriented normative moral conception is developed.

The point is about giving a satisfactory account for moral experience. Teleological and deontological theories, in some of their versions, view universal and invariable principles and laws as being exhaustive of ethics. But real-life moral exemplars do not simply deduce what to do from a hierarchy of timeless, universal principles and rules. Virtue ethics is strongly committed to an agent perspective as opposed to an act perspective. Teleologists and daontologists too often assign a merely negative role in the moral life for desires and emotions. The people we most admire

morally are not simply those who do their duty and act on the correct principles, but those who do so with the right kinds of desires and emotions. In this respect, virtue ethics shares certain affinities with ideas developed in feminist ethics concerning the importance of, for e.g., care and sympathy in the moral life. Both approaches emphasize the positive roles of feelings and desires in ethics. Many teleologists and deontologists do acknowledge the importance of motives in ethics, but they mislocate them in abstractions such as “the greatest happiness principle” or “the moral law” rather than in particular persons and our relationships to them. The person who visits an ill friend in the hospital strictly because it is the morally right thing to do does not seem to be as morally admirable as the person who visits an ill friend in the hospital out of direct concern for the friend’s well-being.

What virtue ethics does is to identify certain inner states of agents, and then evaluate them morally. Actions and consequences are then evaluated in terms of their relationships to these inner states. As an example, we may take the case of the virtue of charity or *dāna* which is a virtuous act. But the act in its externality hardly deserves to be commended. It has to be based on the feeling of mercy and compassion (*karuṇā*). One has to know *how* to give, *what* to give, and *why* to give. The Buddhist thinker considers all the motives, high and low that may actuate a donor. Before one decides to commend the act of charity as virtuous, what one has to look for is whether the act is performed with or without selfish motives, whether the act of generosity was disinterested.

One may recall, in this context, what Plato had remarked about justice. In the *Republic*, he argued that justice was properly understood not in terms of external conduct but rather in terms of a certain harmonious relationship between the parts of man’s soul. Justice was concerned with what is inside him, with what is truly himself and his own. All other virtues were, in effect, analyzed analogously by Plato, with a strong focus on the inner state of one’s soul. Closer to our own time, Martineau argues that the inner motives of agents rather than their outwardly observable acts are always the fundamental objects of moral evaluation. What is to be judged in ethics is the *inner spring* of an action, as distinguished

from its outward operation. As per this view, the moral value of the inner motives of the agent is what determines whether he or she is morally good person, and right action is then defined in terms of the choices a morally good person would make. All this, is in fact following ethics without act-evaluation concepts, and assessing action instead in terms of track concepts.

It is also noteworthy in this context that our moral characters are acquired only over a very long period of time, and virtue ethics takes a long-term perspective. A bodhisattva matures, perfecting his *pāramitās* over several births. The *Jatākas* illustrate the point. What happens in Buddhism is an incorporation of virtue ethics into the framework of attaining *bodhi* or *nirvāna*, if that be the *summum bonum* of human life. But whatever it may be the most valued state of mind is the *bodhicitta*, defined in such terms as the aspiration to attain *bodhi* for the welfare of all living beings. And in this manner of thinking, a shift from an act to an agent perspective is carried out in addressing matters of social justice. At the macro level of morality, a virtue theorist would advocate that social policies, institutional arrangements, and societies themselves should be evaluated and critiqued by asking what kinds of people they produce. Are the moral character of citizens living within a given society or under a specified set of institutions and policies morally admirable or not, and to what extent can we causally track their characters back to the social and political environment in which they live?

The shift towards traits and persons does not merely aim at specific virtues, interesting analyses of vices are also prominent. The Buddhist analyses of unwholesome mental states, *āśravas* and *kleśas*, could be taken as a case. There is one problem, however. The Buddhist thinkers appear to suggest that moral virtues are tied to action in an obvious way. But is that so? Integrity is viewed as an important moral virtue in nearly all moral traditions. The question is: how exactly does the person of integrity act?

One of the attractions of virtue ethics is that it does not transcend context. The portrait of a bodhisattva is highly contextualized. It is possible for us to look upto him and recognize him as embodying

our possible perfectability; he remains firmly rooted in the context of human life.

Virtue ethics has an appearance of antitheory. A virtue theorist does entertain a skepticism concerning the nature of moral theory itself, if by moral theory one means an ordered set of abstract universal principles which is to be applied deductively to solve any and all problems which are thrown at it. Evidences suggest that virtue ethics constitutes more a critique of traditional assumptions concerning the nature and aims of moral theory rather than a flat-out rejection of theory *per se*. It is an attempt to return moral theory to more realistic possibilities. It is precisely in this manner that Buddhism has played itself out. It has been a *mārga*, a way to be travelled for the *gantuh*, and not merely remaining a *gantukāmah*, as Śāntideva puts it.

## II

Śīla, along with *samādhi* and *prajñā*, charts the *mārga* or the path leading to the *summum borun* of human existence, that is *nirvāna*. As far as the importance of śīla is concerned, there is an unquestioned unanimity between the early and the later Mahāyāna phases of Buddhist thought. The importance of śīla could be appreciated in the light of the Buddhist conception of human nature; organic as it is, the explicitly ethical is subordinated to the psychological or to the psycho-physical wholeness of man. Never is the insight, that all our depositions of character are the offspring of consciousness, dominated by consciousness, and made up of consciousness (*Dharmapada, 1.1*) lost sight of, mindfulness, as the seventh of the Eight-fold Way, *samyaksmṛti*, is more fundamental than external routine practice of virtues. To observe one's thoughts is the first, to watch over one's thoughts is the second, to control one's thoughts is the third and to master one's thoughts is the fourth. To observe, to watch over, to control, to master the mind is foundational to an really authentic moral life. The meditative discipline is the king of all Buddhist disciplines. It may be said to stand at the head of every hierarchy of disciplinary techniques. The



Eight-fold Way comprises the levels of *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*. It may appear that, apropos of the Theravada formulation, Right Speech, Action and Livelihood are placed on the *śīla* level, while the stages of Right Effort, Mindfulness and concentration are put on the *samādhi* level, and Right Understanding and Thought on the *Prajñā* level. Does this formulation imply the morality or moral elements of life are placed first and lowest? The intention of the reformulation could have been that it is the ethical discipline that is perfected first, and that is the *meditational* discipline which later and more importantly produces *samādhi* and *prajñā*. Are we to pay more attention to the “inner” factors in a situation than the “outer”? Is it that the personal attitudes and qualities of the actors in a socio-political situation are important than stated policies? It is man’s control of himself that matters. A control of motivations of the persons involved is looked upon as the most dynamic and effective way to control a social situation.

A terminological point may be made at this point. The way, the qualifier term *samyak*, is prefixed to the steps, it may not, without a loss of meaning, be rendered by the word “Right”. The importance of the word *Samyak* is consistently overlooked. ‘Right’ is quite weak and nebulous an adjective. The Eight-fold Way is not a case of ordinary moralism, and that is foreign to Buddhist thought. *Samyak* has a much deeper, stronger meaning, it signifies perfection, completeness, fullness of an action or a state of mind, in contrast to something that is half-hearted, incomplete or one-sided. A *Samyak Sambuddha* is a perfectly fully, completely Enlightened One, not a rightly Enlightened One.

*Samyakdr̥ṣṭi*, likewise, means more than what is commonly called ‘right views’ or the agreement with a set of established religious ideas. It means a perfectly open and unprejudiced attitude of mind, which enables us to see things as they are. To see things as they are in their true nature (*yathābhūtam*) is the first and basic wisdom. It is not to see only *one* of them, but see them from *all* sides, fully, completely, without flinching, without bias, is order to arrive at a perfectly balanced view, which leads to perfect understanding. *Samyakdr̥ṣṭi* is the experience, not only the intellectual recognition or acceptance, of the Buddha’s Truths of

suffering, of its cause, its overcoming and the way that leads to its overcoming. Only from this attitude can perfect aspirations grow and give birth to perfect speech, action, and livelihood, as well as perfect or full effort in which the whole of human personality is engaged, perfect mindfulness and perfect concentration, which leads to *samyak* or full Enlightenment, i.e., *sambodhi*. If we replace “right” with “perfect”, we get over a fixed, static or absolute sense which “right” suggests, and have access to a *completeness* of action and of mental attitude, or singleness of mind that can be established in every phase of life, on every stage of our spiritual development. The wheel of the law, *dharmacakra* symbolizes the Eight-fold Way. The eight spokes of the wheel lead from the periphery of mundane existence, from the world of eternal recurrence to the centre of liberation. All that is visible clings to the invisible, the thinkable, to the unthinkable.

The foregoing interpretation of the Eight-fold Way need not be viewed as exceptional. In view of the fact that the Buddhist conception of moral life is wisdom-oriented, aimed at perfection in the practice of virtues, it is no mere doing of what is commanded, virtues are to be practised in the hope of *nirvāna*. This point comes out clearly in the case of *budhisattva* ethics. An act, becomes a virtue only when it is practised following the arousal of *bodhicitta*, and infused with or enlivened by *prañā*, and then alone it could be called a *pāramitā*.

However, it is indeed problematic to map *śīla* within the domain of experiences and practices charted out by the Eight-fold Way. *Śīla* is placed lowest in the scale of values; but it does not mean that it is inferior to other values, it is fundamental and foundational to them. Moral decency and discipline are indispensable preconditions of the higher virtues of *samādhi* and *prañā*. Only on a solid basis of good moral character and genuinely ethical living can one achieve mental concentration and insight. Nor does one leave *śīla* behind him as he climbs the ladder toward *nirvāna*. It must go with him, in practice and attitude, all the way there. It only becomes inwardized, being transformed from mere keeping of perceptual morality in outward action into the attainment of complete purity of motive and emotion. Ethical discipline must go on till the very

end. This is a sort of cross-fertilization of values, lower and higher, if one would to put it that way. The materials of the life of *śīla* are intended to become materials of meditational achievements. Moral action becomes meditative theme and meditative theme becomes action. Taking the cardinal virtues of Love, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy and Equanimity, it should be possible to show their interrelationship. Love (*maitrī*) imports to Equanimity (*upekṣā*) its selfishness, its boundless nature, and even its fervour. Compassion (*karuṇā*) guards Equanimity from falling into cold indifference, and keeps it from indolent or selfish isolation. Sympathetic joy (*muditā*) gives to Equanimity the mild serenity that softens its stem appearance. Buddhism would speak of no virtue as Wordsworth does of Duty. “The stern daughter of God”. Rather, *muditā* is the divine smile on the face of the Enlightened One. In another way too we may look upon the cardinal virtues. The logical status of Love, Compassion and Sympathetic Joy is not on a par with Equanimity. The first three requires existence of other selves, however *imputedly* real that existence may be. But the insight that makes the virtues possible practice is to be nothing in ourself is to be a part of every other self, and this is what *upekṣā* intends to imply. The centre of existential gravity needs to be shifted from one’s own self to that of others’ in order to have love, compassion and sympathetic joy to flourish in an authentic manner. The Eight-fold Way too may be interpreted in a similar manner.

### III

*Śīla* is primarily guarding alertness. Morality is an affair of attitudes. Śāntideva defines *śīlapāramitā* (V. II) as the attainment of the thought to forsake (*Virati-citta*) not only unwholesome actions, even the thoughts thereof. Physical and vocal actions, says Śāntideva, cannot so result when accompanied by weak mental conduct (V. 15). In short, morality is *citta-virati*.

Besides the celebrated four beautitudes, Buddhist moral codes lie scattered over a large and extensive literature. One can find them in such Pali *Sattas* as the *Mangalasutta*, the *Sigālo-Vāda Sutta* and the *Metta Sutta*. These are similar in importance as Jesus’s Sermon

on the Morent or Paul's description of love in *First Corinthians* (Chapter 13) in the case of Christianity. Then there are the *Jātaka tales* that contain prescriptions. To top these, there are the *Vinaya Rules*, the prime example of Buddhist moral legislation. These are of no relevance in the present context of understanding the basic ethical quality of life in terms of Buddhist premises.

Often one speaks of the precepts, and ethical judgements are at work on the precept materials. The precepts in their five, eight or ten-fold formulations, represent the basic Buddhist moral law for personal life. The term "law" is not quite appropriate in the context, since it suggests a set of commandments spoken by a Law-Giver, even the phrase *anūsāsana* has been in usage. The distinction between commandments and precepts is however academic. Should one compare the five-fold formulation (*pañcaśīla*) with that of the Hebraic Decalogue one would be struck with the great similarity of the two in content and form, with the exception of the first four religions commandments of the latter. Both deal with the same basic personal–social actions; both are negatively phrased, one counseling to avoid, the other commanding. And both provide the same fundamental basis for social law in their respective cultures.

The minimal set of moral precepts, held to be binding in at least external form upon all are the following:

- (i) Avoid taking life, animal or human;
- (ii) Avoid stealing (taking what is not offered);
- (iii) Avoid illicit sexual relations (and sensuality in general);
- (iv) Avoid lying; and
- (v) Avoid intoxicants (and drugs).

Not only is the list pertaining to the *minimal* morality, but *basic* morality capable of many degrees of fulfillment, to be observed in fullness and depth as the principles of non-hatred, non-greed, non-sensuality, absolute truthfulness and self-control. In view of the state of consciousness that is sought to be achieved at the highest level of self-perfection (*bodhi*), the first precept, for example, may be interpreted as the necessary prelude of the ultimate extension of the principle of non-killing, that state of consciousness from which is rooted out even the *possibility* of the hateful thought

that produces killing, and for which all beings, including oneself, have become of absolute concern. It becomes a matter of entire sanctification, to borrow from Christian language, what is called for is the rooting out of man's carnal nature, i.e., his inborn tendency to do evil, his wrong dispositions such as anger and pride, and the purification of his inner fount of his motivational being. The general goal of a purified inwardness (*samprajāñya-rakṣaṇa*, in Śāntideva's phrase) which produces good deeds naturally and spontaneously. Buddhaghōṣa in the introductory discourse to the *Atthasālinī* speaks of the Lord's (*bhagava*) *dhammakāya* purified in every way and glorified by *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*.

Śāntideva alludes to a member of precepts, building on the basic five. They are not so much observances of further self-denying ordinances; rather, they may be said to be rules of good character and matters of etiquette. Along with the basic five, they make a ten-fold formulation, and are often called *daśaśīla*. One is asked to

- (vi) Avoid slander and reviling;
- (vii) Avoid avarice and covetousness, i.e., one form of greed (*lobha*);
- (viii) Avoid enmity and malevolence, i.e., hatred (*dveṣa*);
- (ix) Avoid self-praise and idle-talk; and
- (x) Avoid wrong, that is, heretical views,

and the deriding of the Triple Gem.

These precepts extend beyond the external observances into the realm of motive and attitude, and are aids to the programme of *cittarakṣā* (vide verses nos 35, 45, 48, 71, 72, 75, 76, 78, 92 of the *Samprajanyaraksana* chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*).

Do the precepts constitute a positive morality? The word "positive" may be used in contrast to their negative form, which are stated as avoidances. It is similar to the contrast sometimes made between the negative formulation of Jewish ethics found in the "shall not s" of the *Decalogue* and the "positive" form given them by *Deuteronomy*, and Jesus in the two great commandments to love God supremely and others as one's self (Mark, 12.30-1). Such a contrast should be inaccurate, since the negative commandment is but the prohibitory social formulation of a "positive" value, e.g.,

that lying is wrong because truth-telling is good. In the Buddhist context, it is inaccurate since almost all value statements are in negative forms and where the assumption is that if evil in human nature is done away (i.e., hatred rooted out), then goodness will appear i.e., loving-kindness would come into action. For instance, let us consider *dāna-śīla*, which means liberality or generosity with one's worldly goods and includes the majority of charitable activities. Anything that calls for the sharing of material substance could be classed as an example of *dāna*. It may be considered negatively as the limitation of the giver's temptations to greed by means of curtailing his resources for self-indulgence, but it is also possible to think of it as the "positive" morality of altruism.

A word may be added about the Buddhist concept of action. An action is not merely a physical deed, or even a volition with a physical result. Action includes in its completeness, thought, word and deed. Śāntideva's word for action is *ācāra* (V. 80). The inner or motivational aspect of a deed always precedes and causes it, goes ahead of the action. Any deed has roots in them originally, the action is actually their expression. A somewhat similar point was made by Jesus when he said most emphatically that the thought of lust and the hating disposition make a man an adulterer and a murderer, respectively in the "eyes of God", that is, in reality. He was pointing to the inner and motivational aspect of that deed. It may be recalled that Buddhism is essentially an ethics of intention. Actions are *kuśala* or *akuśala*, morally good or morally bad in accordance only to the action-producing volitions and their associated wanted phenomena. By the figure of speech according to which qualities belonging to the cause are attributed to the effect, an action is termed immoral when it springs from a mental state dominated by the such unskillful (*akuśala*) or unwholesome roots as greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dveṣa*), and delusion (*moha*), and moral when it proceeds from mental states characterized by the opposites of those. It is the *attitude* that is good or bad, not any given action. The three *akusala* attitudes are *always* bad under all circumstances and in every form. It follows by implication that the opposite qualities, e.g., loving-kindness (*maitrī*) and equanimity (*upekṣā*) are always morally *good*.

## IV

There is a sense in which the concept of *śīla* appears in the Eight-fold way in the form of a triad, namely, perfect speech (*vāk*), action (*karmānta*) and livelihood (*ājīva*). But *śīla* is a *pāramitā*, it becomes part of a scheme of *positive* moral development, no longer a *negative* ethical ideal. As positive ideal of moral development, i.e., as *pāramitā* practised by a bodhisattva, who stands distinguished from *arhats* seeking their own salvation and *pratyekabuddhas* or solitary achievers.

*Śīla* as a *pāramitā* has been defined in three ways: identified with virtue in general; interpreted in relation to the ideals of purification and restraint, and lastly, as referring to the five precepts. The *Samādhirājasūtra* attaches particular importance to the control and restraint aspect of *śīla*. The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* divides *śīla* into that which is conducive to the accumulation of *punya* or merit and that which consists in rendering service to living beings. The first is known as *kusala-dharma-saimgrāhaka-śīla* or *sattva-kriyā-śīla*. The first stands for the so-called moral precepts, the latter is altruistic, and is identical with the virtue of charity or *dāna*. But more importantly, *śīla* comes under the focus of *samyaksmṛti*, and is regarded as *samvara*. It takes as the keynote of *śīla*. A bodhisattva who practises *samvara*, examines himself and discovers his own faults and shortcomings. He acquires perfect spiritual vigilance, *apramādaḥ*. The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* refers to conscientiousness (*hrī*) and shame in or before oneself (*ātma-lajjā*) as the ruling and controlling principle of *śīla*. The term *hrī* denotes a remarkable concept in Mahāyāna ethics, it introduces a new order of ideas. *Hrī* has been explained as purity of intention and modesty with regard to oneself. The idea of shame (*lajjā*) can develop into self-respect. We may take *hrī* as an inner self-determining disinterested principle, which inspires a bodhisattva to the practice of *śīla*. In some of the texts *hrī* is made synonymous with *lajjā*. The idea is that a bodhisattva feels shame, if he is not energetic in the cultivation of the *pāramitas*. Hence, *lajjā* is indispensable on his way to Enlightenment. If he escapes from committing any sin, it is owing to self-shame, as he keeps vigil over his own actions. This may be taken as implied by *samyaksmṛti* of the Eight-fold Way.

As a moral term *hrī* has long gone out of moral usage, yet its presence in Buddhist texts deserves attention. *Hrī*, properly speaking, is *akarma-jugupsā*, as Śrīdhara puts it, it is the feeling of aversion to or even abhorrence towards actions *not* to be done. The term has a linkage with ‘modesty’ and it is used in feminine gender. The *Gītā* (X. 34) does not mention it among the list of feminine virtues. But the *Candī*, the celebrated Śākta tāntrika text, does mention modesty, *lajjā* along with *hri*, besides *ksānti* (I. 99), and these are reasserted also in III. 38. It is also not without a significance that the essential seed particle, *vīja*, sacred to the Goddess, is *hrīm*. I am not aware if these terms are analyzed to bring out their ethical import. But in the context of Buddhism, *hrī* has considerable importance for the phenomenology of moral experience. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* (98) Kant speaks of conscience as the presence of the accuser, felt by the moral agent, it appears in the form of “the blame and the reproach he casts upon himself”, and “the repentance for an action long past”. Kant has remarked that repentance is a kind of pain that is morally legitimate. The point may be understood as a deepening of the form of moral consciousness, in which we not only repent of our past actions, but find it hard to imagine how we could perform them. In this consciousness our past being is felt not only to be strange to us, but as an intellectual absurdity, as apparently at once subjective and objective, at once I and me, in such a state of mind, one is aware of the self that is castigated as not merely me but also as I. The past I is that which is sought to be disowned in course of one’s moral development, and in the process *hrī* plays a great role.

## V

How does Mahāyāna ethics of *pāramitās* stand in relation to its predecessor, Hinayāna? By way answering the question we may consider the following:

A. It is true that the value structure of Mahāyāna ethics spells a new moral gestalt. Its ethics is ensouled by the symbolism of bodhisattvas, who go on living for others. The *pāramitās* are innovative ethical categorizations. Yet there was no Copernican



revolution in Buddhist ethics with the advent of Mahāyāna, and its innovations are best understood as supplements to the morality of its predecessor rather than a rejection of it. It is by means of a paradigm shift that Mahāyāna recalibrated the value-structure of Hinayāna.

Let us first have a look at the Eight-fold Way. What does the concept of the Path or Way imply? Obviously, the Path involves a journey, but more truly it is intended to bring about a transformation, rather than relocation. The stages are not mentioned to be passed through or left behind. To follow the Path is to participate in the values or perfections which are constitutive of Enlightenment, namely *śīla* and *prajñā*. It is a matter of gradual cultivation of moral and intellectual virtues. Nirvana is the perfection of the virtues and not an ontological shift or soteriological quantum leap. The beginning and the end is supposed to take place in the same continuum. As one follows the Way, one participates more and more in the *lokattara* just as the Ganga and the Yamuna merge and flow along united, said the Buddha, so too do *nirvāna* and the *mārga* (*Digha Nikāya*, ii, 223).

B. There has often been such a view in vogue that Buddhism demeans ethics at the cost of wisdom. This is entirely erroneous, and does no justice to the distinctive character of the Buddhist approach to men's moral life and its end. The inseparability of conduct and wisdom, *śīla* and *prajñā* is such that at no point the practice of the *śīlas* may be abandoned. *Prajñā* or wisdom develops with their practice and with wisdom one perceives increasingly high moral standards. It should be unexceptionable to say that Buddhist ethics is derived from the philosophy of Buddhism and the Buddhist philosophy is derived from the Buddhist ethics. The two form a continuous teaching, the constituents of the Way are not "steps" in the sense that one accomplishes first one and then another as one would walk up a flight of stairs, but are largely inter-dependent. The constituents of the Way are often divided into three groups of *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*. The first two represent *prajñā*. The next three represent *śīla*, and the last three represent *samādhi*. The first constituent of the Way is *samyakdr̥sti*, or perfect understanding. It is considered to be the foundation of

the Truth concerning Suffering, its origin and, therefore possible means of cessation, but this is only arrived at after perfect and cumulative in the *śīlas*, *samādhi* and the realization of the nature of body and consciousness. The point comes out into high relief in the Buddha's dialogue with Sonadanda: "morality is washed all round with wisdom and wisdom is washed all round with morality. Wherever there is morality there is wisdom, and wherever there is wisdom there is morality. From the observing of the moralities comes wisdom, and from the observing of wisdom comes morality. Morality and wisdom together reveal the height of the world... it is just as if one should wash one hand with the other or one foot with the other; exactly so morality is washed round with wisdom and wisdom with morality". (*Long Discourses of the Buddha*, tr. A.A.G. Bennett, Bombay, p. 100-1).

C. The relationship between *śīla* and *prajñā* is binary and symbiotic, while *samādhi* is a means for the promotion of and participation in morality and insight. Neither cognitive realisation nor moral perfection are adequate in isolation. A pratyekabuddha, it could be argued, is morally out of focus, he can see but not act. The Eight-fold Way is programmed for a bilateral perfection of man's intellectual and moral potential. If one is deficient either morally or intellectually or both, he would be unsatisfactory from the Buddhist moral intentions. This is emblematic of the new scale of values, a new ideal of human perfection. Mystical knowledge by itself is not enough, but must be compiled with action inspired by a consciousness of moral good. *Na ācāram parityajya* (V. 90), as Śāntideva has it. Dimensions of human good are binary, both worldly action and salvific knowledge. Ideally, virtue and knowledge should be cultivated together.

D. The soteriological implication of *śīla* can be appreciated by considering the concepts of stream-winner (*sotāpanna*) or non-retuner (*anāgāmi*). These are metaphors for achievements to be had in the practice of the Way. In the classical texts, the achievers are said to be those who are either Stream-winners or Once-returners or Never-returners. The Stream-winner is one who has just won the Way, and detaches himself from mundane existence. More advanced is the Once-returner who will return to the world no more

than seven times, and finally, there is the Never-returner, who no more returns to this world and attains *Nirvāna*, the ultimate goal of all Buddhist endeavour, the extinction of craving and separate selfhood, a life which has gone beyond death. The “Mahali Sutta” in the *Digha-Nikāya* is a classical locus where the stages of achievements on the Way to *nirvāna* are stated, and the Eightfold Way is spoken of as the Way of Progress.

It should be interesting to consider a few of the imageries of *śīla*. One might go along Buddhaghōṣa as for the etymology of the word *śīla* as that which ‘upholds’, or with Vasubandhu as that which cools. The *Madhyamakāvatāra* takes *śīla* as appeasing the fire of remorse of the mind through resistance to the passions and the non-production of sin. In the Tibetan tradition, the idea of cooling recurs also in sGam popa’s *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, (tr. H.V. Guenther, Rider, London, 1970).

The most common imagery relates *śīla* to *moral foundation*. In *the Milinda’s Questions*. There is the metaphor of religions life as a tree with roots of virtue (*kuśala-mūla*), trunk of *Samādhi*, pith of *dharmma*, branches of *Śīla*, bearing flowers of freedom or *vimutti*. Nāgarjuna, in the *Suḥṛllekhā*, states that *śīla* is the support of every thing valuable, just as the earth is the support for the animate and inanimate. Aśvaghōṣa famously uses the simile of *śīla* and *the earth* (*Saundarānanda*, XIII. 21). Reminiscent of the *Kathopaniṣad* image of archery, in the *Milinda’s Questions* we are told that just as an archer plants his feet firmly on the ground before making a shot, so must one plant one’s feet on the ground of *śīla* before losing the shaft of knowledge.

These images prepare us to understand *śīla* as a soteriological foundation. Kamaśīla echoes Aśvaghōṣa in saying that one has to be supported (*āśrita*) by pure morality (*śīlavīśuddhi*). The *Mahayānasūtrālamkāra* declares that *śīla* is the basis of all good qualifies, even the thought of enlightenment (*bodhicittotpāda*) rests upon *śīla*. We have had enough evidence to support the view that *śīla* is incorporated into the foundation of the Buddhist soteriological programme. It is the starting point as well as the way forward, while conserving what has been achieved, and seeking at the same time further development and transformation. A close study of the

Eight-fold Way leaves us in doubt that morality or *śīla* provides the impetus and dynamism without which liberation cannot be reached. Borrowing the metaphor from Śāntideva one might say that without being founded on morality, spiritual endeavour would prove itself to be a leaky jar, *sachidra kumbha jala vat* (V. 25). *Śīla*, therefore, is the sphere of moral cultivation and at the same time a precondition for proper intellectual development. In these functions of *Śīla* there obtains both a direct and an oblique relation to *nirvāna*. It is itself part of the final good, and is the basis for the development of knowledge. All too often scholars have tended to take the second, the oblique relationship to be the primary one, and the former, the direct as merely a means to knowledge. An approach such as this would fail in unraveling the role of ethics in Buddhist soteriology. In the form of the three divisions of the Eight-fold Way *śīla* and *prajñā* constitute the primary dimensions of perfection with *samādhi*, providing the impetus for their full development. An asymmetrical cultivation of *śīla* and *prajñā* will not only engender psychological imbalance in the form of intellectual or legalistic fixation. What we are expected to achieve is insightful knowledge and compassionate moral concern. The entire teaching of the Buddha could be put as follows: “Vigilance was his penultimate word, “attainment” or “accomplishment” his last.

## VI

We may consider the paradigm shift that occurs in Mahāyāna ethics. There are good reasons for relating the six perfections to the scheme of *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā* in the Eight-fold Way. The *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* states that the first three *pāramitās* (*dāna*, *śīla*, *ksānti*) corresponds to *Higher Morality* (*adhiśīla*), the fifth to Higher Meditation (*adhicitta*), and the sixth to Higher Wisdom (*adhiprajñā*), while the fourth (*Vīrya*) is shared in common by all three divisions. The prefix *adhi* denotes pre-eminence and importance. There is reason enough for holding the view that the origin of the six-fold *pāramitās* lies in the early Buddhist triad, *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*. These were known as the three *skandhas* or groups constituting the factors of spiritual progress and also as

the three *śikṣās* or branches of instruction, the three-fold training and discipline. It is needless to say that the six *pāramitās* had evolved after a process of selection and experimentation. This need not be our concern at the present, but what is worth mentioning is that in the Mahāyāna statement of ten *pāramitās*, besides the basic six, the last four are considered supplementary ones, namely, *upāya* or *upāya-kausalya*, i.e., skillfulness in the choice of means; *pranidhāna* or aspiration or resolution; *bala* or strength or power and *jñāna*, that is knowledge. It may be noted also that *śīla* is often said to lead to *samādhi* and the Eight-fold Way too ends with *samādhi*. Even in the concept of *adhicitta*, referred to above, *citta* is synonymous with *samādhi*, *Cittarakṣā* is a matter of primary importance with Śāntideva, it is said to be a great vow (*vrata*) is itself (V. 18).

What then is the relationship between ethics and insight, *śīla* and *samādhi*? The bilateral relationship of the two is ubiquitous in both ancient and Mahāyāna Buddhism, persisting through terminological changes. The terminological change is not without a significance. Whereas the ancient dispensation or Hinayāna defines its basic values as insight and morality, *prajñā* and *śīla*, Mahāyāna refers to these as insight (*prajñā*) and means (*upāya*), or insight and compassion (*karuṇā*). The terminological change reflects a new emphasis on the function of moral virtue as a dynamic other-regarding quality, rather than primarily concerned with personal development and self-control (*śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha*). But nonetheless, Mahāyāna is conscious of the importance of both of these components. So essential is the interdependence that in the absence of either element, it is bondage that results, not liberation. Such had been the teaching of Vimalakīrti. Wisdom acquired through skillful means, *upāyapāṭṭa prajñā*, and conversely, *prajñānupāṭṭopāya*, i.e., skillful means acquired through wisdom are deliverance. In the Tibetan tradition, Sgam-po-pa explains that if a bodhisattva resorts, between *prajñā* and *upāya*, to the one without the other falls into a one-sided *nirvāna*. Neither of them is adequate in itself. One would be reminded of what the *Īśa-upaniṣad* (verse 9) says in a similar intention. Those who pursue the path of routine conduct enter into darkness, but those aspire for the transcendent

enter into a darkness ever greater. Without *upāya* there cannot be complete enlightenment but only the limited enlightenment of the *śrāvakas*. The *Mādhyamakavatāra*, states that only when morality is accompanied by compassion (*mahākaruṇā*), skilful means (*upāyakauśalya*), and the non-abandonment of all beings, it produces the perfect purity of the bodhisattva-stage. For Mahāyāna, *śīla* is at once and the same time a source of purification and an example as well as a benefit to others. Śāntideva too expresses a similar intention in saying that *bodhicitta* brings oceans of merit for excelling over that of the *śrāvakas* (VII. 29).

The *Mahāyānasamgraha* enunciates the conceptions of *śīla* as temperance (*samvara-śīla*), cultivation of virtue (*kuśala-dharma samgrāhaka-śīla*) and as altruism (*sattva-artha-kriya-śīla*). Without questioning the importance of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, we should note in passing that the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* is more important a locus for studying Mahāyāna *śīla* in view of the fact that the text describes itself as a *bodhisattvapitaka* (157.15) and provides a comprehensive and even radical statement. The chapter on Morality or *Śīla-patala*, as it is called, has the famous commentary on it by Tsong-Kha-pa, a classic on ethics by itself. This, of course, is another story, and we propose to consider some of the points relevant to our context.

The Mahāyāna *Śīla* has three functions or aspects: (a) temperance, continence, restraint and self-control (*samvara*); (b) a subjective personal moral perfection linked to intellectual cultivation in the quest for enlightenment; (c) an objective recipient-oriented dimension which focuses on the needs of others. It is the third factor which distinguishes Mahāyāna ethics from its predecessor, and constitutes the paradigm shift, a shift in the centre of gravity in Buddhist ethics and presents a new picture of the moral agent, called a bodhisattva.

In passing, we may mention that the view that Buddhist ethics is a-historical is given a lie when we find that a bodhisattva is even permitted to cause a cruel ruler to fall from his authority. Whatever it is, this new conception of *śīla* as presented in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* presents an alternative code of conduct in contrast to that of the *śrāvakas*. An air of liberal attitude to contexts or moral situations breaths through it. An offence from the *śrāvaka*

point of view, e.g., lying in the interest of beings be at stake, is held to be permissible for a bodhisattva. This may be looked upon as an escape for excessive legalism of the *śrāvaka* ethics. The point about moral fittingness of an action is now being considered placing the interests of others above all else.

The shift in priorities from a personal quest for salvation to concern for the needs of others is endorsed on the grounds that in certain circumstances, conflict might arise between a monastic life and the need for action in the world. The Mahāyāna allows a degree of flexibility, subject to a two-fold stipulation, namely, that (a) the act should benefit others; and (b) it should be performed from an irreproachable (*niravadya*) motive. This is not permissiveness; rather, it is a form of defeasibility. Care is taken to exclude from this provision acts of a grave or serious nature, and there is no suggestion that a breach of the fundamental moral precepts would be countenanced.

Permissibility of an action, for a bodhisattva, depends on its being *niravadya* or irreproachable. Irreproachability is the key factor, though not easy to understand. It has been defined in terms of assurance of the welfare (*hita*) and happiness (*sukha*) of beings without arousing passions like greed, etc., in the actor or others. Such acts a bodhisattva may perform. Not any act favourable to beings is irreproachable, e.g., illicit relations with a woman belonging to another. One may distinguish between actions that are intrinsically immoral and those that are not so yet prohibited, for example, breaches of monastic rules that are otherwise gravely immoral acts. Some authors have gone to the length of saying that even what is forbidden is allowable for one who seeks the welfare of others with compassion. We may refer to Prajñākaramati's explanation in this regard. He appears to suggest that what is forbidden may be performed by one who perceives with the eye of knowledge a special benefit for beings therein. The exception, he adds, does not apply to everyone, only to cases of the exercise of compassion, by one who is compassionate by nature and is without a selfish motive, solely concerned with the interests of others, and totally dedicated to this ideal. This way of circumscribing a permissible act is not only a key statement but also bears testimony of a good deal of



heart searching in Mahāyāna ethics over the status of its moral precepts. There are two verses in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (V. 83 and 84) that are relevant in our context. Śāntideva puts it explicitly that for a little morality one should not forsake a great gift. One should consider what will be of the most benefit for others. And Śāntideva goes on to add—this is well understood—one should always strive for the welfare of others. “The Far-Seeing Merciful Ones have allowed (a bodhisattva) to do some actions that (for others) were forbidden” *Nisiddhamapyanuññāta Kṛpālosathadarśinah*.

Is *upāya-kauśalya* a moral strategy? Does it advocate situational ethics? These are hard questions and pretty difficult to answer. If one has to give credence to the account of *upāya-kauśalya* as found in the *Saddharmapundarīka*, then two possible views appear to emerge; one is of historical import, and the second discloses a method of teaching the truth of the Vehicle. As for the first, it is held that “there is only one single vehicle. A second does not exist, and there is no third anywhere in the world” (*Buddhist Scriptures*, Edward Couze, Penguin, 1959, p. 201). The vehicles, namely, of the śrāvakas, pratyeka-buddha’s and bodhisattvas are proliferated by the Buddha’s skill in means for the benefit and out of compassion for the world. This pertains to accomodating the teachings of the earlier discourses. It is because of his skill in means, *upāya-kauśalya* that the Buddha expounded the Buddha-career as being three-fold. But more importantly, the second view of the concept concerns a methodology for teaching. The parable of a father lying to children with a view to getting his children out of a house on fire drives home the idea that one of core moralities, not to lie, may be transgressed for the benefit of others. The father in the parable cannot be charged with speaking falsely, since it was only a skilful device by which he managed to get his sons out of the burning building, and to present them with life.

At this point, the requirement of insight or compassion surfaces itself. It is knowledge which absolves one from blame, at other times the scales tip towards compassions. In respect of the freedom allowed to a bodhisattva, there are usually two provisos which must be satisfied; (a) that the action will conduce to the greater good of those beings directly affected by it; and (b) that the action is



performed on the basis of perfect knowledge (*prajñā*) or perfect compassion (*karuṇā*). The proviso (b) implies the rationale that from the point of view of ultimate truth there is no such as a rule or being (See *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, VIII, 101-3). And as for *karuṇā* in the domain of relative truth or *samvṛti* (ibid. IX. 1-2) the interests of others are all-important and must be furthered whatever be the cost to oneself. It is worth noticing that even though dispassionateness is the desideratum of the Buddhist moral life, *rāga* or attachment now comes to find a room. *Rāga* and *karuṇā* are conceptually linked in having other beings in the domain of intention, and perhaps *karuṇā* presupposes *rāga* as a motivational factor. On the other hand, *dveṣa* or aversion abandons beings. *Rāga* can be condoned, while *dveṣa* is absolutely condemned. The *Upālipariprcchā* leaves one in no doubt. For one whose intentions are compassionate, *rāga* is no offence (XI in *Sikṣā-sammucaya*). The point is that in cases where there is advantage for beings, an “offence” arising from attachment or *rāga* is no offence. Here the emphasis is upon a close emotional relationship with others in moral life.

## VII

What are we to make out of the antinomial character of the concept of *upāya* and the varying degrees of latitude allowed to a bodhisattva? He is an ethical paradigm, having vowed to do saving work for the benefit of others. How are we to reconcile ourselves to the idea of relaxation of the rules in his case? Śāntideva leaves us in no doubt as regards the fact that a bodhisattva cannot himself attain enlightenment by merely developing *bodhicitta*, he must also practise the *bodhisattva-samvaras*. The relaxation is only apparent, and calls for interpretation. There is a countervailing insistence in the literature upon the strict observance of the ethical precepts. The antinomy arises, since a bodhisattva is both encouraged both to be vigilant in preserving the precepts at all costs and yet to break them whenever he sees an advantage in doing so.

Any failing of a bodhisattva is extremely serious, for by his failing he places the welfare of all beings in jeopardy. The fact of his own transgression is only of incidental importance; the really serious matter is the repercussion of his failing upon others. The

duty of a bodhisattva is to *all* beings, so the seriousness of his failing is multiplied accordingly. Such have been the reasoning, which leads a bodhisattva to avoid scrupulously even the most minor transgressions. To avoid potentially catastrophic consequences, a bodhisattva must be ever vigilant in the perfection of morality. Śāntideva's chapter on *saniprajanyarakṣana* leaves us in no doubt in this regard.

The notion of *upāya-kausalya* is quite complex, and a part of it may be unraveled in the following way with a view to resolving the antiviral character of the notion.

Let us distinguish the two senses of *upāya*. In the first sense, *upāya* is normative. In the second sense, *upāya* is a concern of bodhisattvas, when they have arrived at a specific stage or *bhūmi* of self-development. At the so-called *upāya-kausalya-bhūmi*, their powers and perfections are supernatural, and hence it cannot be the concern of the common man. We may say also that the two senses of *upāya* govern a bodhisattva's own personal development and perfection and his relationship to others as a harbinger of salvation. The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* distinguishes two aspects of *upāya* by calling one internal (*adhyātma*) and the other external (*bahirdhā*). According to this scheme, a bodhisattva first perfects himself and then radiates his perfection towards others. After a bodhisattva has perfected his moral conduct, he continues to practise if not out of a desire for merit but to instruct other beings.

In the two senses of *upāya*, one is normative ethics, while the other is not. The normative *upāya* may be taken as allowing a bodhisattva his career at the initial stages a slight degree of latitude in respect of minor offences. This does not amount to a slackening of discipline, not enjoining laxity in moral practice but rather the greater recognition of the needs and interests of others. One's moral practice is for the benefit of oneself and others by means of example. Through its emphasis on *karuṇā*, full recognition is accorded to the value of ethical perfection. It makes explicit that ethics and insight are of equal importance for a bodhisattva. *Upāya* in the normative sense endorses the binary nature of the final perfection.

*Upāya* in the second sense can be of parasitic employment. It can only be the provenance of a Buddha or a perfected bodhisattva, and does not concern any normative ethical conduct. The

*Saddharmapundarīka* account of the father in the parable is no other than an analogue of the Tathagata himself. In his compassion-inspired antinomial conduct we see a symbolic statement of the importance attached by the Mahāyāna to concern for others. *Upāya* in this usage becomes an overriding principle, not a normative doctrine for universal consumption or application. *Upāya* as an overriding principle can be rented to such a bodhisattva who has perfected the *pāramitās* of ethics and insight. There is much to be said for the Mahāyāna practice of invoking *prajñā* and *karuṇā* together. *Upāya* in the non-normative sense marks the triumph of compassion in the form of situation ethics, may be over knowledge. Where the end encompasses two values, there will always be an attempt to play one off against the other.

## VIII

The binary pattern of human good consisting of *śīla* and *prajñā* have had an in-built tension, and it has surfaced time and again in the historical development of the Buddhist ethical thought. Mahāyāna appears to have been led in two directions at once. It seeks to excel the *śīla* of the *śrāvakas* and, at the same time, is devoted to the service of others. This tension finds stability of a sort in a tripartite ethical structure consisting of *śīla* as temperance, pursuit of the good, *kauśala-dharma-samgrāhaka-śīla*, and altruistic concern, *sattva-artha-kriya-śīla*. There must have been an inner dynamic of the synthetic relationship between *prajñā* and *karuṇā*. The later came to enjoy and achieve the status of a supreme ideal. In its wake there appeared the antinomian doctrine of *upāya* in a metaphorical and a prescriptive form. The form of the *upāya* doctrine suggests its similarity to the Situation Ethics of Joseph Fletcher.

In much of the Mahāyāna literature, Hinayāna is accused of having subordinated ethics to knowledge, to have undervalued concern for others in the quest for an intellectual goal. Ironically, Mahāyāna fell into another extreme, in promoting the doctrine of *upāya*, of subordinating knowledge to ethics. It would have been felt by the Mahāyāna thinkers that *karuṇā* should be given ampler

ether to breathe, fully freed from the moral prohibitions of the lesser vehicle, and they promoted the doctrine of *upāya*.

Doubts have been raised questioning how ethics could exist at all in the absence of a moral subject as was entailed by the no-self teaching. Śāntideva declares the ontology of persons as fictional (VIII. 101-3). We shall undertake a fuller consideration of the matter in another sequel. At a meta-ethical level one might be left with a logical uneasiness at the Buddhist justification, offered for the use of *upāya*, to an ethical conclusion from metaphysical premises, or from a fact to a value. The argument put forward is of a reductionist kind and assumes a lowest common denominator for all levels of reality, namely emptiness. *Prajñā* is, by definition, the insight into the intrinsic *śūnyatā* of everything that be. In the sweep of the thesis, it appears to be tendered that since precepts are empty of intrinsic existence like everything else, they must be devoid of moral force, and, therefore, cannot act as a brake or check on the compassionate bodhisattva. However, ethics cannot be overridden in such simple a manner. Although facts are not irrelevant to values, they cannot have a priority. Ethical issues must be addressed with ethical arguments, they cannot be brushed aside by reference to facts of an ontological or metaphysical nature. A superficial reading of Śāntideva's chapter on *Dhyānapāramitā* could give such an impression. It is doubtful that the doctrine of emptiness strips away the force of ethical precepts in that manner. The doctrine teaches that phenomena are devoid of intrinsic existence, not that they are unreal or non-existent. The precepts and the moral life are not in any sense abolished by the doctrine of emptiness, at least as far as mainstream Mādhyamikā is concerned. Candrakīrti in *Prasannapadā* is categorical on this issue. The belief that the doctrine of emptiness entails the denial of the precepts is an extreme and erroneous view. More recently, Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, informs us that Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is based on Nāgarjuna's *Ratnāvalī*, and in that case the thesis of *śūnyatā* only engenders one's altruistic aspirations by making it possible to realize oneself as others, equalizing and exchanging oneself and other (*parātma-parivartana*, in Śāntideva's work mentioned

in VII. 76 and VIII. 131). *Śūnyatā* rendering an exchange of selves in altruistic empathy could be looked upon as a *regulative* (*a la* Kant) image; rather, than a constitutive statement. Morality is the foundation of the Buddhist path, it never stands annulled whatever be the attainment of the moral agent. The Dalai Lama quotes the Tibetan saying, “Even if your mental level equals that of the devas, you must still behave like a human” (*The World of Tibetan Buddhism*, Boston, 1995; p. 109).

## *Karuṇā: The Supreme Emotion*

### I

The Bodhisattva is the Buddhist paradigm of human perfection. His motive is *karuṇā* or compassion, pure and simple. The important step in carrying out his compassionate intentions is the vow (*praṇidhāna*), his resolve to win Enlightenment and to save all beings. At a final, later, and higher stage of his perfection (*pāramitā*), the vow becomes a completely disinterested intention, a purely spiritual act. In Mahāyāna, loving-kindness and compassion subordinate virtues in the older Buddhism, *Karuṇā* is stressed more and more, and moves right into the centre of the picture. This may remind us of the Christian emphasis on “love”. A bodhisattva is a compassionate being who, if need be, would sacrifice his life for the welfare of all. This may remind us of the Christ who died for us all so that our sins may be forgiven. Mahāyāna shows the eschatological interest in fervently hoping for a “second coming” of the Buddha as Maitreya (Pali *Metteya*), the “Loving One”. These innovations of Mahāyāna are similar to the spirit of early Christianity.

The creation of the bodhisattva ideal and the elaboration of the doctrine of “Emptiness” are the two great contributions of Mahāyāna. In the bodhisattva, we have the image of an ideal man. A bodhisattva, as the etymology of the appellation indicates (*bodhi* meaning “enlightenment” and *sattva* “being” or “essence”), is a person who in his essential being is motivated by the desire to win full Enlightenment, to become a Buddha. Destined to become a Buddha, in order to help suffering creatures, he selflessly postpones

his entrance into the bliss of *Nirvāna* and escape from this world of birth and death. It is the essential feature of a bodhisattva's compassion that it is "great", i.e., boundless, and that it makes no distinction. Buddhism regards the difference between human beings and animals as unimportant, and requires that equal compassion should be extended to all. Scrupulous respect for the life and dignity, for the rights and wishes of all living beings is a bodhisattva's first and elementary duty. He radiates great friendliness and compassion over all beings.

If it be the case that a bodhisattva's compassion is the selfless desire to make others happy, it is not self-evident that (a) what is good for others, and (b) nor is self-interest easily shunned.

In order to make others happy, one must have some idea of what *can* make them happy. The other people may not always be the best judges of that. It is hard to decide what is good for others and what is of real benefit to them. Is it, for instance, an act of kindness to kill an animal in pain? Such problems do arise in the casuistry of love. More fundamental could be the difficulty that one good thing can be the foe of another. The highest good is said to be the gift of the *Dharma*. In that case, the gift of anything else, in so far as it increases people's worldly welfare, may militate against the development of their spiritual potentialities, for it may bind them still further to this world and increase their worries and anxieties. Should we then wish to increase the material welfare of the people or should we not? Our attitude to such development as social services and raising the people's standard of living is not easy to determine. Yet on this side, our compassion would make us glad to see that longer, that their sicknesses are treated with some care and skill, that justice is dispensed with greater humanity, and so on. On the other hand all these benefits depend on the technical organisation of society, which makes a spiritual life next to impossible. Whatever the answer, it is clear that only a great deal of wisdom can decide a dilemma of this kind.

The effects apart, the motives of doing good to others also present serious problems. Charity has fallen to disrepute. It is often thought as being motivated by a sense of guilt, or by a desire to humiliate the poor. Others are often ungrateful for what one has

done to them. They may hate us for the help we gave. They may be justified in divining that we considered ourselves first in what we did, and secondly, degraded them into a mere means or material of our desire to do good. The benefits of generosity to ourselves are not in doubt, but the benefit to others is. A very high degree of sanctity is necessary to do good to others without harming or irritating them. *Sraddhayā deyam*, enjoins one of the *Upaniṣads* Only the pure in heart can have the vision necessary to decide what is beneficial to others, and only they have the purity of motive. The ability really to benefit others is really regarded as a high and rare virtue, the last and most sublime flowering of a mature development of perfect wisdom. So say the scriptures. Milarepa, the saint of Tibet said if there be not the least self-interest attached to duties for the benefit of others, only then it could be permitted. Such detachment is indeed rare. Works performed for the good of others seldom succeed, if not wholly freed from self-interest. Hence, one should not be over-anxious and hasty in setting out to serve others before one has oneself realized the Truth in its fullness. It is for this reason that a bodhisattva wishes to win full Enlightenment, so that he may be really useful to others. His usefulness to them increases as he comes nearer and nearer to Enlightenment.

As the Buddhist conviction goes, ordinary life is hopelessly unsatisfactory, exposed to constant pain and grief, and in any case futile. Without *Dharma*, there can be no lasting happiness. But if the gift of it is the highest gift of all, one must possess the *Dharma* in order to give it to others. And the only way to get hold of it is through Enlightenment. What is it then? It is thorough and complete understanding of the nature and meaning of life, the forces which shape it, the method to end it, and the reality which lies beyond it could be understood. The highest achievement of man is to be seen in a cognitive insight into a Reality which transcends this fleeting world, and all the beings in it. Here is another difficulty, a definite problem as regards *karuṇā*. The man who has cognized this Reality, which is so much more satisfactory than anything he sees around him, will or may want to withdraw into it and away from his fellow creatures. No more reborn, he will be lost to the world. Humanity will appear to him as a mass of non-entities. Buddhism



teaches us that persons are not really “persons”. We are to *imagine* that they are. They *are* putative in character. Enlightenment need not logically entail the desire to assist others. On this point, there is agreement also among the Mahāyāna thinkers. They concur in holding that different people must reach the goal by different ways, but insist as well that the unselfish ones are superior to others.

It is at this point that Hinayana and Mahāyāna paradigms of the perfected individuals come to differ. The Hinayana ideals comprise the śrāvakas, the enlightened persons who are aloof from the concerns of the world, intent on their own private salvation alone. And there are the pratyekabuddhas, who—independent of the instructions of a Buddha—have gained Enlightenment by their own private efforts. Having gained it, they keep their knowledge to themselves, and do not communicate it to others. These are two selfish types of enlightened persons. Mahāyāna, on the other hand, count, among the unselfish ones, the Buddhas and the bodhisattvas. The Buddha is fully enlightened or *samyaksambuddha*, he is omniscient in the full sense of the term. He knows everything necessary to salvation, his own and that of others. The Buddha is all-knowing, but is he necessarily all-compassionate? That is the question.

The conceptual gap between being a Buddha and being compassionate is taken note of by Mahāyāna writers. What characterizes a Buddha’s gnosis is that therein the subject is identical with the object. The fact that he knows everything that there is, implies that he also is everything that there is. In consequence, the Buddha becomes identical either with the Absolute, or with the sum total of existence, with the totality of all things at all times. And because he has merged with everything that is, the Buddha has cast off all traces of a separate self, and has attained complete and total self-extinction. It could be maintained that the historical Buddha, i.e., Siddharta, was earlier a bodhisattva, and he held his ministry forty-five years after his Enlightenment. But his compassionateness, even after his final Nirvana, seems a little incredible. After his final *Nirvāna*, he was totally extinct as far as this world and its inhabitants are concerned, and they no longer interested him. How can one graft compassion on the Buddha

who has, as the phrase goes, passed away? Does not the emotion of compassion seem alien to him? Doubts are in order due to the transcendental and truly inconceivable nature of all that concerns the Buddha. Everything about him lies outside the range of our direct experience. For us, even-mindedness and compassion seem mutually incompatible. In one vast Emptiness, compassion appears to get lost and inapplicable. But since the Buddha, the selfless one, is conceived of as possessing such states as even-mindedness, boundless compassion and full emptiness to perfection, it seems analytic that the Buddha is compassionate. It could be a sort of contradiction to say that the Buddha is not compassionate.

We may stop the argument at that point and turn to the bodhisattvas. They are nearer to our ways of thinking. They remain in touch with the imperfect by having the same passions as we have, but these passions either affect or pollute their minds. The bodhisattvas are not quite beyond our ken. While all the time intent on their transcendental goal they remain, during their struggle, always aware of their solidarity with all that lives. Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer, and can one be saved and hear the whole world cry? But if a bodhisattva wishes to become a Buddha, and if a Buddha is defined as the sum total of everything there is, then the distance between the given person and the state of Buddhahood will obviously be very large, nearly infinite. One life will never be enough, countless ones would be needed, aeons and aeons would have to pass before a bodhisattva can reach his goal. What separates him and us from Buddhahood? Is it the belief in a self, the belief that he is a separate individual, the inveterate tendency to “I-making and Mine-making? To get rid of himself a bodhisattva, not finding this an easy task, takes two kinds of measures to remove the obstacle to Buddhahood: (a) actively by self-sacrifice and selfless service, and (b) cognitively by insight into the non-existence of a self. The latter is due to *prajñā*, defined as the ability to penetrate to true reality, to the own-being, *svabhāva* of things, to what they are in and by themselves. This is necessary to disclose the ultimate inanity of a separate self. Accordingly, action and cognition are to go hand in hand, closely interlinked. In the Tāntrik terminology this is said in terms of the

“Union” of *prajñā*, and *upāya*, the unity of compassion and wisdom. The unity is acted out by the six perfections, or *pāramitā*, methods by which we go to the Beyond. A person turns into a bodhisattva when he first resolves (*bodhicittotpāda*) to win full enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. Thereafter, until Buddhahood, he passes many aeons in the practice of the *pāramitās*. So important is this concept that the Mahāyāna often refers to itself as the vehicle of the *pāramitās*, or *pāramitāyāna*. The perfections are six in number, of giving (*dāna*) morality (*śīla*), patience (*ksanti*), vigour (*vīrya*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*prajñā*). But what is noteworthy is that they are dominated by wisdom which alone makes the others virtues into *pāramitās* or virtues properly so-called. But why? The perfection of wisdom imparts to the other perfections an organ of vision which allows them to ascend the path to all-knowledge and to reach all-knowledge. What matters is not only what the bodhisattva does, but the spirit in which he does it. For example, if he gives, he is to have no thought of what he gives, paying no attention to the person to whom he gives, and chief of all, to remain unaware that it is he who gives. Convinced by perfect wisdom of their unreality, he should have no perception of self, no perception of others, no perception of a gift. It is simply a state of mind. *Śāntideva* has put it succinctly in V. 10 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. This is the deontological view of generosity or *dāna*.

So has to be the case with compassion. Compassion itself is capable of three degrees of perfection. At first, a bodhisattva is compassionate to living beings; then he realizes that these do not exist, and directs his compassion on the impersonal events which fill the world; finally, the compassion operates within one vast field of Emptiness. It may not be absurd to speak of a compassion which has no object at all. We know of many emotions which arise inwardly, without the stimulus of outside objects. A bodhisattva’s compassion springs from the depths of his heart, and from there it spreads over to that which he knows to be illusory. The *Bodhisattva Padmapāni* in the Ajanta mural looks at no object at all. He casts his compassionate look, at all spaces around, empty and non-empty.

We may now turn to a fuller consideration of *Karuṇā*.

II

In Buddhism, “friendliness” is a virtue, but a subordinate one. Wisdom alone can act as free. ‘Friendliness’ is not one of the stages of the eight-fold path, *astāṅgika mārga*, and is not reckoned as one of the five cardinal virtues, or one of the six perfections. The *Anguttaranikāya* (V. 342) enumerates eleven advantages of the practice of friendliness. *Nirvāna* is not one of them. What could be the reasons for relegation of friendliness to a secondary position? A virtue is emphasized—by praise or by condemnation of its opposite—to the extent that it seems personally important to us, and it is personally important to us to the extent that we are in need of it, and to the extent that its opposite is a temptation to us. Again, love and hatred belong inseparably together. It applies to sex-love, and to all love to the extent that it is intense, sensuous and self-seeking. When one strengthens love, one automatically strengthens hate at the same time, if only unconsciously. The point is that love and hatred are inseparable. It could be that there is neither love nor hate, but a third factor, which appears, respectively, as either love or hate, just as the circumstances demand. One would then expect that religions which stress love should also manifest more hatred than those which do not. Observation seems to bear this out. The concepts *infidel* and *false gods* have caused more harm in human history than love of one’s own people.

Possible arguments against love may be put as under:

The stress on love must involve a stress on the personal aspects of the deity who otherwise would be devoid of attributes which render it lovable. At certain levels of spiritual development, it is significant and fruitful to describe the deity as a father, a mother, a friend, a sweetheart, etc. But, strictly speaking, such statements are inaccurate and untrue. In consequence, wherever *bhakti* is placed above wisdom, a religion is in danger of throwing up dogmas which are ultimately untrue. They have then to be defended with intolerance with which we guard against incipient doubts in ourselves, for it is well known that just the most dubious statements evoke the greatest fanaticism. The true character of the deity can be revealed only to wisdom and that is even-minded beyond hate and beyond love.

Further, if *self-extinction* is the *supreme goal* of the spiritual life, then “love” is not the means by which it can be achieved. In Buddhism, friendliness is taught as antidote, not to self-infatuation but to ill-will and malice. This is its purpose and that circumscribes its possibilities. We habitually tend to oppose “love” to “selfishness”, and to believe that a growth in love will *ipso facto* promote unselfishness. But nothing could be further from the truth. Self-seeking is a most conspicuous element in most of what is currently regarded as “love”. In a mother’s love, for instance, the child is as often as not a mere extension of the mother’s self, which is not weakened, but immensely strengthened by this identification with something outside it. To some extent at least she loves the child because it is “her” child, because it is a piece of herself, which makes her important to herself. In mate love, likewise, the narcissist component is easy to observe. One cannot love successfully unless one builds up the self-esteem and makes oneself feel “wanted” and “precious”. All this has nothing to do with unselfishness. It is clearly a bolstering up of the ego, and not a diminution of it. Even acts of self-sacrifice are no sure indication of unselfishness. They are often accompanied by said musings about the ingratitude of those who do not appreciate what is being done for them. They may spring from self-hate or from hatred for what is sacrificed, or they may just transfer properly from one part of the self to another. For whenever we consider this matter of selfishness and unselfishness scientifically, we must bear in mind the elastic boundaries of the “self”, which is the sum total of all the parts of the universe we claim as our own. It is certainly not the whole truth about love that it seeks only self to please. But this is an important element in it. The eradication of attachment to self is therefore unlikely to be achieved by the cultivation of “love” as such. It is claimed that by loving someone else, one forgets oneself. It requires little subtlety of mind to see that this kind of self-forgetting leaves the self substantially intact. These are formidable psycho-analytical disclosures.

With all these considerations on the debit side, there is a credit side as well. Love is an important raw material of the spiritual life. Just as iron ore will not by itself turn into steel, without the

help of fuel, acids and labour, so also the emotion of love must be changed out of all recognition if it is to become a weapon in the fight against the self. And this process of refinement, sublimation and spiritualization demands the intervention, not of emotional, but of intellectual forces, which deprive love of all these features which make it dear to us. Wisdom alone allows us to see the self for what it really is, and discloses both its nature, boundaries and ultimate inanity, and the workings of the unseen, impersonal, actually real cosmic forces which pervade the universe. When transformed by wisdom love becomes impartial, and thus nearly unrecognizable.

### III

Let us look at the way friendliness and compassion have been understood in Buddhist history, from the *Nikāyas* to the Tantras. I shall first put down what Buddhaghōṣa says in his *Viśuddhimāgga*: Friendliness, he says, consists in that one bestows benefits on others, it is based on the ability to see their pleasant side, and it results in the stilling of ill-will and malice, compassion consists in that, unable to bear the sufferings of others, one strives to lead them away from ill, it is based on seeing the helplessness of those overcome by suffering and it results in abstention from harming others.

Friendliness and compassion are necessary antidotes to the hatred which plays such a crucial part in our mental economy. Hatred is the result of the frustration which we feel when we do not get what we want. We usually expect and demand much more from life than it is willing to grant us. Each frustration generates a corresponding impulse of hatred or aggressiveness in us, which is not only all the time on the look-out for opportunities to hurt others, but also effectively impedes and stifles our own spiritual growth. The latent hatred which is in us as a result of our manifold disappointments sets up a process of self-poisoning, both mental and physical. It also blinds us, and we fail to see the virtues of our fellow men and their lovable qualities, as well as the weight of suffering they have to endure. The cultivation of friendliness and compassion can bring about a reorientation of our attitude to

others, open our eyes to their virtues and problems, induce us to be tender to all that lives, and direct our hatred away from other people. But the root of all this hatred is the belief that we are all separate individuals, and this cannot be eradicated by the cultivation of the social emotions. Left to themselves, they can do no more than replace private egoism by tribal egoism, and that is not the way to peace.

Friendliness and compassion are matters of *sāadhanā*. There are two sides of friendliness: absence of hatred and active benevolence. As to the first, the evils of hate are obvious, but to actually dispose of one's hatred is hard. The impulse of hatred cannot be annihilated by a mere act of will, because the attempt to suppress malevolence merely drives it underground, and forces it to seek expression in all sorts of indirect, stealthy and often nearly unrecognizable forms. A genuine and wholehearted benevolence can be gained only if we can find for it an outlet which is both harmless to others and spiritually fruitful to ourselves. In this context, ascetic practices are greatly to be recommended, because in making ourselves uncomfortable, we use it up in that manner. It is rare to find someone who loves both his own comfort and his fellow man.

#### IV

We may, however, leave behind the perplexities of the world of action, and look into another direction, towards the certitude that arises from meditation. Buddhist tradition has a set of four meditations, called "boundless", aiming at extending to an unlimited number of beings the attitudes of friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy and impartiality. It is in the *Suttanipāta* that one has the *locus classicus* of the notion of *mettā* or friendliness. There is the moving metaphor of the mother who protects her only child at the risk of her own life; even so, let one cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings. The *Dīgha-Nikāya* (*Sutta* 28, IV, 76) too has a prose passage expressing a similar intention. The four meditations or *brahmavihāras*, as they are called, are to be practiced in the spirit of the mother who watches over her child, her only child, but without the usual exclusiveness. The idea has travelled far and wide, and one would be struck by what St Augustine described

as the right kind of love, *ordinate dilecto*. The right kind of love, says Augustine, begins with oneself, and then widens itself by being extended first to our nearest friends, then to strangers, then to enemies. First extend your love to those near to you, but do not call that a real extension. For you really love yourself when you love those that are close to you. Then extend it to strangers, who have done you no harm. Go beyond those even, and arrive at loving also your enemies. It is possible to recast the intention in the form of a prayer: May (I, or X) be happy and at his (my, her) case, free from pain, fear, distress or enemy, untroubled, well, unharmed in peace. We are bidden to equalize the affection we feel for all or any these people, to abolish the dividing line between them, and even to make no distinction between ourselves and other beings. According to Buddhaghosa, this is how one can recognize that one has broken down the barriers, and won an even and impartial attitude of mind to all persons. It is surely not an easy task to equalize one's friendliness in the way asked. The nominal mind is quite incapable of doing so. There is an innate ferocity of our dispositions. No amount of cultivation of the social emotions can uproot our deep-grained attachment to ourselves. But this, of course, is no reason to discontinue our more elementary meditations on friendliness.

The great Christian precept that you should love your neighbour as yourself has had exact parallel in Buddhism. In the process of making friendliness unlimited, one should think: as I myself wish to be happy and have an aversion to suffering, as I wish to live and do not wish to die, so also do other beings wish for the same, and one should desire exactly the same happiness for others as one desires for oneself. This prescription from the *Visuddhimagga* is followed by the statement that one should suffuse friendliness wholeheartedly and with all one's self. Buddhaghosa interprets the canonical prescription to mean that one should identify himself with all, be they inferior, middling or superior, be they friends, foes, or indifferent. One should identify *them all* with one's *own self*, without making the distinction that they are other beings.

Love for oneself is thus held to indicate the level to which the love of others should be raised, and to constitute the measure and pattern of our love for others. Here is a paradox, that to love



others one ought to love oneself also. The natural man is often far from wishing well to himself. It could be argued, apropos of the Christian conception of love, that self-love is so natural to us that a special commandment about it would be unnecessary. To argue thus is to evince inferior psychological insight. Buddhaghōṣa deems it necessary. In the practice of the meditation on *mettā* we should develop friendliness also towards ourselves, and fervently think, “may I be happy and free from ill, may I be free from hatred, oppression and any kind of disturbance”. For people may easily hate themselves, and much of our hatred of others is known to be a mere deflection or projection of self-hate, life is usually so disappointing, one’s death instinct could be at work. One may not dare to want to be happy, because one suffers from a sense of guilt, and feels that one does not deserve happiness, and punishment is due for the deeds of the past. A neurotic person is both discontented with himself and unable to have satisfactory relations with others. He can be made to live at peace with others only by first learning to endure himself. Aristotle said that only the wise man can love himself, and he alone, just because he is wise. The Aristotelian good man alone has no parts of his soul at variance, and have them well disposed towards one another. The bad man, being at strife with himself, can never be his own friend (*Magna Moralia*, 1211a). Here then is our paradox: Self-love can be achieved only by losing its intensity and exclusiveness, i.e., by becoming detached and impartial, a mere acceptance of the contents of one’s own self. For the more possessive it becomes, the more ambivalent it will be, the more charged with latent hate.

So it is our duty to love ourselves, since our ability to love others depends on it. What then happens to the demand that we should be indifferent to ourselves? The difficulty is hardly serious. On the lower stages of spiritual development, self-love is one of the decisive motives for the love for others, and only on the very highest is it extinguished. True self-love should induce us to be friendly to others, because to do so is advantageous to ourselves. The *Anguttara Nikāya* mentions the advantages of *mettā*. The friendly man wishes other people to be happy, and that is clearly to his advantage since it makes them so much more pleasant to

live with. He impedes the anger that is rising in his throat by reflecting that a man's enemies are his best friends, and deserve his gratitude. For they give him an opportunity to exhibit the virtue of forbearance. This idea is echoed by Śāntideva in the chapter on *Ksāntipāramitā* in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. We shall consider that account in a later context. The argument, however, is that they threaten that which is dear to us, without being really our own, because otherwise it could not be threatened. Hostile pressure thus strengthens our resolution to renounce these things, and so to become less vulnerable and more free.

Both Buddhist and Christian traditions equally teach that in the spiritually, fully developed man friendliness is quite selfless. Thomas a Kempis says, for example, one who possesses the true and perfect charity does not seek himself in anything (*Imitation of Christ*, I, Ch. 15). On the highest levels, the Christian conception of charity, or *agape*, does not essentially differ from the Buddhist *metta*, and the close parallel which exists between the ideas on this point should rejoice any student of comparative ethics and religion. In either case, the point is made that we can never find ourselves through our relations with others, but only through contact with a reality which is extra-individual. In a non-theist form, the Zen Buddhist teaches the same thing. Enlightenment, and with it self-extinction, is the result of the Non-relative suddenly bursting in on this world of relativity.

This brings us to the question of the links between wisdom and selfless love. Spiritual love is non-sensuous and, therefore, must have for its object something which transcends the senses. Normally, we live in a world of appearance, where I myself seem surrounded by other persons. In actual truth, I have no self, and they have no selves, either. True, spiritual love therefore must operate on the plane of true reality, and selfless within, it must transcend also the false appearance of self in others, and must be directed towards that which is really there, i.e., to the *dharmas*. But wisdom or *prajñā* is the ability to contemplate *dharmas*, and hence, selfless love is dependent on wisdom. Buddhism combines friendliness and compassion with impartiality. The ordinary person cannot see how impartiality or *upekṣā* is placed above friendliness and

compassion. Does *upekṣā* destroy compassion? Does impartiality or equanimity destroy compassion? Does it make one indifferent? These questions are in order from the common man's point of view, but more taxing enterprise is required to understand how the perfect can claim to practice compassion without a belief in the reality of the persons whom they love. Are they ultimately unreal? We shall endeavour to meet this problem in another section on the Buddhist ontology of persons and the problem of removal of pain (*Bodhicaryāvatāra* 8:101-3). These doubts cannot be stilled by argument, but only experience can lay them to rest. Spiritual states, seen from intellectual distance, tend to throw about paradoxes and contradictions in discourses pertaining to selfless behaviour and the state of self-extinction. The *Gītā* rhetoric concerning the *sthītaprajñā* is often harsh. The verse no. 13 of Chapter XII could be taken up for consideration. *Maitrī* and *karuṇā* are the two terms that occur famously there to be followed by *nirvāṇa*. A few verses later (verse no. 16) the saint is described as *udasīna*, and then he is said to be *sangavivarjita*. These are disturbing epithets for a person who is expected to be friendly to all beings. Shall we say that the saint practices compassion but is not given to petty kindnesses; he practices loving kindness, but ever grieved over the sight of suffering beings; he practices indifference but never ceases benefiting others? These paradoxes cannot possibly be translated into the ordinary logic of commonsense, because common sense is based on self-centred experiences which are transcended in the case of the saint. No service is done to the mysteries of spiritual ethics by trying to flatten them out into the appearance of commonplace events. What is the use of worrying about whether the impartial are compassionate or not, if one has oneself no distinct experience of impartiality. What good can come from arguing about the loss of compassion in emptiness, as long as "emptiness" is no more than a word? In these questions, the decisive factor is not what is said, but who speaks, and to whom.

## V

Buddhist ethical training must regulate our attitude to such fields of experience as the unwholesome passions (*kleśas*) which tie

us to the world and prevent us from reaching the freedom of the spirit; the spiritual reality to which we want to gain access, and other living beings, be they men or animals. There is the secret life of the spirit, and by comparison with it our life in society seems secondary, though not entirely irrelevant. The delicate balance between essential solitariness of man's encounter of *Nirvāna* and his absorption in social duties is of great moment for Buddhism. It is held that our relations to others cannot not be left to either chance or metaphysical insight. Left to chance, the weeds of natural malice would choke the frail plant of benevolence, and if it is governed by metaphysical insight, that would lead to a complete aloofness from others. In order to strike a balance between the two. Buddhism seeks to regulate our attitude to other people by prescribing meditations aiming at the development of friendliness (*mettā*), compassion, (*karuṇā*) sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and impartiality (*upekṣā*). They may not constitute the core of the Buddhist effort, and are relatively subordinate, though important. Nor are they specifically Buddhist, as they occur also in the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patanjali, and were perhaps borrowed from other Indian religions systems.

However, *mettā* and *muditā* belong together. In compassion we participate in the sufferings of others, in sympathetic joy in their happiness. Compassion makes the heart tremble and quiver at the sight and thought of the sufferings of other beings. We suffer with them, and, unable to endure their suffering, make efforts to lead them to greater happiness. Compassion or *karuṇā* is regarded as a virtue which kills out in us the desire to do harm to others. We become so sensitive to the sufferings of people, make them so much our own that we do not wish further to increase them. We feel that the harm done to them is harm done to ourselves. And that we naturally avoid. Left to itself, however, the virtue of compassion would degenerate into the vice of gloom. To contemplate so much pain and affliction is apt to depress the mind. To remove this vast mass of sufferings seems quite a hopeless task, and one is tempted to sink into helpless despair.

Nevertheless, compassion is placed before sympathetic joy, because it is much easier to call forth. The suffering of his fellow creatures is not altogether repellent to the natural man. It seems, as a matter fact, as if to some extent, he were positively attracted

by it. Psychologically speaking, compassion is closely allied to cruelty, which can be defined as the pleasure one derives from contemplating the sufferings of others. The two are the converse and obverse of the same medal. In both cases, one is sensitive to the sufferings of others, and avid to watch it. In compassion one derives pain, in cruelty pleasure from watching it. Modern psychology tells us that the division between pleasure and pain is by no means a clear and unambiguous one, that in masochistic pleasure the two are inextricably interwoven, and that in addition we are endowed with so striking a capacity for self deception that our true motives can rarely be ascertained with any degree of certainty. It is possible for a man to be secretly drawn to the calamities of the world, and to derive, to some extent unknown to himself, a hidden satisfaction from gloating over them, which he himself is convinced that he is actuated by pity. That is one of reasons why Buddhism insists that the practice of friendliness should precede the development of compassion, because it is the function of friendliness to purify the heart of hatred and ill will, both manifest and latent.

But it must really be left to the practice of sympathetic joy to overcome the negative sides of compassion, i.e., despondency and cruelty. *Muditā* or sympathetic joy consists in that one seeks the prosperous condition of others, is glad about it, and shares in their happiness. Logically speaking, one might expect that the happiness of others should be emotionally more welcome to us than their misery. In fact, nothing is farther from our natural inclinations. The *Oxford English Dictionary* shows that we have never managed to linguistically fix the concept of generous admiration for good fortune or achievement that goes beyond our own. Any word used for this purpose seems at some point in its history to convey the sense of a grudge or ill-will against the superiority of others. To some extent, this is perhaps a mere linguistic accident. But quite apart from these linguistic considerations, we have a definite aversion to dwelling on the happiness of others, particularly in the deeper layers of our mind. Envy and jealousy are strong, deep-seated counterforces. All the time we jealously compare our lot with that of others, and we grudge others the good fortune which eludes us. The very fact of our concentrating on spiritual

values may militate against our sympathy with the happiness of others. Happiness can be of two kinds: worldly or spiritual. For an overwhelming number of people, success means material prosperity, when they are elated by having made some money, or having got a better job, or a new house, or because their children get on in the world. The spiritual minded are easily tempted to respond to this elation with a mixture of derision and pity. To those trained in the laws of the spiritual life, it seems a sign of great foolishness to be happy about things like that, and wisdom seems to prompt the reflection that this kind of prosperity cannot possibly last, is often brought at the price of spiritual enslavement, and is likely to lead to great sufferings in the future. To rejoice with the children of the world in what they value as successes requires a spiritual perfection greater than most of us possess. It demands a complete and total indifference or *upekṣā* to material things, because only then is the spirit of rivalry over them quite dead in us, and only then can we ungrudgingly approve of the joy over them. There is an aesthetic dimension to *muditā*, and it can be brought out with the following example: when a grown-up person rejoices with a baby who has just learnt to walk, or with the sand castles built by children at the sea shore (Recall Tagore's line : "On the sea shore of endless worlds children meet" in *The Crescent Moon*). Because all that lies quite outside the field in which we compete and in which our self-esteem is at stake.

It is, of course, not only material but also spiritual happiness which is the sphere of sympathetic joy in the Buddhist sense. It is regarded as a praiseworthy exercise to dwell lovingly in one's mind on the great achievements of the spiritual heroes of the past, and to reflect that such achievements are taking place even today and will continue to take place in the future. The world and its misery is a fact, and in our compassion we suffer with it. The overcoming of the world and the conquest of the great happiness of the Beyond are, however, also a fact, and in the practice of sympathetic joy we share to some extent in this victory and its fruits, then this is a test by which we can know that we have overcome in our hearts the cruelty which may so easily mask itself as pity. When the despondency over the seemingly endless misery and stupidity

of this world threatens to paralyze us, then we require our hope from the contemplation of the bliss which spiritual endeavour can manifestly confer. In addition, sympathetic joy with the spiritual heroes will also cast out the self-pity which so easily attaches itself to the pursuit of spiritual life. One of the chief rewards of the practice of sympathetic joy could be that one loses the discontent engendered by the privations of a secluded life, and by the mental aridity which accompanies some of the more advanced spiritual states. A life of renunciation brings many inconveniences in its train, and the threat of being engulfed by the world is ever present. Only at the end of a long journey there arises the reward of the happiness which is greater than the world can confer. By sympathetic joy with the happiness of the saints, we anticipate to some extent this final stage of bliss, and regain the zest and the courage needed to persevere. Compassion can be so wearying to the mind because suffering is easily felt to be a contagious force. When we witness disaster or deformity, we are inclined to feel that we might have to endure the same, that it is really only by a quite incomprehensible privilege that we are spared the same kind of fate. So there is always the fear that the misfortune will jump over into us, if this state of luck or privilege should cease. But when we practice sympathetic joy we feel tangibly that we are indeed privileged, that we somehow belong to the community of the saints, and that the day is drawing near when the world can no longer touch us.

As for the point about sympathetic joy with the spiritual heroes of the past, there is a remarkable poem by Rabindranath Tagore. On the poet's birthday a devout Nepalese Buddhist visits him, and in reverent greeting recites prayers to the Buddha. Taking the prayer to his heart, the poet feels that he too, though so distantly situated in time, is privileged to have a share in the infinite merits (*punya*) of the Buddha (*Janmadine*, The Birthday, no. 6). Such a case of joy divests one of the limitations of time.

## VI

We have thus far followed Buddhaghōṣa in adumbrating the meditational states of *mettā* and *muditā*. It is time now to look

into the dynamics of *karuṇā*. *Karuṇā*, in the Buddhist context, is designated as fellow-feeling for all suffering beings. The compassionate meditator is required not to distinguish between own's own suffering and another's. False distinctions between one "self" and another "self" are to be wiped out. *Karuṇā* does not mean emotionalized identification with other's suffering. The agonized vicarious bearing of the world's sin and suffering in one's own self is quite different from *karuṇā*. To lose oneself in concern for another, from the Buddhist point of view, is mere sentimentality or emotional orgy, it is a manifestation of weakness and not strength. Speaking analogically, emotional identification with another's suffering could be, at times, like a non-swimmer's casting himself into the water beside a drowning man in order to drown along with him.

The ideal compassionator is like a skillful physician rather than a fellow mourner. He fully appreciates the suffering of the patient—in this case every sentient being—but does not, dare not, give way to emotional sympathy for that patient. Instead, cool-heartedly and emotionally self-controlled, he analyzes the diseased condition and prescribes for it, or performs the operation in a detached impersonal manner. To become emotionally involved could be to undermine his own poise and thereby ultimately to harm the patient more than help him. So it is also with the spiritual healer, or even anyone who hopes to do another *any* lasting benefit. Only as he himself is calm and pure, perceptive but not emotionally attached, in other words, embodying the essence of spiritual health, can he help another. His compassion must be clear and knowledgeable, not distorted by emotion nor attached by involvement. The point is that in order to understand the implication of *karuṇā*, we must get it freed from the usual pity-sympathy context of meaning, even though its imperfect forms are not devoid of moral value. To remain emotionally neutral under trying circumstances may be well-nigh difficult, if not impossible. But that is another story. Presently, we are concerned with the conceptual distinctness of *karuṇā* from the cognate meditational poises extolled in the scriptures. It can hardly be denied, however, that restrained exercise of compassion contains a valuable antidote to that maudlin emotionalism which



helps no one at all and is so often substituted for intelligent action and attitude. And so far as personal relations on a one-to-one basis are concerned, it is quite true that the emotional disturbance in another is more often healed by emotional calm in the healer than by counter-disturbance. Whether it furnishes a dynamic or adequate social motivation is perhaps quite another matter. It could be that in de-emotionalized compassion one senses the cooling influence of *nirvāṇa*.

## *Kṣāntipāramitā*: The Virtue of Forbearance

### I

In opening his discourse on *kṣānti* as a virtue, *Śāntideva* declares in unqualified terms that there is no evil like hatred (*dvesa*), and no fortitude as patience (*kṣānti*): *no ca kṣāntisamam tapah*. Before we come to have a fuller statement of the virtue of *kṣānti*, let it suffice to say that *kṣānti* is one of the most important of Buddhist virtues, and that it encapsulates an entire spectrum of truths about moral life. The *Vajracchedikā*, a Mahayana work, begins with a reference to the Buddha's reminiscence of his previous birth as the sage *kṣāntivādī*. In that incarnation, he was said to have refrained from entertaining any ontological commitments regarding the self (*ātmā*), being (*satta*), soul (*jīva*), person (*puḍgala*). The reason why he did not entertain any such idea was that he did not want to generate any thoughts of ill-will (*vyāpāda*). A belief in a true and real person involves ontological commitment, leading to grasping after the subject or oneself. This grasping can lead to hatred or ill-will. *Kṣānti* turns out to be an effective way of overcoming hatred and ill-will. The story of *Kṣāntivādī* is an idealized version of patience or forbearance. *Kṣānti* is achieved not through external compulsion, as from sense of duty, but through understanding. This is how the perfection of patience or forbearance comes to be related to the perfection of wisdom or *prajñāpāramitā*. *Kṣānti* is possible only when one is poised in peace. The term for such abiding is *araṇavihārī*. The presence of hatred turns it into *saraṇa*. A way of non-conflict in the world includes oneself as well as others. Peace on non-conflict (*araṇa*) involves keeping the doors of communication open.

In terms of Buddhist psychology, the basic problem of salvation is summed up as the need to purify the mind of evil. The problem is analyzed in terms of the mind (*citta*) and its modes or concomitant states (*caitta*), and one of the central concerns of this analysis is to identify those states which are conducive to the overthrow of greed, hatred and delusion. We shall see, as we proceed along Śāntideva's argument, that the virtue discourse, finally, rests upon unravelling the skein of false consciousness within which the notions of permanence and self-hood are fostered. What is sought in the process of critical analysis is exposing the illusory 'self' as a projection onto the underlying mental and physical aggregates. The *Abhidharma* analysis is foundational for ethics. It does have an ethical programme, namely a classification of the whole of reality in terms of ethical predicates. In Buddhism, psychology and ethics go hand in hand, ethical inquiry is conducted from a psychological standpoint, in great part an analysis of the psychological provides the data of ethics. Virtues are counteractive in nature, their practice is intended to overcome the weakness and deficiency which is vice. Virtues are *corrective*, said Phillipa Foot. A virtue stands at a point at which there is some temptation to be resisted or deficiency of motivation to be made good. Whatever it is, virtues are about what is difficult for men, and hence, their relevance for ethics. A close study of Buddhist ethics would show that it betrays a significant link with psychology. For example, *śīla* is a collective term denoting the organization or structuring of the good mental states or *dharmas*. The mind (*citta*) and mental states (*caitta*) are at the heart of the ethical analysis in the *Abhidharma*. In the context of Buddhist soteriology *dharmas*, mental forces or *caitta* are ethically productive. It is with this category of morally related forces, elements or states of the mind that virtue discourse has to do. The three Buddhist cardinal virtues are *arāga* or liberality, *adoṣa* or benevolence and *amoha*, that is, understanding. All evil qualities stem from the negation of these. There is a structured opposition between embedded psychological traits which stand in an intimate relation to the soteriological good. Virtue and vices may be either cognitive or non-cognitive. Intellectual vice is a form of cognitive error and is epitomized by *moha*. Moral vices are forms

of non-cognitive error, they are inappropriate emotional responses or propensities marked by craving or *lobha* and hatred, i.e., *dosa*. It will be evident that moral perfection no less than intellectual perfection is an integral ingredient in the Buddhist ideal. The capacity for moral sentiment is an integral part of human nature.

## II

We may now turn to the moral vocabulary of Buddhist virtues and vices.

*Kṣānti* is always described as the opposite of *krodha* or anger, *dveṣa* or hatred, *pratigha*, that is repugnance and *vyāpāda* or malice. It is defined as freedom from anger (*akopana*) and excitement (*aksobhanatā*). This appears to be the primary and fundamental connotation of *Kṣānti*. The Dalai Lama's commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* chapter on *Kṣāntipāramitā* is appropriately named: *Healing Anger*.

Further light is shed on the concept of *kṣānti* when we consider the metaphors used for its opposite namely, *krodha* or anger. The two metaphors that Śāntideva uses for *krodha* are 'enemy' (*ari*, VI. 6), and 'disturbing conception' (*kleśa*, VI. 19). Anger is the enemy within. Nobody lives happily with anger. The enemy is to be vanquished by eradicating the conditions that give rise to it. If the enemy within is to be subdued, one should totally eradicate the fuel of the enemy (VI.8). Taking hatred towards others to be the case, one has to look for the cause of the unwholesome mental state, and would find ill-will or anger, *daurmanasya* as its cause. Śāntideva has used the two terms, *ista* and *aniṣṭa* to explain the point. *Ista* is such action or thought that generates happiness for oneself and others, *aniṣṭa* brings suffering for oneself and others. This, of course, is a provisional premise, since viewed *sub specie paramārtha*, the distinction would cease to hold. The distinction is conventional. However, in terms of Buddhist psychology, *aniṣṭa* is that which is undesirable, and it arises as a consequence of one's misplaced belief in ephemeral *vāsanās* or desires. Any action so caused brings about ill-will and rancour. When obstacles impede obtaining of the desirable or *ista*, mental worry ensues.

*Daurmanasya* is a two-edged sword; it cuts both ways. Hatred or *dveṣa*, having found its fuel of mental unhappiness in the prevention of what I wish for, and in the doing of what I do not want, increases and then destroys me. Therefore, Śāntideva tells us that one should eradicate the fuel of this enemy. The two other terms that occur for ill-will or hatred are *ripu* and *vairi*, both meaning ‘enemy’. The point is that the unwholesome mental states (*akuśala*) of *daurmanasya* manifest as anger. It is also a matter of importance that ill-will erodes such wholesome mental state as *muditā* or sympathetic joy. This is impermissible for the practitioner of virtue. The state of *muditā* has to be jealously guarded against the onslaught of *daurmanasya*.

In the Abhidharmic system of ethical analysis, mental forces or *caitta* are designated as *dharmas*. They are objective and real, they are not part of the realm of mental construction, i.e., *prajñāpti*, but are actually found within the psyche. Accordingly, the metaphor of enemy is quite appropriate. It will be in order if we take note of the thesis that friendliness or *maitrī*, along with *muditā* and *karuṇā*, is said by the Buddha to be unique in its power to counteract anger by preventing its arising and dissipating it once arisen. The elimination of anger is produced by freedom of the mind through love. In Buddhaghōṣa’s phrase, it is called *metta cetovimutti*. As he explains it, *maitrī* is effective in counteracting hatred, and the other three of the set of *brahmavihāras* are efficacious in eliminating other vices. For example, *karuṇā* counteracts displeasure, and equanimity, that is, *upeksā* counteracts lust, i.e., *rāga*. The fundamental, inspiration for the Buddhist moral life is concern for others, and as Buddhaghōṣa explains in the *Visuddhimagga* (ix. 106) the *brahmavihāras* are the correct attitudes to adopt towards beings, in other words, correct moral attitudes. They reflect the content of the enlightened moral consciousness. It should be unexceptional to say that for Buddhism morality is not a means to an end but an end in itself. It is not a means to enlightenment but a *part* of enlightenment. Let us consider the conduct of the Buddha. He lived an exemplary moral life with nothing to gain thereby. The motive for morality is hardly ever prudential, and if an action is performed for personal gain, it never can be said to be inspired by *anukampā*.

And, it is well-known that the Buddha is described as concerned for the welfare of his fellow men, *bahujana-hitānukampī*, and as sympathetic to all creatures, *sabbabhūtānu-kampī* (*Sutta-Nipāta*, 693 and *Anguttara Nikāya*, ii, 9). *Annkampā* is a commentorial term and, etymologically, it can be understood as the condition of being moved (*kampā*) in accordance with others, or in response to others (*anu*). What is of moment in our context is that the Buddha's moral concern was not a consequence of his enlightenment, it preceded it and, indeed, motivated it. The Buddha is quoted as having said, if with joyous heart he teaches others it is not from duty, but out of compassion and sympathy (*Samyutta Nikāya*, i. 206).

The other metaphor of *kleśa* or affliction is therapeutic in import. Virtuous consciousness is marked by the presence of non-self-referential concern for the well-being of others. The caring about or regard for other persons is often spoken of as 'natural affection' by eighteenth century British moralists, and it may best be described as a form of love. In the absence of this sentiment, there can be no motive for true moral action since the needs of others will fail to make any claim upon us. Now Buddhist psychology distinguishes between the cognitive and affective powers or dimensions of the psyche or *citta*. These functions are subsumed under the categories of cognition (*sajñā*) and feeling (*vedanā*). The functions of *sajñā* and *vedanā* are only logically distinguished, they do not correspond to any real division in the structure of the human subject. Each is merely a power of the psyche: Yet as the function of each is different so is its respective virtue or excellence. The virtue of the cognitive aspect is to understand and discriminate correctly; its vice is delusion and error. The virtue of the non-rational part of the psyche is to sense, feel and respond affectively in an appropriate manner; its vice is to swing to the extremes of craving (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*). The malfunction of *vedanā* and *sajñā* is the basic soteriological problem of Buddhism. Here one is both deluded as to what is the case (*moha*), and emotionally attached (*rāga*) to the misconception, or averse (*dveṣa*) to the truth. Immoral conduct is not simply the result of ignorance or emotional maladjustment alone; it comes about through a misapprehension of the facts (most fundamentally involving the belief in a self) together with an

emotional investment made on the basis of that factual error, i.e., attachment to the imputed self. The Buddha diagnosed the power of the emotions to dominate and manipulate reason, to drag it around like a slave, as Plato put it, and Hume echoed it later. There is a recognition of the power of greed and hatred, and we are to follow the Middle Path which makes for vision, knowledge and leads to tranquillity, to awakening. Metaphysical views too get conditioned by the emotional polarisation between *rāga* and *dveṣa*. In that case, one extreme is eternalism and another is annihilationsim.

However, *vedanā* and *sajñā* are basic and irreducible functions of *citta* and the human predicament may be expressed in terms of a malfunction of these powers which manifests itself in the form of the root vices of attachment, aversion, and delusion. The non-rational dimension of psychic life manifests itself across a spectrum of non-cognitive responses ranging from aversion, hostility, anger and wrath (encapulated by *dveṣa*), to attachment, craving, longing and lust (encapulated by *lobha*). These are extremes. The middle range this spectrum embraces attitudes such as benevolence, kindness, affection and sympathy. And this is where *kṣānti* comes in.

### III

*Kṣānti* could be understood as a virtue that makes one a Buddha. It has been called, in the *Visuddhimagga* (IX. 124), *buddha-kāraka-dhamma*. In the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, it is subsumed under higher morality or adhiśīla. In point of fact, the first three *pāramitās* correspond to the category of śīla of the Eight-fold Path. In Mahayana the basic value of śīla reflects the emphasis on the functions of moral virtue as a dynamic other-regarding quality. *Kṣānti* implies the sameness (*samatā*) of all beings existentially, as a result of affective inhibition of *akuśala dharmas*. As a virtue, *kṣānti* is at one and the same time a source of purification and happiness for the practioner and an example and benefit to others. The status of the *pāramitās* is designated as *upāya* or skilful means and cover the same ground as śīla. In this sense of the term, *upāya* refers to normative ethics. The command, therefore, is: Eschew anger.

*Kṣānti* in the sense of patience is highly extolled in Mahayana works. Gentle forbearance is to be the spiritual garment of a bodhisattva. He forgives others for all kinds of injury, insult, abuse and censure: *sarvam cāpakāram kṣamyate*, says the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. In a word, his forgiveness is unfailing, universal and absolute. But why should a bodhisattva forgive others? What could be his reasons? Śāntideva has deduced reasons for practising the virtue of *kṣānti*. A couple of them may be noted. The reason giving begins by asking why should one be unhappy about something if it can be remedied? And what is the use of being unhappy about something if it cannot be remedied? (VI 10). This verse is a piece of wisdom, and voices the resolve that whatever befalls one, one should not disturb one's mental joy. It is a road map to happiness. If there is a way to resist or remedy the erosion of *ista* or to counter the onslaught of *aniṣṭa*, there is no point in being angry or harbouring feelings of ill-will in the process. The remedy to forestall the undesirable should be sought by renouncing anger. Contrarily, if a remedial course of action does not exist, anger will be equally futile. Hence, the best course under both situations is to overcome ill-feeling and eschew anger. An attitude such as this will lead to happiness.

We may summarize Śāntideva's account of the reasons that justify *kṣānti* from the philosophical point of view, and make it an essential element of the spiritual life.

Anger is the greatest of sins, especially for a bodhisattva who, by definition, is a 'being of goodness'. It destroys all merits. Even during the earthly life it causes great unhappiness. Anger must be destroyed, and the discontent, born of desire or of dislike, that nourishes it. What is the use of discontent?

Suffering is the common lot of men; there is plenty of occasion to get accustomed to it, and it loses, by custom, all its bitterness; it is very useful, as it arouses the pious fear of sin, pity for sufferers, love for Buddhas who deliver from it, disgust for existence, both perishable and penible.

Anger, again, is not aroused by physical suffering, because we know that it is caused by the trouble of the bodily humours. The Greeks, for instance, held a similar medical theory. It is also foolish



to be angry with men who injure us, for (i) they are acting merely under the influences of causes, and (ii) in the first rank of these causes are the wicked deeds of our previous existences. My enemy, says Śāntideva, takes a stick to beat me, and I have assumed this body, liable to be wounded, and destined to be beaten. Far from being angry with my enemy, I ought to consider him almost as beneficial as the Buddhas, for he affords me the opportunity of practising patience, as forgiveness of wrongs, which blots out my sins. Am I to make this principle of salvation the cause of condemnation? Let us rather pity our enemies who ruin themselves by their anger, and let us think of means of saving them in spite of themselves, as the Buddhas do. As for anger provoked by slander, loss of property, etc., it is particularly absurd; as also is anger against the enemies of our religion, iconoclasts, etc.

Envy requires special attention, for the envious man makes use of clever artifices to throw a veil of honesty over his selfish feelings. We must also get rid of the gross illusion that inspires the words, “my enemy is an obstacle to my good works”. Is there a more meritorious work than patience? What does it matter if my enemy tries to injure me? He is nonetheless my benefactor. How can we have our sins pardoned by the Buddhas, how can we please the Buddhas, except by loving the creatures, and by doing good to our most cruel enemies? So long as creatures are suffering, there is no joy for the compassionate Buddhas. They identify themselves with creatures. It is the Buddhas themselves who appear to us in human form.

#### IV

Having taken note of Śāntideva’s reasons for practising *ksānti*, we may now consider a few points that are of philosophical importance.

- (a) The practice of *ksānti* necessitates the presence of a person turned hostile to me. This is a radical moral thesis. Śāntideva puts it in the phrase, *pratītyoṭpadyate kṣamā* (Vi. III). The so-called enemy is the *hetu* or the intentional object of moral consciousness. The moral attitude of *ksānti* is to be appreciated within the matrix of causal relationship. How

could mental states such as forbearance or forgiving be there if there were no person to be forgiven? Anger arises when a contra-attitude develops in the mind towards the wrongdoer. When one forgives, it is the contra-attitude towards the person that is changed or displaced by a strong resolve not to be angry with him or hate that person. It is the wrong action that is to be hated, not the person. The negative mode of stating the case may be quite Buddhist in spirit, since virtue, even if it be intended to counterbalance *kleśa* or a negative mental state, it is required to be spontaneous and a positive intent. A virtue can be acquired by long practice, or meditation, in the Buddhist parlance, or as Aristotle puts it, as a matter of habitual choice. It has to belong to the character; it should be *characteristic* of the person who practises the virtue. A virtuous action needs to have a spontaneity, and only then can a *śīla* be said to be *pāramitā* or perfected. One of the connotations of *śīla*, as *Buddhaghōṣa* has suggested, is composing. The *Visuddhimagga* (I. 20) indicated the etymology as related to ‘character’, ‘nature’ or ‘disposition’. Such being the *lakṣaṇā* of *śīla*, *kṣānti* could be construed as having a dispositional effect. There is also an organic metaphor for *śīla*. For instance, in *Milinda’s Questions*, it is compared to a seed which yields the fruit of ethical life in the appropriate time. If proper care is taken of the seed, the shoots of vices are unable to take roots and grow in *śīla*. Moral life is likened to a tree with roots of virtue, *kuśala mūla*.

Now, understanding *Kṣānti* in causal terms should be interesting in itself. In VI. 104, Śāntideva briefly defines what is meant by ‘cause’, and relates the notion to the question of the possibility of practising *kṣānti*. If without it something does not occur, and if with it, it does come to be, so goes the definition in terms of statement of necessary and sufficient conditions. Every effect has to have a cause, as the *hetu-phala* linkage is one of mutual interdependence. Hence, the presence of a person hostile to me renders, in effect, the possibility of practising forbearance. Whom would one pardon if the wrong does were not there? *Kṣānti* being a virtue, the *hetu* of *kṣānti* is worthy of respect, since but for the presence of the enemy

and his action offers the occasion for practicing the virtue *kṣānti bodhicaryā-sahāyatvāt sprhaṇīyo mayā ripuh* (VI. 107).

(b) Śāntideva has the interesting concept of *sattvaksetra* (VI. 112). *Sattvaksetra* is the domain of beings. The mental states of *kṣānti* as well as that of anger and hatred are directed towards it. Neither of the mental states can occur in a vacuum. A non-solipsist world alone can be the field for occasioning both wholesome and unwholesome mental states. The point about the bodhisattva way of life is that one practises *śīla* for *cooling* i.e. (from *sīlana*, a la Buddhaghōṣa) the mental afflictions (*kleśa*) by adopting the volitional states of *maitrī* and *muditā*, and forbearing towards those who might intend to cause one harm. The presence of such a person in the domain of beings offers a precious opportunity in practicing patience and thereby healing anger. The supposed “enemy” is the *kṣamā-hetu* (VI. 111), i.e., cause of my success in practising *kṣānti* and, therefore, deserves my grateful acknowledgement.

Śāntideva goes on to say further that the domain of beings is *buddhaksetra* as well. The reasons for the co-extensionality of the domains are as follows. A Buddha’s qualities are gained from the sentient beings and the conquerors (*jīna*) alike. An ordinary sentient being and a *jīna* are not similar in their quality of intentions; one causes us harm, while the other leads us to *anuttara* blessedness. The significance of the *samata* or co-extensionality of the domains lies in the fact that the ordinary sentient beings provide us with opportunities of practising *śīla*, in having a share in giving rise to Buddha-qualities. It may be recalled that *kṣānti* is pre-eminently a *buddhakāraka* virtue. Hence the domains are similar in so far as they bear fruit, and not in terms of intentions (VI. 114). Both are equal in terms of being factors or conditions leading to moral perfection. Without interaction with others, even a *pratyeka-buddha* will have nothing to achieve, not to speak of one who has taken the bodhisattva vow. The Dalai Lama, commenting upon the verses VI. 112-114, says that in order to attain full enlightenment we need to practice love, compassion, and many other aspects of the path. In all of these, we find that unless there is an interaction with other sentient beings, there is no possibility of even beginning. And

further, “even though Buddhas are fully enlightened beings and may be very sacred, very precious and highly realized beings, in terms of kindness and their contribution toward our well-being, it seems as if sentient beings have a greater role. So we should be more grateful toward sentient beings than toward Buddhas... the Buddhas... have nothing to do other than serve sentient beings. In a way, it’s their duty. In some sense, it’s nothing to be admired or be surprised about: the Buddhas work for the benefit of sentient beings. However, when we consider sentient beings, with all their weaknesses, in fact, and intact delusory states of mind, afflictive emotions, and so on, even with these limitations their contribution toward our well-being cannot be underestimated. Therefore, we should feel all the more grateful to them” (*Healing Anger*, p. 113).

#### IV

Some writers on Buddhist ethics have argued that within Buddhist parameters there is no room for anger, not even of the Christian “holy anger”. Such a streak of thought comes from Winston L. King’s *In the Hope of Nibbana*. But the soundness of the statement can very well be brought under sceptical focus.

In VI.2 Śāntideva juxtaposes *dveṣa* and *kṣānti*, hatred and patience. There are many afflictive emotions such as conceit, arrogance, jealousy, desire, lust, close-mindedness, and so on, but of all these, hatred and anger are singled out as the greatest evil. What could be the reasons for it? *Anger* and *hate* are often clubbed together. *Rāga* and *dveṣa* are antithetical emotions. In English, *love* and *hate* are taken as opposed. Anger, of course, is more violent a passion than hatred—it erupts—but hate silently eats into the very being of a person. Considered in this fashion, hate or *dveṣa* is deadlier than anger or *krodha*, and this may be one of the reasons why Śāntideva opens his discourse with *dveṣa* in the context of *kṣānti*. Anger burns, while hate freezes human relationships. If one may use the metaphor of fire, anger bursts forth into a conflagration, hate or *dveṣa*, on the other hand, keeps smouldering. Anger seeks to destroy the other, but hate reduces to ashes the one who hates. Anger is episodic, one speaks of a fit of

anger, but hate turns into a disposition, and it acquires the name *daurmanasya*, i.e., ill-will. What Śāntideva seeks to establish in the opening verses of *ksānti-pāramitā* is an inner linkage between anger, hate and ill-will. Of these anger and ill-will are transitive, and hate consumes the person who bears it towards another. It recoils upon its bearer: *daurmanasyāśanam prāpya dveṣa dusto nihanti mām* (VI. 7). Ill-will feeds hatred and finally devours its own perpetrator. It is *dveṣa*, therefore, that is to be eschewed by the meditation on *maitrī*.

The Tibetan word for *dveṣa* is *zhe dang*, which is usually translated as either “anger” or “hatred” into English. It should be translated as “hatred”, because “anger” can at times be positive in very special circumstances. These occur when anger is motivated by compassion or when it acts as an impetus or a catalyst for a positive action. In such rare circumstances, anger can be positive whereas hatred can never be positive. It is wholly negative.

The negativity of hatred and anger is to be deeply appreciated. One will have to reflect upon the destructive effects of generating anger. Śāntideva identifies the need to develop an understanding of the causal mechanism which underlies the arousal of anger. In VI 7, he observes that the “fuel” of anger is what he calls “mental discomfort”, i.e., *daurmanasya*. This is an interesting notion, and it can be understood as dejection, unhappiness, or simply, dissatisfaction. It is best understood as a pervasive, underlying sense of dissatisfaction, which need not be felt at the conscious level. It is that nagging feeling that something is not quite right. Śāntideva seems to suggest that it is this underlying sense of dissatisfaction that gives rise to frustration. When this happens, the conditions are set for an immediate outburst of anger when things do not go the way we wish. Once the causal nexus between dissatisfaction, frustration and anger is understood, we can see that much of Śāntideva’s approach is aimed at rooting out the underlying sense of dissatisfaction, and instead of engaging in a head-to-head confrontation with actual full-blown anger, he lays stress upon reflections which aim to create stability of mind.

In dealing with our emotions and developing patience or *ksānti*, Śāntideva shares a belief in what could be called the plasticity of

the mind, i.e., an assumption of the mind's limitless capacity for improvement. This is supported by a complex understanding of the psychology of the mind and its various modalities. Śāntideva is operating within a long history of Buddhist psychology and philosophy of mind which emphasize a detailed analysis of human emotions. Generally speaking, in this view the mind is perceived in terms of a complex, dynamic system where both cognitive and affective dimensions of the psyche are seen as an integral whole. Śāntideva, in presenting the means of dealing with emotions such as anger, does not suggest that one would or should suppress anger, that may be harmful, and amount to losing, at times, the sight of anger as an outrage toward injustice done to others. This can often be an important catalyst for altruistic deeds. He rejects such possibility with regard to hatred. Hatred can have no virtue. One feature of distinguishing anger from hatred is the presence or absence of ill-will. A person can be angry without bearing any ill-will towards his or her object of anger. Hatred can have no virtue. It only eats the poisons from within and poisons one's interactions with fellow human beings. As the Dalai Lama has put it, hatred is the true enemy, the inner enemy. Śāntideva wants us to ensure that our anger, even when it arises, never culminates in full-blown hatred. This is an important ethical teaching. The Buddhist approach is to get at the root so that the very basis of anger is undercut. What is suggested is a way of reorienting our character so that we become less prone to strong reactive emotions such as anger. The point is to discipline one's mind. In the chapter on *Samprajanyaraksanā*, Śāntideva has summarized his approach (V. 14) by saying that it is not for me to restrain the external course of things; but I should restrain this mind of mine. What would be the need of restraining all else?

## V

The Buddhist moral appreciation is extraordinarily sensitive to our passions and desires. It is also to be noted in the context that moral appreciation can only exist in the absence of our selfish desires, in the absence of exclusive love of self. We have referred

to the theory of *dharmas*. The *Abhidharma* seeks to analyze the *caitya* reals, the defilements or *kleśa*, to eliminate them as those factors that impede Enlightenment. This is the Buddhist ethical programme. The practice of *śīla* and *pāramitā* is intended to organize a structuring of the good mental states, *dharmas*. Virtue consists in the cultivation of the *nirvānic* emotions or attitudes such as love, kindness, affection and sympathy. The fundamental inspiration for the Buddhist moral life is concern for others. The cultivation of feelings of concern for others is closely linked to the practice of the abidings known as *brahmavihāra*. These are particularly effective in counteracting the *dharmas* identified as moral vices or *kleśa*. Love is unique in its power to counteract anger by preventing its arising and dissipating it once arisen. The elimination of anger is produced by freedom of the mind through love. Buddhaghōṣa affirms the effectiveness of *maitrī* in countering *dveṣa* or hatred.

The question that arises now is: how do and why negative emotions, *akuśal caitya*, originate at all? There cannot be a straightforward answer to the question. There is the thesis that consciousness is beginningless, and as, then the negative mental tendencies would be likewise. There seems to be consensus among all Buddhist traditions that so far as the elimination of the *kleśas* are concerned, wisdom is a necessary factor. It is indispensable. Whether one subscribes to the philosophy of emptiness or not, there appears unanimity as regards love and compassion as antidotal to anger and hatred. But the Yogācāra and Mādhyamikā schools hold that eradication of afflictions of the mind and obstructions to knowledge can be achieved only through generating insight, *prajñā* into the nature of emptiness. This could be done by rooting out the imprints and the residual potencies implanted in one's psyche. The point may be made in more moderate a manner. Granted that ethics and insight are to be in a closer consonance, and it could be so only if *prajñā* is a term of practical import. *Prajñā* and *upāya* (*śīla*) are of binary significance. *Prajñā* is not mere insight, but conduct guided by insight. Good conduct is wise, and wise conduct is good. Buddhism does not seek a sterile and incomplete end. Virtue

is strengthened by meditation. *Brahmavihāra* is a technique of meditation. In the Eight-fold Path, *samādhi* stands between *śīla* and *prajñā* and supplements them both. It is a powerful technique for the acceleration of ethical and intellectual development towards this perfection in *nirvāṇa*. The *Milindapāṇha* has imaged meditation as the focal point and support of all virtuous qualities. All virtuous qualities incline towards it. Buddhagosa says that *samādhi* is the virtuous concentration of the mind (*Visuddhimagga*, 69).

There are two kinds of meditation techniques. *Śamatha-bhāvana* cultivates moral virtue and *Vipaśyanā-bhāvana* develops knowledge or insight. The purpose of *śamatha* is to cultivate an attitude, by gaining access to the non-rational, emotional dimensions of psyche. It is a means of penetrating the deeper layers of consciousness and restructuring them in accordance with virtue rather than vice. A correction of imbalance of sensuous desire, ill-will, *rāga* and *dveṣa* needs to be made, and the negative tendencies would be brought under control, if not wholly dissolved. This should bring about a transformation in attitude towards others. It is change of attitude that is ethical, a rebirth of the whole personality taking the emotions and the will in its stride. *Śamatha* is a spiritual virtue, while *vipaśyanā* is a condition of the intellect. The Buddhist tradition is unambiguous on the point that together they bring about birth of a new man, and have important consequences for all areas of human life. Neither *śīla* nor *prajñā* has sovereign autonomy, Mediated by *samādhi*, the matter of moment is to see that their effectual concord is the proper, just and compassionate one.

Śātideva mentions both meditation techniques in VIII. 4 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. They are aids to eradicating evil intentions or propensities, or *kleśas*. His point in the *Kārikā* is to argue that it is essential that a two pronged meditative techniques of *śamatha* and *vipaśyana* are essential for the removal or subduing mental agitations motivating negative actions contrary to the concern for others. It may be said to involve a gradual emotional realignment and has to be cultivated slowly. Since a sentiments of sympathy or concern cannot be engendered by a cognitive act, rationalization or prudentiality, *śamatha* is defined as a state having



put aside considerations, both selfish-regarding and discursive, *kāmādi-vitarka-vivarjita*. To borrow a phrase from Husserlean phenomenology, *śamatha* settles one looking for an unclouded vision, by *bracketing*, as it were, the negative proclivities and predispositions, psychical and discursive. These dull the mind and render it restless. Only after the mind is made stable and unswervingly tranquil can the unclouded vision open into the ontological perspective of affairs as they really are or *yathā-bhūta*.

The meditative inward probing into the secret workings of the mind is indeed needed, since the unwholesome mental modalities are subtle, often hidden, and so indistinguishable as one cannot be told from another. Psychoanalysts inform us about misapprehensions between anger and jealousy, malice and hatred. These are emotion words and as names of emotions, it is quite possible to miscall the one for the other if, of course, their nuances and workings are not attended to. The discipline of meditation would go a long way in avoiding the mis-knowledge of our own mental states that we are all prone to.

Apropos of Śāntideva's concept of *sattvaksetra*, the domain of sentient beings, it should be possible to say that Buddhist ethics has a strong presence of the other in moral consciousness. The mental modalities, *caitya*, as they are called, are intentional in essence, and transitive in character. As *dharmas*, they are either *kuśala* or *akuśala*. Anger and hate are paradigmatically *akuśala* mental modes, and alienate the moral subject from the domain of the *sattvas*. They intend to destroy the presence of the other, and as such are psychical forms of violence, intolerant of the other in a non-solipsist world. The *kuśala* mental modes of benevolence, love and sympathy are tolerant and dealienating in throwing a bridge across the alienation between persons. They are other-regarding, and provide an escape from the confines of the shell of the ego. As for the universal validity of Śāntideva's account of anger and hate as the two "inner enemies" and the idea of *ksānti* as a *pāramitā*, Robert Frost's Poem "Fire and Ice" presents an astonishingly admirable statement. The poem deserves to be quoted *in extenso*:

Some say the world will end in fire,  
Some say in ice.

From what I've tasted of desire  
I hold with those who favor fire.  
But if it had to perish twice,  
I think I know enough of hate  
To say that for destruction ice  
Is also great  
And would suffice.

## *Samprajañya-rakṣaṇa*: Guarding Mindfulness

Customarily the Buddhist account of virtues opens with *dāna* and *śīla*. But Śāntideva innovates a novel mode of presenting the *pāramitā*'s. In such treatises as the *Daśa-bhūmikasūtra* or *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*, the statement of the *pāramitās* mentions *dāna* and *śīla* to go ahead of other virtues like *kṣānti*, *vīrya*, etc., even though the number of them has varied from one treatise to another. Śāntideva puts *samprajañya-rakṣaṇa* ahead of *kṣānti*. This calls for an explanation, or understanding the reasons behind the innovation.

In the opening verse, Śāntideva makes the imperatival statement that one should guard the mind (*citta*), which is flippant in nature, ever wavering from one object to another. With an unsteady mind a disciplined life would become impossible. An undisciplined mind has for it the metaphor of an unsubdued elephant that has gone wild. At other places of the discourse for the flippancy of the mind, another metaphor is also available. It is that of a monkey, which is by nature restless. Whatever it is, moral life in our context consists in practicing the virtues, and this should be impossible with an unguarded mind. There is a priority accorded to disciplining the mind. This is a paradigmatic Buddhist stance, and this position can well be appreciated if we remind ourselves of the Buddha's last words to his disciples, "Work out your own salvation, with diligence". And diligence implies remaining alert, mindful, and self-possessed.

### I

Before we proceed further into Śāntideva's argument for *samprajanya*, it will be in order to have ourselves reminded of

the importance of disciplining the mind in Buddhism. Moral life is a *mārga*, *pratipad*, it is soteriologically motivated and intended to lead to *nirvāna*. It is a *yāna*, a vehicle, conveying those who mount it to the perfection of moral life. Whatever moral theory is there in Buddhism, sometimes deontological, at times teleological, and more often eudaimonistic, what matters is that, if applied, it would lead any man a long way, and some, it may be, the whole way, to Enlightenment. It is primarily concerned with the perfection of the individual. More than a system of doctrine, Buddhism is a way of life.

All that we are is the result of what we have thought, we are founded on our thoughts and made up of our thoughts. The wise man straightens his unsteady mind, which is so hard to control. The well-guarded mind brings happiness. And watchfulness is the path to it. An ill-trained mind is not a safe dwelling, to borrow the metaphor from the *Dhammapada*, it is an ill-thatched house. These are a few of the insights that go being said throughout the Buddhist moral discourse, and Śāntideva's chapter on *samprajañya* is perfectly in order.

Vigilant awareness or *smṛti* is what stands for mindfulness. It is one of the factors of the Eight-fold Path: *samyak smṛti*. Śāntideva mentions both *smṛti* and *simprajñya* for guarding the mind (V. 23). The Tibetan sources dwell upon the distinction of the two as follows: *smṛti* or mindfulness means to be mindful of all that one has accepted to relinquish and cultivate. *Samprajañya* or alertness means to be skillful in applying oneself to the relinquishment and cultivation. *Smṛti* precedes *samādhi* by way of an living in contemplation of the body, in contemplation of the sensations, in contemplation of the mind, of internal phenomena, unweariedly, clearly conscious, with sensations awake. So goes the admonition in the Buddha's *discourses*. In this way, no unwholesome *dharma* will be allowed to take hold of the mind. *Kleśas* or afflictive emotions are averted, since they are no longer generated. On the other hand, *sainprajañya* is the constant vigilance over the bodily and mental states. The *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* speaks of it as under: The vigilant man, when moving he knows he is moving. Unmoving, he knows he is unmoving; seated, he knows he is seated; sleeping he knows

he is sleeping. He is vigilantly aware of his body whatever be its condition or state. It is moment to moment awareness of the states of the body and the mind. It is state of detached quietness, since all agitations are quelled.

On the contrary, laxity in or absence of mindfulness is linked to a thief (V. 27). It steals into an unguarded chamber of mind, lets in defilements to plunder whatever virtues or merit one had accumulated an unalert mind, renders one vulnerable to the onslaught of afflictive emotions. It is on the stage of the mind that moral drama—hellish or heavenly—is enacted. Śāntideva compares the unguarded mind to a leaky jar, no virtues and merits can be stored therein (V. 25) Self-review, that is intended by *smṛti* and *samprajañya*, implies alertness, not only mental but physical as well. Moral intentions have to go along with etiquette. Civilized behaviour in society is an important element in one's ethical way of life. Śāntideva minces no words in describing such manners of etiquette in detail (V. 79-92). Every conduct which is not *loka-prasādaka* (V. 93) is to be abjured. Unexceptionably. This follows from the attitude of altruism that motivates the bodhisattva vow. Humility and urbanity are matters of moral consideration.

What is the status of the body in the context of Buddhist ethics? Śāntideva says that the body is a vessel (*kāye naubuddhi*, V. 70). It is a medium, a contraption to be used over the rough waters of moral life. The body does not enjoy a distinct identity apart from the mind. This is the widely acknowledged Buddhist thesis, that no authority pertains to the body. In a telling passage (V. 60), we are told that there is no sense in holding one's body as "mine", since *you* and *it* are separate, it has no essence of its own (V. 60, 63). All such musings look back to the Buddha's original formula in the Discourses: Can anything which is mutable be called mine, "I", or myself? (*Samyutta Nikāya*, IV, and *Majjhima Nikāya*, 148<sup>th</sup> dialogue). So, why treat what which is non-self as something with-self?

This does not, of course, imply a path of self-mortification, for that will be a departure from the middle way. Śāntideva does concede that body will have to be paid its wages (V. 69) only in order to have it for gainful use. The concept of self-control

*vaśīkrtasvātmā* (V. 71) entails vigilance over the operations of the mind and the body, protecting the both from indulging in *akuśala* or unwholesome actions. It is a matter of an entire culture of the human person.

## II

There is such a concept, in such classical sources (e.g., the *Nikāyas* or the *Mahāparivāna-Sūtra*), as *bodhipaksādharmāḥ*. This is a collective term, meaning the virtues that are conducive to *bodhi*. Alternatively, the expression *bodhisattva-kāraka dharmāḥ* is as well available. However, *smṛti* figures as one of the collection, and suggests the ideas of mindfulness, alertness, self-possession. *Smṛti* is an important adjunct of a bodhisattva's personality, and it is often associated with another quality, *samprajañya*, which means sustained cognizing, deliberateness, self-awareness, or self-possession. It may be noted in this context that *samprajañya* denotes mental alertness and self-control, and emphasizes the intellectual factor implied in self-mastery. There is also the phrase, *smṛtyupasthāna*, made up of *smṛti* and *upasthāna*. This is a Mahāyāna coinage, and it is directed towards the four fields of mindfulness, namely, the body, feelings, thoughts and the phenomena. Although Śāntideva speaks of *kāya* and *citta* together, Vāsubandhu, however, takes the four as making a group. In the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (140.24) he considers the four as antidotes to the four perversities or *viparyāsas* that pertain to the four fields and cause evil. In his other work, *Sikṣā-Samuccaya* (198.11), Śāntideva explains that a man is afflicted with the four *viparyāsas* when he harbours the following wrong opinions:

- i. What is really impermanent (*anitya*) is permanent.
- ii. The things, which have no substantial permanent individuality (*anātman*), possess it.
- iii. What is really impure (*aśuci*) is pure.
- iv. What is really painful (*dukkha*) is pleasant.

The four *smṛtyupasthānas* are the opposites of the four errors. They are essentially four meditations, and help a bodhisattva to

understand the four Noble Truths and promote the cultivation of the *pāramitās*.

A bodhisattva's attitude towards the body would be that he should see the body in the body, i.e., regard it as the body should be regarded, *kāye-kayānudarśī*. As expected of a monk, Śāntideva condemns the body and reviles it as the source of evil. He values and cherishes it only as the instrument of altruistic service and final perfection. That the body is transient and unsubstantial is easily to be agreed upon, as it has been with St. Paul's indictment of the body, it is held to be the seat and source of sinful passions and desires. However, the chief burden of complaint against it is that it is transient and unsubstantial. A bodhisattva analyses the body with his keen insight, and finds it to be a merely composite structure, perhaps cannot really be said to exist, as the name corresponds to no reality. In the *Sikṣā-Samuccaya* (229), Śāntideva makes a bodhisattva reasonably ask, "Then what is this body?" It is empty as the sky. The diatribes against the body need not detain us. The point is, self-sacrifice is not difficult for a bodhisattva, if he regards the body as impermanent. The body should be employed as a ship to carry other creatures across the sea of troubles (V. 70).

Śāntideva undertakes a fuller consideration *smṛtyupasthānas* concerning *vedanā*, *citta* and *dharmas* in the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. As for *citta*, Śāntideva's position is as follows: The mind is neither the body nor truly *other* than it. It is *not mixed* with it *nor entirely separate* from it. The mind is *not in the slightest bit* truly existent. The reasons for the position so held are that a truly existent mental consciousness does not abide in the sense faculties such as the eyes, it does abide in the objects such as visual forms, and it does not abide in between the two. Nor does it exist either inside or outside the body, and it is not to be found elsewhere. Such has been Śāntideva's argument of the natural *nirvāna*, called *prakṛtyāparinirvṛtāh* (IX. 104 and 103). He propounds a dilemma: if the mind exists before the object, on what does its origination depend? And if it arises with the object, the same query can be repeated. Hence, the substantive notion of the mind is a false one, unreal and impossible. Thus does a bodhisattva look upon *citta*. Having reflected on the elements of his own personality, like the

body, the feelings and the mind, a bodhisattva turns his thoughts towards the outer world, the universe in general. Thus, both the ego and the non-ego are included in the operations of mindfulness.

### III

We have earlier noted that *smṛti* is reckoned as the seventh of the eight items in the Eight-fold Path. It may now be said that *smṛti* is the *sine qua non* of moral progress for a bodhisattva. And this can be appreciated from the fact that *smṛti* is the first of the seven *bodhyangas* or factors of Enlightenment, besides that it appears and keeps reappearing in the list of *bodhipakṣyā dharmāḥ*, i.e., principles conducive to the highest moral perfection. The *Lalitavistara* (239.2) has it that when the bodhisattva Siddhartha visits Ālāda Kālāṃ as a wandering seeker after truth, he says that he possesses *smṛti* along with other virtues, that he is vigilant and ardent. One of the titles of the Buddha is *amusita-smṛti*; he is one whose *smṛti* never falters or disappears. It is also on record that Gautama's gait was suggestion of *smṛti*, as he wended his way to the *bodhi*-tree immediately before the attainment of Enlightenment. A bodhisattva never loses *smṛti* and is, therefore, never confused or distracted in mind. Indeed, he regards *smṛti* as his principal asset. It purifies his intellect, gives constancy and consistency to his thoughts, and help him always to keep the doctrine in his mind. He always cultivates self-possession, and mindfulness like virtue and knowledge. It goes by the name of *smṛti-sambhāra*. Without *smṛti* and *samprajañya* one cannot even expect to succeed in any moral endeavour. Aśvaghōṣa has gone almost lyrical in his praise of *smṛti*. Whoever loses mindfulness to the body loses the deathless but he who applies mindfulness to the body, the deathless is his (*Sundarānanda*, XIV. 35). Śāntideva, both in his *Sikṣā-Samuccaya* and *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, speaks in a similar vein. In the former work, he states that the teaching of a bodhisattva is nothing but the preparation of the mind (i.e., of the mind when it is not in a state of unrest). And in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, he exhorts a bodhisattva to keep his great vow under all circumstances and remind him that he has need of *smṛti* and *samprajñya*. There are verses in the



text that breathe a spirit of profound earnestness. I quote only two of them: He who wishes to keep the Rule, should make a great effort to guard his mind, and he, who does not guard the restive, inconstant, unstable mind, cannot keep the Rule (V. 1-2).

#### IV

Śāntideva goes on to show that the *pāramitās* or the perfected virtues presuppose *smṛti* and *samprajañya*. It appears that without the two no virtue can be practiced to its perfection. This requires a little clarification. In order to appreciate a moral theory it is often necessary to be clear about the psychological framework within which the theory is formulated. In that psychological framework, the ideas of *sukha* and *dukkha* play central roles. The concepts of pleasure and pain are variously understood or defined by the different schools of thought in India. Some take pleasure as that which is desired for its own sake, and pain as that which is hated for its own sake, while others like to have pleasure as whatever is favourably regarded by all, the opposite being the case. In order that the definitions of “pleasure” do not extend to “absence of pain”, which is also desired for its own sake and favourably regarded by all, the clause “whatever is a positive entity”, i.e., not a mere negation, is added to the definitions. Again, there are some ontological views that hold pleasure and pain, along with desire and hatred, to be qualities of the self. In another way of looking at the experience, pleasure and pain are said to be mental states and not taken as belonging to the self. Some schools argue that pleasure and pain are not, by themselves, modes of awareness. The Buddhist holds that they are. Dharmakīrti, has argued that pleasure and pain arise out of the same casual conditions as awareness such as perceptions, and so are themselves awareness. There are others, who say that pleasure and pain do not have their own objects, but they derive their objects from some cognition or other.

The idea of pain is fundamental to the worldview of much of Buddhist thought. In terms of one of the recent formulations of the Sāṅkhya view, K. C. Bhattacharya has argued that the example

of objective reality is pain. Only pain is given as utterly distinct from the self. To be reflectively aware of pain is to wish to be free from it. The necessary wish is the necessary idea of pain being foreign to consciousness. The Buddhists regard all feelings, including pleasure, as modes of pain. What is called “pleasure” is but lesser pain. Contrasted with greater pleasure, a state of pleasure is evanescent. We have only more or less pain. Well-known as it is, Buddhism distinguishes between different kinds of *dukkha*. The one that concerns us most is the suffering due to aggregate nature of things, especially of the ego, and the consequent thirst or craving. Whether there is an existence of a natural feeling, Buddhism admits one to be intrinsically indifferent, and calls it *upeksā* or equanimity, and *smṛti* and *samprajāñya* are geared to the attainment of such a state.

Now as for the springs of action, there is a good deal of unanimity amongst the schools, the Buddhist and the non-Buddhist ones. They agree in mentioning three such springs of unwholesome actions: *rāga*, *dveṣa* and *moha*. These are the sources of vices. A life of virtue consists in counteracting the intellectual vices rooted in *moha*, and the moral vices rooted in *rāga* and *dveṣa*. They are to be corrected or guarded against by cultivating the virtues of *arāga*, *advēṣa* and *amoha*. All evil qualities stem from the negation of these. They are antithetical to the state of final perfection which is the Buddhist ideal. Buddhist virtues are in their nature counteractive, to overcome the weakness and deficiency which is vice.

Given the above psychological framework, we may now turn to considering the virtues that ought to be. Virtues are excellences of character. They are states of one’s being, transformations of one’s nature by practice and effort. It is not the case that Buddhism does not talk about duties or actions that ought to be done, but owing to the priority accorded to the mind, its discipline and culture, the aspect of ought to be assumes an important proportion. It is also worth noticing that in the Indian moral discourse both virtues and duties come under the category of *dharma*, and that many of the virtues can be reformulated as rules of action. For example,

charity may be taken as corresponding to the rule: unconditionally give to the needy. Virtues are not actional, they are modes of the inner being. They pertain to character. Buddhist ethics especially emphasizes virtues to be cultivated by effort and practice. In the traditional division of the Eight-fold Path into *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*, the first concerns ethical practice, while the second points to mental discipline.

It is also a matter of importance that Buddhism defines what is good (*kuśala*) in terms of its conduciveness to the production of happiness (*sukha*) and what is bad (*akuśala*) in terms of its conduciveness to the production of suffering (*dukkha*) whatever is impermanent, relativity and eventually brings about discontent is brought under the category of suffering. Speaking historically, Mahāyāna, and for that matter Śāntideva as well, speaks of six *pāramitās* by adding two to the Sarvāstivādin list of four, namely, *dāna*, *śīla*, *vīrya* and *prajñā*. The two that were added are *kṣanti* and *dhyāna*. In all this, what is called ethical is only a part that is mingled with cognitive and spiritual stages of advancement. The highest virtue in Mahāyāna is *karuṇā* or compassion. It is possible to distinguish between *karuṇā* as means and *karuṇā* as the goal. The *Mahāyāna* architectonic is raised upon three ideals as its goal. The ideals are three, and there is a sort of gradual development, the later higher than the former. The śrāvaka aims at removing the suffering of individuals, he follows the fourth of the four Noble Truths, i.e., the *mārga*, he attains the knowledge that the individual self is not real and comprehends the truth of dependent origination. His compassion arises from the perception of the suffering of all beings. This level of compassion is called *sattvāvalambanākaruṇā* or compassion that depends upon the truth of suffering of all individual beings. The pratyekabuddha, which comes next, realizes the impermanence and so the suffering nature of all elements of being. His compassion is called *dharmāvalambanākaruṇā*, compassion that follows from knowledge of impermanence of all things. But the *Samyak-buddha*'s compassion has no grounds, his compassion is inseparable from *śūnyatā*. Like *śūnyatā*, his *karuṇā* too is transcendent or *lokattara*. He lives always in the service of humankind.

## V

One of the intentions of Śāntideva is to show that the *pāramitās* are rooted in *smṛti* and *samprajañya*, it is they that make virtues possible. They are the necessary conditions of virtuous living.

Notwithstanding the intentional character of mental states, there is also the thesis which the *Ratnamegha Sūtra* states as follows: *citta pūrvaingamah sarvadharmāḥ; citta parijñāte sarvadharmāḥ parijñātā bhavanti*. All phenomena follow the mind, if the true nature of the mind is discovered, the true nature of all phenomena is known thereby. The mind is not a mere law-giver of Nature, as it is with Kant, rather, it is the creator of the world of objects and beings. The *Mādhayamikāvātāra-sutra* has it that the mind is the cause of the phenomena, *sattvalokamatha bhājanalokam cittameva racayatyaticitram*. If such be the case, then it should be understandable why the *Dhammapada* enjoins that *cittadamanam sādhu*, disciplining the mind, is itself a prerequisite of virtue, and it is to be commended as *cittam dāntam sukhavaham*, it is intrinsically worth attaining.

It follows then that should an action be virtuous it can have its roots in the mind. Śāntideva asks what makes charity or *dāna* a *pāramitā*? And then he goes on to redefine the virtue as a state of mind. At the actional level, charity is intended to alleviate poverty, but poverty has persisted as ever. Charity, properly so-called, can never be a virtue at the actional level alone. There is an important mental component, and it is under this description that an action, called charity, can have moral worth. The proper objects of moral evaluation are not actions but motives. Virtue cannot simply be a performance of law-abidingness. Śāntideva reminds us that real poverty is that of the mind, *citta-kārpanyam*. *Dāna* is a *pāramitā* only when the act is entailed by the thought of its fruit for the sake of all beings. Charity occurs in the mind. It is not merely the giving away of things to others or for other's sake. It is also the giving up of all hankering after the fruit of the generous act. It is renunciation *in toto*. That state of mind is verily *dāna-pāramitā, tasmāt sa cittameva tu* (V. 10). In the absence of such a mental state, no physical act of generosity can be ascribed the status of a *pāramitā*.

It a similar vein, *śīla-pāramitā* is also defined. Take the case of non-killing, one may abstain from killing on a variety of reasons. What matters is the aversion fro killing, hurting, etc., the mental detachment from the very idea of violence or injury to beings. It is the mind that has to be trained to attain the state what is called *virati* (V. 11). This has relevance for the practicing the virtue of forbearance. *Kśānti* is the non-angry state of the mind. The point that Śāntideva makes it this: if one subdues one's mind and destroys its propensities to hurting others, all enemies will cease. *Mārite krodhacitte tu māritāh sarva śatravah* (V. 12). Angry thoughts are the worst foes, and the angry mind is unhealthy (*akuśala*) and unsteady, while *kśānti* is *cittasyākopanatā*. When the mind is cleansed of the traces of anger, forbearance is generated. There will be no need of destroying supposed enemies. The real enemy is within. Subdue it, and there is real victory.

Even *Vīrya-pāramitā* or the virtue of enthusiasm is essentially an affair of the mind. It is joy in what is wholesome, *kuśalotsāha* (V. 2). The position of *vīrya* or enthusiasm or even courage is somewhat unique. If we take the six *pāramitās* as related to the three-fold division of the Eight-fold Path, with *śīla* on one side, and *prajñā* on the other, then *vīrya* would map on both the domains, coming under the category of *samādhi*. According to the *Mahāyānasūtralankāra*, the first three *pāramitās* correspond to higher morality or *adhiśīla*, the fifth, i.e., *samādhi* to higher meditation or *adhicitta*, and *prajñā*, the sixth to higher wisdom, i.e., *adhiprajñā*. *Vīrya* is shared in common by all the three divisions.

By *vīrya* we are to understand the striving and onward effort, the exertion and endeavour, the zeal and ardour, the vigour and fortitude, the state of unfaltering effort, the state of sustained desire, the state of not putting down the yoke and the burden, and the solid grip of the yoke and the burden. Aspects of *vīrya* are covered by such terms as *apramāda*, i.e., vigilance, alertness or watchfulness and *dhṛti*, meaning fortitude or steadfastness. Needless to say, these are the properties of a disciplined mind.

Śāntideva goes on to say that the two other *pāramitās*, namely, *dhyāna* and *prajñā*, are none other than excellences of the mind

(V. 16 and 17). Nothing avails if the mind is distracted elsewhere. The secret of the mind is the paramount significance of *dharma*.

## VI

It should be evident from our discussion of *smṛti* and *samprajañya* that Buddhist morality, fundamentally, is autonomic and personal, less legal and only indirectly, rather obliquely social. There is a sense in which taking refuge in the Buddha is to take refuge in oneself as the Master had done.

Again, there is a great significance of the Buddha's personality in Buddhist ethics. He is revered less as a founder of the religion, and more as the revealer of truths concerning life and existence, and finally as the guide to the same attainment as his own. In him, personal perfection is united with universal truths: "One who sees me sees the truth", so goes a celebrated saying in the *Digha Nikāya*.

Śāntideva incorporates etiquette to ethics. This is significant enough to mark Buddhist morality off from other systems. Urbanity is considered as important as ethical goodness. In spite of his humility and friendliness, a bodhisattva is to have an aristocratic bearing. Moral and intellectual perfection of a personality, notwithstanding the doctrine of the non-ego, is the highest aim of Buddhist morality.

In the remainder of this section, I would like to consider Śāntideva's reference to *brahmatā* (V. 15) in a somewhat detailed manner. Does he look back to the four points of *brahma-vihāra*? And if he does, then there had been an unbroken development of the linkage of morality with kindness in Buddhist thought till it reaches its apex in Mahāyāna.

However, let us first consider the idea of *brahmavihara*. It is also called "the boundless". In the *Metta Sutta*, the synonymous word is *aparimāna*. The word *brāhman* is Upaniṣadic in origin and it was a practice with the Buddha to define such hallowed and commendatory terms in a persuasive manner. He took brahmanical terms and gave them a new meaning. In such discourses as the *Digha-Nikāya*, *Sutta IV*, we hear him say that the word *brāhman*

should not refer to a person born in a particular family but to someone with certain virtues.

The four *brahmavihāras* occur in several canonical texts, but *locus classicus* is the *Tevijja Sutta* (*Digha-Nikāya*, XIII). Indeed some of the vocabulary and phraseology of the *Metta Sutta* comes straight out of the *Tevijja Sutta*. In that prose text, the Buddha introduces the four *brahmavihāras* in a narrative context. He speaks of a monk whose way of life culminates in permeating every direction with his kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Then it appears plausible that at death such a monk goes to companionship with the Brahmā. Is it not that the Buddha was using the brahmanical way of putting things as a metaphor for what he saw as the highest goal? Was he not using the brahminical description of the *summum bonum*, which was itself conched in metaphysical terms, to describe his own *summum bonum* in precisely analogous metaphysical style? Let us not forget that the Buddha was famous for his skill in means (*upāya-kauśalya*), and that he was adapting the style of his message to the understanding of his audience. In the *Tevijja Sutta* he was conversing with two Brahmin boys.

Why exactly are these four states called ‘boundless’? Each of the four states, from kindness to equanimity, is called *cetovimutti*, liberation of the mind. There is, of course, another dimension of *vimutti*, by understanding. In the context of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, we need not enter the troubled waters of the debate whether *cetovimutti* is *nirvāna* or no. It should be unexceptionable to say that in order to have salvific realization, one has to be alive, and then the ultimate solution comes when life ends. The ideal Upaniṣadic monist understands that he is Brahman, and then becomes Brahman at death. We may keep in mind the range of meanings in the English verb ‘realize’, and say that one realizes his true nature while alive, and makes it real at death. The same dual character of *nirvāna* may be expressed by saying that the blowing out of the fires of greed, hatred and delusion while one is still alive leaves a residue of fuel, while the death of such an enlightened person in *nirvāna* occurs with no such residue. There is simply nothing left which could again be ignited with the passions.

There is a rigid view that the final step to liberation consists of a gnosis, an insight into the nature of the phenomenal world as being impermanent, dissatisfying and without essence. There occurs a progression, from *śīla* to *prajñā* through *samādhi*, and each of these three factors is a prerequisite for the next. According to this rigid interpretation, the four boundless states are classified as forms of concentration, not of understanding, so they cannot be part of the culminating gnosis. But there is something in the interpretation that leaves one unconvinced. Let us take the Noble Eight-fold Path, which is enunciated, supposedly, in the Buddha's first sermon. This does not follow the progression, rather ends with *samyak samādhi*. Or to take another example, the *Digh-Nikaya* (1, 124) has the Buddha say that where there is morality there is understanding, and vice versa, and that they purify each other just like the process of washing one's hands. There is no reason to suppose that this evidence is of no value in the face of the rigid interpretation. There is good reason for taking the four boundless states as coming into all the three categories, they partake of *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*.

In the *Tevijja Sutta*, the Buddha is speaking about the pervasion of an ethicized consciousness. In enlarging one's mind to be metaphorically boundless, one emulates the Upaniṣadic gnostic who identifies with universal consciousness. This moral activity is a kind of activity not exactly envisaged in the *Upaniṣads*. It transcends finitude, and at the same time, it is a meditation, a harnessing of the mind, and a gnosis, a limitless illumination. The Buddha could be taken as substituting an ethical for a metaphysical message.

When Śāntideva, while elucidating *smṛti* and *samprajañya*, all of a sudden breaks into eulogizing the mind concentrating on achieving *brahmatā* or brahma's realm of bliss, one cannot but be reminded of the issue we are endeavouring to outline above. It is well-known that in the Mahāyāna, the Buddha has both infinite wisdom and infinite compassion. They complement each other exactly like *śīla* and *prajñā* in the *Sonadanda Sutta*. Even Buddhaghosa in the *Visuddhimagga* mentions the Buddha's quality as 'perfect in knowledge and conduct'. It was through *prajñā* that the Buddha understood other's suffering, and it was through compassion that



he undertook to counteract it. Even more striking is the way in which Buddhaghosa ends chapter IX of the *Visuddhimagga*, the chapter on the four *brahma-vihāras*. He explains how high in the universe each of the four states, in turn, can take you. And more importantly, the verse no. 368 of the *Dhammapada* leaves us in doubt as regards the salvific potency of kindness. It says that one who dwells in kindness may attain the peaceful. The optative ‘may attain’ is not of much consequence in the context. The force is that of “will attain” in the indicative. In another version of the verse in the *Mahāvastu*, the verb is in the indicative, *adhigacchati*. Both the cases say that kindness is salvific, and it is no coincidence that the *nirvāna*, “the peaceful state”, is the same as that used at the opening of the *Metta Sutta*. Was the author of the *Dhammapada* (no. 368) interpreting the *Sutta* to mean that it is kindness which will get one to *nirvāna*? The tradition however, holds that the author of both poems is the Buddha himself.

## VII

The Mahāyāna emphasizes the virtue of compassion, the second in the set of four boundless states, while the older dispensation tends rather to speak of the first, kindness. This, I believe, is hardly more than a purely verbal difference. All that I hope to bring home is the idea that both in the Mahāyāna and the older dispensation, kindness is not only commended but also valued so highly that it can be a means to attaining *nirvāna*.

Is this kindness what St. Paul meant by ‘charity’, or in a less technical vocabulary, ‘love’? Is it merely benevolence? The question is important. Before any definitive answer comes, may we not remind ourselves that the Buddha exhorted monks to tend each other when they are ill, and that he set the example in this. So did Jesus in tending the leper. It will be too much of literalness to say that wherever the words kindness and compassion are mentioned in the canonical texts, the reference is to thought, not to acts of kindness. A bodhisattva would be prepared to lay down his life, if need be, to ameliorate the suffering of others. It could not have

been the case that the Buddha, the great ethiciser that he was, could have been content with preaching a bloodless kindness. Buddhist ethic deserves our respect for edifying not only self-restraint but also love.

## Note

- A. Should the concept of *brahmavihāra* make one recall what the *Bhāgavad Gītā* (V. 24-25) mentions as *brahmanirvāna*? Or doesn't the latter toll one back to the former? Take, for instance, the indicative *brahmabhūta adhiḡacchati*. Śāntideva's term *brahmatā* is the same as *brahmabhūya*, meaning identification with or absorption in *Brahma*. And such a person (*nara*), says the *Gītā* happily engages himself in the good of all beings, *sarvabhūta hite ratah*. It could be argued that what we have here is a statement about the perfected individual poised in *upeksā* or equanimity. But does such a person lack in love? If that were so, then the word *suhṛda*, i.e., friend, could not have occurred in the final couplet of the chapter.
- B. The *Tibetan Dhammapada*, which is a translation of the *Udānavarga* by Vidyaprabhākara, done in the ninth century. It is called *Ched. Durbjod.pa*, and it is included in the *Ka'gyur*. One of the two Tibetan lineages for meditating on compassion comes from Śāntideva's concepts of *parātma-parivartana* or exchanging self with others. As the great Tibetan commentator Tsong Kha-pa has explained, a bodhisattva is so committed as to go steps further and personally undertake the task of benefiting others. I could, in particular, like to refer to verses 22 to 24 of the section on Monk (Folio Three) which explicitly indicate the salvific import of kindness: "Any (one) who is kind... *achieves* the state of peace", and "*Finds* the state of peacefulness" and "Gradually experiences. The end of every clasping". (*The Tibetan Dhammapada*, tr. Gareth Sparha., Ed.

Beth Lee Simon, Mahāyāna Publications, New Delhi, 1983.)

- C. One might recall the problem in Hume's *Treatise*, Book II, where in deference to his atomistic psychology 'love' does not entail 'benevolence'. From the fact that x loves y, it does not follow, for Hume, that x would be benevolent y. Since love and benevolence are distinct and referentially opaque mental states, one does not imply the other. This is travesty of usage, however logical the position may appear to be.

*Prajñāpāramitā: Human Excellence –  
Eudaimonia*

There is much to be said for having *eudaimonia* in the title of the chapter along with *prajñāpāramitā*. Buddhism recognizes two basic values or excellences of human good, namely, moral and intellectual. The hegemony of these values is accepted throughout the tradition, even though there have been variations in respect of the importance attached to each of them. That does not concern us here. Poussin, at one point, characterized Buddhism as eudaimonistic (in *Le Morale Bouddhique*, Paris, p. 28). Ethical perfection is a central ingredient in the Buddhist *summum bonum*. But the point to notice is that the sphere of perfection is binary, founded upon knowledge and morality, while meditation is a means for the promotion of the two. There is a symbiotic relationship between *śīla* and *prajñā*. They are inalienably linked with each other symmetrically. *Śīla* is washed around with *prajñā* and *prajñā* is washed around with *śīla* (*Discourse to Sonadanda Sutta IV*). Mystical insight is not enough; it has to be coupled with action inspired by a consciousness of moral good, worldly action and salvific knowledge are, both and at once, essential facets of the path towards enlightenment. The Buddha redefines the notion of human perfection by making space for moral as well as intellectual goods. The ways of action and knowledge are not alternative paths. The basic dimensions of human goods are binary.

Now a word for *eudaimonia*. In many a way by its simultaneous emphasis on both moral (*śīla*) and intellectual (*prajñā*) virtues, in holding that the wise are virtuous, Buddhism has a formal parallelism, to a broad measure of agreement with Aristotle's

conception of human perfection, in spite of their different social and cultural contexts. In many respects, Aristotle's ethical theory appears to be the closest Western analogue to Buddhist ethics. It is of course true that the exegesis of Aristotelian ethics has reached a sophisticated level than the study of ethics in Buddhism. Both regard human nature as a complex of intellectual and emotional factors and consider that the final good for man lies in the full development of his potential in these two dimensions. For both this is a gradual, cumulative process. The state of perfection finally reached is *nirvāna* for Buddhism and *eudaimonia* for Aristotle. The virtues are those qualities the possession of which will enable an individual to achieve *eudaimonia* and the lack of which will frustrate his movement towards that *telos*. The virtues participate in and constitute the end. If one reads *nirvāna* for *eudaimonia*, the statement will be largely true for Buddhism as well. In the Buddhist path, the *śīlas* are the means to the gradual realization of the end through the incarnation of the end in the present. Living in accordance with the end is a progressive articulation of the end itself. It is a project which is progressively realized through time in the transformation of personality. Whereas Aristotle allows for only one lifetime, in Buddhism this slow maturation takes place over the course of many lives. There is no sudden enlightenment, without prior cultivation. Enlightenment does not supervene like an adventitious charm. On the ground of the internal relationship between virtue and the *summum bonum*, it should be arguable that both the ethical theories, Buddhist and the Aristotelian, are teleological. And if that be so, then the employment of the term *eudaimonia* for *prajñāpāramitā* would stand justified.

## I

What is *prajñā*? Where does it figure in the structure of the Buddhist moral thought? In the traditional exegesis of the *astāṅgika mārga*, the first two factors, namely, the right view and the right directed thought go under the nomenclature of *prajñā*. It is not that any view and thought could be said to be candidates for the status, they have to be *right* or *samyak*. The qualification is important and of

significance. *Samyakdṛṣṭi* covers intellectual and even experiential understanding of the truth of existence or *dukkha*. *Samyaksainkalpa* is the resolve to follow the truths. This concerns the emotions, with thought, channelled towards freedom from sensuality, and away from ill-will and cruelty to loving-kindness and compassion. The two dimensions, of *dṛṣṭi* and *sankalpa*, imply liberation in psychological terms, as something to do with transforming the mind through correct understanding. To see the truths of existence as *dukkha* is self-referential, since it includes the path as well. It means that one speaks, acts, and thinks in conformity with reality, how things actually are. To hold the right view with regard to craving is to have a *dṛṣṭi* which is ultimately to be abandoned. Holding the right view with craving is as such to engage in the path that if followed through eventually erodes all craving and leads to a right view without craving, that is, therefore, no ‘view’ at all. *Sankalpa* is intention, and its rightness consists in its freedom from attachments to worldly pleasures, selfishness, and self-possessiveness.

We have in *prajñā* an ideal take-off point for morality or *śīlā*. And it shows wonderfully well the connection between seeing things the way they really are, in terms of seeing how the psychological world actually is, and this leads to liberation. There is built into seeing how things are (*is*) a transformation of normal response (*ought*). It appears that for Buddhist ethics, transformation is an automatic response to seeing how things really are. Liberation results from letting-go that which is seen as not being the self. When one sees things are sources of unhappiness, out of one’s control, and impermanent, one sees that they cannot be any kind of Self. With this one lets them go, for having any involvement with them can only lead to misery. In letting all these go there is liberation, for the force of craving which leads to suffering is no more. Seeing that all these are not Self is the path to liberation. From this it must not be supposed that the Buddha accepts a Self beyond his negations, a Self other than and behind the five aggregates. For him, finding the Self really has nothing to do with liberation. In the *Anattalakkhana Sutta*, he makes no mention of discovering the True Self. On the contrary, he explains how liberation comes from letting go of all craving and attachment simply through seeing that things are not

Self beyond all this. Any postulated Self would lead to attachment. The aforesaid *Sutta* in the *Samyutta-Nikaya* does not suggest that there is additional factor called the Self beyond the five aggregates. Of course, persons in the everyday sense do exist. The Buddha's liberating denials does not include the absurdity that you and me and he himself simply do not exist, and we would all be better off realizing this. Persons exist as practical ways of speaking about bundles, physical and psychical

The Buddha replaces a vision of the world based on the Selves underlying change (in the manner of Aristotle's medieval followers, Descartes, and the paradigm case put forward in the *Bṛhadaraṇyaka Upaniṣad*). With an appeal to what he sees as being its essential dynamic nature, there is a dynamism of experience based on centrality of causal conditioning. The *trilakṣaṇa*, the three hallmarks of the world are pervasive. It is suffering (*dukkha*). It is impermanent (*anitya*). And it is not Self (*anātman*). The world truly is a torrent of cause and effect with no stability within it, save the stability we try to make for ourselves as a refuge from change and inevitable death. That stability only exacerbates suffering because it is a fictional stability created by our desperate grasping after security. The only real stability lies in *nirvāna*, just because *nirvāna* precisely is not the torrent of the world. The stress on the dynamic nature of the world throws into relief the still, calm, dimension of *nirvāna*.

The Buddha is interested in the fact that X comes into existence due to Y, particularly because through the cessation of Y there will be no more X. this emphasis on causality describes the central feature of Buddhist ontology. It explains how suffering comes about through *causes*. Through reversing the causes the suffering can be ended. The Buddha links the emergence of suffering to impersonal law-like behaviour, and he chooses to anchor this link in the impersonal law-like behaviour of causation. Causation is a relationship between events, and is what we call it when X occurs Y follows, and when X does not occur Y does not follow. The remark that he who sees Dependent origination sees the Dhamma; and he who sees the Dhamma sees Dependent origination places causation at the very centre of the middle path. This is what the

Buddha is said to have rediscovered, and it is in this rediscovery and its implications that he is held to be Enlightened. The very significance of the four noble Truths which formed the content of his enlightenment relies implicitly on the impersonal law-like behaviour of causation. *Anātmatā* and *pratītyasamutpāda* together form the two pillars of the Buddha's final gnosis. Rightly, we may be asked to appreciate the sheer exhilarating wonder the Buddha must have felt at realising the significance of the fact that *effects follow from causes naturally*. Through this law he now had the key to putting a stop to that which all would want to stop, if only they knew how. This discovery was absolutely, enlighteningly liberating. From this sheer wonder of the Buddha at uncovering (is it not *alethea* that Heidegger celebrates?) the inner turnings of the universe, and the overwhelming freedom of stopping their incessant roll, flows the whole history of Buddhist thought.

## II

In keeping with the fact that *nirvāna* and the *mārga* lie in the same continuum, there is no taking a leap into the transcendent. The sequential characteristic of the path is such that it begins with *śīla* but ends with *śīla* and *prajñā*. *Śīla* is the starting point since human nature is so constituted that moral discipline facilitates the intellectual discipline. Morality is to be constantly cultivated alongside insight until the two fuse in the transformation of the entire personality in the existential realization of selflessness. *Prajñā* is the cognitive realization of *anātma*, while *śīla* is its affective realization. The factors of the path are not to be understood in the manner of a linear metaphor. That will be a mistake. It is not to be the case that all of the stages are passed through once and forever left behind. *Śīla* is a central enduring feature of the conduct of the enlightened. In a passage of the *Anguttara Nikāya* (V. 2), the Buddha describes the scheme of progress from morality to enlightenment as a series of spiritual breakthroughs and the order in which they occur for one following the Path. The order is experiential, and *not* set in terms of priority of values. The point is one of achieving the state of spontaneous moral perfection. In



stead of transcending goodness, the enlightened person fulfils it. What he may be said to have gone beyond is the possibility of evil. The relationship of ethics to soteriology is integral and inalienable. And we could further say that the Path is both the means and the end, there is no ontological gulf to be crossed over.

It will be advisable to have foregoing considerations in mind when we turn to Śāntideva's account of *prajñāpāramitā* in the Chapter IX of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. It is also in order to remind ourselves that there is no Copernican revolution in Buddhist ethics with the advent of the Mahāyāna. Its innovations are supplement to the morality of the older school. The Mahāyāna only brings about a paradigm shift and thereby recalibrates the value-structure of earlier persuasion. The six perfections are or may be related to the scheme of *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*. And this had been done in the *Mahāyāna-Sūtrāṅkāra*.

In both the Vehicles, a distinction is made between the moral perfection and the perfection of insight or knowledge. There has, of course, been a change in the terminology. The basic values of the older dispensation were defined as insight and morality, and now the Mahāyāna refers to them as insight (*prajñā*) and means (*upāya*), which is sometimes called *karuṇā* or compassion. The terminological change reflects a new emphasis on the function of moral virtue as a dynamic other-regarding quality. Mahāyāna sources acknowledge the importance of both of these components as constituents of the final goods. So essential is the interdependence that in the absence of either element the result is bondage rather than liberation. If there is any imbalance between the two, should one be neglected, the result is bondage and not liberation. Neither *prajñā* nor *upāya* are adequate by themselves.

### III

We may now turn to *prajñā*. A whole body of literature had come about it. What comes out clearly from one's perusal of the *prajñāpāramitā* literature is that they have a message. It is a message of inspiration, spoken in the language and perspective of Mādhyamikā philosophy in explaining the path of the bodhisattva.

It bears three principal themes. The first theme is that of the very peak, the perfection (*pramit*) of *prajñā*. Its content is emptiness (*śāauyatā*), and its context is the path and practices of a bodhisattva, one whose aim is not just Enlightenment but perfect Buddhahood, *samyak sambuddhatva* for the benefit of all sentient beings.

*Prajñā* has been variously rendered as gnosis, wisdom, insight, knowledge, and enlightenment. All these terms only partially map the fuller intention of the term *prajñā*, which is derived from *jñā*. The opposite of *prajñā* is often *avidyā* (ignorance), *moha* (delusion). If we take *moha* as the principal intellectual vice, then *prajñā* should be its opposite, the highest of all virtues, that enlivens them. In fact, it is their fulfilment. *Prajñā* is the highest intellectual virtue.

*Prajñā* has been variously explained. The *Vijñānavādins*, interpret it as the knowledge of the Supreme Good, *paramārthajñāna*. It is the knowledge of that which exists, and as it exists, *dharmanām pravacayeh*, discrimination of *dharmas*. As an unobscured knowledge of all that is knowable, it implies the knowledge of the four Noble Truths, of what should be done or not done. The *Vijñānavādins* identify *prajñā* with perfect knowledge in all its aspects. It is insight into Reality (*tathatā*).

The Mādhyamikās tend to interpret *prajñā* in a negative mode. *Prajñāpāramitā* is not only greater than all the *pāramitās*, but what is important is that it produces and promotes them all. It really includes all of them. Śāntideva calls the other *pāramitās* simply the attendants, *parikāras* (IX. I) of *prajñāpāramitā*.

The Mādhyamikā distinguishes two modes of understanding something, *prajñā* is that understanding which sees how that something really is in contrast to the way it appears to be. Just as that seeing can both be a matter of understanding that things are really like this, and also actually being in a state of mind where one sees directly how it is, so we can refer to different levels of *prajñā*, from understanding to non-conceptual insight. Buddhist thoughts form the beginning that was marked by a distinction between the way things appear to be and the way they actually are. Within the framework of Abhidharma, *prajñā* is used to refer to discernment of the ultimate primary existents. They are to be distinguished from

conceptual constructs. Mahāyāna has its linkages with *Abhidharma*, but what matters for Mahāyāna is not wisdom, rather its perfection. The *pāramitās* to be mastered by a bodhisattva may be six or ten in number, what really matters is that *prajñā* as a *pāramitā* is primary. The perfection of *prajñā* is the final *prajñā*, the final proper understanding of the way things truly are.

What is the way things truly are? The answer is that they are empty of selves, they are *śūnya*, because they are conditioned, contingent, only phenomenally existent. This is the way they are discerned by the wisdom eye, *prajñā-cakṣu*. Buddhism, from the very beginning, had used the terms *śūnyatā* to apply to the truth discovered by the eye of proper understanding or *prajñā*, the eye of the Buddha. First this was with reference to the five aggregates, empty of Self or anything pertaining to a Self. Then it was applied to many classes of fundamental constituents to be empty of Self or anything pertaining to Self. In addition, the term *śūnya* was also used to refer to the nature of existents, empty of any status other than conceptual existents, empty of own-existence (*svabhāva*), empty of primary, irreducible primary existence. But while there is no Self at all, and all things are empty of Self, for *Abhidharma*, there *must* exist some things which have primary existence, and secondary conceptual existents are themselves empty of that primary existence, which is, of course, possessed by primary existent, *dharmas*. The absence of Self cannot mean there are actually no primary existents at all.

But in the *prajñāpāramitā* literature, the same term *śūnya* is used to refer to absolutely everything, and it entails that absolutely everything is like a magical illusion. We need to be quite clear about the range of the claim. Scholars, such as Conze, would want to limit it and argue for some sort of monistic Absolute, a primary existent behind the negations. But there is also unequivocal texts that say that even *nirvāna* is like a magical illusion, like a dream. In other words, absolutely things have the same status as persons, tables, and forests. They are all conceptual constructs and therefore, cannot be vested with own-existence or *svabhāva*. Crucially, therefore, they cannot be grasped. One cannot substitute grasping after tables and

so on with grasping after dharmas as the refuge, the fixed appoint in a world of disappointment and suffering. What is being constantly asked is: what is referred to by the term X, what *dharma* is this. And the response is, that nothing can be found, nothing can be grasped, and a bodhisattva should heroically resist all fear. To see otherwise is to grasp, and to grasp is to miss Enlightenment. Thus, Enlightenment comes from ceasing to grasp even the most subtle sources of attachment, and this ceasing to grasp requires seeing those things which could serve as sources of attachment as empty, mere conceptual constructs. *All* things are empty. On the level of what is an ultimate, primary existent, there is nothing. On such a level, therefore, there is an endless absence, and endless emptiness. For both philosophical reasons and also perhaps existential reasons, this teaching of emptiness may for some have been terrifying. It has been said that this teaching can be scaring to the immature intellectually, *balānām trāsajanakam*. Yet emptiness is the antidote to fear. For if all is empty, what is there to fear?

It will have been clear that the *prajñāpāramitā* teaching is therapeutic. It is intended to cure one of the natural propensities to grasp the ‘objects’ of thoughts and feeling, and court frustration and disappointment at the end. Hence it is important that genuine morality is not any longer going to be a matter of unthinking rule-following, rather it has got to be an affair to *telos*, guided and informed by the image and prospect of Enlightenment, and aided unwaveringly by the practice of *samādhi*. Actions become virtuous only if and when they are accomplished as being informed by a characteristic gnosis.

#### IV

Śāntideva reiterates the basic tenets of the Mahāyāna mode of looking at life and existence in chapter IX of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. It may be noted that Prajñākaramati treats the chapter as an independent work, and appends an invocatory verse to mark it off from the preceding chapters. However, this change is found missing in the Tibetan version of the book.

Śāntideva relates altruism to *prajñā* in the very opening *kārikā* of the chapter: *utpādyetprajñā dukkh nivṛttikāṅkṣayā*, those who wish to pacify suffering should generate *prajñā*.

We may have a quick look at the commentarial ramifications of *prajñā*, and then return to see its import for our context. Prajñākaramati elucidates a two-fold *prajñā*: *hetubhūta* and *phalabhāta*. The causal (*hetu*) type would be available to anyone who desires release, *adhi-mukti-caritāh*, or to a bodhisattva, who has perfected the virtues and stationed himself accordingly (*bhūmi-pravistāh*). Obviously, the reference is to the stations or *bhūmis* that a bodhisattva aspires later or is expected to attain. Only the latter is ontologically equipped with the realization that all things are lacking in any intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) or essence. Thus, only he can distinguish *samvṛti* from *paramārtha*.

*Samvṛti* is the domain of bewitchment by linguistic conventions (*a la* Wittgenstein) that screen off the identifylessness and conditionality of the so-called existence. From the *paramārtha* mode of apperception, they deserve to be designated as fictional, and are likened to appearances in a magic show. Conventions of language and patterns of habitual affective reactions cover up (*samvṛti* = *āvaranas* both cognitive and affective) or even conceal the real nature of the experiential contents. In the Mādhyamikā discourse, ‘unreal’ is a technical term. What it is intended to signify is something that is *constructed*, and when the parts of the construct are made to fall off, nothing remains substantially. A recent elucidation of the notion of *samvṛti* comes from the present Dalai Lama. To quote him, “if phenomena had no deep mode of being other than their external or superficial mode or being, and if thus the way they appeared and the way they existed were in agreement, then it would be sufficient to hold that conventional modes of appearances are true just as they appear, and to place confidence in them. However, this is not so, though phenomena appear as if true, most true, ultimately they are not true. Therefore, phenomena abide in the middle way, not truly or inherently existent and also not utterly non-existent”. Again, “names are fabricated and imputed to the individual phenomena, names are adventitiously designated. They are all designations”. And furthermore, as also most

importantly, “The empty nature of a phenomena is established in relation to that phenomena which is qualified by this empty nature, and a phenomenon qualified by an empty nature is established in relation to its empty nature. Just as when a phenomenon qualified by an empty nature is analyzed it is not found, so too when this phenomenon’s empty nature itself is analyzed, it is unfindable as well. Therefore, when we seek the object designated as ‘an empty nature’, this empty nature is not found. It merely exists through the force of subjective designation done without analysis. Thus, it does not inherently exist” (*The Key to the Middle Way*, pp. 62, 73 and 75, Unwin Hyman, London, 1987).

The mode of argument is called *prasanga*, a sort of *reduction ad absurdum* for proving the contrary of what is claimed to be the case. Our experience is conditional, governed by *hetus*, and only very rarely do we apprehend the objects presented uncovered or unconcealed in their ontological nakedness. More often than not we experience objects under the trapping of inherited concepts and emotional colouring. The *that* is made to recede behind the *what* (as Bradley would have it). Ours is a lot of mediated experience, hardly ever pure. In encounter with Truth in its pure nakedness, the customary predicates give way to a failure, slipping away from their bearers, and result in a self-falsification.

On the other hand, *paramārtha* is the implicandum of the negations of the assertions in the domain of *samvṛti*. The Mādhyamikā love for negative statements derive mainly from Nāgarjuna’s negative dialectic, which points at the *paramārtha* only obliquely, but perhaps is never asserted. It is the appeasement (*upaśama*) of both the cognitive and affective polarities, the subject and the object, that Nāgarjuna holds as auspicious (*śiva*), since this is what constitutes freedom from the moral and intellectual vices, namely *rāga*, *dvesa* and *moha*. His has been an analytical project of showing the non-assertibility of views and theories. And Śāntideva is an heir to the legacy. There is a sense in which Buddhism may be said to be a *non-foundational* point of view.

The non-foundationalism is reflected in the logico-linguistic criterion for demarcating *samvṛti* and *paramārtha*. As a part of the Buddhist philosophy of language, *śūnyatā* suggests that the world

we live in is bound by logico-linguistic conventions. It is a thesis with Nāgarjuna that language ought not to be granted an absolute status, but must be treated cautiously, as temporary, relative and culturally formulated. Even the foundationalist realism of Nyāya admits that linguistic usage is an agreed-upon convention, though if one is capable of correctly formulating words and sentences, one can realize any goal within the language. This is a static view of language. The Buddhist, Nāgarjuna in particular, tends towards a dynamic view by accepting the world of nature only conditionally in conventional terms (*samvṛti* or *vyavahāra*).

*Samvṛti* corresponds to our ordinary world of reason (*anumāna*) and sense perception (*pratyakṣa*), while *paramārtha* “transcends” the faculty of reason and perception by means of the introspective faculty of *prajñā*. But the truths are dialectically interrelated, there is perhaps no oppositional polarity between the two, as it is in Augustine’s *City of God* and the *Realm of Nature*, or Samkara’s *māyā* and *brahman*, nor would there be the *Yogacāra* distinction between *parinispanna* (absolute quiescence) and *parikalpita* (phenomenal delusion). Nāgarjuna, rather inclines towards a bi-negation, that is, the two domains are “neither identical nor different”. This constitutes the latter two members of the four alternative pairs of *catuskoti* logic. “x is A”, “x is not A”, “x is both A and not-A”, and “x is neither A nor not-A”. This is Nāgarjuna’s response to the problem of the description of Reality. “x is A” and “x is not A” disjunctively exhaust the domain of the actual and possible states of affair. “x is both a and not-A” is a simultaneous affirmation of logical opposites, that x is identical and different, and “x is neither identical nor different. The functions (not propositions proper, since x is an unbound variable, and A is a predicate) are disjunctively related. This fact is reflected in the formulations of *pratītyasamutpāda* and *śūnyata*. One of the best passages referring this insight is found in Nāgarjuna’s *Mādhyamikakārikā*, 25 19-20. from the point of view of conventional truth (*vyavahārata*), *samvṛti* and *paramārtha* ought to be distinguished, but from the point of view of *paramārtha*, no such distinction obtains.

In spite of the striking resemblance between Buddhist and Aristotelian conceptions of human life, the realization of happiness

in all aspects of human nature, there appears a divergence of outlook that deserves to be noted. Aristotle, like Nyāya, speaks of ultimate happiness within the scope of logic and language, *logos*, whereby the rational faculty contemplates the nature of the ultimate truth. In the Buddhist conception, ultimately happiness is conceived as transcending the faculty of logic and language, and hence reason, beyond the pursuit of the world, i.e., beyond convention. This also could have been a matter of cultural convention.

## V

The detouring of logic was necessary since Śāntideva incorporates Nāgarjuna's insight and weilds similar arguments for establishing the thesis of twin truths. The structure of chapter IX is polemical. Śāntideva represents himself as a Mādhyamikā spokesman and contests the positions as could come from the Cittamātrin (*yogacāra*), the Vaibhāsikas, the Naiyāyikas, the Sāmkhya and the Cārvāka. We need not be detained by the logico-ontological dimensions of the debate, but we shall inspect the points concerning moral activism of a bodhisattva. How is altruism possible if the persons be absent?

In point of fact, the question is raised by the Cittamātrin: Should the sentient beings be fictional, for whose sake would the act of compassion be? If there be no existence of a *sattva* as a self on whom is compassion to be practiced? (IX. 76-77). The question is directed towards the prop or *ālambana* for a bodhisattva's compassion. When we say 'X is compassionate towards Y', it makes sense only if the expression is taken with the variables being existentially quantified, and the relation as transitive. In the absence of bound variables the expression would carry no import.

Logic apart, more importantly, the Cittamātrin can bring the charge of fictionality of the objects of compassion, because Śāntideva had earlier put forward the Mahāyāna thesis that both the collectivities (*samudāya*) and continuants (*santāna*) are fictions (*mṛsā*). In chapter VIII, Śāntideva had argued for the non-existence of sorrow on the grounds that it has no locus in the sense that it had no owner. If persons are such that they are nothing but assemblage



of factors and continue to be there for a period of time, then they are not subjects in the sense of having a self or an identity. And if that be the case, how could they be in sorrow or be bearers of sorrow? In that case, sorrow also does not exist, neither mine nor theirs. Such has been the contention of the *kārikās* 99 to 102. Is it not that Śāntideva throws the baby too along with the bath water? His intention is to argue for altruism, while also denying the existence of bearers of sorrow as well as the objects of compassion. This is the logic of the metaphor of a magic show. What Śāntideva argues in IX. 76 in reply to the Cittamātrin is but a corollary of what he had maintained in VIII. 101.

Yet Śāntideva has undeniable moral intentions, which appears to undergo a process of subversion under the heavy artillery of logic and dialectic. Is it really the case?

Let us consider the metaphor of rosary and look for its intention. The Dalai Lama writes, “The whole, the one rosary, has one hundred and eight beads as its parts. The parts and the whole are conventionally different; yet, when the parts are eliminated a rosary cannot be found. Because the rosary is one and its parts are many, the rosary is not the same as its parts. When the parts are eliminated, there is no rosary which exists separately; therefore, it is not inherently or fundamentally different from its parts. Because the rosary does not exist separate from its parts, it does not inherently depend on its parts, nor do the parts depend on it. Also, the beads do not belong to the rosary. Similarly, since the shape of the rosary is one of its qualities, this shape is not the rosary. Also, the collection of the beads, and the string is the basis in dependence on which the rosary is imputed; therefore, it is not the rosary. If it is sought in this way, a rosary is unfindable. Further, if the individual beads are sought as above, that is, as one with their parts, or different from their parts and so forth, they are unfindable as well. Furthermore, since forests, armies, continents, and countries are imputed to aggregations of many parts, when each is analyzed as to whether it is this or not that, it is unfindable” (ibid, pp. 67-8). The rosary can only be said to abide in the middle way, not truly or inherently existent and also not utterly non-existent in the manner of viewing. All phenomena exist in the manner of

appearing as varieties of dependent arisings. Such is the manner of conventional truths or matters of *samvṛti*. Or to put the matter in another way, that which depends on causes is empty, or even that which does not survive analysis is inherently non-existent. (One might be tempted to recall Kant's definition 'nature' as that which is governed by casual laws.)

If Śāntideva intends to advance the analysis to characterize sentient beings, it must be a purely negative formal concept, since it is not endowed with anything like substance or even quasi-substance at all, and it is a matter of singular importance to note that the very concept of 'person', 'individual', or 'personality' remains rather problematic in Buddhist discourses. The fact of being conscious is only *nominally* (i.e., in the sense of *nāma-rūpa*) attributable to a 'person', and in no way to an 'I'. Let us take the *Metta-Sutta* of the *Sutta-Nipāta*. The beginning of the *Sutta* contains a short description of a 'person' who has realized the calm state (*sāntapada*) and a few ethical precepts necessary in his behaviour towards *other* persons. This implies indirectly that his *inner mental* qualities have already been perfected with respect to the calm state. Then this description abruptly comes to a stop, and we see a direct address to...

May all sentient beings be happy.

This line leaves us in uncertainty as to the person to whom it is addressed. That is, whether it is addressed to a person who has already realized the calm state for himself and is now to be turned towards other beings, or whether it is addressed to all beings, urging them spiritually then in their natural desire to be happy. Don't we here face a situation in which the whole universe is, as it were, divided into two parts? One part comprises all sentient beings in their separateness from the calm state, and another comprises those in the calm state, existing as if the inner mental change had already been completed whereby they became separated from the world of sentient beings. This *Sutta* is important in as much as it later became the textual basis for one of the most important of Mahāyāna prayers.

In the Buddhist usage the word 'mind' has a distinctive non-Cartesian ring about it. By 'non-Cartesian' I mean that it is *not*

individual mentally. When we hear or read that “one speaks or acts with a corrupted mind”, ‘one’ is simply a pure formal attribute having no psychological depth of ‘I’. It is only one dimension of what in other philosophical or psychological contexts is called ‘I’. It is impossible to observe the thought and ‘I’ at one and the same time. When the Buddha says “mind is not ‘I’”, “there is an implication that the very term ‘mind’ is used as if it were instead of ‘I’, as if it were the psychological dimension of ‘I’, but without ‘I’s ontological connections, it does not appear to have a need for denotation.

How does thought comes to be related to a person? How are we to understand such phrases as “the rise of thought” or *cittotpāda*? The very term though (*citta*) figuring in the context of ‘rise of thought’ seems to assume an abstract and universal meaning. The thought of Awakening (*bodhicitta*) is the central concept of Mahāyāna philosophy. What does this thought represent? A potential, latent or potential *Bodhisattvahood* spread all over the universe of sentient beings? Is the concept relative? Is it an ontological category figuring on the plane of separate and individual sentient beings? Is it mind itself? Is each and every mind whatsoever latently and potentially *bodhicitta*, i.e., mind as potentially awakened? The individuality of *bodhicitta* is as uncertain as the individuality of a bodhisattva. Isn’t its non-psychologism absolutely certain? It is totally devoid of any capacity to form the complex mental phenomena. Does *bodhicitta* belong to a stream?

In its soteriological aspect, *bodhicitta* may be thought of or meditated on as having already arisen, been acquired or produced *consciously*, i.e., in the sense of *individual* awareness. *After* having become actualized, it is described in its gradual development, ascending from one *bhūmi* to another. Does it not remain a process including the series of psychologically significant moments not identical with or equivalent to each other? Yet there is no real psychology, because ‘thought’ in *bodhicitta* is only figuratively referred to just as a bodhisattva is referred to as a *sattva* or a sentient being. The process of *bodhicitta* can only be viewed from the point of view of a bodhisattva, who, by definition, cannot have any point of view whatsoever. A bodhisattva at the tenth stage

of the realization of *bodhicitta* cannot be viewed as a personal manifestation of thought understood as the potential or latent aspect or unconscious *bodhisattvahood*. The individualism of a bodhisattva is quite nominal, just like the individualism of any *sattva*. Can we think of either *bodhicitta* or bodhisattva as a phenomenon, even though we are told that the development of *bodhicitta* could be? The development of *bodhicitta* is phenomenal, it occurs at a decisive moment in one's personal history, yet *bodhicitta* itself is said to be non-phenomenal. This is an enigmatic fact: how could *bodhicitta* arise and develop as if it were pre-existent before its *utpāda* or arising? Again, if *bodhicittapāda* were always and everywhere latently present, does it imply the *logical* necessity of its arise? The fact of its rise can be soteriologically reduced to its timeless potentiality, but one's becoming a bodhisattva at the tenth stage cannot perhaps be deduced from one's previous experiencing of the rise. One's *bodhisattvahood* can, of course, be traced back to the rise. The 'rise' remains the central fact in the genesis of a bodhisattva.

## VI

In the three *kārikās* of the Chapter I, on the glory of *bodhicitta* Śāntideva has admitted that virtue (*śubha*) is always weak, and the might of evil (*pāpa*) is ever over-bearing. Only *sambodhicitta* (I. 6) can rescue one from the unwholesome situation, and he further implores others to hold on fast to *bodhicitta* (I. 10-11). It is the precious jewel (one might recall Kant's self-same analogy for the goodwill in the *Groundwork*). The questions raised in the previous section shows how problematic, and hence important, the concept of *bodhicitta* is, and has been in the development of Mahāyāna. If the bodhisattva is a soteriological concept, then it is another matter, but the philosophical perplexity is still in no way abated. And since Śāntideva states the Mahāyāna points of view in the first person, personally, the question comes up in a natural fashion.

One of the contentions of the Chapter IX of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* concerns the content of *bodhicitta* caught at the moment of its rise. It is said to comprise emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*)

thought as one. The notion of *śūnyatā* is referred to all sentient beings (*sattva*). This is the thesis of *pudgala nairātmya*. All sentient beings are non-beings. The notion of *karuṇā* refers to all sentient beings taken as one object, for the sake of which a bodhisattva-to-be, in whom *bodhicitta* has taken place, is to give himself up as a *sattva*. His re-awareness of all *sattvas* as empty, and of himself as a mere *sattva*, viewed as disposable, would bring him on a different level of ‘being’. It is also held that *bodhicitta* becomes non-reflexive, and in relating to other *sattvas* it becomes entirely objective. And therewith *sattva* becomes the object of content in *bodhicitta*, or the focus in its rise. All psychological characteristics of *bodhicittopāda*, for instance ‘decision’, ‘resolve’, ‘resolution’, etc., would then appear as merely formal. At that moment thought is only formally a thought, this understanding becomes devoid of all psychological modalities.

We may also note that a bodhisattva-to-be is related to *bodhicitta* in the same way as a sentient being, *sattva*, is related to its ‘sentientness’. Both are metaphysically postulated as pre-existent with respect to their awareness in a human being in the case of *citta*, and in a future bodhisattva in the case of *bodhicitta*. In other words, *citta* becomes actually aware of itself in a man, and *bodhicitta* in a future bodhisattva. This is a phenomenology of thought, starting not with an act of its being experienced by one, but with an act of its becoming aware of itself in one. This awareness cannot be characterized as ‘reflexive’, because it is referred to anything but itself. The state of *bodhisattvahood* in its consummation is, in fact, the realization of non-person. This moment of thought, though self-aware, makes an individual a person, but it cannot be said to be personal, for as such, it is impersonal.

Nor can the rise of *bodhicittopāda* be a happening in time or understood in terms of *duration*. The occurrence of the thought and its being aware of himself do not admit of series of moments, it is simultaneous, with no time between the two. In the sense of *bodhicittopāda*, they are one thought.

Where can the occurrence or rise or generation of *bodhicitta* be located? A person in general is the *place* where a thought may happen. But a person implies a diachronical finiteness. The idea of the body of a Buddha or a bodhisattva is quite fluid and indefinite.

Contrastingly, a *pratyekabuddha* or a *śrāvaka* is much nearer to us with respect to the definiteness of their biography. A bodhisattva, in terms of his trans-incarnational mode of his persisting, renders it difficult to understand except as a *topos* of thought. Can there be any physical way to be taken as a criterion for identifying his personality? Following Wittgenstein, Terence Penelhum has suggested two criteria of personal identity, bodily identity and self-identifying memory. Are they non-inconsistent and non-arbitrary? And in the Buddhist context, an act of thinking as an action side by side with bodily actions, and is reduced to thought as such, also together with other *bodily* actions. Śāntideva suggests the idea that thought is as operable or even manipulable as one's body. When a bodhisattva (or Śāntideva) gives up his body for being disposed of by and for the sake of all sentient beings, it seems to be separated from him as *bodhicittotpāda* is separated from them.

## VII

In the preceding section we sought to understand the relationship of *bodhicittotpāda* to *bodhisattvahood*, and in that we found the time for, a phenomenological investigation, as suggested by Alexander Piatigorsky (*The Buddhist Philosophy of Thought*, Curzon Press, London). It was very promising indeed. Buddhism makes us to look at thought and consciousness (*citta*) as an object. And a propos of the Buddhist conception of object, an object is always conceived as an object of thought. It is not, as in the Western Philosophy, or as even in Nyāya, by any means not opposed to thought, or more objective than thought. *Samādhi*, then, not absolute stopping of thinking, as it is often misrepresented to be. In the Noble Eightfold Path, *samādhi* is entertaining thought-in-self- (analogically with Kant's 'thing-in-itself'). The Cartesian *Cogito* formula is not possible in Buddhism. An observer of thought does not (or cannot) observe himself as a subject. The classical dichotomy of 'subject-object' is transformed here into a complex construction, an objectification achievable only if there is no subject any more.

It has not been any part of our intention to inquire into a 'philosophy of psychology' non even in the least 'philosophy of thought'. But we availed ourselves of the insights pertaining to

the phenomenological method with a view to understanding the *prajñāpāramitā* mode of looking at life and existence *pari passu* the notions of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*.

But what implications do all these have for ethics? This brings us back to the *Cittamātrin's* question to Śāntideva. He answers that *karuṇā* is only initially dependent on *sattvas*. This is called *sattvāmbana*. At the next stage *karuṇā* passes through the stage of *dharmāmbana*, but finally it can subsist without a prop, i.e., it can be there as *anāmbana*. Śāntideva has the decisive *kārikā* (IX. 78), saying that since ego is the root cause of suffering, and it is augmented by the delusion about self, even one's encounter with *ātmā* is never enough to ward-off the sense of ego. Hence, it is better to cultivate the ideal of *nairātmya*.

The *kārikā* brings *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* in their closest possible conceptual proximity and, therefore, deserves careful attention. In the Tibetan commentary of T'og-me Zang-po, the *kārikā* is explained in the following manner: *Although* ultimately it is true (that there are no truly existent beings, compassion or results), deceptively, *from* the point of view of a *mind confused* about phenomena, we (Mahāyāna) *accept* the existence of merely apparent results arising from merely apparent compassion developed towards merely apparent sentient beings. And if it be objected that since compassion is both a subjective state to which things appear in a false way and a mind confused about phenomena, surely it is equally fit to be rejected as is confusion about the self, the answer would be *in order to completely pacify suffering* one need not and cannot reject compassion. Therefore *one should not reject* merely apparent *confusion about the results*. But *confusion about the self* should be rejected because it increases such things as *self-importances which are the causes of suffering*. But are there means to reject this confusion? The answer is: there are, since *the supreme remedy* for it is meditation upon identitylessness.

## VIII

In the remainder of the chapter IX, Śāntideva reiterates the Mahāyāna teaching on *prajñāpāramitā*. Broadly speaking, *prajñā*

is the state of mind that comes from properly understanding something. As a technical term in Buddhism, it is used primarily for that understanding which sees how things really are in contrast to the way they appear to be. Just as that seeing can both be a matter of understanding *that* thing are really like this, and also actually being in a state of mind where one *sees* directly how they are. Buddhist thought was from the beginning marked by a distinction between the way things appear to be and the way they actually are. Within the framework of Abhidharma, *prajñā* is used to refer to discernment of the ultimate primary existents, and they are to be distinguished from conceptual constructs. But what is the perfection (*pāramitā*) of *prajñā*?

Mahāyāna texts treat a series of ‘perfections’ to be mastered by a bodhisattva. The common list is six, the perfections of giving, morality, patience, effort, meditative concentration, and finally wisdom – but the perfection of wisdom is primary, said to lead the others. It enlivens and illuminates the virtues.

The perfection of *prajñā* is the final *prajñā*, the final proper understanding of the way things truly are. *Śūnyavāda* is the thesis that things we encounter in our everyday life and grasp at are empty. This is indeed the principal philosophical teaching of Mahāyāna. Buddhism, from the very beginning has used terms ‘empty’ (*Śūnya*) and ‘emptiness’ (*śūnyatā*) to apply to the truth discovered by the eye of proper understanding (*prajñā*), the eye of the Buddha. First, this was with reference to the five aggregates empty of Self or a thing pertaining to a Self, then, by an imperceptible shift in meaning, to refer to the nature of secondary, conceptual existents empty of any status, other than conceptual existents, empty of own-existence, empty of primary, irreducible, existence. Persons, tables, forests, and so on are empty of the Self, but they are also empty of irreducible primary existence.

But in the *prajñāpāramitā* literature, the term *śūnya* is used to refer to absolutely everything, and it entails that absolutely everything is like a magical illusion. Later, the radical implication is dissolved away by saying that everything is like an illusion, arguing that it does not mean everything is illusory. This is because all things appear one way (as inherently existent, having primary



existence) and exist in another (as conceptual constructs). We need to be quite clear about the range of this claim. Does any primary existent, a monistic Absolute, stand behind the *Prajñāpāramitā* negations?

The classical accounts say that all things have the same status as persons, tables and forests. They are all conceptual constructs and, therefore, cannot be vested with own-existence. They also cannot be grasped. It is constantly asked: what is referred to by the term *x*, with the response that nothing can be found, nothing can be grasped. To see otherwise is to grasp, and to grasp is to miss Enlightenment. Thus Enlightenment comes from ceasing to grasp even the most subtle sources of attachment, and this ceasing to grasp requires seeing those things which could serve as sources of attachment as empty, mere conceptual constructs. *All* things are empty. On the level of what is an ultimate, primary existent there is nothing. On such a level, therefore, there is an endless absence, an endless emptiness. As an exhortation this is an appeal to complete letting-go. For both philosophical reasons, and also perhaps existential reasons this teaching of emptiness may for some have been terrifying. Śāntideva remarks that reflection on emptiness obviates all fear (IX. 57). Emptiness is the antidote to fear, for all is empty, and so what is there left to fear?

All Mādhyamikās believe in the complete absence of primary, substantial existence, and thus to the universality of conceptual constructs. They represent a strategy to detect a contradiction in any ontological distinction between primary and secondary existence. For them, to be a conceptual existent is to be capable of being dissolved away under a particular sort of critical analytic investigation. That investigation searches to find if *X* is the sort of thing that has existence in its own right. It searches to find whether *X* can or cannot be dissolved into component parts that, as it were, bestow the existence of *X* upon it when conceptualized in a particular sort of way. Later Tibetan thinkers would refer to this sort of search as an ‘ultimate investigation’, a search to find out if *X* has ultimate (i.e., primary) existence or not. The existence of a table is a particular way, for particular purposes, of conceptualizing the top, legs, and so on. Thus, a conceptual existent does not have

own-existence, *svabhāva*. Its existence as such is given to it by conceptual construction. Thus also, it is *nihsvabhava*, lacking own-existence. Therefore, in Mādhyamikā philosophy, a particular sort of analysis is carried out, an analysis which investigates each of the categories held by the opponents (for Śāntideva, they are *Nyāya*, *Sāmkhya*, *Cuttamātrin Mimānsaka* and *Cārvaka*) to contain entities possessing own-existence in order to see whether those entities can be dissolved under this ultimate analysis.

There is an implied relationship between dependent origination (or interdependent co-origination?) and emptiness. As Nāgarjuna would say, a secondary existent cannot be found to have existence in its own right because it can be reduced to primary existents. If that is so then its very being as a secondary conceptual existent is granted to it through existence being bestowed upon it by its causes and conditions. *Svabhāva*, when contrasted with constructed existence, is *inherent* or *intrinsic* existence, i.e., self-contained existence, existence that is not bestowed upon it at all from the outside. Inherent or intrinsic existence is an equivalent of existing from its own side, quite independent of the causal and conceptualizing process. But anything that is the result of causes and conditions must lack its own inherent existence.

While there may be a relative distinction between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ existents (a table can still be analyzed into parts), anything which is the result of causes and conditions must be *nihsvabhāva*, i.e., empty, *śunya*. If X, whatever it is, cannot be found when searched for under the sort of analysis that is investigating the ultimate existence of X, then X is empty. If X is the result of causes and conditions, particularly also if it can be shown to be the result of causes and conditions, particularly if it can be shown to be the result of conceptualization, then x is empty. Nothing is exempted from the analytic focus, categories Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist, such as causation itself, movement, time, the Buddha, *nirvānā* as well as the Self. Anything found to be the result of some sort of causal process is empty. “Whatever comes about conditioned by something else is quiescent from the point of view of inherent existence,” says Nāgarjuna, “Therefore both the process of origination and the act of production itself are quiescent”

(*Mūlamādhyamika-kārikā*, 7:16/34). Once it is appreciated that emptiness is an implication of dependent origination, and is by no means identical with non-existence, it can be seen that for something to be empty implies that such a thing must in some sense *exist*, since it must have originated through some sort of dependence. Emptiness is the very absence (a pure non-existence) of inherent existence in the case of X, whatever that X may be, which is the result of X's arising due to causes and conditions. If a table is empty, it is because it has come into existence in the dependent way that tables come into existence. The table is *empty of* inherent existence and that quality, that complete absence of inherent existence, possessed by the table is its emptiness. Nāgarjuna's commentator, Candrakīrti too reiterates the relationship between emptiness and dependent origination. Śāntideva echoes him in saying that is it necessary to appreciate the two truths taught by the Buddha. Without relying on everyday practice (*vyavahāra*) the ultimate is not taught, while without resorting to the ultimate there is no *nirvāna*. The ultimate truth is emptiness, it is what is ultimately true about things. Things themselves as empty of inherent existence are the conventional. Without reference to things there could be no teaching of emptiness. There is a very real sense in which emptiness is dependent on things. Emptiness is the absence of inherent existence in the case of X. if there were no X then there could not be an emptiness of X; emptiness exists in dependence upon that which is empty. As dependently originated, emptiness is itself, therefore, empty. While emptiness is the ultimate truth in the that it is what is ultimately true about X, it is not an ultimate truth in the sense that it is itself a primary existent. The ultimate truth that all things, including any emptiness itself, lack ultimate truth.

It is important to note that the Mādhyamikā approach to the ultimate and conventional does not separate the two, nor is it a move away from conventional to the ultimate. Nor too does it advocate the ultimate truth as the final goal beyond the conventional. Buddhism is not a move away from conventional to ultimate; rather, it is a move of gnosis, an understanding of the conventional as merely conventional rather than bestowing it with a false sense of inherent and, therefore, graspable existence. The whole point is to see things

the way they really, are, to understand the ultimate way of things. Then the follower of Mahāyāna engages in the world for the benefit of others. The point is not to move, as it were, from this world to another realm of the ultimate, a pure emptiness. To maintain something as conventional or merely conceptual, is to cut grasping after it and craving for it. This is not necessarily to devalue it. These have importance for a bodhisattva. There is Nāgarjuna's famous, though much misunderstood statement about there being nothing whatsoever which differentiates *nirvāna* from *saṃsāra* (ibid. 25: 19-20). This statement cannot be taken in the context as meaning that this world is itself the realm of Enlightenment. Nor can it be taken as indicating that Enlightenment (or emptiness itself) lies just in a way of looking at the world. Emptiness is not a way of looking at something. It is the quality of that thing which is its very absence of inherent existence. The teaching of emptiness is never meant to entail a flight from the welfare of sentient beings. To maintain that all things are lacking inherent existence is to say that they are *prajñāptimātra*, merely conceptual constructs. The *prajñāptimātra* status of all things does not imply nihilism, the view that nothing exists at all. Emptiness is said to be the same as dependent origination, not non-existence.

## IX

It is significant that Śāntideva refers to two ways of looking at life and existence: the *yogi's* point of view, and that of the common folk. The *yogi* apperceives the *paamārtha*, while the *prākṛtaka* perceives the *samvṛti*. It is meditation that closes the gap between the way things appear to be and the way they actually are. How does meditation do this? The structure of Buddhist meditation since the ancient texts and throughout much of it later is to calm down and still the mind. One then uses that still, calm, mind to investigate how things really are. This is in order to see things free from the blocks and obscurations that normally hinder all vision. The blocks and obscurations entail our immersion in *samsāra*. Calming the mind is called 'calming (= *śamatha* meditation). Discovering with a calm mind how things are really is called

‘insight (= *vipaśyanā* meditation). Śāntideva refers to them in VIII: 4. At least some degree of calming is considered necessary to insight. Right concentration or *samyaksamādhi* is a stage of the ennobling Eight-fold Path that supports the practice of the virtues or *śīla*. Insight and ethics are inalienably linked when calming and insight are linked (as Śāntideva says, *śamathana vipaśyanāsuṣukta*) and the mind has the strength and orientation really to break through to a deep transformation understanding of how things truly are. As it is well-known, Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* and Vāsubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa* are classics in that direction, and there is good reason in supposing that Nāgarjuna had similar intentions in formulating the dual Truths of *samvṛti* and *paramārtha* in keeping with the tradition of meditation. In the schools of Tibetan Buddhism the *lam-rim* texts do go along with that tradition. As one advances through stages of meditation, the world is no longer experienced as consisting of things that are lasting and solid but rather as something that vanishes almost as soon as it appears, things in themselves lack substance and always elude one’s grasp. The mediator sees that things are all impermanent, suffering, and not the Self. One sees them as arising and falling in their constant change and impermanence. He deconstructs the apparent stability of things, and sees directly the world as a *process, a flow* (recall Heraclitus). A Buddhist tends to look beyond apparent stability, apparent unity, to a flow of composite parts which are elaborated by mental processes of construction and reification into the relatively stable entities of our everyday world. There appears to be a Self, but really there is not. Really, there is just a flow of material form, sensations, perceptions, formations (recall David Hume), and the flow of consciousness. The way things appear to be is one thing, the way they are is another. Be it Abhidharma or Nāgarjuna, there is a clear distinction between conventional reality (*samvṛtisatya*) and the ultimate way of things (*paramārthasatya*). The project lies in knowing directly the conventional as *conventional*, rather than investing it with an illusory ultimacy. The ultimate truth—how it really is—lies precisely in the fact that what appeared to be ultimate is merely conventional. It appeared that there was a Self, but really there is only a flow of aggregates and the Self is just an artificial unity, a Self, oneself, the person one is, in fact, a

pragmatic conventional construct.

Clearly, this is not abstract philosophy, engaging in analytic art of intellectual interest. The purpose is one of direct concern with the path of liberation, namely, seeing how things really are and cutting the sense of self, to know which mental factors conduce to positive, wholesome, mental occasions, to know how to cease to be evil and to learn to do good. The aim of the analysis is not wholly theoretical. It is related to insight meditation and offers a worldview based upon process in order to facilitate insight into change and no-self so as to undermine mental rigidities.

Yet theory and ontology do not fully fall apart in Buddhism, nor is the distinction so sharply made as to have the one glide into another. There is some sort of reduction, and the search of the reductive process is driven by a quest for what factors, what elements, are actually there as the substratum upon which the forces of mental imputation and reification can form the everyday 'life-world'. An ultimate truth/reality is discovered as that which is resistant to attempted dissolution through reductive analysis. This search is animated by the wish to let-go, to bring to an end all selfish craving after things that turn out to be just mental and cultural imputations, constructions for practical purposes. Absurd craving for such things leads to rebirth. All Buddhist thinkers agreed in the direction of this analysis. Disagreements among Buddhist thinkers centre on claims to the status of ultimate truth or truths. This is another story. The dissolution of what we might call 'everyday' craving through dissolution of the everyday world is agreed and taken for granted.

## X

*Pudgala nairātmya* and *dharma nairātmya* together do not endanger the possibility of ethics. On the contrary, they engender it. *Śīla* and *prajñā*, good conduct and intuitive insight, are inseparably united. What we are called upon is to make ourselves a new heart and see with new eyes.

In the present section, we propose to round off our discussion of *prajñāpāramitā* with relating spiritual practice to philosophical theory in the context of Buddhism. By 'philosophical theory' we

understand any attempt to make rational statements about the true nature or the fundamental principles of the totality or some part of the existent, or about those aspects of it of which everyday experience is not aware. In this sense, philosophical theories in Buddhism include, e.g., the doctrine that there is no substantial Self, no *ātman*; or the doctrine that the whole universe consists of momentary factors, of factors each of which lasts only for the time of an extremely short moment. In this sense, one could say that Śāntideva's chapter on *prajñāpāramitā* is an explication of philosophical theory. Spiritual practice in the case of Buddhism, consists essentially of moral or ethical exercises, and of practices of meditation. And as for example, we may adduce the four *brahmavihāras*, the meditative practice of attitudes of friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity with regard to all living beings.

The question that one might ask is: did Buddhism start from philosophical theories and afterwards develop corresponding spiritual practices? Or is it that at first there were spiritual practices and that philosophical theories are only the result of a subsequent reflection which leads to a theoretical consolidation and generalization of those spiritual practices? These questions concern the *historical relation* of the two elements, philosophical theory and spiritual practice.

Of course, spiritual practice seems hardly possible without theoretical presupposition. In Buddhism, there are philosophical theories which can be traced back to the Buddha himself: the doctrine that earthly life and its constituents are essentially characterized by suffering (*dukkha*), are to be evaluated negatively on account of their impermanence (*anityatā*); the doctrine that craving (*trṣṇā*) is the cause of sorrowful worldly existence. It can be at once seen that suicide is ruled out as a remedy against suffering and that the doctrine of transmigrational rebirth necessitates spiritual efforts.

Buddhist philosophical literature charts a detailed map of inner space, and one can travel the psychic terrain only by meditational praxis. Hence, there occur such key technical terms as *śamatha*, *vipaśyanā*, *samādhi*, *smṛti* and *prajñā*. Interpreted

phenomenologically, they are assumed to designate states of consciousness experienced in the midst of meditative practice.

Even though Śāntideva engages himself in arguing with the Cittamātrin (*Yogacāra*), yet there may be a large measure of truth in the view that the *Mahāyāna* description of all finite entities or notions as empty (*śunya*) presupposes the idealistic formulation defining all phenomena as being nothing but mind (*cittamātra*) or cognition (*viññaptimātra*). Such a view as this could only be possible or proceed from meditative practice, for it is the mind or *citta* that is considered to be the centre and source of meditative processes. The traditional older dispensation to which Buddhaghōṣa belonged and elaborated the meditative practices in the *Visuddhimagga*, merely denied the existence of a substantial Self (*ātman*). The reality of insubstantial entities (*dharmā*), mental as well as material ones, was not questioned. But in the *Yogacārabhūmi*, especially in the chapters *Bodhisattvabhūmi* and *Bodhisattvabhūmi vinścaya*, one meets with a nominalism that declares finite entities as mere denominations or *prajñaptimātra*, objects are considered to be the product of false conceptions or disintegrating mental activities (*vikalpa*). There occurs also the term *viññaptimātra*, the most used and most typical term of *Yogacāra* idealism, in the *Samādhinirmocanasūtra*. It implies that it is no longer the objects encountered in meditation, but the ordinary things too are not different from the mind, and are nothing but cognition or *viññaptimātra*. The *Sūtra* starts from the ideality of meditation-objects and then extends this fact to ordinary objects as well. It should be unexceptionable to say that *Yogacāra* idealism is a generalization of a fact observed in the case of meditation-objects in the context of spiritual practice. It should be recalled that from the epistemological point of view, the *Yogacāra* says that in every cognition or perception what is cognized or perceived is only an object-like mental image, not a real object existing outside the mind. Again, from the view point of metaphysics, there are no material but only mental entities. The whole universe only consists of living beings that are constituted by nothing but mental factors. The mental entities belong to the emotional or volitional sphere,



e.g., sensations of pleasure or pain, hatred or desire, good or bad intentions. And all mental factors exist only for the time of an extreme short instant (*kṣaṇa*). We need not go the entire length of *Yogacāra* argument for an uncompromising idealism. The point that remains for our present interest is that the whole world, the outer world, as the *Yogacāra* envisions, is only a subjective mental projection of each living being. And lastly, the manifold universe of fluctuating mental factors is only an imperfect level of reality. In mystical intuition, one can become aware of a deeper reality constituted by the so-called Scuhness or *tathatā*, which is one, unchangeable and imperishable. This is the ontological aspect of *nirvāna*.

The truncated statement of the *Yogacāra* position presented above, will serve our purpose in mapping the Mahāyāna-*Yogacāra* dialectic. Mahāyāna does employ quite a many of *Yogacāra* premises in order to establish its own thesis.

The important point that the Mahāyāna makes is *not* “universal illusionism” (as Lambert Schmithansen mistakenly suggests, *Buddhism: Critical Concepts*, Voll. II, ed. Paul Williams, Routledge, 2005, in his otherwise wonderfully insightful essay, pp. 242-254). Rather, it states that the world of ordinary experience is not *really real*, when considered in the light of the criterion of intrinsic existence or *svabhāva*. Mind and its categories counterfeit the reality. The status of *ordinary* objects is not called in question, they are real only in the *vyavahāra* mode of dealing. The ideality of the objects of meditation does not entail that the mind itself has to be exempted ontologically. No Mahāyāna text establishes the mind as a higher reality. While it may be true to say (as the *Yogacāra* does) that the objects visualized in meditation are mental entities but it is by no means implied that the mind has an independent ontological status of its own. Śāntideva alludes to the *Ratnacudasūtra*, and says in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (IX. 17) that the mind is not self-introspective: Just as the blade of a sword cannot cut itself, likewise the mind cannot behold itself. This is a clear rejection of one of the basic *Yogacāra* thesis. Varying the metaphor, the Mahāyāna further asserts that the lamp does not illuminate itself, since that requires a previous state of unilluminatedness, and hence the discourse is as vacuous as the deliberation whether the looks of the daughter of a

barren woman are attractive or not. The point is that the notion of mind as something real is only ignorance and has to be abandoned. On the part of the Mahāyāna, the reduction of objects to the mind is merely a preliminary step toward as the intuition of complete emptiness. The notion of mind has to be transcended in the end.

But what is the *motive* for all this move? Ethics, perhaps, cannot be founded on empirical consciousness, since it is adventitiously defiled. Purity of consciousness is something of a motive and thesis that the Mahāyāna takes over from *Yogacāra*. In order to realize the truth of the statement just made one can only recall what Asanga says in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*. He assigns magic like (*upamā*) status to the domain of dependent co-arising (*paratantra-svabhāva*), while the nature of full perfection (*pariṇispanna svabhāva*) is pure, and it can only be verbally designated by demonstratives, paradigmatically by *tathatā*. The other terms are *śūnyatā*, *bhūtakoti*, *animitta* and *paramārtha*. These terms stand for undefiled purity, and can only be spoken of as suchness, emptiness, reality and the unmarked. Full perfection or *pariṇispana* is not *parikalpita* or imagined. The ontology is not ethically neutral, for the *purity of path* (*mārga-vyavadhāna*) is also entailed by the concept of purity (*vaimalya*). And this is what constitutes *mahāyānasaddharma*, or the Mahāyāna path of virtues. The passage I am referring to in Asanga's earlier mentioned work is most important as a source for the interpretation of the Mahāyāna point of view. Further, Vāsubandhu comments that wherever there is *pariṇispanna* purity, there is Mahāyāna. Just the Cartesian Deity cannot lack in existence inasmuch as He is Perfect, similarly, there cannot be perfection of Enlightenment or *prajñāpāramitā* without purity of the *mārga*. The inclusion of the path within *pariṇispanna* has a close connection with the interpretation of *paramārtha* as object, realization and practice. In the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, Vāsubandhu explains the concept of *pratipattiparamārtha* or the path of practice as it refers to that which has ultimate meaning. The path is not itself *paramārtha*, but inasmuch as it bears ultimate meaning, or is in harmony with ultimate truth.

The notion of the ultimate is then somewhat unavoidable in any ethico-religious discourse, and what we find is that the discussion of the nature of the ultimate in the *Yogacāra* has been foundational

or basic to all Mahāyāna thinking. Since the moral idealism of the *Dhammapada* (I.1), the centrality of the mind has remained a key object of Buddhist concern, in theory as in practice, till its flowering in *Yogacāra* and Mahāyāna. The conception of an innately pure mind appeared repeatedly in Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and it clearly suggests something very close to the Hindu notion of *ātman* in its essential purity. However, how can the innately pure mind be defiled or polluted by adventitious defilements remains a mystery. Whatever it be, the internal history of Buddhism is constituted by the fact of a conscious subjective attempt to restore the inner realization of Enlightenment. In this matter, spiritual practice and philosophical theory appear to have reinforced each other. To quote Śāntideva in this context: Will a sick man be benefited merely by reading the medical texts (V. 109)? Therefore, the theory has to be put into practice. Spiritual practice or meditation is self-change, the reconditioning of the person, the transforming of its animal inheritance and social heredity. It should be futile to insist on giving logical accounts of the ultimate. No predicates are enough for it, *buddher agocaras tattvam* (IX. 2) says Śāntideva. The reality of *nirvāna* has to be realized on the plane of practice.

What are we to make of the ‘teaching’ (*deśanā*) of the twin truths, *samvṛti* and *paramārtha*? What are their ethical implications? May we not borrow Wittgenstein’s confessional term ‘bewitchment’ in the context of our understanding the twin truths? The simplest definition of *samvṛti* given by Śāntideva runs to say that it has something to do with *buddhi*: *buddhih samvṛti ucyate*. What does *buddhi* do?

Both *samvṛti* and *paramārtha* are Abhidharmic concepts. Within the framework of *Yogacāra* and Mahāyāna philosophy of mind, *buddhi* is regarded as networking around ascribing predicates on the supposal of existentiality of objects of experience, psychical and physical, and thereby presenting us with a veneer of a stable and solid world. But every piece of empirical knowledge is found to be unendingly corrigible, and judgements turn out to be falsifiable. What *buddhi* conjures up is a world, which, in the final analysis, is existentially void. The Kantian adage that existence is no real predicate is ironically true of the nature of

things. All things are devoid of self-nature or *svabhāva*. We live in world, built by the conventionality of conceptual aspirations and linguistic employment. This is what *samvṛti* implies and stands for. *Paramārtha*, on the other hand, *sub specie śūnyatā*, anticipates no existence of things. Things appear to be existing only from the *samvṛti* point of view. The *Lankāvatārasūtra*, juxtaposing *samvṛti* and *paramārtha*, makes the following perspicuous statement: *sarvam vidyate samvṛtyām paramārtha na vidyate, dharmānām nihsabhāvatam paramārthe'pi drśyate, upalabdhī-nihsabhāve samvṛtistena ucyate*. In view of the conventional truth all things exist, but in view of the absolute truth nothing exists; in absolute truth one realizes that all things are devoid of self-nature; there is, however, the conventional truth where there is no mental fancy (ed. B. Nanjo, Kyoto: The Otani University Press, 1923, p. 280).

What implications do the twin truths have for ethics? Be it the cognitive mode or the emotive reactive pattern, Buddhism seeks to explain the relationship between the subject and object within the domain of *samvṛti* by the phenomenon of grasping. It is this what defiles the consciousness. Speaking ontologically, there are no essences to be grasped, nor is there any essence that can grasp, yet the *grāhyagrāhaka* mode of awareness causes human entanglement and his eventual sorrowful state of affairs. This has another important dimension. The defilement, consequent upon dependently co-arisen phenomenal consciousness, also leaves open the possibility of the access to *nirvāna*. This is the problematic as well as the destiny focused in what may be called *mahāyānābhīdharmā*, a propos of an ancient text (*sūtra*) bearing that name. (This *sūtra* is now extant in fragments, and Āsanga quotes from it in his *Mahāyānasamgraha* and *Abhidharmasamuccaya*.) There are, in fact two emphases: the original purity of mind and empirical consciousness. If defilement did not exist, then all bodily beings would then be delivered. If purification did not exist, then practice would be without result. Hence neither defilement nor undefilement exists. The reason is that mind is originally luminous and its defilement is adventitious.

Since emptiness can only be discovered in and through *samvṛti*, it is dialectically related to *paramārtha*, to be lived through and finally rejected. *Samvṛti* is not indifferent to our ethical striving. The

end of the Eighth-fold Path is the winning of insight, the attainment, comprehending and realizing in this life emancipation of heart and emancipation of insight. When we purify our heart by *śīla* or ethical training, when we focus the total energy of our consciousness on the deepest in us (*samādhi*), we awaken the possibilities of a new experience marked by clarity of insight and freedom of joy (*prajñā*). *Paramārtha* is the transcendental character of the empirical world of *samvṛti*. The Buddha's teaching is a way of life, not a way of talking. We are what we love and care for. It is within ourselves that deliverance must be sought. Every moment the course of our life is being decided. This is the lesson of *pāramitā-yāna*, the path of virtues.

## Part III

- III.1. *Duhkha*: The Human Predicament.
- III.2. The Problematic of Altruism and Rebirth: *Bodhicaryavātara*:  
8:97-8
- III.3. Persons and the Problem Altruism: *Bodhicaryavatāra*:  
8:101-3
- III.4. Meditation and Action: Problematic Polarities? *Prthagjana's*  
Logic



## *Dukkha*: The Human Predicament

### I

*Dukkha* belongs to the basic vocabulary of Buddhist discourse. “Two things only do I teach,” said the Buddha, “*Dukkha* and the cessation of *Dukkha*” (*Cullavagga*, IX. 1.4). The *Digha Nikāya* (II. 304) makes the concept of *Dukkha* co-extensive with human existence. The eloquent passage runs as follows: “Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, coming into contact with those who are not liked is suffering. Separation from those who are liked is suffering, not to get what one desires is suffering...” It is this sensitivity to suffering that forms the guiding ideal for Buddhist philosophical inquiry. The melancholy foreshadowed in the *Upaniṣads* becomes central in Buddhism.

Despite the centrality of *dukkha*, the exact connotation of the term is quite problematic; the only way to get at its meaning is to look at its usage in the canonical discourses. The term is partly descriptive, and in part a judgement on the human mode of existence. As a description it throws the human predicament into high relief, and as a judgement, it negatively implies or suggests a possibility beyond the predicament. *Dukkha* in Pali and *duhkha* in Sanskrit is a compound of two words, *du* and *kha*. The prefix *du* is used in the sense of vile or ugly. It signifies something ‘bad’, ‘disagreeable’, ‘uncomfortable’ or ‘unfavourable’. The suffix *kha* is employed in the sense of empty (*tuccha*). It signifies ‘emptiness’ or ‘unreality.’ Therefore, *dukkha* stands for something that is vile. Buddhghoṣa has, maintained that things that are impermanent, harmful and devoid of substantiality lead to pain and misery, and deserves to be called *Dukkha*.



Ordinarily, *Duhkha* is taken in the sense of suffering, pain, misery or discomfort, as something opposed to happiness, comfort or ease. But *Duhkha* in Buddhist parlance does not merely refer to corporeal suffering of men. It is difficult to find one word embracing the entire spectrum of meanings of the concept as used by the Buddha in his teachings. Words such as ill, ill-ness, disease, etc., are but half-synonyms in their connotation. *Duhkha* is equally mental and physical. Pain refers to the physical phase, while sorrow to the mental. In certain contexts such words as disease, ill, suffering, trouble, misery, distress, agony, affliction, woe, etc., are usable, though none of these is fully right. It appears that *Duhkha* be better left untranslated than suggesting something incomplete and misapprehended or inadequate.

As a philosophical term, *Duhkha* covers all that we understand by pain, illness, disease—physical as well as mental—including such minor forms of discomfort, disharmony, limitation, frictions, and above all, perhaps, the awareness of incompleteness or insufficiency. Man's ignorance of the true meaning of life is also a candidate to be called suffering. Absence of wisdom, or knowledge, properly so-called is also a form of suffering. The uncertainties of life, its contingent nature may give rise to a feeling that could be called spiritual discontent, and should motivate for its transcendence. Thus, the two cardinal teachings of the Buddha are *Duhkha* and its *nirodha*.

One of the Buddha's most characteristic sayings is that he who is not unenlightened is ill. Ignorance or absence of Enlightenment is a state of disease. A good life, by implication, is health. We are to realize our predicament and strive to overcome it. The predicament is existential.

## II

To put the matter in a less sombre vein, it would be convenient to say that it is something instinctive that each one of us has an innate desire to seek happiness and to overcome suffering. The aspiration to achieve happiness and overcome suffering is our natural state of being and is our natural quest. Much of the Buddhist teaching

takes off from this basic psychological insight. But there is a subtle nuance. In speaking of happiness in the Buddhist context one does not necessarily have a state of feeling in view. Cessation of suffering, if it is to be total, is also not a state of feeling. And yet we could say that cessation is the highest form of happiness, since, by definition, it is complete freedom (*vimukti*) from suffering. But is cessation a conditioned event? Can it be said to actually be brought about? We need not venture into these troubled waters at this point. What matters most is to understand a bodhisattva's altruism in respect of the removal of suffering of sentient beings. He undertakes a vow to that effect. And it is indeed the corner-stone of Buddhist moral life. The concept of *Dukkha* embraces both the environment where we live and the individual beings living within it. Śāntideva calls it *sattvaksetra*. Suffering permeates the domain, and altruism seeks to remove it for others living therein.

Śāntideva's terms for altruistic intention are *parārthāśaya* (I. 25), *hitaśamsana* (I. 27) and *sarvasaukhyārtha* (I. 27), etc., and the Buddhist resolves to relieve all beings in unhappy states from suffering, and prays, may they dwell in joy (III.1). May I become capable of assuaging the sufferings of all beings : *Sarva sattvānām, sarvaduhkha praśāntikṛt* (III. 6). Śāntideva has enumerated the various types of Duhkha. The significant ones may be mentioned: *mohaDuhkha* (III.4). This is of cognitive import. Indiscrimination in the matter of right and wrong, good and evil is intellectual vice, and hence is an unwholesome state to be in. At the physical plane, disease is suffering (III.7). So is hunger and thirst (III. 8). Then comes poverty (*daridrānām*) and this is something unique with Śāntideva (III. 9). It is needless to say that cyclic existence itself is the paradigm state of suffering.

In the chapter entitled *Bodhicittāpamāda*, Śāntideva opens another dimension of suffering, and this is summed up by the term *kleśa* (IV.31). *Kleśas* are negative emotions, unwholesome feelings or the enemies within who keep tormenting us. One suffers morally by coming under the sway of such emotions as anger, hate, malice and ill-will. Whatever is unwholesome entails suffering, and suffering being intrinsically evil, it has got to be removed at all cost, *Duhkhatvādeva vāryāni* (VIII. 102). This is the moral imperative.

It is calling for a new emphasis in our ethical priorities. Buddhism involves tackling the basic and obvious instances of human suffering at the level of persons. Karl Popper has aptly remarked that human suffering makes a direct moral appeal, namely, the appeal for help, and the concept of bodhisattva answers to the same.

In the recent formulations of the moral theory, fashionably called Negative Utilitarianism, the moral claim of suffering is taken as urgent. This emphasis on the immediacy of suffering is reminiscent of Buddhism. The first of the Four Noble Truths takes suffering as the starting point of the analysis of the human predicament. There is an obvious similarity between the objectives of Buddhist soteriology and Negative Utilitarianism in the sense that both aim at the reduction of suffering. There is, of course, a difference. Since suffering is said to be inherent in human existence, only the stopping of rebirth will provide a permanent solution which generates the end of suffering. Negative Utilitarianism has no room for the concept of rebirth. With Mahāyāna, and Śāntideva included, the end of suffering is not conceived of as a personal aim, it is seen as a universal one. A bodhisattva does not regard his task as complete until all beings have passed beyond the reach of suffering. Nevertheless, in spite of these qualifications, we may accept that both Buddhism and Negative Utilitarianism are committed to the reduction of suffering as an immediate goal.

### III

In recent times, Richard Ryder has proposed that the chief moral task is to reduce the suffering of the sufferer. *Duhkha*, call it pain or suffering—is man’s lot, and Ryder uses the term *painience* to mark man’s capacity to experience pain or suffering. There could be a sense in which the Buddhist view of life could be said to advance a thesis, which Ryder would call *Painism*. Among other things, painism holds that pain is the only evil. It implies also that the moral code should be based upon the capacity to feel pain. Ryder interprets “pain” broadly to include *all* negative experience, that is to say, all forms of suffering, *mental* as well as *physical*. As

pain is perceived as the only evil, the main moral objective will be to reduce the pain of others. It is also arguable that moral objectives such as liberty, equality and fraternity are important in so far as they reduce suffering. People want justice because it will make them feel less aggrieved, it will reduce their pain. Śāntideva's moral point of view culminates in the offering of his merits in the prayer, *mā kaścid duḥkhitah sattvo/ ma papī ma ca rogī tah* (X. 41). May no living creature ever suffer, commit evil or ever fall ill. May no one be afraid or belittled, or their minds ever be depressed.

Utilitarianism recognizes the importance of pain. But it is quite possible for the utilitarian to justify torture if the sum total of benefits to several others is considered to be greater than the pain inflicted. The aggregation of pains and pleasures among individuals is rejected in painism. Ryder considers that around each individual is the boundary of its own consciousness and so aggregations of pains and pleasures across individuals make no sense. There exists a barrier between individuals though which consciousness cannot pass. However much I empathize or sympathize with your pain, I can never feel that *same* pain. This is a point about privacy of pain-experience, or even pleasure-experience. As for the Buddhist, the other person's experience of pleasure or happiness is, of course, meditatively realizable, as in the case of *karuṇā* and *muditā* for example. Śāntideva proposes the concept of *parātma parivartana* (VIII. 120), the practice of exchanging one's own self for others. This may not be an easy achievement and, hence, it is called the most secret path (*paramam guhyam*). The intention of the concept appears to be an imaginative putting of oneself into the other person's shoes. The 'holy' secret of exchanging of self for others consists in a radical change of attitude. It seems possible to habituate oneself to have a compassionate and caring mind for others. Śāntideva has outlined a programme for rendering altruism possible. Selfishness is an opening element of moral life, this is something that Śāntideva does not deny. But altruistic moral consciousness begins with the following considerations. One is to make an effort to bring about an attitudinal change by meditating upon the equality between self and others, *parātma samatā* (VIII. 90) as we are all equal in wanting pleasure and not wanting pain.

Just as there are different parts and aspects of one's body, which are to be protected as one, likewise the different sentient beings in their pleasure and their pain have a wish to be happy that is the same as mine. The suffering that I experience does not cause any harm to others. But that suffering is *mine* because of my conceiving of myself as "I", thereby it becomes unbearable. Again, the misery of others does not befall me. Yet, by conceiving of others as "I" their suffering becomes mine, Therefore, it too should be hard to bear. Hence, I should dispel the misery of others, because it is suffering (VIII. 94). This is apropos of the Buddhist thesis that *Duḥkha* is intrinsically evil, whither it is mine or others. Hence I should benefit others, since they are sentient beings, just like myself, Śāntideva asks, when both myself and others are similar in that we wish to be happy, what is so special about me? Why do I strive for my happiness alone?

It will be well to give a little more attention to the concepts of *parātmasamatā* and *parātmaparivartana*. The first stands for the equality of self and neighbour, while the second for the substitution of neighbour for self. As Śāntideva explicates them, each includes a clear insight into the real nature of things, and if the energy (*vīrya*) is strong enough to ensure their perfect practice, they include, in addition, all the merits of a bodhisattva.

To practice *parātmasamatā* is to make no difference between the self and one's neighbour. In the manifold world of living beings, joy and sorrow are common to all. What joy means for me, it means the same for others. It is the same with suffering. I must do for others what I do for myself. I must destroy my neighbour's sorrow just because it is sorrow like my own. I must serve my neighbour, because he is a living being as I am. Supposing anyone should object, 'My neighbour's sorrow is his sorrow, not "mine", the reply is, "What you call 'your' sorrow is such only by an illusion: there is no permanent ego in you, but a series of intellectual phenomena, a series which does not exist in itself, any more that a row of ants, or an aggregate of phenomena with no individual unit. There is, therefore, no existing being to whom we can attribute sorrow, of whom we can say "his sorrow", or who can say 'my sorrow'."

We may now note Śāntideva's explication of *parātmaparivartana*. It is owing to the influence of false judgments, repeated during the course of existences, that we attach the illusory self to this product of heterogeneous elements called the body. Why not rather consider our neighbour as our 'self', and as far as the body is concerned, regard it as foreign to ourselves? One has to humble himself, and discover that our only enemy is our selfish 'ego'. One will have to give one's self to one's neighbour, thinking nothing of one's own sufferings.

Viewed in the context of Mahāyāna point of view, *parātmasamatā* and *parātmaparivartana* are no more than a translation of the doctrine of *prajñā*, the application of the mind to the knowledge of what is (*tattva*).

#### IV

The entire discourse of Mahāyāna altruism is encapsulated in the concept of *karuṇā* or compassion. Compassion is an emotion involving the feeling of others' troubles or sorrows combined with a disposition to alleviate or, at least share in them. The ethical significance of this emotion arises out of concern for others. *Karuṇā* is a combination of emotional and volitional elements that are also referred to by such words as "care", "sympathy", "pity", and "empathy". Compassion refers not only to the emotional ability to enter into another's feelings but also to an active will to alleviate and/or share in the other's plight.

The emotional element plays a large role in compassion. Theorists like Plato, Aristotle, and Kant argue that reason must rule over emotion in ethics and give compassion a secondary role in their systems. But others such as Joseph Butler, David Hume, and many utilitarians argue that ethics is rooted in human emotion. They give compassion a larger role. Feminist theorists such as Carol Gillian and Nel Noddings have argued that care and compassion should be at the centre of moral reasoning. Persons working in applied ethics have also often suggested that human emotion deserves focused attention in ethical decision-making. They suggest that

without a focus on compassion, ethical theorizing is in danger of neglecting what is most human in favour of satisfying abstract rational standards.

Śāntideva will have a long way to go with those who favour compassion. *Karuṇā* is not unqualifiedly emotive. It is to be served by rational assessment of situations. The compassionate bodhisattva employs reason to assess the source and significance of the troubles that are to be confronted, to weigh alternative ways of alleviating those troubles, and to relate projected actions to other ethical considerations, such as those concerning justice and/or self-interest.

Compassion includes not only the feeling of other's troubles and sorrows but also an active will to alleviate and/or share in them. Thus, compassion also includes a volitional element.

The point about the roles of reason and emotion in ethics is addressed in Mahāyāna in terms of the concept of *upāya-kauśalya-pāramitā* or *upāya-pāramitā*. It may be explained as skilfulness or wisdom in the choice and adoption of the means for helping others. There is also the concept of *pratisamvid*. The *Khuddaka-Nikāya* incorporates the *pratisambhidā-magga*. The word *samvid* occurs in the *Yoga-Sūtras* (III.34) as *cittasamvid*, and is taken to mean consciousness. The *Taittirīya Upanisad* (I,2.3) enjoins one to give in charity with detailed and thorough knowledge: *Samvidā deyam*. In Śāntideva's context, an act of *dāna* would become a *pāramitā* only when it is informed by *prajñā*. Altruism is not blindly emotive, and since *karuṇā* involves volition, compassion is intellectually guided. In *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Śāntideva suggests mindfulness and alertness as necessary conditions for any practice of virtue. The so-called virtues of the mind are obviously intellectual or rational in import. And who does not know that that *samyaksmṛti* is the seventh factor in the Eight-fold Path? Another necessary factor for guarding the mind is *samprajanya*, a constant vigilance over the states of the body and the mind. He implores that it is better to let other virtues deteriorate rather than ever to let the virtues of the mind decline (V.23). When *karuṇā* is extolled as the supreme emotion, it is not compassion *simpliciter* that is asked to be practiced, rather what is enjoined is an *enlightened* act of altruistic motive.

## V

To return to the human predicament. *Dukkha*, taken as a term descriptive of the human state of affairs, has a connotation that *Dasein* has in the system of Martin Heidegger. Beginning with Sāṃkhya, schools after schools have agreed in holding a view of life that is hard and austere, and along with Buddhism, they called a spade a spade. But the question of moment is: How is *Dukkha* related to ethics? And an answer to the question calls for an hermeneutics of the first Noble Truth.

It is easy to trivialize the statement *Dukkham ariyasaccam*, the proposition that there is *Dukkha*. What is its locus? Where does it abide? Obviously, the term refers to the *unenlightened* human consciousness. Shall we take it in the sense of annoyance, as Sabara does? The semantic net of the concept is cast so wide as to map the domains of both the physical and the psychical. If we are take *Dukkha* as designating the human predicament, *anomie*, *angst*, *boredom*, and unsatisfactoriness too deserve to be taken into account. Doesn't *Dukkha* bear a resemblance with the Biblical assertion "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"? Doesn't *Dukkha* connote a state of spiritual hollowness much like Heidegger's *Dasein*? *Dukkha*, as primarily intended, has the least to do with ontology, as in Russell's phrase, "On what there is." It is unsatisfactoriness, undesirableness (axiological), an unhappy, a spiritual disquiet, not worth-having an experiential data. *Dukkha* is a judgment on life and existence.

*Dukkha* is a predicate for the individual suffering from *satkāyadrsti*, and all that it connotes and implies. The first Noble Truth, in all probability, is a summary statement of the famous "Fire Sermon", where the Buddha says that everything human, on the unenlightened plane of existence, is on fire. This is a perception of life, and has a great liberating force. It signals the passage from deluded living to Enlightenment. Truths of life are cruel, but the brave ones love it, and thereby stand liberated. This is testified by the following poem by Rabindranath Tagore:

*Time and again the obscure night of suffering has knocked at my door.*



*Its only arms, as far as I've been able to make out, are the  
tortuous poses of pain, grotesque gestures of terror.*

*in brief, its role as a conjurer in the darkness.*

*Each time I've believed those horrid masks to be true,  
disastrously I've lost.*

*This game of winning and losing, life's false jugglery,  
nightmare that clings to our steps from childhood on, replete  
with torment's jests.*

*Fear's variety show on film*

*death's smart artistry projected onto the dark.*

(Translation by Ketaki K. Dyson)

## VI

The Buddha's recognition of four truths relating to *Duhkha* are truths about human existence, they are articulations of his wisdom or insight. These are not truths in the ordinary sense of the word. These truths are not to be distinguished from untruths or falsehood on the basis of cognitive validity or of rational consistency or in terms of correspondence or of coherence. As truths about existence they could be said to be psychological truths. They are *ariyasaccāni* or noble truths. The adjective *ariya* or noble distinguishes them from epistemological or rational truths, since nobility involves a value judgment. It implies relevance or worth. The four truths are then factual truths with moral relevance. In his discourse to Kaccāyana the Buddha contrasts the conception of suffering with the notion of *ātman*. He was reluctant to renounce human perspectives in favour of a view from no where. When metaphysical speculations are avoided, a human perspective remains to be adopted. The conception of truths comes then to be determined on the basis of its relevance or irrelevance to human life.

Let us have a look at the way in which the first noble truth of suffering is enunciated in the *Dharmacaktrapravartana Sutra*. It will be noticed that the general statement is concretized by the use of the relative pronoun "this" or *idam* : *sabbam idam Duhkham*, i.e., all *this* is suffering. Again, what is defined as suffering in the *Sutra* has a temporality about the experiences talked about. It begins

with the past (i.e., birth), moving on to the immediate present (i.e., sickness), and reaching out into the future (i.e., death). Sickness need not be the only instance of the immediate suffering in the physical sense. It also includes such experiences as contact with what is unpleasant and separation from the pleasant, as well as not achieving the fulfilment of one's wishes. The first noble truth of suffering maps on the entire domain of the ethical universe, beset with the riddle of existence. There is the recognition of the fact of suffering. Our dispositions in the form of wishes and desires bring us into conflict with the constitution of the universe, namely, arising and ceasing (= dependent arising). In the case of the human perception, the constitution is represented by birth, old age, sickness and death. The point is not to give up hope, every effort has to be made to minimize the suffering that a man experiences between birth and death. Examining the conditions that render immediate experiences painful and frustrating, the Buddha presents a way out of the suffering. The *Sutra* goes on to say that clinging to the five aggregates of the personality, namely, body, feeling, perception, disposition, and consciousness, as possessions of "myself" is suffering. Here there is no judgement that the five aggregated (*pañcaskandha*) are suffering. What is condemned is grasping (*upādāna*) the aggregates as the possession of a mysterious ego. In doing so, the Buddha traces the cause of suffering to the way in which the human personality is perceived.

There is an evaluation of the objective world. The use of the term *Dukkha* in describing the world is appropriately understood as *unsatisfactory*, rather than suffering. This is an abstract use of the term *Dukkha* in as much as it is an extension of a subjective attitude to explain what may be called an objective experience. The reason for considering an object unsatisfactory (*Dukkha*) is that it is impermanent and subject to transformation or change. There is no room for the recognition of any permanent and eternal substratum in the world of experience. Hence, all phenomena are non-substantial (*anattā*). And it is so because it is dependently arisen (*pratityasamutpanna*), i.e., subject to arising and ceasing depending on conditions, meaning thereby, that to be liable to change and transformation is to be impermanent. From such a

position as this, how is it that the Buddha declares all phenomena are unsatisfactory, *sabbe dhammā dukkhā*? How are we, again, to understand this proposition? This too is not to be taken as an open universal statement. This has to be understood as qualified, and the qualification is spelled out as *sabbe saikhārā dukkhā*, all dispositions are unsatisfactory. What is the domain which the quantifier *sabbe* maps out? It could be said that it refers to the class of entities or objects that have come into existence or are provided to satisfy the dispositional tendencies in human beings. Such objects are dispositionally conditioned, and they are referred to as the dependently arisen. This way of understanding the statement *sabbe saikhārā dukkhā* is important for ethics and the human perspective. These dispositional functions which find expression in the form of greed (*lobha*), lust (*rāga*), craving (*tanhā*), or hatred (*dosa*), and it is these that are referred to in the context of the second noble truth as the cause of suffering.

As in the case of *idam*, there is the particle *yad* in the statement, *yad aniccam tam Duhkham*. The particle specifies a sub-class of the class of objects under the term *anicca*. We have the statement, *sabbe saikhārā anicca*, i.e., all dispositions are impermanent, and when they get an upper hand in determining a person's subjective life, they lead to suffering. Hence, *sabbe saikhārā dukkhā*. Being impermanent and dispositionally conditioned, if one were to be obsessed by them, clinging to them as one's own, one could eventually experience suffering. The unsatisfactoriness of dispositionally conditioned phenomena (*sankhata*) lies in the fact that they leave the mistaken impression that they are permanent and everlasting. Only an understanding of how such things have come to be (*yathābhūta*) can enable a person to avoid any suffering consequent upon their destruction or cessation.

I have tried to understand the concept of *Duhkha* as the human predicament from an ethical perspective. If the *Dharma-cakra-pravartana Sūtra* be taken as the *locus classicus* of the Buddha's basic teaching about *Duhkha*, then the general form the statement of the first Noble Truth needs be interpreted as referring to the unsatisfactoriness of only those phenomena that are determined solely by dispositions, for they are the ones that affect the individual most and from which he is unable to free himself easily. The

realization that such phenomena are impermanent and dependently arisen, constitutes the cessation of suffering and the attainment of freedom and happiness.

It does not seem that Buddhism advocates the view that feelings and sense experience are necessarily evil and conducive to unhappiness. The programme of *nirodh* in respect of perceptions and what is felt is intended as a deconstructive method, never as a goal in itself. The point has been that once the deconstruction process has taken effect, feelings and dispositions can serve their proper functions without running the risk of reifying either their cognitive content or their emotive component.

## VII

We may now enlarge our perceptual field in order to see the human predicament against a wider perspective.

There is much justification for taking freedom from suffering as an ultimate end. Hume too admitted this. He says, "If you inquire, why anyone desires health, he will readily reply, because sickness is painful. If you push your inquiries further and desire a reason why hates pain, it is impossible to give any. This is an ultimate end, and is never referred to by any other object" (*Treatise of Human Nature*, Book II). the only other experience as intense as suffering is release from it, and this is felt in its most acute form when a man is just released from it. Plato observed that release from pain is more intense than pure pleasure (*Republic*, 585 A).

The *Upaniṣads* use terms like, *Duhkha* and *śoka*, suffering and despair. As for the analysis of despair, Kierkegaard has shown great insight in saying that it is a terrible torment in which one is not aware of the things over which one is in true despair. (*A Kierkegaard Anthology*, ed. Bretall, *Sickness Unto Death*, p. 342-3). *Duhkha* occurs only in one major *Upaniṣad*, the *Kaṭha*, but in an expressive phrase, *lokaDuhkha*, which can mean either the suffering of the world or the world that is suffering. The inner self in all beings, it says, is one, but is not touched by the suffering that is the world, which is external to it, just as the sun is not touched by the evil of the world though it shines upon it and illuminates it (V.II). This text implies that the world is suffering, because there

is outside it, towering above it, but also immanent in it, an inner Self, distinct from that which is experienced by one as one's self. Such a consolation, however, is not easily available in Buddhism.

The other concept *śoka*, despair, receives more attention in the *Upaniṣads*. He who does not know the self despairs, says the *Chāndogya* (VII. 1.3). How close does it come to what Kierkegaard said, not being conscious of oneself as spirit is despair (ibid. p. 347). It is a sickness in which one has no hope and would like to die, but is not able to die. In it one dies the death, i.e. one confronts contingency and mortality, would like to escape from them, but cannot. Śāntideva puts it in the form of a paradox: men hate suffering, and yet they are in love with the causes of suffering *Duhkham necchāmi Duhkhasya hatumicchāmi bālīśah* (VI. 45).

To crave to be other than what one is and to refuse to be oneself is despair. The despairing man experiences an agonizing contradiction : he is lured by something which he is not conscious of clearly, yet which seems to hold out a hope, but he does not find it. When one is in despair and does not know it, his bewilderment is greater. He is in delusion, *śocati muhyamanāh* (*Mundaka*, III, 1.2). Both the *Abhidharmakośa* (VII.13) and the *Viśuddhimagga* (XX) point out, in the context of the truth of suffering, things we desire to have and covet for are contingent and oppress us by their very nature. They are a burden and enslave us, and are sources of anxiety and fear. Again, as all things are compounded, they are doomed to decay and extinction, none of them is a self. We come to live for the sake of things, and as we covet them, they overpower us. Only by much effort we get them, we have to bestow much care in safeguarding our possessions. This binds us to them, causing us anxiety. The insatiability of our enjoyment of objects leave us athirst for more of them. It is no less a suffering.

This teaching has a striking resemblance to that of *Ecclesiastes*. All is *vavity*, for whatever one may do to it does not profit, as all things pass away. No thing is new, whatever one achieves is a repetition. Boredom prevails and creativity is scarce. Nothing we do or achieve matters, all labour is grievous and vexatious. All is *vanity*. It is interesting to note that *vanity* comes from Latin *vanus*, meaning empty. It has the same connotation which the Buddhists have in mind. Vanity means futility, insubstantiality, unreality and

emptiness. The important and interesting point that comes out is that mere experience of suffering is not wisdom, for everyone suffers. It bears fruit only when, through it, insubstantiality and emptiness are perceived and experienced as suffering. One can feel sorrow and pain without understanding suffering. The *Majjhima Nikāya* says, one cannot understand suffering and keep clear of it if one succumbs to it and gives oneself over to it. One has to detach oneself from it and meditate on it to develop an insight into it. It is *the mode of awareness* about suffering that tells the story of Buddhism.

And it is from the mode of awareness that one could ask, as the Buddhist does, can anything which is mutable and so suffering be called mine, “I”, or myself? The answer will have to be negative. We can observe, consider, investigate and keep watch of all things, including our minds and bodies and find that they all have a beginning and an end. So, being conditioned and mutable, all things are not-self (*anattā*).

The Buddhist account of the human predicament is existential, close to lived reality. It does not tear man away from nature and talk of him as the soul or spirit. It takes the human being concretely. The soul, apart from the body, Candrakīrti says, is a metaphysical expression, a mere word. Man is just *nāmarūpa*, nothing else.

Is there a reality which is not mutable, not *nāmarūpa*? Does the quest for security end in a void? The Buddha says there is an abode (*āyatana*) where there is no suffering. Unless there is, says the Buddha, something which is unborn, unconditioned and undying, there is no possibility of getting out of conditioning, flux and suffering. Suffering has an end, because one can attain that unconditioned reality. But as it is non-phenomenal, it is useless to talk about it, we cannot even say whether it exists or not. It is the other shore, the Refuge. When the world is realized as vanity, craving is got rid of *nirvāna* is an unchanging state where there is no suffering.

It must not be supposed that the Buddhist discourse on *nirvāna* intends to show that the living world of suffering is unreal like a magical show. That would have amounted to making a mockery of the pain, anguish and despair of men and the saving efforts of the bodhisattvas. That would be against perceptual experience and reason.

The point of moment is that freedom or *nirvāna* is an experience, not an ontology apart from the vast vale of tears, where men sit and hear each other groan. An air of unanswerability lingers about the question of the nature of *nirvāna* or freedom. There is a belief that the Buddha observed silence on such inquiries. He was reluctant to make any statement because it is a matter that transcends linguistic expression. The question is epistemologically meaningless and unanswerable, and morally irrelevant, and pragmatically, it does not in any way help solve the problem of human suffering. The *āyatana* that the Buddha spoke of is a *regulative* image. In speaking of the *āyatana* as *the other shore*, the Buddha was asserting that freedom is beyond linguistic expression. He was not intending to create something *more*; rather, he was striking at the root of the problem by insisting that freedom, like any other phenomena, is non-substantial (*anattā*).

If the musings above are unexceptionable, then we could also say that the person who has attained freedom continues to experience through the same sense faculties he possessed before, and that he continues to have agreeable and disagreeable, pleasurable and painful experiences (*Itivuttaka*, 38). This means that there is no qualitative difference between of someone who is in bondage and someone who is freed. In the case of a person who has attained freedom, there is absence of the greed, hatred and confusion that are *generally* consequent upon sense experience. It is the emotional and cognitive slavery to the world that constitutes suffering, and it is their slavery that is referred to as bondage, whereas freedom from such slavery constitutes the highest happiness that a human being can enjoy while alive. The bodhisattva not only relieves misery of others but also destroys their infatuation, *nāśayatyapi sammoha*, says Śāntideva (I. 30). It is from the absence of greed, hatred and confusion that altruism or compassion for others in suffering follows.

## VIII

Does suffering have any use? What is its significance? There appears to be a view that life is suffering and existence is evil.

Udyotakāra holds that great teachers of philosophy are concerned with describing the nature of suffering, its causes, the ways of getting rid of it and the cessation of it (*NyayaVārtika*, I). Life itself, said Vātsāyana, is nothing but suffering (*Nyāya-bhāṣya*, I.1.21). Even Vācaspati explained suffering as body or the embodied state, *Duhkha śabdena sarva śariradaya ucyate*. And to go with Candrakīrti, the five aggregates, the *upādāna skandhas* are suffering. This is a long way from the original teaching.

The Greeks considered suffering to be the appointed lot of man, though Aeschylus believed that highest knowledge can be reached only by suffering. There is a spiritual unity of suffering and knowledge, R. W. Livingstone quotes Glycon: “All is nothingness, all ashes, all a jest made of unreason and by it possessed” (*Greek Ideals and Modern Life*, p. 67). Yet the Greeks lived a sane and noble life. Their best minds believed that in spite of all the suffering and evil in the world, there was sense in man endeavouring to realize his “virtue” (ideal, perfection or excellence (Livingstone gives definitions of “virtue” in pp. 77-8). For Heraclitus, virtue was thought. Even though tragic pessimism pervaded Greek culture, they could live a life of virtue, because, as Nietzsche showed, their despair was reconciled to life through beauty (*The Birth of Tragedy*). Existence appeared justified to the Greeks as an object of their aesthetic contemplation, as an aesthetic phenomenon. They made drama out of suffering and created the sublime by artistically subjugating the awful.

Of course, Nietzsche, along with his “great educator”, Schopenhauer, should be understood in the European context. It is typical of the Western *psyche* to seek to reach self-awareness in suffering. Suffering and understanding are deeply connected in that culture. Unamuno informs us that suffering is the path of self-consciousness, for to possess consciousness of oneself is to know oneself, and this is only reached through suffering. Reflective consciousness is acquired through suffering (*The Tragic Sense of Life*, 1931, p. 140). Karl Jaspers thinks that by facing the tragic and seeing through it, man sees to the unspoken and unutterable depths of life, and this is one way of obtaining purification and redemption (*Tragedy is not Enough*, pp. 39, 89).



It is the point of overcoming suffering that distinguishes the Indian attitude, Liberation from suffering is what the philosophic minds of India hold as the highest aim, and they think that right knowledge is the means for this. The knowledge of the four *noble* truths of suffering is a case in point. Ignorance is evil, and this is acknowledged on all hands. The *delectatis morosa*, the sweetness of suffering had never been a part of the culture in India. When Jean-Paul Sartre says that human reality is by nature an unhappy consciousness with no possibility of transcending its unhappy state, it will hardly ever be at home with the Indian perception that the being of human reality is suffering. But to say this is not to discount the insight of deep significance regarding suffering that comes to us from the West.

We have earlier referred to Karl Popper's contention that suffering has a moral appeal, and altruism springs from surveying the sorrowful state of mankind in general. This is the great myth of *Avalokiteśvara*, and the idea of the bodhisattva in particular. All suffering is bearable, and its evidence is physical and, consequently temporal. Life perhaps exists in order that suffering may exist, and because one suffers, one is, and one day one may no more suffer. One may become free one day. In the meantime, we live by the ethics that whatever be the sources of human suffering, many of them are conquerable by human care and effort. This is one of the messages of the bodhisattva ideal.

Now a note on Sukha or happiness in the context of the human predicament or Duhkha

Is there a truth of happiness apropos of the Truth of Suffering? Is the truth of suffering half the truth of Buddhism? Isn't the truth of suffering only a starting point of the Buddha's teaching. Doesn't he, after having shown the axiomatic value and the universality of the thesis of suffering, proceed to the antithesis : the truth of happiness? What else could the truth of the cessation of suffering, *Duhkha samudaya ariyasaccam*, mean?

The Buddhist scriptures point out that the cessation of suffering is supreme happiness, and that the steps taken towards it is accompanied by ever-increasing joy. Let us consider the Verses 197-200 of the *Dhammapada* : "Happily, indeed, we live without

hatred among those who hate. Happily, indeed, we live without greed among the greedy. Happily, indeed, we live who call nothing our own. The more man frees himself from greed, hatred and ignorance the greater will be his happiness. *Nibbāna*, which is defined by the Buddha as the perfect liberation from these fetters, is therefore called supreme happiness: *nibbāna paramam sukham* (*Dhammapada*, 203-4). The point about *sukha* or happiness is found repeated in the *Dhammapada*, also in the verses nos. 197-199 and as well in 200.

The *Mahāvagga* describes the state of the Buddha's mind immediately after his Enlightenment. He is said to have spent several weeks in an ecstasy of happiness. 'Ecstasy' may not be the right word, nor quite correct. The Buddha cannot be conceived or said to be in ecstasy in the sense of being beside himself. But certainly it was a happiness and ecstatic in the sense that his state of mind was calm and serene, it was free from selfish concerns, beyond the realm of the ego. Was it a state free from all emotions? If that the case, then, yet it was *not* a state of passive indifference, a negative state of mind. It was a state of spiritual equilibrium. The Pali word for it is *tatramajjhataṭṭā*, the beatitude of perfect harmony. It was not the happiness of personal satisfaction, but rather a happiness of universal character, born of an insight into the laws of Reality.

This idea of happiness is indeed difficult to apprehend, and one of the literary devices employed in order to bring it home is to combine apparently contradictory terms in describing the state of mind, equanimity and happiness together: *upekkhāko* (equanimity) *satimā sukha* (happiness) *viharati*.

However, joy in Buddhism is a problem. To go with the *Abhidhamma* account of the matter, the happiness of men stands in inverse proportion to the existence of hatred and aversion (*dosa* and *pratigha*). Both are products of his illusion (*moha*), because suffering is nothing but hampered will. Grief or mental suffering (*daurmanasya*), in the psychological system of Buddhism, appears bound up with aversion (*pratigha*), while bodily pain is understood as the after-effect or *karmic* result or *vipāka*. This experience is *bearable*, and can be taken care of by means other than the

philosophical. Suffering, properly so-called, is a life-experience at the level of consciousness.

Buddhist psychology distinguishes many degrees of joy or happiness. We may mention three main types. The first is physical, i.e., bodily welfare and sensual pleasure, *kāyika sukha*. The next higher is the mental joy, designated by the term *soumanasya*, which consists in the satisfaction of intellectual interests or emotional inclinations which are individually conditioned and limited. The highest type is that pure joy or happiness, *cetasika sukha*, which is free from selfish interests and individual limitations, a joy which takes part in the happiness of others (*muditā*) and in which an ethos carries the individual beyond the boundaries of egoism. This is what transforms it into ethical. Otherwise, it is of psychological value. Whatever be the form of mental feeling of pain, be it sorrow, grief, misery, melancholy or despair, it is always bound up with an impulsion of self-opposition, of resistance, ill-will or hatred, and Buddhism looks upon it as immoral. And when every mental gloomy mood is rejected as immoral, universal joy or *muditābhāvanā* remains. For the person who has achieved Enlightenment, the ground and the condition for the arising of feelings of bodily pain would remain, as these are dependent upon the body, not upon the will. But as for him the ground and condition for the arising of the feeling of mental pain are removed, he can no longer experience the feeling of mental pain. (*Milindapañha*, II.2). Absence of the ego is *nīrvāna*.

In the Buddhist discourse, freedom is said to be *lokattara*, and the term need not be taken as *platonizing* (the expression is William James' in *Principles of Psychology*, II. 453) the state of the exclusion of our life of sensations and feelings. Emotions are an inalienable part of human experience, even though they are ephemeral. Any search for the ultimate content of emotions would lead to frustration, since there is no "mind-stuff" out of which an emotion can be said to be constituted. When the Buddha says that emotions (*vedanā*) are the result of contact (*sparsa*) involving the harmony of the sense-organs, the object of sense and consciousness, what he suggests is that they are dependently arisen or *pratīyasamutpanna*. But it should taken into account that the casual relation

is quite intricate, and not always a one-to-one relation. It is likely that pleasant sensations *could* give rise to craving and lust, and the unpleasant ones can cause aversion or hatred. This does not, of course, warrant that pleasant sensations (*sukhāvedanā*) should be identified with craving (*tanhā*) and lust (*rāga*). This would be a mistake. There is no need to deny intellectual and aesthetic feelings or emotions as being necessarily evil. They could be considered, along with the moral, as being part of the restrained or refined life of a man. The paintings of Ajanta or the architecture of Borobudur could not have come about if aesthetic feelings had to be denied or annulled on the path of *nirvāna*. The joy expressed by the Buddha (*Majjhima-nikāya*, 1.167) as well as his disciples (*Thera-and Therī-gāthās*, ed. H. Oldenberg and R. Pischel, London, 1966) upon attaining Enlightenment represent some of the sublime intellectual emotions experienced by human beings. And they are not qualitatively different from the intellectual emotions enjoyed by other beings in ordinary life, scientists, philosophers, poets and artists. Their innovations and discoveries are made part of their experience. The Buddha once remarked that most people cannot enjoy whatever is beautiful (*citrāni*) in the world unless they make it their own. That a person, clinging to brute pleasures, cannot enjoy the serenity and beauty of a forest glade is emphasized by the Buddha when he remarked that “Whatever is beautiful in the world does not represent your desire” (*Dhammapada*, 99, and *Samyutta-nikāya*, 1.22). There is no need to suppose that aesthetic emotions are blunted by the attainment of Enlightenment or freedom.

How closely does it anticipate Kant’s thesis of disinterestedness in the *Critique of Judgement*? Even Moore considered (in *Principia Ethica*, chapter on the Ideals) the contemplation of the beauty of nature as something that *ought* to be. Nowhere does the Buddha admonish us to abandon the experience of the beautiful, the experience of the aesthetic joy, but only to restrain one’s craving or desire, lest they convert it into one of suffering. The poet Rabindranath Tagore reminds us

Beauty’s distance never seems to wane  
so near, and yet so far, without end.

(Rabindranath Tagore, *I Won't Let You Go*, tr. K.K. Dyson, Bloodaxe Books, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1992, p. 213). This is the secret of aesthetic relish, and Abhinavagupta was not mistaken in pointing to the linkage between the yogi's ecstasy and the aesthetic pleasure of the ordinary mortals.

Now given the Buddhist classification of mental states into wholesome (*kuśala*) and unwholesome (*akuśala*) ones, it appears that the terms *śubha* (good) and *śobhana* (beautiful), as they occur in the discourse, should be taken as each other's cognates. And if that be so, then the talk about the centrality of ethics in Buddhism would come to be modified to an extent. There is the relevance of ethics for the determination of aesthetics. If we understand aesthetic as concerned with ideals or that which is objectively admirable without any ulterior reason, then it will have to repose on phenomenology. And ethics as the theory of self-controlled or deliberate conduct may do well in appealing to aesthetics in determining the *summum bonum*. The mental mode of *upeksā* (derived from *upa*+*√īks* to see, to perceive), which spans both ethics and aesthetics, is not utter indifference to whatever is presented or given in sense experience. It is to remain unsullied, not to locate oneself therein. In a moving discourse the Buddha says, "thus must you train yourself: In the seen there will just be the seen; in the heard, just the heard....when in the seen there will be to you just the seen;.... just the heard..... then you will not identify oneself with it. When you do not identify yourself with it, you will not locate yourself therein, it follows that you will have no "here" or "beyond" or "midway-between" and this would be the end of suffering" (*Udāna*, 8). If this is an ethical stance, it is not less aesthetic. The concept of the beautiful (*śubha*, *śobhana*) in Buddhism is closely related idea of purity and of the Good, similar to Plato's teaching of the identity of the Good, the Beautiful and the True in their highest reaches. The consciousness of aesthetic pleasure is accompanied by joy and free from evil root-cause (*akuśala mūlāni*). In the contemplation of the beautiful, if and when it is really pure, there is no selfish motive, and man is free from the ego. Recall Kant's distinguishing of the *agreeable* from the *beautiful*, gratification and delight. The absence of the ego is

*nirvāna*. And the man who is enabled temporarily to be freed from the 'ego' in the contemplation of the beautiful has, thus, temporarily experienced *nirvāna* in a way which might lead him finally to the complete, real, perfect *nirvāna*. Beauty will help many of us to find it. Amid the encircling gloom, this one step is also great.

The Problematic of Altruism and Rebirth:  
*Bodhicaryāvatāra*, VIII:97-8.

The Mādhyamikā mode of analysis consists in asking whether x has inherent existence or not. In Mādhyamikā meditation and debate, critical analytic reasoning is employed in the area of ultimate investigation, the investigation whether something can be found under analysis and, therefore, has ultimate, i.e., inherent existence. Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* shows this mode of inquiry from the beginning, gives arguments, appeals to reason, in order to convince to adopt a radically new vision and perspective. This new vision moves from his relationships to himself, his own concerns and projects, towards his relationships with other sentient beings. It is a move from self-centered egoism to an anticipated perfect altruism. This move is accomplished through appeals to reason, the rationality of the Buddhist spiritual path and, ultimately, the rationality of altruism.

A point of textual interest is that the chapter on meditative absorption (*dhyānapāramitāparicheda*) is set immediately prior to the chapter on *prajñā*. Thus Śāntideva develops a meditation which involves an analysis of how to cultivate the bodhisattva aspiration and path. This meditative analysis is known as 'equalizing of self and other', *parātma samatā*, and in it Śāntideva initiates to touch on some interesting issues of practical philosophical ethics. We propose to think up a *purvapaksa* and see how Śāntideva would meet him on grounds of reason.

## I

Śāntideva's *pūrvapakṣa* would ask: why should we care if other people are suffering? What does it matter to us? The questions are foundational for a construction of an ethical system. We find Śāntideva arguing that for himself at least the Buddhist vision implies altruism as a necessary consequence. He has already urged that suffering is to be removed simply because it is suffering (VIII.94-6). For him, it makes no rational difference who actually experiences the suffering. The fact that the suffering is *mine* does not make it morally more significant. I am neither rationally nor morally justified in removing my own suffering rather than the suffering of another just because it is my own suffering. This brings back us to *Bodhicharyāvatāra* VIII:97.

The *pūrvapakṣa* puts forward an argument that the grounds by which something is to be protected against is the fact that it causes harm to me. The grounds are not simply that it is not to be protected against. Śāntideva replies in the *prasanga* counter-argument mode. The *pūrvapakṣa* is inconsistent in holding that it is rational to guard oneself against future sufferings even when they are not causing pain to oneself. Śāntideva's concern is to refute the suggestion that the grounds for claiming that something is to be protected against are merely that it harms me personally. Rather, the grounds why something is to be protected against are simply that it is undesirable, unwanted.

Does the argument refer simply to future sufferings, or to the sufferings of future bodies? The commentarial tradition in India and Tibet tend to take Śāntideva to be referring to future bodies in unfavourable destinies. Accordingly, the arguments can be developed pointing to the case of otherness where everyone with a rudimentary religious and, therefore, moral sense does care for the sufferings of others, i.e., future lives, sufferings which are not affecting one's present state of being. Does the *pūrvapakṣa* say that there is no need to protect against sufferings which do not affect me, and why do I need to take precautions now against future sufferings which will come later in this life? Myself, later in this life, can be



seen as another in relationship to myself now, and that otherness is arguably, for a Buddhist the very same morally significant otherness as I bear to contemporary others. This interpretation is somewhat radical and difficult to defend. The otherness of bodies between incarnations gives a sense of ‘otherness’ not possessed by stages within one life, where there is a bodily continuity shattered only by death. The radical gap between the one who dies and the one reborn is hard to deny. There does not exist any such gap within *one* lifetime of bodily continuity. One could like to argue that it would be consistent to protect myself against future sufferings in this life, while ignoring the sufferings of contemporary others. And, in a way, that would not be consistent if I also protect myself against the sufferings of future lives. But, in the *Milindapañha* (2:2:1), we notice the Buddhist tendency of diminishing the significance of the distinction. It is argued that, in fact, the continuum from one life to another is in no significant way different from the continuum within one life. In both cases, the subsequent stage is said to be neither the same nor different from that which has gone before. It is meant thereby that the subsequent is not the same as the preceding, but also is not radically separate and intrinsically different from it either. The subsequent exists in casual dependence upon the preceding. As Buddhaghosa puts it, if there is identity, curd could not come from milk, for there can be no causal relationship between two things which are numerically identical. But the same unwelcome consequence would also apply for different reasons if there were absolute otherness as well. Absolute otherness involves a denial of all causal relationships (*Visuddhimagga* 7:167). It is clear, therefore, that the denial of difference here is a denial of complete *acausal* otherness. It is not a denial of what we usually mean by ‘otherness’, the sort of otherness which is normally thought to exist in the context of causation, the otherness which in everyday life we all say exists between, for example, seed and sprout. In the case of rebirth, otherness is clearly admitted by the Buddhist between the body which died and that (re)born. This otherness is also accepted between the *person* who dies and the *person* who is reborn. In both cases, it is thought to be otherness of the subsequent to preceding in a causal continuum, but the causal continuum is not

thought by Śāntideva to null the moral significance of the facts of this otherness, an otherness in the same morally significant way as applies to contemporary others. Following the *Milindapāñha*, the same relationship as occurs between the being who dies and the one who is reborn also applies to stages within the life of one being. It follows then that my relationship to my future lives is other, and if I concern myself with my own future stages I am also morally obliged to concern myself with contemporary others. In the Buddhist context, it is indeed possible to construct an argument based on a wider application of ‘future sufferings’. The fact that this seems to deny a clear *phenomenological difference* between the otherness possessed by cases of rebirth, and otherness within one’s own life-stream where bodily continuity seems to provide a stronger sense of personal continuity, if not identity, may be taken as an argument against the Buddhist position.

## II

More than one way of understanding Śāntideva’s position in the context of rebirth is available with the commentators. *Bodhicharyāvatāra* VIII:98 says that it is misconceived fancy (*mithyā*) to think I shall be the same person who has died, and other also is the one who is born. In the second part of the verse, Śāntideva refers to death and rebirth. What he appears to be claiming is that the relationship between me in this life and ‘me’ is ‘my’ future life is one of complete otherness, like contemporary others. The fact of casual continuity is not relevant to issues of identity and otherness. If one says that “I in a future life will experience future sufferings which result from my deeds now”, that should not be rationally justifiable. Whoever will experience the results, it will not be *me*. There is no self, only a process of self-construction, as Susan Blackmore says (“Beyond the self the escape from reincarnation in Buddhism and psychology” in Arthur and Joyce Berger, ed., *Reincarnation: Fact or Fable*, London, The Aquarian Press, 1991). Now, given the characterization of self as a fluctuating construct dependent upon bodily, social as also psychological factors, it is difficult to see how it could make any sense to speak of the (re)

born being, even if one accepts the coherence of the process called ‘rebirth’, as being me. It will not be the same person as the person who died. That person who has died is one thing, the later person who is born is another. It is not all suitable to see these two as one.

The Tibetan commentator, rGyal tshab argues that it is just that the body of the reborn being is different from the one that died; rather, we are dealing with a completely different person. Since the *gang-zang* (the Tibetan for ‘person’) is conceptualized in dependence upon the aggregates, the commentator goes on to say that the conceptualizations which enable the construction of a person are different in different lives. We are dealing with a different set of constructions and, thus, for the commentator’s interpretation of Śāntideva, there is no sense in which I survive death. For the I (the self) in the only way in which it can exist is a conceptual the construct, and construct dies, not survive death.

Is it not possible to have a psychological continuity? Is it not possible to experience psychological continuity from life to life in cases of birth as it is understood in Buddhism? There occurs, everyone agrees, the radical break of physical continuity at death. But could it mean to speak of psychological continuity between an old man who dies and a foetus? Derek Parfit has attacked the whole importance of personal identity. He has argued that what is important when talking about whether I am the same person is not whether I am identical with the person P. Roy, when he was six years old but rather whether I have survived as P. Roy or not. What makes for survival is a matter of experience; it is precisely not identity but experiences of psychological continuity. Survival, unlike identity, is not a matter of either/or but can rather be a question of degree. Identity, on the other hand, is a matter of all-or-nothing. The P. Roy who was six has survived, but not as someone who is identical with six-year-old P. Roy who has without a doubt changed, and I do not know that there would be any mental or bodily state of the present P. Roy who remains from the six years old. Over just one life time I can change *completely*, there could in a sense be a series of selves, I might well look back on earlier actions and say that the person who did those is no longer me, but through psychological continuity I could still coherently be spoken of as the P. Roy.

The upshot of all this lends support to Śāntideva's contention as clarified by rGyal tshab rje that the being who is re (born) is a different person from, albeit causally dependent upon, the one that died. For our commentator, the discussion has nothing to do with inherently existing, isolated, permanent self as such. He makes no mention of there not being a Self, and he states categorically that the refutation taking place here is based on the principle of separation between earlier and later moments (stages of a continuum) and has nothing to do with issues of ultimate truth, which is at stake for those who hold to the existence of a self. Our commentator, rGyol tshab rje is out of line with other commentators. The Indian commentators Prajñākaramati, for example, seems to think that the essence of Śāntideva's refutation lies in the Buddhist denial of a self. He makes good philosophical sense in raising the issue in the following manner: whether I can speak of the (re)born being in some sense *me*, whether I have survived death, depends on whether there is a psychological continuity of experience which would enable me to live through the death process and still feel that is me. If my sense of 'me' fails to survive the death process, than the re (born) being would then be a different person.

One alternative explanation of why it would still be me is to have recourse to an unchanging self. Our commentator's *pūrvapakṣa* does not appeal to that explanation. rGyal tshab's point is simply that if the re(born) being is a different person (in whatever we normally understand the concept of person) from the one who died then the person who died, has not survived the death process. The future being whom we seek to protect by our actions now would be no more me than contemporary others. No more me in the sense of not the same Self as me, but rather not the same person in our ordinary everyday sense of 'person'. Supposing that *pūrvapakṣa* comes up with saying that I do have a self and that it were is the same self in future lives, then it could be pointed out that it is the person who experiences the sufferings of future lives. The person who does the deed is different from the person who receives the results even on a Self theory.

Does rGyal tshab says that neglecting the issue of the self in interpreting VIII:98 fit well? Śāntideva's makes no mention of the *ātman* in his verse. The *pūrvapakṣa* simply says, "I (*aham*)

will experience that”. Neither the *pūrvapakṣa* nor Śāntideva’s counter-argument require any reference to self. Śāntideva’s use of ‘conception’ (*parikalpanā*), in the Buddhist context, refers to a wrong view about the nature of things, a philosophically wrong understanding. He might be thinking here of more than just a misunderstanding between a conventional person who dies and the one who is reborn. It should also be borne in mind that in Mahāyāna texts, *parikalpa* tends to be associated with the *ātman* as a unity created out of the *skandha*. The *pūrvapakṣa* for Prajñākaramati objects that “the I (*aham*) is always one, it is not differentiated for different bodies” *aham eka eva sarvadā, tenātra bhinnatvam nāsti śarīrayoh*. The *pūrvapakṣa* of another Tibetan commentator, Bu ston, makes the interesting claim that not only is the self always one, but because of that its body also is said to be one, so that I can say that “I experience suffering”. Of course, for a Buddhist, there is no such self. Another Tibetan commentator, Sa bzang mati Panchen says that the aggregates of the one who has died here are other with reference to the future life, and the aggregates of the subsequent rebirth are other with reference to the present life. This is true. The aggregates of this life are different from the aggregates of the future life. Thus, we are dealing with different persons, and this is all that matters.

There is another Tibetan commentator, dPa’bo who appears to give a more coherent explanation of Śāntideva’s argument from the *anātman* point of view. His explanation could be said to spring from his own understanding of Śāntideva’s text. dPa’bo seems to show the *pūrvapakṣa* that there can be no self, rather than simply asserting its non-existence, as it is done by some other commentators, Indian as well as Tibetan.

As for the self, dPa’bo tells the *pūrvapakṣa* the thought that it is true as one in the past, future and present is a great perverse conception. We have graspings—thoroughout our lives—occurring in succession. On the cessation of former apprehensions later ones arise. Because of this we experience directly, in our own awareness, that there is not just one apprehension of a self. Take the mind or body which is perhaps apprehended as a self. If one surveys one’s stretch of life from birth to death, one would notice the former

ways of existing subsequently cease. Thus, we can see ourselves directly that body and mind are impermanent.

What dPa'bo is suggesting is that we all know from our experience (i) that when we use the word 'I' its meaning and indeed its referent depends upon the context in which it is uttered, and this context will differ from stage to stage in our life. The word 'I' does not have a univocal meaning. And (ii) neither mind nor body which might normally form the referents of the word 'I' are single, inherently existing and unchanging, they do not fit the description for a Self. The *pūrvapakṣa* is thus shown that what he claims is false when he asserts a Self, and that he is introducing an unnecessary metaphysical factor. Since this Self is not what is referred to in our normal use of the word 'I' it is not our *self*, and is completely redundant. But the point is not made in this straightforward fashion. The refutation of the *pūrvapakṣa*'s self remains on the level of an appeal to see its absurdity. dPa'bo's is not a direct disproof.

There is another point. dPa'bo does not simply assert that there is no self but tries to get the *pūrvapakṣa* to see that this is in fact the case. On another level of his argument dPa'bo's argument shows that there is no self beyond our everyday use of the word 'I'. He does not need to show that there is no self. The *pūrvapakṣa*'s assertion in *Bodhicayāvātāra* VIII:98 need not be taken to rest on an assertion of Self. He simply thinks that I will be same person in my next life. In commenting on the *kārikā* which refers to the process of rebirth, dPa'bo makes no reference to different lives at all, he concentrates, as rGyal tshab rje does, on the changing use of 'I', and mind / body continuum, in this one life, it follows that there also could be self to carry into future lives. He adds that even in this one life it would not be correct to say with the *pūrvapakṣa* that "I will experience that", for the uses of 'I' vary depending on context. Even within one life my own future states could be other 'I's in relationship to myself now, as with contemporary others.

dPa'bo shows how in everyday life, within one lifetime, the word 'I' lacks universal usage, and the conventional person is a construct created for pragmatic purpose out of many different contexts of use. We do not consider in everyday life that our uses

of the word ‘I’ refer to an inherently existing and unchanging Self. This conventional person does not continue into future lives, for the constructions will certainly then be different from those which are now accruing. There is no unchanging Self and, moreover, there is not even a relatively stable person who survives the death process.

### III

Śāntideva’s counter-argument addressed to his *pūrvapakṣa* does not logically depend on a denial of the permanent inherently existing Self, the *anātman* doctrine. This point is appreciated by the Tibetan commentator rGyal tshab rje’s treatment of the verse. A point of further interest is the fact that Śāntideva does not only write for the *pūrvapakṣa*, but also for himself (1:2-3) *na me parāthacintā svamano bhāvayitum kṛtam mayedam*. He is himself following the meditations he has developed. His text is a guidebook for the bodhisattva path, and those who do not concern themselves with the sufferings of others are not just worldly hedonists, nor even non-Buddhist teachers. One form of eliminating the suffering of future lives is to attain *nirvāna*. The one-sided *nirvāna* which is simply the cessation of rebirth is associated with the attainments of arhats and pratyekabuddhas. In aiming for *nirvāna* one on the *arhat* path aims to destroy forever, not just present but also future sufferings, sufferings which are not being experienced. In the light of this, and its context in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and Śāntideva’s vision of the complete spiritual path to Buddhahood, Śāntideva’s argument can be taken as applying not just to Hindu and other thinkers who hold to the existence of an *ātman*, but also to other Buddhists who deny the *ātman* and also fail to concern themselves with the sufferings of others. This, for Śāntideva, is so at least in part because they do not see that it is as rational to eliminate the suffering of others as it is to eliminate those of their own future lives. Śāntideva could be imagined asking the person seeking for the goal of *arhat*ship why he or she strives for the elimination of his or her own future sufferings while neglecting to strive at the same time, and just as much for the elimination of the sufferings of

others? If Śāntideva's addressee thinks that he or she will experience sufferings in future lives if they are not eliminated, this would be a mistake (VIII:98), since the person in a future life is not the same as the person in this life. The future-life person is other in just the same way as contemporary others are other. If we take the *kārikā* as appealing to a Self, not only is it philosophically less satisfactory but also an argument which Śāntideva would surely want to make against fellow religionists who have not developed the impartial and altruistic mind of a bodhisattva would be lost.

#### IV

I take Śāntideva as arguing that the person who receives the results of my actions in future lives will not be me, and that person is as much other to me in this present life as contemporary others are other than me. It may even be the case that the one who receives the results of my actions in *this* life is as other to me now as contemporary others. Thus, if I strive to eliminate future sufferings, I should also strive to eliminate the sufferings of contemporary others. Because survival is a matter of degree, Derek Parfit—we have noted earlier—is prepared to accept that even within one lifetime it may be quite possible to speak of a series of different selves. So many changes may have occurred to me and my outlook between now and when I am seventy that from my present perspective the seventy-year-old me may be no different from one who is for me now a contemporary other. If I should have compassion for contemporary others then I should also and equally have compassion for my future selves. Likewise, the reverse occurs. I am no more justified in considering my own future than the present or indeed future of contemporary others. What is crucial for Śāntideva's argument is that if I concern myself with my future selves, then, rationally and therefore morally, I am obliged to concern myself equally with contemporary and future others. This point can have a widening effect on my concerns. It makes me less concerned about my own future, and my death, and more concerned about others. This could be so only when my relationship



now to ‘my’ future births must be the same as my relationship to contemporary others, and rational moral concern should extend to contemporary others if it extends to my ‘own’ future lives.

Śāntideva has argued that if it is proper to concern oneself with future lives one should also concern oneself equally with contemporary others. But in arguing that the future person is different from the person who dies, rGyal tshab rje has thrown into considerable doubt the whole question of whether one should concern oneself with future lives at all. Not only will those not be *me*, but there is likely to be a break in psychological continuity and certainly in physical continuity, between me in this, both now and when I die and the re(born) being. Thus, the sort of factors which ensure continuity in this life will be lost. ‘My’ future lives will indeed be others. They will not be me in any sense whatsoever. I will not have survived death.

Here the *pūrvapakṣa* has a point to make: why should we be concerned with our future lives at all? It could be suggested that this thought denies the context of Śāntideva’s argument. His *pūrvapakṣa* engages in actions in order to ensure favourable future (re) births. Therefore, Śāntideva, as Mādhyamikā, simply says that the *pūrvapakṣa*’s action is incompatible with neglect of contemporary others. But the *pūrvapakṣa* is free to seek consistency by modifying behaviour through neglecting future (re)births rather than helping contemporary others. What Śāntideva’s argument shows is an incompatibility. If the *pūrvapakṣa* is to be the rational and consistent, something has to be modified. There is a dilemma here since no grounds are given in *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII:97-8 for showing that the *pūrvapakṣa* should adopt the behavioural modifications. If I am a good and virtuous altruistic person, then I will indeed agree with Śāntideva that I should concern myself with contemporary others as much as with ‘my own’ (re)birth. And even ‘my own’ future (re)births I will treat with exactly the same loving compassion as I treat contemporary others. Moreover, because these future lives will be determined by actions done by me at least in part in this life, I have a very direct way of ensuring that those lives at least will be lives of happy beings. And as one who is already a bodhisattva, or even aspiring bodhisattva, one

should indeed concern oneself with those future lives as well as contemporary others. If I am moral, then my morality should include 'my own' future lives. But clearly this does not appear the direction of Śāntideva's the argument. Why I should concern myself with future lives when they will not be me? Śāntideva has left this undetermined. And it is a real problem. How can we take argument to support the generation of a bodhisattva's altruistic mind of enlightenment for the benefit of others? Should there be more effective arguments? Does Śāntideva quiet our distrust?

Persons and the Problem of Altruism  
*Bodhicaryāvatāra* 8:101-3

“You must doubt, because doubt stimulates research, and research is the road that leads to knowledge”  
 – The Dalai Lama

Spoken to Claude B. Levenson  
*The Dalai Lama*, p. 181.

Morality requires that I make no distinction at all between removing my own pain and soothing the pains of others. Put another way, moral consistency requires that in acting to remove my own pain, I must also act to remove the pains of others. No morally significant distinction can be drawn between the two imperatives. Such a position has been argued for by Śāntideva in connection with *bodhicittotpāda*, namely, the arising of the mind set on Enlightenment. Such a mind as this seeks perfect Buddhahood. And perfect Buddhahood is finally the fulfilment of the moral imperative, the imperative to strive unceasingly to remove the sufferings of all sentient beings without discrimination.

If I am to remove my own pain I must (moral imperative) act to remove the pains of others without discrimination. This is the universal thesis. Śāntideva’s argument for the universal thesis is based on (i) rational consistency arising from (ii) how things actually are, how the world is. He takes as an assumption that the disinterested nature of morality is fulfilled by rational consistency, and that a moral imperative can be drawn from an ontological position. Śāntideva could be taken to hold, *pace* Hume, that it

is possible to draw an *ought* from an *is*, that the way things are has moral implications, and those implications can be derived through disinterested reason. Our failure to act in conformity with the moral imperative is measured by the extent to which we fail to understand the way things really are. The centrality of the role of rationality in the moral imperative is quite in order with the Buddhist perspective. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII: 102-3 say that it is not rational that one should remove the pain of oneself and not remove that of others. It is rational that because it is *pain* it is to be removed. It is rational that if it is to be prevented, all pain also is to be prevented.

Moral actions, the aspired perfect moral actions like the removal of the pain of all sentient beings, occur under the glance of the eye of reason. In this context the paradigm of perfect objectivity would be the Buddha-eye, the eye which because it is perfectly objective, is also perfectly moral.

## I

Now having made an appeal to rationality, it will be logically inconsistent to remove the pain of myself alone and not that of others. *Bodhicaryāvatāsa* 8:101-3 call for an examination. We are told that a continuant and a collective (*santānah samudāyaśca*), such as an army (*senā*) are fictions (*mṛsā*). The one who is in pain (*dukkha*) does not exist. Therefore of whom will there be ownership of that? Further it is held that pains without an owner are all indeed without distinction. Because of its quality as pain indeed it is to be prevented. What limitation can be made there? And lastly, if one asks why pain is to be prevented, it is accepted by all without dispute. As Buddhists, we all know that there is no such thing as a self, an independent, enduring and real unchanging referent of the indexical first-person pronoun. We are each of us an ever-changing composite of various radically impermanent psychophysical components extended in space and time. But a composite thing itself is a fiction (*mṛsā*), in itself it is nothing at all. *Mṛsā* can be taken as fiction, instead of delusory or false. 'Fiction' in the present context recalls Hume's treatment of personal identity which turns

on the notion of fiction. Since, he said that persons change and are therefore not identical, as a fiction it is superimposed upon a succession of like impressions. “The identity, which we ascribe to the mind of man, is only a fictitious one” (*Treatise*, p. 303, Oxford).

Śāntideva appears to argue, we cannot rationally talk of the *owner* of a pain. If he wants to hold an extreme version of no-ownership theory for sensations, pains (*dukkha*) are for him quite literally without owners at all. Since we cannot refer to the owners of pains themselves, we can refer to pains. But pains *qua* pains cannot be distinguished in terms of which are and which are not to be removed. If a pain is to be removed at all, then all pains are to be removed. And pain *is* to be removed, for pain is unpleasant and no one wants what is unpleasant. That is agreed by all and all, as a matter of fact, do set out or wish to remove what they consider (through beginningless ignorance) to be their pains. Thus, if it can be removed, and one is able to remove it, pain is to be removed. The very nature of pain entails that, on the no-ownership view, if one is to be rationally consistent, then in preventing or eradicating away pain at all (one’s own pain) it is not possible to draw a limit at the eradication of just some pains, but one is obliged to eradicate, or strive to eradicate, all pains.

Śāntideva’s argument is intended to move directly from wisdom insight into how things actually are, to morality through rational consistency. In short, Śāntideva argues directly from the Buddhist ontological insight to altruism.

The argument rests on a series of foundational presuppositions. The core ones are, of course, the non-existence of the self and the non-existence of composite entities, wholes. The conception of ‘existence’ at play here is worth examining. Why should Śāntideva hold that wholes simply do not exist?

Let us first see the implication of the term *mṛśā*. Does *mṛśā* mean complete non-existence? In the Mādhyamikā context, Candrakīrti (*Madhyamakāvatāra*, 6:23-5) speaks of conventionalities. All conventionalities are fictions. Perceivers of fictions are either those whose sense organs are functioning properly or those whose organs are deranged. The fictions seen by the first are correct in the eyes of the world. They are correct conventionalities. Tables

and chairs cognized in everyday life are held to be valid. Since there is no disfunction in the means of cognition they are correct conventionalities, but still fictions. But Śāntideva has said that a great many things, if not all, which we normally consider to be genuine realities, the furniture of the world, are going to be fictions, because they are wholes, composites made up of parts. The correct conventionalities are fictions, but this does not mean that they are utterly non-existent. If correct conventionalities were utterly non-existent, no distinctions conventionally valid could be made between them. The Mādhyamikā need not court the nihilistic implications in its entirety. Nāgarjuna has argued that it is possible to distinguish between existing conventionally and not inherently existent, and the former have their functions and validly enter into everyday transactions. One outcome of the distinction is that conventionalities found by conventionally acceptable means of valid cognition are not simply non-existent at all. To be a fiction means to appear in one way and exist in another. Conventional phenomena are not truths, but are falsities because they do not exist as they appear. A table as seen by the conventionally acceptable means of valid cognition of an enlightened being will be a fiction because it will not exist the way it appears. It will appear as if existing from its one side, an independently self-subsistent, inherently existent, while actually it exists as a conceptual imputation superimposed upon its basis of imputation. Whatever it is, fiction will nevertheless exist. It can enter adequately into pragmatic transactional usage and, therefore, will not be the same as a completely non-existent thing. To be capable of entering into everyday pragmatic usage is to exist in every sense of existing whereby existing, can be distinguished from being an hallucination. So while to be capable of entering into transactional usage might not be existence, according to some rather restricted senses of 'existence', it is still to exist. If something 'merely' enters into transactional usage, i.e., it can be used and that use *works*. It could not be used and work if it did not *exist*. In order to be considered as *sat*, the object must have the property of *arthak yākārika*.

It is common to apply the same approach to issues of the self.

It is agreed on all counts that there is no such thing as a self, some *really* existent ultimate and individual referent for the indexical ‘I’, an inherently existent thing which can be found ineliminably to be there as an identifiable entity even when subjected to most probing of philosophical analysis. But nevertheless, I do clearly exist. I am a conventionality, and as a conventional entity I may not be called the ‘self’ but the ‘person’. The Tibetan Gelug texts have two terms, one for the self (*sdag*), and another for person (*gang zag*). The point is that persons exist, though a permanent, partless, independent self does not. All systems of Buddhist tenets assert ‘selflessness’ of the person, the meaning of ‘self’ in the term ‘selflessness’ is different. At least the Gelug Mādhyamikā is not a doctrine that persons do not exist. Rather, persons do exist and are impermanent phenomena.

The person does indeed exist as a conventionality, it is the person who lives, breathes, needs to have his or her pains removed, and becomes enlightened. It is what is referred to when I speak of ‘myself’, but not my Self. Thus I am indeed a fiction, but once more I am a fiction not in as much as I simply do not exist but rather in as much as I experience myself to exist one way and actually exist another way. One may make good distinctions between people. Our friends Brahmāḍattā and Devāḍattā tend to think they are truly existing selves while are actually just conceptual imputations upon two spatio-temporal psychophysical continuants, still, there are *two* imputations at play here. *Inter alia* there are obvious biological and explanatory reasons why the living being who is Brahmāḍattā is spoken of as one both by himself (as ‘I’, ‘me’) and by others (as ‘you’,) and Devāḍattā is also spoken of as one. Within in framework of everyday life, everyday conventional transactions, there are genuine real distinctions between Brahmāḍattā and Devāḍattā, Brahmāḍattā may be portly and lives in Pataliputra, Devāḍattā is thin and lives in Śrāvastī. These are genuine distinctions. To apply the attributes of Devāḍattā to Brahmāḍattā is simply erroneous.

This point we may now generalize. The existence of the person thus understood as a conventionality—even if there are no True Selves—enables all the normal everyday transactional distinctions to be made. This is why any insight into the absence of any Self

does not entail seeing that no one exists at all and, therefore, does not undermine the Buddhist path. It also seems clear that if there is not only no self but not even a person in the sense understood, then everyday distinctions of the relevant type cannot be made. It makes no sense to teach, for example, without even seeing the existence of a person or persons to be taught. It also makes no sense to help without any awareness *on any level* of a person to be helped. If a Buddha does not perceive any difference at all between Brahmattā and Devattā, then even a Buddha is wrong. In as much as there are both Brahmattā and Devattā, there are indeed differences to be respected as important to being Brahmattā and Devattā, and may, indeed must, be relevant to helping them. Clearly, if there were no differences at all between them then, by the identity of indiscernibles, there would be no Brahmattā and Devattā but just either of them. And if a Buddha does not perceive Brahmattā and Devattā at all—simply does not see them or hold them as existing all—then once more a Buddha must be simply wrong. It is, of course, quite coherent to argue that teaching and helping do not require any conception of a True Self which is taught or helped.

We may now distinguish a person from merely being a sentient being, there is a distinction at work between a *Bodhisattva* and a *prthagjana*. A person is, perhaps, with Locke, a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider himself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places (*Essay*, 1977, p.162). Persons require first person thinking or autobiographical thought. To all intents and purposes, persons are a particular class of human beings, and higher beings, say, God for theists. Personhood has implications for moral duties and rights which should not be denied to any *human*. The Tibetan term *gang zag* is employed to mean persons, or the identity that sentient beings have, given that there are no selves in the technical sense that they are denied by Buddhists. This broader use of ‘person’ is also put forward by P.F. Strawson. His point has been that the person is a set of irreducible things, a logical primitiveness that is presupposed by both mental and physical predicates and cannot simply be reduced to either. A person is that about which both



mental and physical ascriptions can be made, and it is the *very same thing* which is the subject of these mental and physical ascriptions. This characterization of the person will apply to any being which is sentient and has a physical body. The Gelug term *gang zag* is made to stand for conventional self as the person, a *subject* of mental and physical ascriptions. One can use the lower case ‘self’ interchangeably with ‘person’. This needs to be distinguished from the Cartesian or Sāṃkhya Self. In Buddhist meditations, the same word ‘I’ sometimes appears to refer to the body and sometimes to the mind. What is needed is to pin down one referent or one type of referent, and the *gang zag* or person does the job very well. The unity of the person is what remains unexplained on the basis of any Humean or Buddhist ‘bundle theory’ of psycho-physical attributes linked simply by causal or other relationships.

To come back to the point of making distinctions between persons, the Buddhist teaching of no True Self should entail freedom from all egoistic selfishness. Śāntideva too seems to hold this view. In common English usage, ‘selfless’ and ‘unselfish’ are near equivalent expressions. But does the absence of True Self entail unselfishness? Are they equivalents? There could be a point about immorality. But is there a contradiction between accepting the teaching of no self (*anātman*) and being selfish? The Gelug Mādhyamikā would argue that since there does not exist any self anywhere even conventionally, the very grasping after one’s self and possessions is irrational. And it is necessary to abandon it. If by ‘self’ we mean a concern with myself, this person, then it might be immoral, but hardly irrational. A conventional self is a socio-cultural or perhaps a biological construct. Selfishness may be lamentable, but it need not involve a logical contradiction. There occurs a semblance of contradiction only if one equivocates between ‘self’ as a metaphysical self and ‘self’ as occurring reflexively in words like ‘oneself’ or ‘myself’.

When I am selfish I give precedence to the interests of this person, me, over the rights and interests of that person, Brahmadaṭṭā. This has nothing to do with holding to the existence of a self. In giving precedence to this person over the interests and rights of that person, I have to be capable of making a distinction between

the two persons. One way of making the distinction between the two persons—me and Brahmāḍattā—is to appeal to common experience and normal everyday distinctions. If Brahmāḍattā and I are different persons, I can be selfish. I may put myself first. But to fail to recognize any difference at all would be false, and it will destroy all transactional conventions, at least regarding me and Brahmāḍattā.

Even if there is a conventional person one could talk in everyday transactional terms, e.g., the owner of the pain. And so it is possible to give priority selfishly to one person over another. If I can distinguish between myself and you, then even without True Selves, I can give priority to myself in a selfish manner. The *ought* of unselfishness does not follow from the ‘is’ of *anātman*. And, if, as a matter of fact unselfishness does follow from understanding the absence of self that is a contingent matter rather than one of logical entailment. Hume made a similar point regarding “X loves Y” and “X is benevolent to Y” (*Treatise*, Book II, Section VI. Love and benevolence are different passions, “abstractedly considered, is not necessary”. p. 368). The point is *why* I should not be selfish. The perspective of no Self does not give the answer. It would only be answered by the perspective of no self if that perspective entailed that it would be wrong to make even everyday conventional distinctions between me and others, or if the perspective of no self meant that I simply did not exist. Anything less than this would be no entailment at all. A clearer way of showing it would be as follows. Let us take P( $\emptyset$ ) for ‘P is in pain’, and S( $\emptyset$ ) for ‘S is in pain’, Śāntideva says in *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, VIII.101 that the bearer of pain does not exist. There is the absence of an *ālambana*. Hence, there is no real owner of suffering. The contention will work if we can remove ‘P’ and ‘S’ from the statements entirely. This leaves us now with two incomplete statements “is in pain”. They are identical, but incoherent as lacking in full meaning, there are predicates which require to be completed by subjects. The class P will have its subclasses “inherently existent P” and “conventionally existent P”. So it will be for S. Now, removing inherently existent P and inherently existent S, we shall be left with “conventionally existent P is in pain” or [CP ( $\emptyset$ )]. Similarly, [CS ( $\emptyset$ )]. Still, it will

be seen that CP( $\emptyset$ ) and CS( $\emptyset$ ) are different, and that we can make valid conventional distinctions between P and S.

We may now recall Śāntideva's concept of *mṛśā*, which should involve complete nonexistence. As P and S do not exist, they need to be struck off from the statements P( $\emptyset$ ) and S( $\emptyset$ ). This demand is for the sake of philosophical coherence. The simple non-existence of Brahmā and Devadattā—you and I—is completely false. It could be self-contradictory on Cartesian terms. The issue here is not one of the status of you and me (the self), but one of reference, the ability to refer for any purpose at all to you and me.

The issue could be appreciated in the following manner. No philosophical thinker teaches seriously and literally that he or she simply does not exist. Hume professed himself to be unable to find an *impression* of the selfsame self throughout his experiences yet independent of them. He did not contradict himself when he said that the identity he ascribed to himself was a fictitious one. Recently, Derek Parfit came closer to Buddhist intention in saying that we could redescribe any person's life in impersonal terms, and that persons need not be claimed to be thinkers of any autobiographical thought. It is, of course, unclear whether Parfit is suggesting the translatability of first-person expressions, or that he is literally denying subjects for mental events. The unclarity is hardly edifying, since any reference to pain is intrinsically subject involving. If Parfit is literally saying that in the case of pain no subject is needed, then he must be palpably wrong. A footnote in *Critique of Pure Reason* A 363 – 4a appears to have a direct bearing on the issue at our hand. But at the moment we need not worry on that front. What, then, has led Śāntideva to his disingenuous conclusion that even in conventional terms also Brahmā and Devadattā, you and I, do not at all exist? What could have been his plausible reasons? Śāntideva's reason is contained in the first *pada* of *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII.101. It is stated therein that composite things are wholes made up out of parts. As psychophysical individuals, we are actually each of us composite things. But in reality there is no such thing as a whole. Śāntideva understands a psychophysical individual on the model of continuant and collective. His *Pūrvapakṣa* wishes to argue for

the person, understood as a conventional existent identical with or constructed out of or on top of the psychophysical composite. In denying the *Pūrvapakṣa*, Śāntideva has to deny the person in addition to the Self.

## II

Let us now turn to the problem of continuants (*santāna*) and collectives (*samudāya*). A continuant is a sequential ordering of events, ordered in the series before and after. It is possible to imagine examples where the ordering is temporal, and also a spatial ordering. For Śāntideva, the cause–effect series of mental events, where each event is both effect of a previous and cause for a further event within the series, and each causal event perishes before the occurrence of its resultant event would be an example of a continuant showing a temporal ordering of before and after. Let us take Śāntideva as speaking of the mental continuant, where the before and after series is explicitly a temporal series. Reference to a collective is intended to indicate the physical body, where the ordering would seem to be a non-sequential structuring based—I suppose—on something like purpose and optional performance. A simplistical reference of *samudāya* is often as the uniting of many into one. A single continuant of mind is also spoken as consisting of former and later temporal phases of itself. This mental continuant in temporal series is coupled with a collective of the body. The Gelug tradition speaks of the continuant or stream wherein there arises a sequentially ordered series, one following the other, of a plurality of former and later momentary cognition-events. But in the case of collective, there is no suggestion of sequential ordering in a before and after sequence, nor is there any clear statement whether that sequence is understood in temporal or spatial sense. Some of the commentators speak of the continuant of body *and* mind, even though there is no self, no deep further fact or even psychological substance like that of Descartes, as a separately existing entity with determinant expressed in terms of ownership behind the personal series of mental and physical events. Yet, a few of the *Pūrvapakṣas* assert the existence of a continuant which

is a stream that is the union of the before and after sequence of body and mind.

It is interesting to note that Śāntideva's continuant has a linkage with the mind involving what is a *temporal* before and after series, while the examples he chooses are those of *pankti*, which is a *spatial* before and after sequence. A *pankti* is a token-row where its members are tokens of the same type and, therefore, fall under the same class.

Now to take up the issue of the non-existence of wholes. According to Śāntideva, there is simply no such thing as a continuant or a collective, let alone a psychophysical aggregate of continuant and collective extended in time and space. This should sound very strange, since most things we encounter in everyday life are composite things. How is it that the very physical basis of life, the universe and everything simply does not exist? Doesn't aggregation make anything new over and above the composite things? Is the whole, the continuant and collective a fiction, simply non-existent? Prajñākara's *Panjikā* leaves us in no doubt as for the original author's intention: *samtāno nāma na kascid ekah paramārthasambhavati*, and again, *evam samudāyopi na samudāyibhyo vastusan eko vidyate, tasya tebhyah prthag anupalabdheh*. There also does not exist any unitary ultimate reality called a *continuant*. There does not exist one reality which is a *collective* apart from the collected members themselves. This is because it is not apprehended separately from these. Both the continuant and the collective are conventional existents. Their reality is conceptual (*vikalpa*). They are employed by the mind for the purpose of everyday transactions, *samketo kṛto budhair vyavahārārtham*. Prajñākaramati tells us what is being negated is not continuant as a conventionally existent construct, but rather an ultimate reality (*paramārthasat*). The continuant is a conceptual reality (*prajñāptisat*). The collective is a conventional existent *samvṛtisat*. The classical Mādhyamikā *svabhāva – nihsvabhāva* binary structure is quite clear here.

The terminology is that of Vaibhāṣika. The Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma maintains such central distinctions as between *paramārthasat* and *samvṛtisat*, *dravyasat* and *prajñāptisat*,

*svabhāva* and *niḥsvabhāva*. These binary distinctions have their origin in the basic Buddhist claim that the apparently fundamental reality of the self can actually be reduced to a spatio-temporal series of psychophysical elements. The claim is related to issues of certainty and irreducibility. To say that *x* exists, or that it is *paramārthasat* is to say that however hard we try, we cannot reduce *x* to some other elements which can be said to be its components. And, therefore, it is claimed to have a more foundational, i.e., *dravyasat* reality. If something has only conventional (*samvṛti*) or conceptual (*prajñāpti*) reality, then it can be divided into its component parts, and then the original object is no longer experienced. In the light of reduction, the experience of the original object is lost. What all this comes to mean is that if such a reduction can take place, then there does not remain the original object alongside its parts. The argument is that apart from its parts the original object is nothing, and therefore, the original object is just a way of conceptualizing or seeing, its parts and cannot be granted the same sort of reality as the parts themselves. One might compare the view put forward by Sextus Empiricus: if there is a whole, it is either distinct from its parts or the parts of it *are* the whole. The whole does not appear to be distinct from its parts, since when the parts are removed nothing remains which would allow us to reckon the whole as something distinct from them. But if the parts themselves are the whole, the whole will be merely a name and an empty designation, and will not have an individual existence. Therefore, there is no whole (See Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, 1995 London, Routledge). The Vaibhāsika Abhidharma offers definitions of *samvṛtisatya* and *paramārthasatya* in the following manner. Something would be said to be conventional *satya*, if it can be analyzed into its separate parts by the mind, and, hence, the cognition of the nature of that thing must be abandoned. A clay pot smashed by a hammer leaves one in no position to apprehend it as a clay pot. A rosary loosened into its individual beads is no longer a rosary. Something is *paramārthasatya*, even if it could be destroyed a analyzed into its separate parts by the mind, then the cognition of the nature of that thing would not be abandoned. Such unconditioned entities as atoms, partless moments of consciousness, and space (*ākāśa*)

are examples of ultimate existents. There is no suggestion in these definitional accounts that conventional *satyas*, even though not ultimately established, are not true or actual. It is significant to recall that the Vaibhāṣika branched off from the Sārvāstivādins, who hold that the “I” alone becomes void, but the rest of the world exists (*asti*). From that point of view to say that something has conventional or conceptual existence is not a euphemism for saying that it does not exist at all. Hence the person, on a par with rosaries, forests, armies, i.e., any continuant or collective, in as much as they are conventionalities, is made up of ontologically more fundamental elements, are definitely existent. They can hardly be called *mṛsā*, in Śāntideva’s sense of the term. The Vaibhāṣika has a point to make. Rosaries are made out of beads, forests out of trees, and pots out of atoms. If the beads are taken apart, there does not remain an additional thing called the rosary itself. This quite trivially true. The whole “in itself” in nothing at all. A whole is a *whole*, by definition, there is no whole in itself. The parts are precisely its parts. It is part of the meaning ‘parts’ that they are all the elements or factors which make up x as its constituents. The relations between parts, *sūtre maṇiganāmiva*, as the phrase goes in the *Gitā*, are necessary in addition to the parts themselves in order to make a whole. Hume spoke of resemblance and causation as cements between this or that perception forming a personal identity (*Treatise*, Oxford, p. 260). If there were an additional thing called the ‘x itself’, then without that additional thing, there would be no x, no rosary. Thus, that additional thing would be a constituent of x and, therefore, not the whole but a further part. Thus also, it is trivially true, a result of the meaning of ‘part’ and ‘whole’, that there is nothing called a ‘whole’ in addition to the parts. It is a matter of definition that wholes are called *samvṛtīsat* or *prajñāptīsat*, while phenomena which are thought to be analytically irreducible *dravyasat* and *paramārthasat*.

There is more to the distinction, there is a strong dimension of value. The word *paramārtha* conveys the sense of the supreme thing, purpose, goal and meaning. The contrasts drawn between *paramārtha* and *samvṛti* implies a very definite value judgement. Whatever is *samvṛtīsat* may be useful but it is not to be *supremely*

*valued*. When something is said to be a conceptual reality, and one is asked to have done with craving for it, there appears a derivation of the ‘ought’ of value from the ‘is’ of an ontological category. Since the continuant (*samtāna*) is a conceptual reality, one should have done with craving for it. The underpinning is the Buddhist dislike of impermanence and our attempts to ignore or deny impermanence as the source of all suffering. All composites will eventually fall apart, and by their very nature the composites are subject to impermanence. Recall the dying statements of the Buddha in the *Mahāparinivāna Sūtra*. In as much as craving for what is impermanent leads to suffering in the light of its transitoriness, it is well to avoid craving for anything composite. Therefore, the rationale for distinguishing between wholes and parts, composites and simples, on the basis of types of existence, and the introduction of an axiological dimension through valuing one type of existence more than another, together with the surface paradox that the whole is *nothing in itself* and, therefore, is thought to be somehow not fully real, has its basis in the wider Buddhist spiritual context of decreasing attachment and, therefore, it is argued and hoped, decreasing suffering. Within this context it is certainly not *wrong* to speak of composites as merely conventionalities, lacking the prestigious type of existence. This is a matter of how we choose to define and use our terms. But it would be certainly wrong if one is misled by this to go to the far extreme and deny that conventionalities have *any existence* at all.

### III

Śāntideva appears to argue that without Selves there are no selves, with no selves there are no persons, and with no persons we cannot distinguish between ‘my pain’ and ‘your pain’. But we do, as a matter of fact, set out to remove our own pains. That is a basic fact of human nature. Thus we are morally obliged if we are to be logically consistent to remove the pains of others as well, The problem at hand in Śāntideva’s context (VIII:102) is that without persons we have no subjects for mental predicates like “is in pain”, and, hence, without persons not only can we not distinguish between



“my pain” and “your pain”, but we cannot make sense of pain at all. Pain has a *necessary* connection with a subject who is in pain. Anything resembling a literal understanding of a no-subject view of Śāntideva’s type is quite incapable of making any sense of the concept of pain. If one be incapable of making any sense of the concept of pain, no sense can be made of the removal of pain either. This would obviously render the Bodhisattva Path problematic to be followed. One may be reminded of Mrs. Gradgrind in Dicken’s *Hard Times* (Bk 2, Ch 9). She declares that she thinks there is pain in her room somewhere, but she is not sure whether she is the one who has got it or not. This is something absurd, and would not help us in anyway. It is part of the very concept of pain that it is the pain of a subject. It is one thing and quite possible, to be unsure whether one is in pain or not, but no sense can be made of speaking of pains as if they were free-floating. If there is a pain, part of the having of the pain is its being had by a subject. The indubitability of the point is contained in Kant’s comment (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B 131-2) that the essential subjectivity of mental events follows tautologously, but nothing follows about the status, the nature or constitution of the subject.

It will be readily agreed that it makes no sense to talk of any experience which is not the experience of a subject. That all experiences require a subject, they are experiences of some sentient being is there behind Descartes’ conclusion that if he can doubt then he must exist. Doubt requires the subject of doubt. His mistake lies elsewhere. It came from his conclusion concerning what followed about the ‘substance’, and Descartes instantly inferred he must be a Self, whose essence consists solely in thought, and which is completely separate and of a different order from the body. Kant had remarked on this mistake in *Critique of Pure Reason*, B421: the unity of consciousness is mistaken for an intuition of the subject as object, and the category of substance is then applied to it. This is another story, however. What is of importance for us is that no account of pain can be given in full without mentioning the subject of that pain. If there could be pain experience without an experience, there would be no point in stopping it, because no one would be suffering. On a literal understanding of Śāntideva’s

no-subject view there is no one undergoing pain, and that there is no point in stopping pain. This should be very much unwelcome for Śāntideva's intentions.

There is another dimension of the problem. All experiences are essentially of a subject, and subjects are different. If subjects could not be distinguished, there could also be no experiences. We shall then have no grounds for speaking coherently of consciousness at all, simply because we can make no sense of consciousness without experience, and no sense of experience without subjectivity, and no sense of subjectivity without subjects. The subjective quality of an experience is what makes it an experience and, is thus, essential to consciousness.

But the self is not simply the subjectivity of experiences. As Kant has argued, the fact that all my experiences are necessarily given as *mine* means that the subject, the self, provides a unity to what is diverse. Prajñākaramati appears to endorse the view that we can use the expression 'self' for everyday pragmatic purposes, the five psychophysical aggregates being the components of embodied individuals. Is there not a necessary ontological dependence of mental events upon some sort of subject? If one should be inclined to reducing the personhood and personal identity to a functional state of organism, then subjectivity is disposed, and with that the mental as a *sui generis* category too is also disposed. Any attempt at explaining the mental in physical or functional terms, if done within Buddhist framework, would amount to reducing Buddhism to the position of the Cārvaka. And no Buddhist will ever welcome this move. The primacy of the mental is foundational in Buddhism (see *Dhammapada* I.1).

Historically, Buddhism has been quite diverse. There was a view called *Pudgalavāda*, which meant that there does indeed exist a 'person' (*pudgala*, called *gang zag* in Tibetan), and that the *pudgala* is not identifiable with any of the psychophysical aggregates. The *pudgalavāda* doctrine may have been quite acute, and appears to be truer to what P.F. Strawson would call a 'descriptive metaphysics'. A *pudgalavādin* would hardly endorse the view put forward by Śāntideva, *asvāmikāni dukkhāni*, i.e., the mental states have no owner.

Any bundle theory, be it Buddhist or Humean, has an attendant problem. What exactly unites the bundle into one thing? *Why* should a bundle be bound together as a unity, and what is that particular unity? So long as we speak only of the elements which make up the bundle, and the bundle as the aggregate of those elements, we shall not have a principle of unity. What actually unites the bundle of properties, thoughts, or experiences into one is that they all pertain one way or another to the same subject. The essential subjectivity of thoughts and experiences means that as part of their very nature they are all given as *mine* or yours (i.e. ‘mine’ for you). The items within the bundle are, in fact, states of the person, while what unites all the states of the person into one is that they are all experienced by a (i.e., the same) person. I do not experience another’s person’s experience. My experiences are experienced by me. If that be case, then the existence of particular bundles of perceptions presupposes the existence of selves of persons that are not mere bundles of perceptions. To state that the person is not a mere bundle of perceptions, in the Buddhist context, need not logically *in itself* require adherence to a Self, a permanent, partless independent Self which is different from the aggregates. This is what Kant saw as Descartes’ mistake. To recognize that the person is a different *sort* of thing need no more imply the existence of another thing separate from and alongside the states of the person. The person could be constituted by the psychophysical constituents without being identical to them.

The concept of the person has relevance for the occurrence of conceptual thought. Under conceptual thought, one might include reasoning, decision-making, and engaging in choices. To engage in conceptual thought, I must be capable of abstracting from one particular case and applying it to another, and using a term or concept more than once. This is also the case in order to use any language at all. How can the bundle theorist and impersonalist think that the very language he is using could be acquired without both his own and others’ existence and, indeed, the actual continued endurance of the subject he is and they are? In order to acquire the use of language and engage in conceptual thought, I must remain as the same person for a significant period of time. How does a

Buddhist philosopher think that the very language he uses could be acquired without both his own and others' existence and indeed the actual continued endurance of the subject he is and they are? In order to acquire the use of language and engage in conceptual thought, I must remain as the same person for a significant period of time, and that remaining as the same person cannot reduce simply to the use of the same name for a series of separate causally related person-moments. In order to engage in the reasoning which requires conceptual thought and which is capable of bringing about a correct understanding of the way things really are, it is necessary that there be an actual significant identity between the person at one stage of the reasoning process and that at the next. An extremely short momentary person-moments where nothing of the first moment remained in the second would not be capable of conceptual thought, would not be capable of entering into the common lived world where conceptual thought takes place, would not be capable of imposing conceptual existence (*prajñāptisat*) on things like persons or *pankti* or *senā*, would not be capable of reasoning, and seeing things the way they really are. Even the word 'I' is learnt through personal experience but also through public application. It refers to a person who is capable of having both mental and physical predicates applied to it and which appears to be quite irreducible. I use the word 'I' to refer to myself, but I have *learned* the use of it through its use by others. Correct acquisition and application is necessary for common human transactions. It is necessary that 'I' refers to the same identifiable and reidentifiable both by myself and others. We do not require inference for acknowledging that all my experiences are mine; they are given as mine. It is part of the very givenness of my experience that it is mine. And it should be meaningless to speak of it as mine if the 'me' instantly ceases. It is hard to comprehend that there are free-floating subjectless experiences, mine or yours.

#### IV

In a like manner, learning the use of the sensation-word 'pain' depends upon the existence of persons, repeatedly identifiable using

*inter alia* the first-and third-person indexicals. The word ‘pain’ is not a private term for a particular sort of momentary individual private sensation. Had it been so, we could never know that we were using the term in the same way and for the same thing as others, and use of the term would become impossible. We learn the use of ‘pain’ through its repeated public use, in the case of its use by others, and then applying it to ourselves. Our usage has to correspond with the public and publicly acceptable usage as the *same*. Without the use of ‘pain’ for the *same* thing as applied by and to other persons, I could not learn the use of the term, and without learning the use of the term I could not have the concept of pain as such at all. To hold—as Śāntideva could be taken as suggesting or arguing—that there free-floating pains, or pains are deprived of their subjects or their subjectivity, is also to believe that pains are cut adrift from not just their private but also their public contexts. If there is no one to experience pain, and no identification of them as pains, it should be difficult to make sense of the imperative or resolve that *dukkhatvād eva vāryāni*. What sense can we make of the suggestion that pain should be eliminated?

Again, with no persons around, we cannot distinguish between ‘my pain’ and ‘your pain’. This is a basic fact of human nature that we do, as a matter of fact, all set out to remove our own pains. We are only *morally* obliged, if we are to be logically consistent, to remove the pains of others as well. But how are we going to have, in the absence of persons, such a mental predicate as ‘is in pain’ and, therefore, ‘your pain’. Pains without an owner simply do not exist and, therefore, the argument that pain is to be prevented simply because of its subjectless quality as pain. No pain is prevented because it has some abstract ‘quality of pain’. Initially, pain is a first-person unpleasant experience, it hurts (*pratikula vedaniya* as Nyāya asserts). The hurting quality is *intrinsically* subjective. On the no-ownership thesis, there being no subject to experience any sensation, there would not be pain, nothing unpleasant about it and, hence, no need to remove it. We can only make sense of a sensation’s negative quality as pain with reference to the unpleasant experiences of subjects. And if we cannot make sense of pain at all, then what sense are we make sense of the Bodhisattva Path?

If the considerations offered above are of any worth, it should follow that there is a *necessary* relationship between pains and the subject of pains. The obviousness of the case, in all likelihood, is incompatible with a bundle theory. The idea of a disembodied pain is quite meaningless. If pain does not exist, then the morality of removing pain is unnecessary. Śāntideva concedes an essential point, namely, that we all do as a matter of fact strive to remove our own pains. But how can this common behaviour be incorporated into the moral imperative without establishing the existence of identifiable persons?

Further, since temporal continuants are not permitted, a pain must be a momentary individual. A pain as a single unchanging thing through time would be unacceptable, particularly when the subject of pain is unreal because it is actually a temporal continuant and not a unity. How can a pain be unchanging through time when the subject of pain is momentary? That would be absurd. Pains must be impermanent, changing from moment to moment. How can it be identified? If pain is taken a specific and unique momentary *svalakṣaṇa*, it will have to be beyond all concepts. Can we even say that pain is unique if it be momentary? For a correct application of 'pain' there will have to be more pains than just my own pains. If there were my own pains I could never learn the concept. And, again, in its very uniqueness, a *svalakṣaṇa* pain could not be specified as being of a type. The *svalakṣaṇa* would have to be beyond language, and also beyond identification as well. Is it not a *reductio ad absurdum* of the *svalakṣaṇa* itself? An identityless entity cannot be an entity at all. Identity and entity are conceptually related. Accordingly, if one is unable to apply the concept of 'pain' to a pain, then the pain cannot be identified as a pain at all. In order to apply the concept 'pain' to a pain, there has to be more than one pain, and indeed more than one person who experiences pains. And if it cannot be identified as a pain, it also cannot be re-identified as a pain. Further, without an ability to identify and re-identity pain, it becomes quite difficult, if not impossible, to say that there is a case of pain. And if something is in *all respects* unique, there being only one example of it, therefore, there would be no example of it. It is argued in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII:103 that we do seek

to eliminate ‘our own’ pains, and that we are morally obliged to seek to eliminate the pains of others. What makes it difficult and problematic is that we are unable to identify our own pains. Even if we could, the momentary uniqueness of pain would give us no grounds for identifying others of the same type. Each pain is unique, *sui generis*. Do I have grounds for saying that what other people experience is an example of what ‘I’ experienced when ‘I’ experienced a pain? To say that each has the quality of pain, we require the concept of ‘pain’, and the concept of ‘pain’ requires that we can identify at least two cases of pain as being of the same type. If we cannot distinguish different subjects or the same subject over time, we are not permitted to speak of ‘my pain’ and ‘others’ pains. To a behaviourist, the idea of a disembodied free-floating pain would be non-sensical. Without subjects, actual sensation will be lacking. Behaviour, along with the actual sensation of pain, make up the pain-experience. All these are part of what it is to be in pain. In the absence of all that, we shall fail to identify and individuate pains. Thus, we are unable any longer to apply the concept of ‘pain’. It is indeed necessary to employ the concept of ‘pain’ in order to identify pains. Without being able to do so, one cannot make any sense of what is said in the verses VIII:102-3 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Any talk of removal of pain would make no sense. There would be nothing to remove. If pains cannot be identified and individuated, it would be impossible to identify and individuate a removal of a pain. Without reference to persons, what is it to count as the removal of pain? And without being able to identify and individuate the removal of pains, one would be unable to fulfill one’s vow to remove all *duhkha* and thus all pains.

## V

It has been Śāntideva’s intention to eliminate the subject in order to appeal for the removal of pains without discrimination of myself and others. Where does the elimination take place? It could be said that the elimination occurs only on the level of the ultimate truth, the final way of things. Śāntideva intends his elimination of the person to issue in altruistic actions. But the problem is that

it is within the everyday transactional conventional realm that actions, including the salvific ones, take place. In that case, is the elimination of the person as ultimate, leaving the acceptability of a conventional person, going to work well? It is quite possible that I do not have an isolated monadic true self, and yet I as a person selfishly put the interests of myself before the interests of all others.

Is it enough that Śāntideva denies the *ultimate* existence of the person and urges the removal of pain without discrimination? He gives the impression of arguing that there can be no distinguishable and, therefore, differentiating subjects for pains either ultimately or conventionally. The point of his argument appears to be that it is consistent to remove pain without discrimination because we cannot logically discriminate between persons. Therefore, there are no persons.

This is what creates the problem. Is it possible to refer to pains without the subjects who are in pain? Are we not left with the impossibility of making sense of pain? Does the desired conclusion, on Śāntideva's part, stem from a complete elimination of the person as subject?

When we speak of the actions, we mean the actions of a person (as subject) as the locus of the action. Without persons to act as their loci (*adhipikarāna*), there can be no actions. It makes no sense to speak of acting for the benefit of others, removing pains, if the person as locus for the action is denied. This is a point of importance. If selfless action is exhorted at the same time, at the same level and on the ground that we have no distinctive self, the very basis of action gets denied. Even if such might not have been the intention, yet it obtains as a fact.

Preparedness to self-sacrifice for removal of pain is a part of the Bodhisattva's vow; self-sacrifice requires that I distinguish myself from others and that I sacrifice myself on their behalf. Can we have it both ways as per Śāntideva's premises? If it is rational to make no distinction between oneself and others in the removal of pain, because there is no such thing as a self, then it should be rational no less to make no distinction between one self and others in the case of self-sacrifice. Without a self, there can be no self-sacrifice. Further, without persons, even conventionally, there are



no pains. Without pains there is no removal of *dukkha*. And without removal of *dukkha*, how can there be Buddhahood? But there are pains, and with pains, at least conventionally, there are differences between persons. Now with differences between persons, will it be possible to argue for the moral imperative to remove pain based on the argument of *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII:101-3? Without the moral imperative to remove pain, there can be no moral imperative to remove *dukkha*, which includes pain.

A bodhisattva will perhaps not go by the thesis of free-floating pains. On the contrary he will discount his own intervening concerns in order to focus on the other in their very *uniqueness*. He will be vividly aware of the other as an individual. The pain he seeks to remove is intrinsically embedded in the actual individual in front of him, who is different from other individuals and of course, different from him. It is in this mode that a bodhisattva can become an effective healer.

There has to be a concern with the individual and concrete rather than abstractions, with the *svalakṣaṇa*, for example, rather than the universal. But *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII:101-3 appear to direct us to pain rather than the suffering individual. Pains are essentially embodied and context-dependent. If Śāntideva is taken to view pains as free-floating, then he is making a move from the specific towards the abstract. Removing abstract pain is removing pain in abstract. With abstract pain we cannot identify any actual persons in pain, nor can we identify and individuate pains or the removal of pains. Following this process, one will eventually end up with a vague disembodied altruism, through vague pain to the “suffering of all” and a concern for “all sentient beings”. Disembodied altruism is divorced from the helping of anyone in particular. This is not without reasons. The tendency to de-individualize, I fear, gives rise to a plethora of abstractions. The concept of free-floating pain is one that comes up in consequence.

Notwithstanding the televolitional character of *maitrī* or *karuṇā* in Buddhist thought and meditational practices, it remains to be said that altruism begins in a recognition of differences, a concern for others as being indeed who and what they are, different from us yet still lovable in all their strangeness, not to reduce the other to

our own image, or to some abstract unity. The teaching of no-self may indeed help subordinate our own interests to the interests of others. But if this teaching is interpreted as denying the existence of persons and the significant differences between them, then the very basis of altruism is done away with. Altruism recognizes the other as a unique individual and subordinates any inordinate concern for ourselves. Both are necessary.

## Meditation and Action: Problematic Polarities? A Piece of *Pythagjana* Logic

Meditation plays a great role in the Buddhist scheme of life. Not only is *dhyāna* a *pāramitā*, one is exhorted to practice it as a part of one's moral life. We have considered the importance of *smṛti* and *samprajañya* as prerequisites of a virtuous life. The bodhisattva vow is said to be altruistic but a bodhisattva's altruism is no ordinary benevolence, it is defined by Śāntideva as *bodhicittam jagaddhite* (III. 23). At no stage of the ethical path, is a bodhisattva supposed to lose sight of the aim of attaining *bodhi*, or attaining the status of a Buddha and a Buddha is recollected in tranquility, the autological status of the mind in *bodhi* is so very unique that nothing appears to exist for it, apropos of *dharma nairātmya* or *śunyesu dharmesu* (IX. 152). So does it seem at the first flush. But it may turn out to be a mistaken view on a later consideration.

Mahāyāna sources are quite clear that the path to full Buddhahood takes a long time. The reason for following it is compassion. The two motivations for ethico-religious practice are outlined: the motivation of wishing to attain freedom from suffering for all, and from that motivation embracing the long path to Buddhahood. This is quite definitive of Mahāyāna. And it may be endorsed by the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, together with the *Bhāvanākramas* of Kamalaśīla and Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa*. They are unanimous as regards the possibility of altruism, locating it as they do in the actual revolutionary event which occurs in a bodhisattva's mind, an event which is a fundamental switch in orientation from self-concern to concern for others, to compassion. It is called the arising of *bodhicitta*, and it is not without a reason that the crucial event

is praised in glowing terms. Śāntideva devotes an entire chapter for the purpose.

All this may be in order. There could be no sense in doubting the universal salvation commitment so undeniably present in the Mahāyāna discourse. But one may feel somewhat philosophically uneasy concerning the cognitive mode called *prajñāpāramitā*, the perfection of wisdom or the wisdom of the Sugatas, *sugatāna prajñā*.

How are we to understand *prajñā*? To give a general definition, *prajñā* is a subtle process which presupposes both an intuitive grasp of the reality and a high degree of awareness with no emotional support or attachment. But a *prthagjana* may raise the point about logical consistency, if, by *dhyāna* is meant a gradual decrease of emotional and cognitive activity, how is relationship or connection between *dhyāna* and *prajñā* to be explained. Enstatic meditation or *śamatha* and observational concentration, *vipaśyanā* have been present since early Buddhism, and Śāntideva too speaks of the two (VIII. 4). Are we to take *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* as being in a state of balance and harmony? The former is cognitive, while the latter is tinged with mysticism. Is the marriage of the two a happy one?

The poles of canonical Buddhist ethics or even spirituality are detachment or *upekṣā* on the one hand, and caring for others, *karuṇā*, *dayā* or *anukampā* on the other. For Mahāyāna, the two are *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*. The actual relation—psychological and doctrinal—between them is not simple as it may appear. Early Buddhism regards sympathy or *karuṇā* as an important virtue, but does it regard it as an inevitable outflow of any liberating experience? Is there not a certain tension between liberation as *detachment* and as *involved* in activity for the sake of others? Does the Mahāyāna ideal of universal salvatory nuances bring the tension to an end? The *samādhi* of *śūnyatā* is so transphenomenal that it is potent to lead directly to the attainment of Buddhahood. How does it compromise the salvific career of a bodhisattva? Doesn't he have to counterbalance the *samādhi* of *śūnyatā* by cultivating benevolence or compassion with regard to all living beings? A bodhisattva may have the *samādhi* of *śūnyatā* as a far-off regulative ideal, but does he experience it as a psychological

reality? If it be argued that the meditative ecstatic state *includes* compassion and normal behaviour, then the inclusion cannot be analytic. Given Śāntideva's distinction between *gantukāma* and *gantuh* (I. 15-16), the underlying tension between the two poles remains unsolved. One might argue that *prajñāpāramitā* includes all perfections, even then the question persists whether we see it as a psychological reality or a doctrinal ideal.

There is another dimension of the issue. How can one in *samādhi*—which definitionally excludes all types of entities, characteristics and mental orientation—*simultaneously* feel compassion and friendliness towards all living beings? How is it possible to fuse *dhyāna* with *prajñā*? I am aware of the immense difficulty of the question. Any attempt to answer this question will land us in the field of the philosophy and psychology of religion. Even if an answer, let alone a certain one, may not be possible, the question will, nevertheless, satisfy a basic human need to discuss such propositions not only in terms of their occurrence, but also in relation to truth-values. After all, these propositions admittedly try to say something about the essence of reality and human mind. Do we have to deal with the task of accommodating two basically incompatible practices, i.e., enstatic states and active social involvement? Or do we have to deal with spiritual modes and states which cannot be known and assessed by means of our normal epistemic categories? The latter solution can be envisaged as forthcoming. But, after all, deluded *prthagjanas*, to which I undoubtedly belong, have no right to pass judgements on such lofty states which they cannot experience. The only alternative is to become bodhisattvas ourselves. As far as our normal understanding of psychological states as well as the basic requirements of logical consistency is concerned, it is hard to believe that one can experience *simultaneously* states of gradual decrease and eventual cessation of all discursive and emotional functions, on the one hand, and intense mental, verbal and bodily activities for the salvation of the sentient beings, on the other. It could be that the Mahāyāna move is meant to portray the exalted ideal of a bodhisattva's messianic mission rather than a psychological reality. Shall we say that a bodhisattva dwells in the concentrations of emptiness,

singleness without realizing them? This may be the problematic of the bodhisattva ideal. Does the realization of the reality-limit or *bhūta-koti*, as *paramārtha* is said to be, ensure or annul altruism or any social concern?

Two points appear to hold out a sort of promise on the horizon:

- i. There should be no doubt about the fact that Buddhist ethics is soteriologically oriented, and it also cannot be denied that the fundamental inspiration for the Buddhist moral life is concern for others, and, it is no less true as well that morality is not a means to an end but an end in itself. It is not a means to Enlightenment but a *part* of Enlightenment. There is a possible hermeneutics favouring what may be called the transcendency thesis. It could be taken to say that in the state of final *nirvāna* ethical predication and evaluation become problematic, since there is the absence of an identifiable moral subject. There are even arguments supporting the ontological discontinuity between ethical perfection and Enlightenment. The Parable of the Raft in *Majjhima-Nikāya* is often interpreted to mean that the attainment of *nirvāna* involves the transcendence of both good and evil. The image of fording a stream by a raft or boat is common enough in the early Buddhist canonical discourse. But the question is: are *śīla* along with *samādhi* and *prajñā* all a part of the further shore, or are they to be left behind on the near side after Enlightenment? It remains also to note whether the Raft Parable is to be invoked to support epistemological or ontological positions rather than ethical ones. Transcendence of ethics does not seem to be thrust of the Parable. On the contrary the further shore is to be identified with moral perfection. One should take into serious account the context in which the Parable occurs, and be sensitive enough to the metaphor of the shores: *Auguttara Nikāya* (V. 232 and 253) leaves no one in doubt that the further shore symbolizes the *practice* of the Eight-fold Path and not its abandonment. The Buddha's remarks at the end of the Raft Parable should be understood not in the general sense that his ethical teachings are to be transcendent, but as a critique of a particular wrong

attitude towards his teachings. As for the thematic issue, it sounds absurd a suggestion that Buddhahood could be an achievement which is morally neutral. It is analytically false to regard Enlightenment as transcendent to ethics.

- ii. What does it mean to follow the Eight-fold Path? It is true that the Path involves a journey? But it is more true to say that it brings about a transformation rather than effecting a movement or relocation. The linearity of the Path could be understood in a metaphorical sense. The Path describes the dimensions of human good, rather than listing stages meant to be passed through and left behind. To follow the Path is to participate in those values or excellences which are constitutive of Enlightenment, namely, *śīla* and *prajñā*. The Path is to be followed in the sense of cultivating moral and intellectual virtues. *Nirvāna* then could be the perfection of those virtues and not an ontological shift or sorteriological quantum leap. The beginning and the end are to be in the same continuum, or else the process could never begin at all. The Buddha said (*Digha Nikāya*, ii. 223), just as the Ganga and the Yamana merge and flow along united, so too do *nirvāna* and the path.

Buddhism speaks of two sets of values, moral and intellectual, actional and cognitive. There is no alternatives as between *jñāna* and *karma-yoga a la* the *Bhāgavad Gītā* in the present context. Any one-sidedness could be incomplete, unbalanced and fall short of perfection. The ethics is to be sorteriological, and the sorteriology ethical. It is a bilateral strategy for perfection. Between a Buddha, a bodhisattva and a *pṛthagjana*, the difference, profound though it may appear, could be one of degree, *Nirvāna* marks the fulfilment of human potential, not its transcendence. If it were in any sense transcendent, then the Buddha would have passed beyond the possibility of ethical predication and become a moral zero. On the contrary, he has referred to himself as rooted in *adhiśīla* (*Digha-Nikāya*, i. 174). Far from being incompatible, ethics and soteriology in Buddhism appears to be in an integral and inalienable relationship between moral goodness and Enlightenment.

There is then the question concerning the soteriological status of *brahmavihāras*. How much do they contribute to the soteriological goal? Are the intentions of *brahmavihāra* relevant of it? Are they not conducive to furthering one's progress on the path to Enlightenment? Were they not originally thought of as one sufficient means for attaining enlightenment itself? One recent argument favours such a view and has much that is commendable about it. The *brahmaviharas* are states of meditation and have their importance within the Buddhist theoretical framework. It is through working with and one in the mind that Buddhism considers one can bring about the transformation in seeing required in order to bring to an end the forces generating suffering and rebirth. One uses the still, calm mind to investigate how things really are. Calming the mind is the first requirement, *śamatha*, and then one discovers with a calm mind how things really are, *vipaśyanā*. When calming and insight are linked, the mind has the strength and orientation to break through to a deep transformative understanding of how things truly are. The point about the *brahmaviras* is that they close the gap between the things as appear to be and the way they actually are, and one may now hope that the actional state of existence could thus be linked with the liberating gnosis. *Samyak samadhi* is significantly enough a stage of the Eight-fold Path. Or what may be said in other terms is that the actional and the meditational are not given diversely. To borrow and adapt Kant's phraseology, one should always be *acting from the conception of* the way things actually are, and also go on realizing it in experience in a graduated mode. This is a call to the *pṛthagjana*.

**Note:** The term *bhūta-koti* occurs in the *Astasāhsrika-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*, and it is used for the absolute truth or *paramārtha*, (See Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, p. 410. And Conze, *Materials for a Dictionary of the Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, p. 308).





## Part IV

- IV.1. The Lesson and Relevance of the Bodhisattva Ideal
- IV.2. *Bhāvanā* and Action: Buddhist Ethics in Perspective
- IV.3. A Note on *boāvanā*
- IV.4. Closing Thoughts: Buddhist Ethics



## The Lesson and Relevance of the Bodhisattva Ideal

We are living in the world of terror and violence. In a poem addressed to the Buddha, Rabindranath Tagore had noted that the world is wild with the delirium of hatred, the conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish, crooked are its path, tangled its bonds of greed. One can pray to the embodiment of immeasurable mercy and goodness to wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth. Both the anguish and prayer still ring true.

How are we to negotiate this phantasmagoria of terror? There is a Christian commentary on the *Bhāgavad Gītā* entitled *River of Compassion*, which weaves the story around the idea of a personal god as the embodiment of love and compassion. The idea of the bodhisattva in Buddhism was such an advance. The chapter XIII of the *Gītā* includes the virtues of non-fearful non-violence issuing in the ultimate goods of forgiving toleration or *ksānti*. It is not simply negative in the sense of ‘not-killing’; rather, it is an entire attitude of mind involving freedom from aggression. *Ksānti* or forgiveness, forbearance or tolerance is there is St. Paul’s list of virtues in his letter to the Colossians (3.1, 13). These are parts of what goes by the name Wisdom, Tradition or a set of profound spiritual teachings and practices that are available with most of the world’s great religions. These can guide us to tolerance, i.e., to a more peaceful, compassionate and just life beyond violence and rivalry. The primary qualities that lead to wisdom are largely universal, and can be found alike in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

I would like to recall in this context the Mahāyāna recommendation of the four boundless attitudes, namely, unconditional love (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekṣā*) as the most effective response to violence. It identifies the construction of a demonic enemy as a projection of our minds. The cycle of vengeance, aggression and scapegoating may be understood as follows. In a moment of intense anger at someone, a narrow and inaccurate images of self and other is projected (e.g., my ownself as simply the righteous wronged one, the other as simply a demonic being). That projection is accompanied by a painful mental feeling. From that projection and feeling, the emotive energy of rage takes shape in the wish to hurt the other either by word or physical action. Such activities of the mind and the body reacting to one's own thought-made projections of self and other, make us unaware that the projections are not the actualities. As we react in that way, we further imprint the habit of experiencing the world through our own projections and reacting to them unawares. By a practice of skillful means (*upāya-kauśalya*), a virtue of strategy, one may seek to overcome the limits of the friend/enemy distinction, eventually embracing a position of no enemies. The moment we falsely apprehend an 'enemy', a person as an object inherently deserving of hatred, we feel hatred, act from that hatred, and the conditioned arising of suffering goes on. Until we discern the hollowness (rather the emptiness) of our moment by moment constriction of reality, we reify our representations of it, cling to them unawares, grasp to some, hate others, and suffer. Apropos of the diagnosis of the human predicament, the prognosis consists in compassion for all beings caught in the confusion that reifies and clings to representations. *Prajñāpāramitā* sees through that confusion into its empty, thought-constructed nature, realizes its freedom from it, eliciting even more intense compassion for all who are caught in it. *Prajñā* and *karuṇā*, mutually empowering, are to be cultivated in synergy on the bodhisattva path to full Enlightenment. It should be noted that the *Dhammapada* does not teach naïve piety but a human *truth* when it says that hatred is never quelled by hatred in this world. It is quelled by love. It actually *works*. The most useful and practical way of protecting

oneself and one's loved ones from violence is, as Śāntideva teaches, to practice exchanging ones self for the other, the great mystery. This is a powerful testimony. *Prajñā*, along with *karuṇā*, are not just an attitude but also a matter of efficacy.

Mahāyāna texts are wisdom texts, and they call for, what Aristotle would have named, *phronetic* understanding. It goes without saying that *prajñā* does not translate easily into *theoria*, the abstract propositions of purely scientific and mathematical knowledge. *Sophia* may be timeless, but it is *phronesis*, which articulates a mode of understanding, without giving way to relativism. The bodhisattva ideal is avowedly activist; it is intended to change the world of sorrow into a dynamic force for action. The task—to use an adage of Karl Marx—is to change the world, it is not enough to understand it as heretofore. Writers such as Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, and Susan George in *How the Other Half Die*, and Julien Benda in his *Treason of the Intellectuals* have made it clear how dangerously seductive can be the idea that correct ideas are enough to change the world. Between the thought and the act, there is no easy step, but a possible unbridgeable gulf. It is the *Acts* of the Apostles that matter, not their thoughts, as the *New Testament* discloses.

The Mahāyāna critique of the earlier dispensations of *śrāvakayāna* or *pratyekabuddhyāna* is a pointer to a deeper truth of life, it combines in the bodhisattva ideal both ethics and poetics, saving our life with others from becoming either too moralistic (ethics without poetics) or too arbitrary (poetics without ethics). The proper balance between the two holds a great promise, an historic *combination oppositorum*, a vision of love and wisdom, when the world of *samvṛti* fuses with the horizon of *paramārtha*. Charity remains a surplus, and it is this very surplus of compassion and tenderness which is capable of giving the motivation for noble moral actions, its daring and momentum. Saraha has this following verse to that effect:

He who clings to the void  
 And neglects compassion,  
 Does not reach the highest stage.

But he who practises only compassion  
 Does not gain release from toils of existence.  
 He, however, who is strong in practice of both,  
 Remains neither in Saṃsara nor in Nirvāna.

(Edward Conze, 1959, *Buddhist Scriptures*, Penguin Classics, p. 180). It is no ordinary altruism; it is altruism with a difference.

Buddhist traditions identify the self-grasping tendency to construct a seemingly absolute duality between “us” and “them”, “enemy” and “friend”, as part of the very root of human suffering and the very source of evil. Evil, in Buddhist terms, is not at one pole of the duality, but is rooted in the very tendency to construct one’s world *as* such a duality. That construct unleashes the motive force of individual and communal fear and hatred. The Buddha, on the other hand, taught us that human beings have the potential to cultivate *prajñā* that recognizes the fabricated nature of the duality, that sees through its projections of inherent enemy and friend, whereas the fabricated dualism takes expression in the motive power of fear and hatred. The wisdom that utterly disbelieves—the dualism—it is taught—manifests in the unconditional love of the bodhisattva: “All beings tremble before violence. All fear death. All love life. See yourself in others. Then whom can you hurt? What harm can you do? He who seeks happiness, by hurting those who seek happiness, will never find happiness” (Kornfield, J (ed.) 1993. *Teachings of the Buddha*, Boston).

Let us return to the four boundless states mentioned earlier. The four boundless (*apramāna*, *brahmavihāra*) attitudes are four powerful states of mind that are literally unconditional and all-inclusive in scope. Let me explain. *Maitrī* or love is the wish for beings to be deeply well and joyful, and to possess the inner causes of such joy (in most virtue). *Karuṇā* is the wish for beings to be free of suffering, and free from its inmost causes (free from patterns of self-grasping and their reactions). *Muditā* is joy in the joy of beings and in the means to their joy. *Upekṣā* is the impartiality that permits the prior attitudes to focus on every being equally, without discrimination. Buddhist traditions provide meditation methods for the cultivation of these all-inclusive attitudes. In Mahāyāna, such

attitudes are posited as innate capacities of mind that manifest spontaneously as the self-grasping patterns that obscure them are cleansed away by spiritual practices.

In early Buddhism, the boundless attitudes were cultivated to overpower obstacles to the path (such as hatred and jealousy) and to achieve states of highly refined meditative concentration. But in Mahāyāna, the story is a little different. The four boundless states are cultivated to empower the emergence of *bodhicitta*, the bodhisattva's resolve to attain fullest liberation for the sake of all beings. *Bodhicitta*, the motive force of the Bodhisattva path, is the motive power of the four boundless attitudes conjoined with wisdom (*prajñā*) when they are harnessed to attain or express Buddhahood. Such soteriological statements may seem abstract, but the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra* by Asanga is a great classic and a forerunner of Śāntideva's work. The question raised by Asanga is: without love, what follows? What happens if these boundless attitudes of love are lacking? The answer that comes is that we become defenseless before their opposing tendencies. It declares: where the boundless attitudes are lacking, persons become subject to their opposing tendencies; malice, violence, jealousy and prejudice, and those who comes under the power of malice, violence, jealousy and prejudice undergo many miseries. (17.24 *Bhāṣya*). Asanga further says that such deluded tendencies destroy oneself, destroy others, and destroy morality. Through them, one is damaged, impoverished and made defenseless (17.25). Elsewhere, it declares: boundless love destroys deluded tendencies, it unravels the mind-made knots of deluded emotions, so their objects of projection are cut (17.19 with *Bhāṣya*).

In other words, if love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity are lacking, the fundamental power of care for others' well-being, the essential will for good, is just not there. According to the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra* teaching, strategies of assistance or protection for self and others which lack the fundamental motive of love, of authentic care, automatically tend to express individual and communal dispositions toward jealousy, prejudice, fear, and violence, in the face of which all are rendered defenseless. Even when we claim to be helping others through our various agencies



and governments, our “helping” strategies are ineffective or harmful if they are not the expression of a genuine, strong will for the good of others, the will of loving-kindness that wishes others to be deeply well. This is a truth that can be profaned only at our own peril.

It appears that real solutions to individual and social suffering require much more than material resources, strategies and technologies. What is needed in order of social development work to actually make a difference in people’s lives is a great care for people, an indomitable will for the good, immense love and compassion which doesn’t become discouraged at numerous social and material obstacles to progress and doesn’t dissipate into apathy or self-cornered competition among “helping” individuals and agencies. Without a tremendous motive force of genuine care for persons—as the *Mahāyāna-sūtrātambkāra* declares, the common good simply will not hold together, no matter how clever the strategy for development, no matter how advanced the technologies.

The message and caution get further reinforced by the following considerations. When individuals and groups do not experience being loved, cared for, when communities lose hope that anyone cares, fear and violence are often seized upon as seeming protectors in the form of gangs, mobs, and communal hatreds. Where each fears the others, the only seeming protection is to be on the strongest, most violent side. Indeed, when the tendencies opposed to love and compassion become so seemingly omnipresent, their projections of fear and hatred appear simply to *be* the world.

The attitude of prejudice, hatred and violence are radically cut off from the realities of persons, lost in projections of fear and malice which, in the absence of all-inclusive love and compassion, present the appearance of *being* objectively what persons are, what the world is. The current perpetrators of violence, here as also abroad, often perceive themselves as the historical victims who finally get “justice” through violence, while their current victims fantasize being able someday to become the perpetrators so as to inflict their own revenge in the name of “justice”. Fundamentally, contrary to that dynamic are the all-inclusive attitudes of love, compassion, equanimity and sympathetic joy, which are attuned to the *actual* realities of persons beyond such projections. These

attitudes sense and respond to persons accurately, as they are, in the qualities shared by all: layers of human suffering and fear often hiding a tremendous inner capacity for generosity, love and fundamental goodness.

It is extremely hard to break out of the communal maps which project the appearance of a world of intrinsic “friends”, “enemies”, and “strangers”. Such maps organize communal violence, precisely because such maps are a social construction viewed as real by social consensus. This is an important meaning of the Buddhist term *karuṇa*. In classical Buddhist theory, the term refers to the habitual patterns of thought, intention and reaction through which individuals experience and react to their world. It is possible to extend the sense of the term to also socially conditioned and reinforced phenomena.

We mostly find it hard to believe we could ever really become free from our deluded emotions of fear and aversion, to realize all-inclusive love as a real human possibility. When everyone around me believes that only certain people deserve to be loved while certain other people deserve just to be hated and feared, I become accustomed to seeing and reacting to them in that way, and as I treat them in that manner. I receive the feedback that reinforces the impression, react accordingly and thereby condition others around me to the same deluded view. Such social patterning of interpretation and reaction (*karma*) is largely sub-conscious, hard to even notice, hence to change. This patterning, individually and socially conditioned, which pre-consciously effects our reactions to everyone we meet, profoundly obscuring the fuller, more mysterious reality of each person, inaccessible in his core, beyond and time. But the *Mahāyāna-sūtrātaṃkāra* (17.19) declares: boundless love destroys deluded tendencies. It unravels the mind-made knots of deluded emotions, so their objects of projection are cut. The component of impartiality in unconditional love and compassion contains a wisdom that does not believe in the projected appearances of such deluded tendencies. The lens of the boundless love and compassion is the wisdom of equanimity that sees through projections of individual and communal violence; that simply does not believe the reduction of persons to objects of hatred and fear.

My argument is not that individual cultivation of boundless attitudes, by itself, will alleviate the problem of violence in our world. Also required is continued analyses of connections between poverty, unjust social systems, and the social and material conditions that feed communal fear, hatred and violence, followed up by social action. I do argue, however, that all such strategies for social intervention, in themselves, will never be sufficient. The power of the boundless attitudes, the sheer power of good will for all involved, is essential.

Where all-inclusive love and compassion are lacking, their opposing tendencies tend to become the dominant motive force of social activity, whether or not the activity purports to help or to harm. If the cultivation of all-inclusive love and compassion could be made an essential part of education in contemporary societies as the necessary complement to out and out technocratic. This could beneficially inform the future development of our social theories, our social institutions and our individual responses to the challenges we face.

Lastly, I would like to make a point about the menace that has come to go by the name of fundamentalism. Doesn't the lesson and message of love and compassion seem largely lost on fundamentalists? The issue is complex and does not permit any easy answer. However, I feel inclined to take fundamentalism or its problem as ultimately hermeneutical, rather than inherently religious. It is, more often than not, associated with scriptural *literalism*. The fundamentalist develops a highly selective relationship between scripture and traditions, he is selectively traditional and selectively modern. He does not simply reaffirm the old doctrines, but subtly lifts them out of their original context, embellishes and institutionalizes them, and empties them as ideological weapons against a hostile world. This is different from religious conservatism, since it is not so much concerned with maintaining the purity and integrity of the tradition as a whole, but only of certain beliefs and practices which serves its own purpose. Fundamentalism could be said to be as a reactionary (against modernism), innovative and aggressive form of traditionalism. It involves the selective appropriation of and distinctive interpretation

of particular beliefs and practices that are elevated beyond critical reflection and that become the basis of all thought and action.

As an antipode to the above rigid and intolerant hermeneutic, a Buddhist may propose a hermeneutic of tolerance. His philosophy of religious language is based on the belief that the language of scriptures or any narrative is marked by plurality and flexibility, and based on the continuous discovery of new layers of meaning, through engagement of the text, both from within and, from without one's own tradition. This amounts to holding on to the polysemic nature of sacred texts. And this is what the fundamentalist, consciously or unconsciously, denies. The Dalai Lama has no difficulty with the Christian Gospels, the recognition of the distinctive identity or specificity of religions notwithstanding, testifying the complementarity of religions (*Spiritual Advice for Buddhists and Christians*, 1999, The Continuum Publishing Company, New York). Fundamentalism ignores or denies the rich history of its own tradition as well as modern historical consciousness. It is a reaction against the very notion of narrative plurality and flexibility, against the integration of historical critical methods of scholarship within religion and against the development of liberal interpretation of scripture and tradition.

The fundamentalist gives rise to a hermeneutics that is intolerant. Buddhism offers a hermeneutics of tolerance. What could be the Buddhist concept of scripture? It goes by the name of *Buddhavacana* and is called *Āgama* in the Mahāyāna discourse. Śāntideva (IX. 41-48) raises this issue, whereupon Prajñākaramati mentions the four characteristics of *Āgama*, namely the discourse is meaningfully wholesome, averts whatever is unwholesome; it is in consonance with the moral law (*dharma*) and never encourages what is contrary to it; it alleviates suffering, does not contribute to its furtherance, its intention is salvific and leads to peace, the way of freedom from existential bondage. In short, *whatever* and *wherever* something is well-spoken that is to be taken as having been said by the Buddha: *yat kincit subhāsitanm sarva tad buddhabhāsitam*. *Āgama* is a wisdom text, and the historical person of the Buddha (*nirmāna kāya*) is of no great consequence as it is in the case of the prophetic religions of the world. Moreover,

Buddhism allows a rational scrutiny of sacredotal statements. The Buddha admonished his disciples not to take him on his personal authority; they should subject his teachings to personal experience and reasoning before they accept and live by it, just as the goldsmith burns, cuts, melts and assesses the quality of the metal (as quoted in the *Tattvasaṃgrahatīkā*). There is nothing a priori sacredotal about Buddhist scriptures.

The idea of hermeneutics of tolerance implies that it could be timely, sympathetic and well taken. It could be inter-religious and intercultural as well. If it had not been so in the past, there is reason to suppose that it cannot be in the future. It is always possible to seek *sincerely* to transform unreasonable disagreements into relatively reasonable ones which allow for some kind of dialogue. There are resources for pardon, hospitality to the stranger, suffering and humility, the peace of prayer and meditation in every religious tradition. It is on these bases that the reciprocal rapport can be expected to be built. If the promises of the past have not been kept, they can be fulfilled in the future.

And lastly, the future Buddha is named *Maitreya*. His name is derived from *mitra*, meaning ‘friend’ or ‘friendliness’, which is a basic Buddhist virtue. Many Buddhists look forward to his coming. Such an eschatological hope is a source of great religious fervour. For centuries, Iran exerted a strong influence in North-West India, and in the beginning Maitreya had strong affinities with Mithras. Whatever it might have been, what appears promising is that the future Buddha, Maitreya, as a regulative image of the basic Buddhist virtue of friendliness, behoves us to work for a hermeneutics of dialogue, which alone could be hoped towards establishing a world *sans* hatred, fear and terror. “Have you not heard his silent steps?”

## *Bhāvanā* and Action: Buddhist Perspective in Ethics

Whoever, monks, would tend me, he should tend the sick.

The Buddha  
Vinaya, i. 302

The relationship of thought to action is one of the debated issues of moral psychology. In the British analytical tradition, scepticism loosens the connection between the two. Does thought necessarily issue in action? Is action always a reliable road map backwards to thoughts in the form of motives?

Kant's concept of the will is significant in this context. The will summons all the powers of the mind to bring about an action. To will and not to act is a conceptual impossibility. The goodwill is not an ineffectual angel. In our times, Sartre declared, '*Parler, c'est agir*' Speech is action. The French term derives from the Greek *parrhesia*, which Euripides used in a drama of his. To speak the truth is never to indulge in empty rhetoric. The parrhesiastes, the one who speaks with an authentic voice, is ever informed by *mathesis* or wisdom or *prajñā*. The Buddha, the teacher, did not teach with a 'closed fist'. The metaphor implies a lot.

The incompatibility of rhetoric and parrhesia are issues that touch the ethical. In the context of Buddhism, the *bhāvanās* of friendliness and compassion are important indeed as the thoughts or meditations set the mind in ethical order and counteract egoistic afflictions, namely, greed and hate, the *akuśala* mental states. The importance of the *bhāvanās* lies in the fact that by rectification of

egoistic emotions, *ceto vimutti*, one moves nearer to the supernally blessed state of *nirvāna*. But for an ethical life thought alone would not be enough. At best, one could be a *pratyekabuddha*, never a *bodhisattva*. Mahāyāna virtue ethics requires the practice of virtues or *pāramitās*, acting appropriately in consonance with moral mental states. The *bhāvanā* are intentional; they are directed towards all living beings and do not permit a life lived within meditational cloister. Moral life is inescapably social, and it is in respect of society, *sattva-kṣetra*, the domain of persons, that morality of *paramitas* can and does make any sense. The otherness of persons has to be overcome: *parān grhnāmi cātmaivat* as Śāntideva puts it (VIII. 136).

Further, *bodhicitta* is generated not as an end in itself, it is altruistically programmed: *bodhicittam jagaddhite*. The *bodhicitta* is the first great move towards an ethicized consciousness resolving itself to the good of others. Hence, *bodhicitta* entails responsibility.

A *bodhisattva* knows that everything is interconnected. The thesis of *pratītyasamutpāda* can be so interpreted at the plane of ethics as suggesting the idea that no man is an island. There is nothing special about our own sorrows and happiness to neglect those states in others. Myself and others are similar in the sense that we wish to be happy, both myself and others are similar in that we do not wish to suffer. Our own and others' desire for happiness, the difference between the two is logically indiscernable. So goes the drift of the argument in Śāntideva, and we are led to the conclusion that there is no reason whatsoever to exert ourselves in seeking our own happiness alone without thinking of others, nor should we exert ourselves to eliminate only our own suffering when others' wish to be free from suffering is equal to our own. This is the argument for altruism: that we all desire happiness and do not want that suffering should be enough reason as to why we should be moral in the altruistic mode. The non-differential human condition of sorrow is an evaluation, since sorrowfulness in itself is a matter of disvalue. Therefore, the imperative of altruism need not be taken as a passage from *is* to *ought*, though it does so appear at the first sight and we have pointed it out earlier. The human predicament of sorrow and suffering is not a description

*simpliciter*; it is a judgement of disvalue, undesirableness of the given state of affairs. It is a *Truth*, and *not merche* fact.

There are good grounds for taking *pratītyasamutpāda* on the ethical plane as interconnectedness of all that lives. There can be no lonely achievement, as the *pratyekabuddhas* might think and hope for, without touching and affecting others. In the matter of sorrow my state is indistinguishable from the other, hence good can only be the common good, and we are all responsible for it.

Altruism presupposes a good heart, *bodhicitta*, as it is technically termed. Normally, we strive to acquire happiness for ourselves and to eliminate our own sufferings. But morality demands that we are to take the same responsibility' for others as we do for ourselves. The argument is: there is *no reason* whatsoever to exert ourselves in seeking own happiness alone without thinking of others, nor should we exert ourselves to eliminate only our own suffering when others' wish to be free from suffering is equal, indistinguishably, to our own.

Although we all desire happiness and do not want suffering, we are under the sway of the three root afflictions, emotive and intellectual, *rāga*, *dvesa*, and *moha*, and are unable to help either ourself or anyone else. Rectification of emotions and transformation of the nature of mind is called for as a prerequisite of leading a moral life. Suffering and selfishness co-imply *each* other, the sense of the ego alienates and even seeks to annul the existence of others, as in the case of malice. But when one generates an uncontrived aspiration for Enlightenment, motivated by compassion and love, taking responsibility upon oneself to provide benefit and joy for all sentient beings lack happiness and are tortured by sufferings, one is already on the path of becoming a *bodhisattva*. Ordinary mortals work for their own benefit, but, the Buddha, it is said, works for the benefit of others. A benevolent intention is greater than even religions observances. Śāntideva values it as the panacea that relieves the world of pain and is the source of all its joy (1. 26-27).

The moral interpretation of *pratītyasamutpāda* comes chiefly from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Suffering is a consequence or effect of ignorance. Afflictive emotions and thoughts give rise to suffering, and if they are removed, suffering too will stand



removed. The lesson of importance is the interdependent nature of one's own and others' interests: how the interests and well-being of human beings is dependent upon the well-being of animals living on the same planet. If we develop a sense of interdependent nature of reality, we would also be able to appreciate the interconnectedness between the well-being of human beings and the natural environment. We would be able to cultivate an outlook on reality which is holistically viewed.

The implications are significant. There are no independent causes of one's own happiness. In order to have a happier future for oneself, one will have to take care of everything which relates to him. Although sentient beings do not desire suffering and dissatisfaction, it is through ignorance that they are led to undesirable experiences. As for the nature of ignorance, there is the role of afflictive emotions and thoughts, there is also the role of afflictive emotions and thoughts, like anger, hatred, infatuation, which blind our understanding of the nature of reality'. In the state of anger, the angry person has a kind of unquestioned assumption of an independently existing 'I' or subject or person which is perceived, not necessarily consciously, as a kind of master. It is not totally independent from the body or mind, nor is it to be independent with the body or mind, but there is something there which is somehow identified as the core of the being, the self, and there is a strong sort of grasping at that kind of identity or being. Based on that, one experiences strong emotions, like infatuation with someone, or anger or hatred towards someone who is perceived as threatening.

Further, there obtains a son of assumption of an independently existing entity', something which is worthy of being desired or worthy of being hated. Aside from the metaphysical thesis of *śūnyatā* or *pudgala-nairāmya*, at the ordinary level of experience, there is met with a disparity between the way we perceive things and the way things really exist. If that was not true, then the very idea of being deceived would not make sense. Our feeling of being disillusioned follows from our having had false perception of reality. Once the illusion is dispelled, we realize that we have been deceived. What often happens is a conflation between an image or

a concept of an entity and the actual reality' of the moment. Entities or objects are ontologically transient, dynamic, but we miss the point by conflating the concept of them and their actualities.

However, it is never intended to imply that continuants and collectivities such as 'I' or other persons do not exist in a straightforward mode (as might be read off VIII. 107 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*). If that were the case, much of our concerns, projects and actions would not make any sense. Even our concern for attaining *samyak sambuddhatva* for the sake of other sentient beings would become hollow in intent. There has to be someone or something who would either suffer or benefit as a result of our action and project. The point, in the present context, is to identify and dispel the type from within our minds, to see through the misconception of our misapprehension. It may be hoped that by going about seeing through the misapprehension, it might disappear or disintegrate. As Nāgarjuna says in his rejoinder to the realists, the thesis of *śūnyata* does not state or imply the non-existence of everything. It simply means the interdependent nature of reality, in the context of ethics, specifically, of all humans in their interconnectedness. The predicament of sorrow and suffering can be transformed into an opportunity through disciplining the mind and behavioural reflexes. In leading an ethical life, we attempt or seek to liberate ourselves from the isolation of the ego. from the consequent suffering and its causes. We cannot live outside the interface with others.

Compassion arises out of one's deeper appreciation of the human situation. Negative emotions like anger and malice and hatred involve grasping situations and persons therein as absolute, independent and unitary. The insight into the interdependence of the human predicament is expected to loosen the grip of these emotions on the mind.

There is one philosopher in the West, Spinoza, whose ideas on the life of virtues have a striking similarity to the Buddhist analysis of emotions, and their evaluation in terms of being evil and diseased, and reasonable. It is the life of the mind that matters most for both the Buddhist ethicist and Spinoza. Both commend love and generosity for countering hatred, and ask us to endure

with equanimity the injuries that we received from others. We may have one quote from Spinoza to show how the Buddhist ethicist would have endorsed much of the former's ideas: "hatred is increased by reciprocal hatred, and, on the other hand, can be extinguished by love, so that hatred passes into love. Therefore he who lives according to the guidance of reason will strive to repay the hatred of another... with love, that is to say, with generosity." This immediately recalls what the *Dhammapada* puts as follows: "For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by lover" (7.5).

The point of Buddhist ethics is to watch ourselves; this is our first responsibility. Then if we are compassionate and love others, it can arise on the basis of a clear recognition of the existence of the other person, and a genuine respect for the well-being and rights of others. This is a matter of reorienting one's modes of thinking in respect of the presence of others, their sorrows and sufferings. In the Buddhist perspective, it is foundational to counteract and prevent the arising of afflictive emotions, and thereby remove the seed or potential that give rise to the negative states. The success is not easy to have. As Spinoza remarks at the end of his *Ethics*, if salvation were near at hand, who would ever have exerted himself for it? The human emotions of hatred and anger are *akuśala*.

Śāntideva admits that virtue is perpetually feeble, and the strength of evil is ever intense (I. 6), and that is the reason, that the *bodhicitta*, the benevolent intention, is all the more prized above everything else. But the aspiration to be of benefit to others—if it is not to remain idle or hollow of intent (just a matter of the *gantukāma*, I. 16)—is a commitment to be responsible. Since *bodhicitta* is directed to all sentient beings, the responsibility it entails is also universal. The Dalai Lama's phrase, 'universal responsibility' brings out the nature and scope of the ethical commitment of a *bodhisattva*.

At the turn of the twenty-first century the Dalai Lama has published *Ancient Wisdom. Modern World: Ethics for a New Millennium* (Little, Brown and Company, London, 1999). In many ways this is a remarkable book. It nunciates secular ethics, though written by the head of a famous religious order that has itself

stemmed from a great tradition. The book is divided into three parts. Part one looks for the foundations of ethics, redefines the goal, and finds in *Nying-je* the supreme emotion of compassion. Part two is devoted to discussing the ethics of virtue, of compassion, and relates the question of moral life to human suffering. Part three opens the issues of universal responsibility. It is arguable that our every act has universal dimension, and that is why *śīla* or ethical discipline, wholesome (*kuśala*) conduct and careful discernment (*samprajāñya*) are crucial factors for a meaningful happy life. Today's reality is complex and interconnected at various levels, economic, technological and environmental. Man is no longer an island and we cannot afford to ignore others' interests. The Dalai Lama proposes the concept of universal responsibility as being entailed by *bodhicitta*. The Tibetan term *chi-sem* literally means universal (*chi*) consciousness (*sem*). On the basis of concern for others well-being we can, and should, develop a sense of universal responsibility. The Buddhist practice of the *bodhisattva* way requires one to remind oneself of the duty to serve all sentient beings. What is entailed is a reorientation of our heart and mind away from the self (*svārtha*) and towards others (*parārtha*). 'To develop a sense of universal responsibility, of the universal dimension of our every act and of the equal right of all others to happiness and not to suffer, is to develop an attitude of mind whereby, if we see an opportunity to benefit others, then we will take it in preference to merely looking after our own narrow interests' (p. 171). It will have been noticed at once that the argument is based on an ethical interpretation of *pratītyasamutpāda*, or the complex web of interrelated causes and conditions. One sense of the *identitylessness* is that phenomena exist interdependently. The ethical implication of the thesis becomes momentous. First, if the self had intrinsic identity, it would be possible to speak in terms of self-interest in isolation from that of others. But given that this is not so, given that both the self and others can only be understood in terms of relationship, we see that self-interest and the interest of others are inalienably interrelated, and within this picture of dependently originated reality, we see that there is no self-interest completely unrelated to others' interests. Due to the foundational

interconnectedness at the heart of reality, your interest is also my interest. My happiness is to a large extent dependent on yours, ‘my’ interests and ‘your’ interests are intimately connected. In a deep sense, says the Dalai Lama they converge. He goes further to say, “if we wish for our own happiness, we have to consider others. It is a practical necessity that we do so” (p.48). Given the fact that certain actions lead to suffering while others lead to happiness, it is in everybody’s interest to seek those that lead to happiness and avoid those which lead to suffering. It also follows that since our interests are extricably linked, we are logically obliged in ethics to interface between my desire to be happy and yours.

What is remarkable in the account is that the argument for altruism is shown to have premises referring to the logic of existentiality, i.e., *interdependence* and relationships involved in the matter of *our* happiness and suffering.

If we commit ourselves to the truth of the view presented above, we would be obliged to admit as well that it is *we* who create the conditions for a happy world. The question of justice, for example, may be seen as closely connected with the notion of universal responsibility, and hence we have to evaluate our own needs in relation to the needs of others and consider how our actions are likely to affect them in the longer term. A sense of responsibility towards others also means that both as individuals and as a society of individuals, we have a duty of care to each member of our society. We need one another, because we are the same in wanting happiness and not to suffer.

There are several areas of human endeavour where the attitude of responsibility toward others is relevant. We need to ensure that it informs our actions both at the level of the individual and of society. Inter-religious harmony, international peace, natural environment, politics and economics are notably areas where we have to consider others’ interests along with our own. There are and will, of course, be different levels of commitment. But it cannot perhaps be denied that by committing oneself to the principle of universal responsibility, one can become a more compassionate and happier human being. And through being more compassionate individuals, we can make a significant contribution to society.

Even the problem of peace is not unrelated to universal responsibility. Buddhism requires us to understand peace as a state of tranquillity founded on the deep sense of security that arises from mutual understanding, tolerance of others' points of view and respect for their rights. This is how the Dalai Lama puts forward the case of peace. It cannot rest on fear and suspicion and the psychology of mutually assured destruction as it was instantiated by the decades of Cold War in Europe, and the management of weapons. It can only be fragile and precarious, and any misunderstanding on the part of either side may lead to disastrous consequences. Peace, properly so-called, is not something which exists independently of us, and peace in the world would depend on peace in the heart of individuals. It depends on all of us only by disciplining ourselves in regulating our responses to negative thoughts and emotions. Only by disarming ourselves internally by *kānti* and *samatā* can we create conditions for external disarmament. In the matter of ethics, *śila* or discipline is only really effective when it comes from within.

Another dimension of responsibility has to do with the question of our survival on this planet. In plain language, the natural world is our home and, therefore, it should in our interest to look after it. This is common[sense], but with an ethical dimension. The Dalai Lama proposes to look at the problems caused by environmental degradation as the earth's response to our responsible behaviour, as if the Mother Earth is warning us that there are limits even to her tolerance. The consequence of our failure to exercise discipline in the way we relate to our environment are apparent today.

Our actions affect the environment, and they are likely to also affect others. But one thing is clear, as the Dalai Lama sees it: "that we humans are the only species with the power to destroy the earth as we know it. The birds have no such power, nor do the insects, nor does any mammal. Yet if we have the capacity to destroy the earth, so too do we have the capacity to protect it" (p. 7).

We have to find ways of achieving ends without harming the environment. We need to find methods of manufacture that do not destroy nature. We must find ways of cutting down on our use of the limited natural resources. The wisdom that greed is a vice will have a bearing on this issue. We cannot rely on technology

to overcome our problems. Hardly can we afford to continue destructive practices in anticipation of technical fixes being eloped. The Dalai Lama thinks that the environment does not need fixing; it is our behaviour in relation to it that needs to change. Can a fix to the massive looming disaster caused by the greenhouse effect exist, even in theory? All this point to the need to recognize the universal dimension of our actions and to exercise restraint. The importance of ethical discipline as a means to ensuring a healthy place to live will have to be recognized, and more so by the people living in the industrially developed countries in the matter of changing their life style. The pursuit of ever increasing standards of living is unsustainable. The cost to the planet and thus the cost to others is simply too great.

The argument can be extended to the domains of politics and economics. Briefly indeed it could be said that if a society is itself lacking in morality, if the individuals who make up the population do not practise ethics in their own lives, it is surely unjust of the electorate to criticise their politicians. A country's politicians may be corrupt, but, as the Dalai Lama says, these people do not drop out of the sky.

In the case of the application of economic policy, the same considerations apply, and a sense of universal responsibility is crucial. The relationship between empathy and profit is necessarily fragile, but there is no absurdity involved in having competition which is constructive. Motivation has a large part to play here. If there is meanness or if the intention be to exploit others, it should be plainly unethical. Notwithstanding the reality of commerce, it is not right to seek profits regardless of their consequences. In no domain of human enterprise can we be exempted from developing our compassionate nature. Modern economy, like the environment, knows no boundaries. And the more interdependent our economic relationships, the more interdependent would our political relationships become. Alongside the political and economic alliances, greater consolidation along the lines of ethnicity, language, religion and culture, often in the context of violence, is a paradoxical phenomenon to be witnessed. The trend towards transnational cooperative groupings appears to run alongside the

impulse towards localization. Is it really a paradox? The challenge for ethics, as the Dalai Lama observes, is to find ways to achieve international cooperation or *intercommunity* wherein all human diversity is acknowledged and the rights of all respected. A concern with finding happiness and avoiding suffering through the practice of ethical discipline and cultivation of love and compassion had been relevant in the past. Is it that we have no grounds to say that it is not equally so today? We humans still suffer. Today, this is experienced more internally as mental and emotional affliction, ethics with, its concern to help us overcome suffering must still be relevant. The Dalai Lama's message is clear and simple, as truths of life always are: "Relinquish your envy, let go your desire to triumph over others. Instead try to benefit them. With kindness, with courage and confident that in doing so you are sure to meet with success, welcome others with a smile. Be straightforward. And try to be impartial. Treat everyone as if they were a close friend" (p. 245). This is spoken as a human being: one who, like others, wishes to be happy and not to suffer.

The Dalai Lama's accounts of ethics is marked by its entire Independence of any theology. This is something quite remarkable. It belies the common criticism levelled at Buddhist morality, namely, that of its selfishness. In the ignorance of the Mahāyāna ideal of the *bodhisattvayāna*, it was held to be narrow and self-interested. It was argued that the good of our fellowmen, the feeling of gratitude, or of disinterested love, finds no place in it. The tradition of Mahāyāna, epitomized by Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, through Tsong-kha-pa's *Lam Rim*, especially its *bodhisattva* section, down to the Dalai Lama's such a work as the *Ethics for the New Millennium* discredits the criticism that Buddhist morality rests on pure individualism. It was taken for granted that in the absence of belief in God, the motive for morality could only be a selfish one, and even lacking in the altruism of Positivism. As the Dalai Lama presents the *bodhisattvayāna*, one finds the inculcated aspirations almost remote from sordid self-interest. The key to the liberation of the self is the quest to ameliorate the suffering of all. The Buddhist renunciation of self is for the sake of others. The conquest of desire is the road map to ethical blessedness.



It is also settled that a high standard of morals is not inseparable from a belief in God. Buddhism affords an argument to show that not only theoretical but practical morality of a high type may be realized without faith in the existence of God. The precepts with regard to patience under injuries, the cultivation of unselfishness and of sympathy, the duty of endeavouring to distresses of others, the temperance, soberness, and chastity, of resignation, of bridling the tongue and the temper, of the practice of works of mercy, of the avoidance of any ostentation of goodness (the *pāramitās* in general, and the coupling of etiquette and morality in the *Samprajanyarakṣana* chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* in particular) are all regarded and considered on the human side. This may be seen as providing sufficient motives or sanctions for the moral life. Buddhist ethics preserves the autonomy of ethics.

Two things—immortality of the self and belief in the existence of God presuppositions, and his ethics is but a categoric imperatival spelling of Christian ethics. The regulative notion of the Kingdom of Ends' looks back to the Gospel idea of the Kingdom of God' (St. Luke, 2: 14). Buddhism has no with such ideals. The concept of secular ethics arises out of a dialogue with theological conception of moral life. The Hindu view of life upholds a view of morality that is not necessarily theological. If one takes the *Gītā* as a model text, the eschatological implications of moral life are more important than the theological. The theology and morality in the *Gītā* could be held to be detachable in the long run. The *sthitaprajña* need not be a *bhakta*, if one goes by the definitions of the terms Moral excellence can be conceived independently of theological concerns.

The idea of secular ethics may appear out of place in discussing moral ideas in the Indian tradition. The Vedic *Rta*, the cosmological law is *sui generis*, and does not refer to any creator God. The Mīmāṃsā uphold the sovereignty of ethical law. *Dhamma* as the refuge is the most important of the Buddhist scheme of life. Even the concept of *dharmakāyā* had shown it to be, later in the wake of Mahāyāna, nothing else than deep compassion, massed and absolute. The Dalai Lama makes it perspicacious enough when he says that by 'spirituality' he means such "qualities of the human

spirit as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony - which bring happiness to both self and hers”, and that there is no reason why these should not be developed to a high degree ‘without recourse to any religious or metaphysical belief system’. And finally, “religion is something we can perhaps do without. What we cannot do without are these basic spiritual qualities” (p. 23). The Dalai Lama’s use of ‘spiritual’ implies some level of concern for others’ well-being. The Tibetan equivalent, *Sben-pen kyi-sem* means ‘the thought to be of help to others. Therefore, spiritual practice entails acting out of concern for the well-being of others. It can be possible only if we change “ourselves so we become more readily disposed to do so. To speak of spiritual practice in any terms other than these is meaningless” (p. 24). This is a remarkable quote

The kernel of the Buddhist discipline is to ethicize consciousness. If it succeeds in the project, *bhāvanā* would hardly afford to be irresponsible. The entire idea of generating the *bodhicitta* encompasses of it.

#### A NOTE ON BHĀVANĀ

To go by etymology, the term *bhāvanā*, implies causing to be, causing, manifesting, promoting, the act of forming in the mind, thought, etc., and has the cognate import of *dhyāna* or meditation. Derived from the root *bhū*, *bhāvanā* is a state of being, an innate property, and even any state of mind or body. *Bhāvanā* is also disposition, setting, and is ordinarily rendered as “making to become”. It connotes self-development, by means of mind control, concentration and meditation.

In the Buddhist context, *bhāvanā* is specifically employed with the four *brahmavihāras*, e.g., *maitrī-bhāvānā*, *karuṇā-bhāvānā*, and so on. These are poises of meditation, and are taken to be potent in eradicating the three basic blemishes (*akuśala*), mental states or volitions that are unwholesome, namely, greed, hate and delusion. It may be noted that meditation is an activity that leads to *prajñā*, subduing the discursive and initiating wholesome (*kuśala*) mental

states. It is a matter of discipline. Even though *bhāvanā* has levels of meaning, this much is certain that *bhāvanā*, in connection with the *brahmavihāras*, is supposed to be causally efficacious and, therefore, capable of giving rise to appropriate actions. Taking *bhāvanā* in the sense of dispositional thought, its importance in Buddhist moral psychology is something that can hardly be denied.

Nāgarjuna's *Dharma-sāra-samuccaya* (*A Dictionary of Buddhist Technical Terms*, ed. Max Müller and Wauzel, Delhi, 1984, reprint, p. 28) mentions *prajñā* to be three-fold: *śrutamayī*, *cintāmayī* and *bhāvanāmayī*. The first is wisdom obtained by study, the second by thought, and the third by meditation. Do the three poises have something to do with *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*? It ever, in the present context, it is the *bhāvanāmayī prajñā* which concerns us.

The *brahmavihāras* are emotional attitudes that we are asked to develop, and made illimitable, unlimitedly blessed (*brahma*), or *apramāna*. As *bhāvanās*, they are methods of cultivating emotions that are intentional in being directed to others, consequent upon reducing the boundary lines between oneself and other people. In our normal state we are unable to get very far with friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy or evenmindedness. The mind must acquire the refinement and detachment which only the practice of *dhyānas* can give it. The *bhāvanās* are imperatival in nature, and engender transform *kāmachanda* into *dharmachanda*.

Experience shows that one cannot possibly cultivate spiritual, even ethical life, without at the same time calling forth psychic powers and sharpening one's psychic senses. *Bhāvanā*, to that intent, is potent enough a practice in acculturating naturalistic propensities of greed, hate and delusion into friendliness, compassion and sympathetic joy, and to top it all, into even mindedness or *upekṣā*. Through the practice of *brahmavihāra*, *bhāvanā* trains one not to discriminate between oneself and others, and also reduces the sense of separateness on the part of individuals. In this respect, *bhāvanā* is a method of cultivating social emotions or sentiments or attitudes of friendliness and compassion. The other method, apropos of *Abhidharma*, is to acquire the habit of regarding whatever one thinks, feels or does as an interplay of impersonal forces, *dharmas*,

weaning oneself away slowly from such ideas as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ or ‘self’. The two methods, primarily meditational, are together taut with tension. The Abhidharmic method admonishes one to see no persons at all, while the method of *bhāvanā* cultivates relations to people as persons. A bodhisattva is to carry on with both methods at the same time. The method of *dharma*s leads to boundless contraction of the self, because everything is emptied of it, while the method of *bhāvanā*s leads to a boundless expansion of the self, because one identifies oneself with more and more living beings. *Prajñā* explodes the idea that there are any persons at all in the world, the method of *bhāvanā*s increases the awareness of the personal problems of more and more persons. The tension between the two methods is often stated in an uncompromising form, as in the famous passage from the *Diamond Sūtra*: although innumerable beings have thus been led to *Nirvāna*, no being at all has been led to *Nirvana*. Why? If in a bodhisattva the perception of a ‘being’ should take place, he would not be called an ‘enlightened being’.

Two things, we are told, are most needful to a bodhisattva, and to his practice of wisdom: Never to abandon all beings and to see into the truth that all beings are empty. The Aristotelian would hardly be happy with the tension of the polarities, the paradox and the problematic of a bodhisattva’s life and existence. Are the polarities logical contraries? Or are they contradictions? No easy answer should be forthcoming, for a bodhisattva abides in the *avitarka*, non-discursive mode of awareness through meditation. Nāgarjuna’s concept of *bhāvanāmayī prajñā* appears to encapsulate the paradox. And who doesn’t know that a paradox often awakens us to a truth that lies beyond contrary polarities?

We must not forget that a bodhisattva is fearless, vigorous, exceedingly tender, compassionate, courageous and resourceful. He is one who has vowed to take all of us to Enlightenment, not abandoning us to our fate. All beings are dear to him. What he proposes to do is to make no discrimination between himself and others, and to wait until he had helped everybody into *nirvāṇa* before losing himself into it. A bodhisattva is all-compassionate; for him it is not the case that *prajñā* is the highest, and *karuṇā*, for him, comes to rank as equal with *prajñā*. It may be fruitful in

setting free in oneself what there was to be set free, but it would be an achievement if that should be evaluated as self-centred, cold and narrow-minded. To have aimed so is not high enough. It will be rather sterile in ways and means of helping ordinary people. A bodhisattva, *apropos* of Mahāyāna, would be a man who does not only set himself free, but who is also skilful in devising the means for bringing out and maturing the latent seeds of enlightenment in others.

The polarities of *karuṇā* and *prajñā* are somewhat similar to what the *Bhāgavad Gītā* calls *sāṃkhyā* and *yoga*, and yet they are declared to be one in intent (V. 4-5), and hence the compound term *sāṃkhyāyoga* (II. Colophon). This is the *prajñāvāda* (II. 11) of the ideal man, called *sthitaprajñā*. Likewise, one could, as the *Gītā* does, say that it is only the unlearned (*bālā*) who would say that *karuṇā* and *prajñā* are *prthak*, i.e., mutually exclusive. The mutuality of *karuṇā* and *prajñā* is a sort of *advaya*, non-dual, and it had been rendered in Tantrik iconography as the bi-unity (the term is Coomaraswamy's) of *upāya* and *prajñā*. This, of course, is another story. If *upāya* comprehends *bhāvanā*, then Nāgarjuna's concept of *bhāvanāmayīprajñā* should prove exceedingly exciting.

Atiśa looked back to Nāgarjuna in invoking *bhāvanāmayīprajñā* in the *Bodhipathapradīpa*. The idea was later taken up by Tsong-kha-pa's *Lam rim*. It is made clear that a bodhisattva is a journeyman on a *path*, who gradually accomplishes his spiritual and moral intentions. It is much less a matter of doctrine. The practice is called Means or *upāya*, and the chief amongst the various ones is the Thought of Enlightenment: *bodhicitta*. The person who would enter this path must generate *bodhicitta* with its double goal, Enlightenment for oneself and benefit for others.

Tsong-kha-pa presents two alternative methods, one was handed down from Atiśa, and the other found in the texts by Śāntideva, i.e., *Śikṣāsamuccaya* and *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Atiśa's precepts consist of "seven causes and effects". The seven are as follows: perfected Buddhahood arises from the *bodhicitta*; that Thought, from altruistic aspiration; that aspiration, from compassion; compassion from love; love, from gratitude; gratitude from recollection of kindness; recollection of kindness, from seeing as "mother".

Every sentient being has sometimes or other served as one's own "mother". The point is that *bodhicitta* is conceived as having two aims, Enlightenment for oneself and deliverance for others.

Śantideva's precept is "the highest secret": changing places between oneself and another. The usual condition of holding oneself as dear must give way to holding others as dear. The change of heart comes about through cultivating the view of personality interchange. It is the interchange of feelings, taking on another's suffering, installing in him one's bliss.

Conceptual problems arising out of the meditational process are not easily solvable. In the least, there could be two hindrances: (i) the thought, "This is mine" and "That is his" is as distinct as the colours green and yellow. The contemplation could be countered by the following counter-thought in the *Sikṣāsamuccaya*: The relation-oneself-and-anotherness, like this side and the further bank of a river is false; not because of our own is that bank, the other one; for, with relation to what is there a "this side". Ego is not proved by our own self, rather in relation to what would there be the other, where the "other" is ourself.

The second hindering thought could be that "his suffering does no harm to me; why try to dispel it?" This might be countered by contemplating that in such a case one should make no provision for old age, since the suffering of the aged does no harm to the youth. It might be objected that the analogy does not hold. The old man and the youth have a single stream of consciousness, while in contrast one cannot say the same of oneself and another. It could be possible to argue back that the stream of consciousness is momentary and the set is subject to reformations. Thus, it is a similar situation and one could just as well posit oneself and another self in the case of the youth and the old man. Having in that way eliminated the wrong approach, one can attend the basic method of cultivation: *anya sambandhamsmīti niścaya kuru he manah* (VIII. 137), make sure, O mind, that I belong to the other.

It is worth one's while that the *bhāvanā* of Enlightenment has two degrees (Cf. I. 16): in the case of the one who desires to go and the one who is already on the way. The initial *bhāvanā* is *bodhipranidhicitta*, while the latter is *bodhiprasthāna*. The first

is the wish, the second is the will. The initial *bhāvanā* as a vow coheres in the stream of consciousness in all consciousness, and the practice of the *pāramitās* takes on an added significance.

There is a striking similarity between *bodhicitta* and Kant's concept of the Good Will. Both are morally invaluable, both are compared with a jewel that shines in its own light, intrinsically excellent, and summon all the powers of the mind to execute the *bhāvanā* into action. An impotent will is morally worthless. *Bodhicitta* legislates unto itself just as Kant's Good Will does. *Bodhicitta* operates in the light of *prajñā*, the Good Will *necessitates* itself from the conception of the Moral Law, the regulative image of the *Idea of Ought*.

The literature on the *bhāvanā* could be viewed as attempting to answer the question: What is a perfected man like? The texts provide four models: *arhats*, *pratyekabuddhas*, *bodhisattvas* and the *buddhas*. The texts, of course, vary in their descriptions of each type, yet the importance of the *bhāvanāmārga* is never and nowhere profaned. In point of fact, *bodhisattvacaryā* is *bhāvanācaryā*. Even if the word *bhāvanā* does not occur in a text, the imperative mood *bhāvaya* (VIII. 158) would be inevitably there. *Caryā* or unceasing practice is of such cardinal importance that a bodhisattva never indulges in thinking of his achievements, i.e., ascending the tiers or *bhūmis*. *Bhāvanācaryā* is a way of life and a life of a way.

And, finally, how is *bhāvanā* related to *prajñā*? *Karuṇā* for example, can be said to provide *prajñā* with a root in the phenomenal world. *Bodhicitta* provides *prajñā* with a motive, the vow as cause. The *upāya* provides *prajñā* with a finality. A person desiring to embark on the bodhisattva path will have to arouse *karuṇā* and then to take *bodhicitta* as a vow. The third step, i.e., *upāya* consists of the first five *pāramitās*, *dāna*, *śīla*, *ksānti*, *vīrya*, and *dhyāna*. *Upāya* must be combined with *prajñā*, the sixth *pāramitā*. The union of *upāya* with *prajñā* denotes, as Tsong-kha-pa says in his *Lam Rim*, *nirvāṇa* of no-fixed-abode. The abode or *bhūmis* are to be ascended by a bodhisattva, but he should not think that he has reached the highest realm. He is reminded of his former altruistic aspiration, and he has to begin all over again and continue

onward. Of his two aims—one for him and one for others—the latter would always remain open and ever loom unaccomplished.

The practice of the open-ended bodhisattva ideal may look exceedingly arduous, yet it can be discovered. As Spinoza reminds us, “it must be arduous, since it is found so rarely. For how could it happen that, if salvation were ready at hand and could be found without great labour, it is neglected by almost all? But all excellent things are as difficult as they are rare” (*Ethics*, p. 3. tr. G.H.R. Parkinson, Oxford, 2000).

It may be noted that like the *brahmavihāras*, the Yoga Sūtra (1.33) also speaks of the practice of *maitrī*, *karuṇā*, *muditā* and *upekṣā*. But while, according to Vyāsa, there is no *bhāvanā* and *samādhi* with respect to *upekṣā*, according to Buddhaghōṣa, in *upekṣā* alone is the fourth *Ihāna* possible and the other three *bhāvanās* culminate in *upekṣā*. As a matter of fact, while *upekṣā* means for Vyāsa indifference towards sinners, it means to Buddhaghōṣa an evenly balanced state of the mind.



## Concluding Thoughts: Buddhist Ethics

I. It may have been the case that Mahāyāna has a mystical, i.e., non-conceptual or non-discursive focus, but its teachings do not deny the need for moral relationships. Or else there could not have been the prominent figures of compassionate bodhisattvas. Mahāyāna involves a moral perspective not merely as a worldview, but directly as a system. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* itself presents a new moral gestalt. Its ethics is ensouled by a unique dynamism, symbolized by the bodhisattva, who goes on living for others. We recall that the Buddha sent forth his monks with these words: Go... out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, and for the welfare of men (*Vinayapitaka* 1.21). When the barrier of egoism is broken down, there remains nothing that can prevent us from loving others as ourselves. Here we have a worldview which justifies universal moral action, through the figure of the bodhisattva, who reaches the moral *bhūmi* by an inner mystical experience. The cooperative and altruistic moral anthropology may coexist and sometimes interact with the mystical. Taken both as moral justification and inspiration the aesthetic feeling evolves to new heights of the *bodhisattva bhūmis*.

The reference to the mystical or the intuitive dimension of moral life need not put us into alarm. Much, of course, would depend on our understanding of the term “mystical” or “intuition”. The terms have multiple usages. There is the fashionable analytical view that alleged non-inferential experiences, including the mystical, are cognitive neither of outside objects nor of the certitude or content of subjective experience. In this perspective, cognition begins only with interpretation, communication, and the concomitant subjection

to possible inferential error. This is just one view, and need not be taken as all-encompassing. Nor can the Buddhist term *prajñā* be a synonym of “intuition”.

*Prajñā* is methodical contemplation of *dharmas*. Buddhaghōṣa’s formal definition of the term is characterized by penetration into *dharmas* as they are in themselves. It destroys the darkness of delusion which covers the own-being (*svabhāva*) of *dharmas*. It has the manifestation of not being deluded. Etymologically, *prajñā* does not allow emotivity nor non-cognitivity, and connotes great mental discipline and prolonged perseverance in strenuous introspection. *Prajñā* implies that experiences should be analyzed into an interplay of impersonal forces. When one has shown the ultimate events behind the surface appearance of any datum that may present itself inside or outside our so-called personality, then one has accounted for it as it really is, i.e., one has seen it as *prajñā* sees it. The Abhidharmic analysis is not offered as a metaphysical explanation of the world, to be discussed and argued about. It is, on the contrary, presented as a practice, a method of destroying—through meditation—those aspects of common sense world which tie down our spirit. Its value is meant to be therapeutical, not theoretical. As a method it has a tremendous power to disintegrate unwholesome experience. The meditation on *dharmas* by itself alone can obviously not uproot all the evil in our hearts, but it is bound to contribute to our mental health to the extent that it may set up the habit of viewing all things impersonally. This itself is a great liberation from the habitual mode of reactive patterns of ordinary living.

Sri Aurobindo, in his *Bases of Yogā*, has well set out the effect which meditation on *dharmas* may have on our perspective. In the calm mind the substance of the mental being is still, so still that nothing disturbs it. Thoughts or activities do not arise at all *out of the mind*, they come from outside and cross the mind as “a flight of birds crosses the sky in a windless air”. It passes, disturbs nothing, leaving no trace. A mind that has achieved this calmness can begin to act, even intensely and powerfully, but it will keep its fundamental stillness, originating nothing from itself, whatever it receives is given a mental form without adding anything of its

own, calmly and dispassionately. Sri Aurobindo's account of the stilled mind can be taken as ringing the intentions of the Buddhist disciplines of *samādhi* and *prajñā*.

II. Shall we say that Buddhism is exclusively or primarily a way of *seeing*? How does it propose ways of *acting*, latently, overtly, or in both manners? Does *seeing* lack moral implications? Is it not an inward, centrifugal realization which renders morality irrelevant? It may be argued that a *weltanschauung*'s correlation with behaviour is moral, because it is prescriptively proposed as a way of viewing which one *ought* to embrace. A way of seeing is in itself an action-guide. And after a given outlook on life is accepted, it can trigger specific forms of moral conduct. Conversely, rarely would a moral system lack an ultimately prescriptive worldview. If the argument is valid, then it can be contended that *prajñā* can indeed ensoul or enliven moral conduct. Śāntideva says that *prajñā* is the basic *pāramitā*, and other *pāramitās* so become, properly so-called, only if and when they are practised from the point of view of *prajñā*, he discloses a deeper insight into moral life.

It has been said innumerable number of times that Buddhist ethics comprise a somewhat positive yet passive gestalt of self-restraint, temperance, contentment, patience, purity, humility, toleration, righteousness, reverence and benevolence. The virtues of Buddhism disclose a passive moral ethos. But an ethos can be manifested less in virtues and values to be basic than in evils which are judged most radical. This is what matters with Buddhism.

III. The fundamental Buddhist evils are hatred, delusion (*moha*) and covetousness. Delusion or ignorance is placed at the roots of immorality. Doesn't morality refer more to enlightenment or mind culture than to volition? More to wisdom than to good in itself or for others? If the regulation of one's social relations is ultimately oriented to eradication of ignorance and attainment of personal enlightenment, then morality is no morality at all, but a form of philosophical egoism, subjectively amoral. It is also argued against Buddhism that behaviour is prescribed in terms of the effects it will have on the "self" rather than on others. Anger is bad because of what it does to the person who is angry. Helping others is good because it helps the self.

This kind of consequentialist rationale for morality is not the whole story about Buddhist ethics, nor is it true either. A little patience in understanding will disclose the fact that it is less utilitarian in the derogatory sense of the term. Evil is basically wrong-viewing rather than bad. The three roots of evil are hatred, ignorance or delusion and covetousness; the last functions concretely as the ground of all evils. The terms that express the basic pervasiveness of covetousness in human life include attached craving or desire (*tanhā*), greed and avarice. Shall we say that the source of desire is only problematically reducible to ignorance? There is accentuation of detached contemplative equanimity, which may be expected to insure a proper sharing of social goods and solutions of conflicts over values and rights. Equanimity entails non-attachment also to the “self” and to mine-thine distinctions. The televolitional wish to radiate effective moral goodwill to one’s community need not be irremediably removed from a dynamic of putting that goodwill into action. The ethos of non-discriminating love or equanimity is unegoistical in itself and gets incarnated in the symbol of the compassionate bodhisattva. He is a striking personage, who delays his or her own Enlightenment to help other beings obtain it. This image is displayed as a moral ideal and altruistic model. A bodhisattva’s purpose in life is not to die for others but to live for them, again and again. In him, in Greek terminology, *thanatos* yields to *eros*. He lives, like the historical Buddha, virtuously practicing the six perfections or *pāramitās* not for himself, but for others.

The compassionate dimension may have had a lot to do with the social interpretation of Ashokan inscriptions. The third Mauryan emperor of India made a notable moral contribution. His edicts and inscriptions carved out a programme of social thrift, welfare, distribution and non-injury (Pillar Edict, VIII). Virtues especially prominent for Ashok were compassion for suffering, liberality and religious toleration (Rock Edict, XIII and Pillar Edict, VII). As for religious toleration, it may be noted that Śāntideva adds a prayer even for *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas* (X. 50). Viewed in historical retrospect, the Ashokan version of early Buddhism,

the moralization of Buddhist teaching are undoubtedly reflective of bodhisattva aspirations.

IV. Let us come back to conceptual points about the ideal man of the Mahāyāna, a bodhisattva. How does he stand to the thesis of emptiness? Before we proceed further, the mistake of assuming that the conception of a bodhisattva was a creation of the Mahāyāna should be corrected. For all Buddhists, each Buddha had been—for a long period before his enlightenment, a bodhisattva. The Sarvāstivādins had given much thought to the career of a bodhisattva. The *Abhidharmakosa* gives a description of the mentality of a bodhisattva. It is asked what personal benefits does he find in the benefit of others? It is said that the benefit of others is his own benefit. But who would believe that? It is admitted that men, devoid of pity and who think only of themselves, find it hard to believe in the altruism of a bodhisattva. But compassionate men do so easily. Sadists find pleasure in the suffering of others. But a bodhisattva, confirmed in pity, finds pleasure in doing good to others without any egoistic preoccupation. It is also added that ordinary people, by force of habit “attach themselves to so-called ‘Self’ constituted by *dharmas*, that are devoid of personality. Inversely, a bodhisattva, by a force of habit, detaches himself from the *dharmas* that go to make his so-called ‘Self’. No longer considering the *dharmas* as ‘I’ or ‘mine’, he grows in pitying solicitude for others and is ready to suffer a thousand pains for this solicitude. Apropos of the *Abhidharmakosa* account, it should be readily admitted that the idea of the Mahāyāna was formed within the older dispensation, only to be elaborated later into an ideal valid for all. The ideal man, the aim of a bodhisattva’s effort is not self-centred, cold narrow-mindedness, but all-compassionateness. He abandons the world, but not the beings in it. Initially, *prajñā* was taught as the highest, and *karuṇā* as a subsidiary virtue. In the development of the *bodhisattvayāna*, compassion comes to rank as equal with wisdom. A bodhisattva would be a man who does not only sets himself free, but who is also skilful in devising means for bringing out and maturing the latent seeds of enlightenment in others.

It is possible to conjecture that the ideal of the bodhisattva was partly due to social pressure. We have already referred to Asoka's contribution. The *Mahāsāṅghikas* had suggested a new approach. The Mahāyāna ideal was created with the greater solicitude for salvation of the many. This must have met a crisis.

V. How are we to account for the existence of the chapter on *Prajñāpāramitā* in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*? There is an opinion that the chapter IX<sup>th</sup> is an independent work. Prajñākaramati, who holds the opinion and even writes an invocation before commencing his commentary on the chapter. Whatever it is, we may bypass the debate as it does not concern our context. Rather, it appears that there is a necessary reference to the earlier chapters in the very first verse of the IX chapter: the *pāramitās* elucidated in the earlier chapters are *parikaram sarva prajñārtham*, they are of instrumental value, or attendant virtues of *prajñā*. They are of generative import (*utpādayet prajñām*). If that be so, then the discourse on the virtues can never be isolated from the thesis concerning wisdom, if at all one ardently desires cessation of suffering (*dukkha nivṛttikāmkṣaya*).

In chapter VIII the meditational traditions of *parātmasamtā* (IX. 10) and *parātmaparivartana* (IX. 120) have been recommended for cultivating altruistic attitudes. Altruism could be made possible only if the hard shell of egohood is broken by *viewing* it as hollow, ontologically dysfunctional, on the either grounds of *pratyaayasāpekṣatā* or *niṣprapañcatā*. The subtleties of the argument need not detain us. What is of moment presently is that the altruistic moral agent is not to discriminate between himself and others by reducing the sense of separateness on his part. There are two ways in which it could be achieved. The one is the culture of the social emotions such as friendliness and compassion. The other consists in acquiring the habit of regarding whatever one thinks, feels or does as an interplay of impersonal forces, weaning oneself slowly from such ideas as 'I' or 'mine' or 'self'. *Prajñā* is methodically dialectical. On the one hand, one is admonished to see no persons at all, and on the other one is asked to cultivate relations to people as persons. The meditation on *dharma*s dissolves other people, as well as oneself, into a conglomeration of impersonal and

instantaneous *dharmas*. It reduces our selfhood into five heaps, or pieces, and puts a label on them. How could there be anything now which friendliness and compassion work on? To put more bluntly, one cannot wish well to a *dharma*, or pity a mind-object or a sight-organ? Will it not lead to a certain dryness of mind, to aloofness, and to a lack of human concern? How does one find a room for *karuṇā*? Can a dysfunctional ontology be a site for building social ethics? On numerous occasions, Śāntideva employs metaphors suggesting the dissolution of the empirical show, e.g., the pranks of the daughter of a barren woman (IX. 23) or the world of experience being as illusory as a magician’s illusion (IX.9), or the persons we encounter are *māyapuruṣa* (IX. 11). *Prajñā* explodes the idea that there are persons at all in the world. On this issue, Śāntideva has been quite explicit in declaring continuants and collectivities to be false entities (IX. 101). And yet altruism is imperatival: resolve to take upon oneself sufferings of others (VIII. 161).

How is this dialectical tension to be resolved? The Aristotelean logic would not be of much help. The polarities of *samvṛiti* and *paramārtha* are both entertained to a point of delight. There is a tradition of stating polarities in an uncompromising form and leaving it at that. Zen, to be specific, excelled in teaching by riddles. A bodhisattva is a being compounded of two polar forces of *prajñā* and *karuṇā*. Sub specie *prajñā*, he sees no persons; in his compassion he is resolved to save them. His ability to combine these attitudes is the source of his greatness, and of his ability to save himself and others. We are told never to abandon all beings and to see into the truth that all things are empty. This truth, of course, is no longer a *scientific* but a *mystical* truth. It is a matter of *living* by it, less, much less indeed the object of a definite belief. We can hardly afford to forget that “When logics die, truth leaps through the eye” (Dylan Thomas).

VI. “Therefore... be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge”. These words of the Buddha in the *Digha Nikāya* (II. 110) reach the high-water mark of moral freedom and autonomy. He reputedly rejected an ethic based on heteronomous authority and urged the people to be lamps and refuges to themselves. This tradition could only live on

in dynamic tension of *prajñā*, or *samyakdr̥ṣiti*, viewing or seeing or apperceiving the vanity of existence, its construction, social or psychical, and lovingly suffering the sufferings of others.

The altruism of a bodhisattva is autonomous, it is not founded upon any metaphysical or theological principles, as it could said of the ethics of the *Bhāgavad Gitā* or the *New Testament*. We may explicate the idea a little more. An analysis of the inner or outer experience discloses the states of affair as impermanent, sorrowful and without a privileged transcendent identity. Every cognizable element of experience, inescapably and without exception, are so characterized. This may be taken to be the basic Buddhist teaching that determines its view of life and, hence, its ethics. The realization of the fundamental fact of experience is to possess the right view, *samyakdr̥ṣiti*, the first step of the Path, and the beginning of moral life. Seeing rightly, one is detached, escapes the dominion of passions, even destroys them, and with the destruction, the mind is freed. Thus, without recourse to any metaphysical or theological presupposition, relying only on empirical, analytical disclosure of the transience, and hence sorrowfulness of the objects of experience, through a culture of dispassion and right understanding, laying bare the causal nexus of the psychical occurrences in terms of sufficient and necessary conditions, the way to *Nirvāna* is sought and found. All feelings arise from sense-object-contact (*phassa paccayā vedanā*). One cannot feel secure with any object of sense and this insecurity is an unmistakable mark of suffering. The judgement that the items (*idam*) of life are sorrowful follows from the experience of their over-lapping nature. In one of his dialogues, the Buddha asks, “Is it proper to look upon that which is impermanent, sorrowful and changeable as ‘this is mine, I am this, or this is my Self?’” The answer is expectedly, “Certainly no” (*Majjhima Nikāya*, i. 232-3). The thesis of *anātma*, then, is a deduction from the fact of sorrowfulness of human existentiality. There are subtle clingings to the ‘I’ or selfhood, working as the root of suffering; and unless one detaches oneself from what one is not, suffering would persist. With estrangement from what one is not, passion fades away, and the fading away of passion is freedom.



Beginning with the right view of the three marks of existence, one shakes off all attachment, gets rid of the root cause of suffering.

The right view does not consist in the knowledge of any metaphysical or theological principle, but in the correct appraisal of existential discontent. All actions, verbal, bodily or mental, good or evil, rest on the respective right or wrong view of the person concerned. When one understands unrighteous action and root thereof, righteous action and its root, one could be spoken of as possessing the right view. And it is well-known that greed, hatred and delusion are said to be the roots of all unrighteous actions, and their opposites are the roots of righteous actions. It will have been evident that the ethical code of Buddhism is based on an empirical analysis of the nature of things, the human existentiality and its discontents. No extraneous sanctions from any other authority is appealed to. The foundation of Buddhist ethics is autonomous. This ethics is valid on its own right, whether or no there be any theory, *a priori* or theological. Irrespective of any theory, there remains birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Buddhism teaches the destruction of these in the present life itself. They are soluble through attaining discriminative knowledge (called *vijja* or *abhiññā* in Pali, and only later *prajñā*), which cannot be developed without adherence to an ethical discipline. No metaphysical speculation or *a priori* theorisation are of any avail.

Ethics—be it in the *Gītā* or the *New Testament*—are derived from metaphysical and theological views. They do talk and endorse that impermanence of worldly objects and feelings generate by sense-object-contact are sources of suffering. Detachment from pain and pleasure too are admonished. But they lean heavily on the metaphysical doctrine of the self or soul, which provides the basis for their ethical code. Neither the *Gītā* or the *New Testament* would or could entertain the thesis of *anātmā* or the vacuity of the concept. At the threshold of *pudgalanairātmya*, they would give up their empirical analysis and approach. The concept of Self plays a pivotal role in the ethics of the *Gītā* and the *New Testament*.

One might point to the fact that the true view of life, according to the *Gītā*, consists in realizing the real nature of the Self as *nitya*

and *prasanna* (II. 20, 21 and XVIII. 54). The Buddhist analysis does not disclose any such entity, even as Hume did not find it millennia later. It should be either a delusion or fiction. The *Gītā* goes on to declare that perservering yogins apperceive the *ātman*, the deluded ones do not see it (IV. 35), and it is on the basis of the knowledge of such an indestructible permanent soul that one is exhorted to discharge one's duties. Even though there is a commonality of virtues of non-injury to others, the Buddhist reason that is given is the empirical fact that all living beings as ourselves like to live and be happy, and dislike death and pain. The ethical principle of non-injury is laid down since all tremble at punishment, all fear death, to all life is dear. So comparing others with oneself, one should neither kill nor cause to kill. So says the *Dhammapada* (129 and 130). The principle is an inference, *anumāna*, derived from experience (*Anumāna Sutta* in *Majjhima Nikāya*, i. 97). When the *Gītā* admonishes the same virtue, it does so on the basis of the metaphysical concept of the all-pervading self. The perfect *yogin*, says the *Gītā*, looks upon the happiness and suffering of others as his own, because the same self, to speak metaphysically, is apperceived by him to inhabit in all the creatures of the world. The *yogin* sees the self abiding in all beings and all beings in the Self (VI. 29), the ethical principle is derived from or based on the metaphysical unity and equality of all beings: He who perceives equally everywhere in respect of pleasure and pain, comparing others to oneself (*ātmapaomyena*) is verily a perfect *yogī* (VI. 32). This is a decisive statement.

Again, the *Gītā* holds scriptures to be the authority for determining what should be done and what should not be done (XVI. 24). We could say that the *Gītā* takes recourse to different forms of intuitionism in order to establish the validity of its ethics. It invokes the help of tradition and convention (III. 20 and IV. 1, 2, and 15) for the same purpose. Buddhism, on the contrary, erects the edifice of its ethics on the fundamental facts of experience, without seeking extraneous sanctions from sources such as the metaphysical self, *Īvara*, scriptural authority, tradition and convention.

A close inspection of the Eight-fold Path reveals that the stages of the Path are connected in a causally conditional mode. *Prajñā*

leading to *vimukti* is to be attained through *samādhi* which, in its turn, requires prior purification of mind by means of moral virtue and discipline, *śīla*. A virtuous life is a preparation for attaining true wisdom. Wisdom is adorned by conduct, *apadāne sobhati prajñā* (*Anguttara Nikāya*, I. 102). The close and invariable relationship between *śīla* and *prajñā* is brought out by the remarkable statement of the Buddha: *śīlaparidhotā...prajñā, prajñāparidhotam śīlam* (*Digha Nikāya*, I. 124), i.e., wisdom is washed around with moral discipline, and moral discipline is washed around with wisdom. The co-extensionality of *śīla* and *prajñā* in the domain of the holy life obtains to such an extent that not even the Buddha is exempted from the practice of *śīla*. At no stage of the moral development of man is virtue allowed to be swamped by over-emphasised metaphysical considerations, as in some of the teachings of the *Gītā* (IV. 14 and XVIII. 17) and of the *Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad* (III. 2). At no plane of achievement does ethics lose its significance in Buddhism.

VII. Often, in discussing Buddhist ethics, references are made to such ethical theories of the West as Utilitarianism, Hedonism, Eudaimonism, Perfectionism and the ethical ideas of Kant. In mapping Buddhist ethics in the global perspective, this should be somewhat expected and unexceptionable. But it remains to be borne in mind that Western ethical theories and ideals have arisen in response to chiaroscuro of cultural and socio-economic states of affair in Europe and America from the time of the Greeks. The scenario at this end of the world has been different. Culture and ethos have been varied. Yet concepts underlying linguistic expressions can be found comparable, though with subtle differing nuances. For example, the Buddhist *karuṇā* and the Christian *charity* are similar and yet different, and their intentions too do not coincide. The one belongs to the domain of *bhāvanā*, the other calls more for action, *praxis*, rather than meditation. The respective psychologies are also never the same.

Again, let us take the term *sukha*, often rendered and understood as 'pleasure', and in haste, Buddhist ethics is assimilated to a variety of hedonism. This would be a mistaken move. Two points may be noted. It is *upekṣā*, equanimity, not pleasure *simpliciter*, that Buddhism seeks and aims at achieving. It is true that *nirvāṇa*

is spoken of as the supreme bliss (*paramam sukham*), but the description does not warrant it to be taken in any mundane sense that hedonism ordinarily concerns itself with. The Buddhist aspirant in his holy moral pursuit is said to experience an inner bliss or even happiness that is qualitatively distinct from any sensuous happiness of the world (*Digha Nikāya*, i. 73 and *Majjhima Nikāya*, III. 233). The latter form of happiness, depending as it does on the senses, is deprecated as ignoble and low. Even the inner happiness along with its opposite is to be abandoned by developing a state of perfect indifference to such hedonic qualities as pleasant or painful. It is the stilling of all volitions or the peace that is said to be blissful.

The Buddhist moral ideal suggests an approximation to Eudaimonism and Perfectionism. The moral end, apropos of Eudaimonism, is to be achieved by action and conduct, and the standard and final criterion of what ought to be is welfare. Aristotle held that well-being is founded and rooted in well-doing. A greater emphasis is laid in it on moral excellence, but if we adhere to the principle that the end of all moral action is the welfare of our fellow men, then the striving for perfection ultimately reduces itself to the principle of maximum happiness. The difference between the Buddhist moral view and Eudaimonism is subtle, and irreducibly distinct. Eudaimonism comes quite close to Perfectionism in so far as it lays great stress on the moral development of man and believes that well-being is founded and rooted in well-doing. But Buddhism enjoys, at least, a formal superiority over Eudaimonism, since its ideal of holy life transcends even the finest forms of worldly happiness. This, however, does not mean that happiness, welfare or perfection of oneself or others is ignored by Buddhist norms. These are incorporated in Buddhism only to be so sublimated into forms of holiness, transcending their ordinary mundane connotations, external consequences, attainments, and never profaning the inner motives.

VIII. Redemption from the pervasive ill and suffering of human existence is the goal of life in Buddhism. Its fundamental criterion of morality is derived from this consideration. All forms of conduct which promote man's release from suffering and tend to secure it are good, and their opposites are unwholesome. Such

a criterion takes a good account of the psychological propensities of human nature. The Middle Path avoids the extreme polarities of repression, mortification of the senses and licentious sensuality, and enjoins elevating of the mind to a stage where ordinary levels of experience get transformed into states of holiness. *Śīla* and *samādhi* are therapeutic in import, and intended to cure man's existential *dis-ease*. The discipline is based on the psychological analysis. It is not really a valid judgement that psychological ethics is peculiar only to Christendom, as Martineau had once asserted (*Types of Ethical Theory*, Vol. I, p. 14).

It is a fact of psychology that the spring of moral conduct is the will (with apologies to Gilbert Ryle. Hume somehow retained the concept in Book II of his *Treatise*, but Ryle dissolved it). The willed or volitional acts alone are ethically significant. Voluntary actions, those willed by the agent alone, are either morally good and bad. Volition being the spring of moral action, behavioral actions have secondary ethical significance. What one wills or thinks will have primary moral value. It is the motive, a little more than the intention, that is ever under the Buddhist moral notice. The *Dhammapada* opens with the assertion that all mental states are preceded by the will, led by the will and made by the will.

It then follows that the root (*mūla*) of all meritorious and demeritorious (*kuśala* and *akuśala*) actions lies in the inner purity or impurity of the mind. We cannot call an act morally worthy or unworthy merely on the basis of its external consequences without taking into consideration the inner motive from which it arises. Thus, the consequentialist or the utilitarian interpretation of ethics in Buddhism is somewhat shallow and quite uninformed. The roots of meritorious and unmeritorious actions, expressed or harboured within, are traced back to three unwholesome states of mind, *rāga*, *dveṣa* and *moha*, i.e., attachment, hatred and delusion. These are spoken of as *dis-eases* and require to be healed. The entire culture of *bhāvanā* or meditation on lovingness and friendliness, etc., are intended as remedial in curing and engendering moral health. They are salvific, and deliver one from egoism, that is, the view that evolves around the delusive idea of the self. The cultivation of socially harmonious emotions are commended on moral grounds,

and are esteemed as contributing to freedom of the mind, *ceto bimutti*. As bondage or release is the release of our own wrong or right actions, the roots of these actions are considered the roots of bondage and release. The moral worth of an action is to be decided in terms of its being conducive to or subversive of *Nirvāṇa*. such actions that lead to the conquest of attachment, hatred and delusion are morally commendable, and those that are bad to their promotion are evil, and accordingly, a great emphasis is laid on their eradication. One has to see for oneself; self-reflection can only tell one if one's actions are prompted by attachment, hatred or delusion. The mind is imaged as a mirror wherein one should introspectively see whether one's action is aimed at the good of oneself and others. Two points may be noted in the context: (a) there is a decisive statement that *nirvāṇa* is *rāgaḥaya*, *dveṣaḥaya* and *mohaḥaya* (*Samyutta Nikāya*, IV, 251 and 261).

(b) The image of the mirror is intended to drive home the idea of *paryavekṣana* (*pacca vekkhana* in Pali), the introspective nature of moral awareness in Buddhism. The point is that the mind is as though a mirror, and having reflected therein thoroughly one should decide whether an action, bodily, verbal or mental is to be done, and ascertain and realize if the proposed course of action would lead to one's obstruction or harm (*byābādhāya*) or to the obstruction or harm of others, or to that of both. If that be so, then the action would be demeritorious, entailing suffering and productive of pain. No action of such a description ought to be undertaken. On the other hand, if reflection discloses that the intended action would be conducive neither to the obscuration or harm of oneself, nor to that of others and nor to that of both, it should be esteemed meritorious, entailing joy and happiness and, hence, it is right to be performed (*Majjhima Nikāya*, I, 415-6). The criterion of morality should not be hastily adjudged as either enlightened egoism or altruistic consequentialism. In the Buddhist usage, *sukha* is a synonym of *hita* (as the classic *Vinaya*, i. 21 expression: *bahujanma hitāya bahujana sukhāya*). There has been a long tradition of distinguishing *preya* and *śreya* in the *Upaniṣads*, which Buddhist moral thought was heir to. The *Dhammapada* (75) too declares that the path of worldly gain and pleasure and the one

that leads the supreme end of *Nirvāṇa* are different, and hence one should cultivate discrimination. Happiness, interchangeably with the good of others, is the principle of morality in Buddhism. This idea is echoed resoundingly by Śāntideva when he says that altruistic thoughts accumulate measureless virtue or moral merit (*aprameyana puṇyena*, i. 21), the culture of *bodhicitta* is intended for selfless benevolence (*jagaddhite*, III, 23), and the idea reaches its zenith in the *pariṇāmnā* section (X. 41) of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. For a fuller realization of the psychological propensity of man in seeking for happiness and avoiding pain, Buddhism lays down a simple test of morality: comparing others to oneself, one should rise over the naturalistic inclinations of attachment, hatred and delusion, and do whatever is worth doing (*śīla*) informed by the light of *prajñā*.

IX. There is a basic difference between the Eastern and the Western approaches to morality. Hegel, for example, insisted that character is revealed by movement. In *Phenomenology of Mind* (tr., J. B. Brillie, London, 1949, p. 349) we find Hegel saying that the true being of a man is his act; individuality is real in the deed. One may even go back to Goethe's *Faust* (Part One) where Faust meditates on St. John's Gospel (verse no. 1) and feels uneasy with the statement that in the beginning there was the Word (*Logos*), and ventures to restate it as: In the beginning there was the Deed. Even Wittgenstein found Goethe convenient for formulating his theory of meaning in use. This is but a reflex of the problem of the relationship of thought and action. Another sustained effort in the direction of understanding the issue was Stuart Hampshire's *Thought and Action*.

However, the Eastern approach to ethics found it needful to look into the mind in order to ascertain the moral worth of actions. The spring of actions lies hidden in the recesses of the mind, and unless they are taken care of, no judgement on overt actions can be made in a certain manner. And this is no easy job, and even the positivist David Hume—before proceeding to consider the passions in Book II of his *Treatise*—pointed to the domain of moral psychology as “those immense depths of philosophy” (*Philosophical Works*, Vol. I, ed. Green and Grosse, 1964, p. 544). This humility has been



begged off by most writers on ethics in the West. To be happy, Hume tells us, “the passion must be benign and social; not rough or fierce.... Who is to compare rancour and animosity, envy and revenge, to friendship, benignity, clemency, and gratitude?” (“*The Sceptic*”, Green and Grose, p. 220). A student of Buddhist ethics will find in Hume a favourable and convenient point of departure, despite the differences. Bacon’s idea of setting affection against and to master one by another was there with Hume. The idea of contrary passions is an important insight. No less significant is his therapeutic phrase, borrowed from Cicero, “medicine of the mind” (“Of Suicide”). “Perfect tranquillity”, says Hume in the *Treatise*, “is to be the end of the passional life in moderation”. There are ideas similar in intent, though different in implications and presuppositions from Buddhism. The point is that moral psychology is an important ingredient and prerequisite for ethics, if it be not sought to be founded upon metaphysical or *a priori* presuppositions.

Moral psychology in the context of Buddhist ethics has had a long career. Beginning with the great dialogues of the Buddha, the Abhidharmic literature has been full of analytical insights into the workings of the human mind. From Buddhaghosa to Āsanga, and through Vāsubandhu, Kamalaśīla and Ratnākaraśānti, the operations of the mind, the inner methodical mental orientation *yoniśo manaskāra*, have been studied in a deeply sustained manner. The main task has been of teaching meditation to get over the hurdle of what, in Buddhism called, the Realm of Desire, with its lust, hatred and delusion. The theory is that by calming the mind, one may transcend the Realm of Desire as an inward process. In this direction, the *Bodhisattva* section of Tsong-kha-pa’s *Lam Rim Chen Mo* is a masterpiece of moral psychology. We propose to take a brief look at its contents.

Tsong-kha-pa takes off from Aṭiṣa’s setting forth three religious degrees of persons. The superior is he who completely desires the right cessation of all the suffering of others, i.e., a bodhisattva. Tsong-kha-pa tells us that a bodhisattva is not distinguished from a *śrāvaka* or a *pratyekabuddha* by a viewpoint or any doctrine. As far as *prajñā* is concerned, there is no difference between Hinayāna



or Mahāyāna. They are both distinguished by practice. In the case a bodhisattva the practice is the *means* (*upāya*), and the chief *means* is the *bodhicitta*. It is the door to Mahāyāna.

A bodhisattva generates a double goal, Enlightenment for oneself and benefit for others. Tsong-kha-pa presents two alternate methods of compassion as an exercise of the mind: one which was handed down from Atīśa, and the other that is found in Śāntideva's texts, *Sikṣāsamuccaya* and *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. For Atīśa, perfected Buddhahood arises from *bodhicitta*, and that from altruistic aspiration, aspiration arises from compassion; compassion from love; love from gratitude; gratitude from recollection of kindness; recollection of kindness, from seeing as "mother". The aspirant reflects in meditation that all the uncountable rebirths are possible through a mother's loving care. Every sentient being has some time or the other served as one's own "mother". Thus the meditator first vividly sees his own mother, and through her passes beyond all bounds of love for all the sentient beings. Having compassion through realizing the sufferings of all sentient beings, the meditator then aspires to free them from suffering and to bring them happiness, as one wishes to do so for one's mother. Hence, altruistic aspiration expands into the state of *muditā* or sympathetic joy with all the happiness accruing to the sentient beings. It is possible to surmise that Atīśa has made an innovative use of the image of mother in the Pali *Metta Sutta* itself.

As for Śāntideva's view of personality interchange, or for that matter, of feelings is concerned, Tsong-kha-pa has significant points to make. He refers to Śāntideva's distinction between *bodhipraṇidhi citta* and *bodhiprasthāna citta*, and remarks that implies a true conversion of the mind. We have already noted that the first five *pāramitās* are the means, while the sixth *prajñā* is the finality. All the *pāramitās* are necessary for the moral life of a bodhisattva, and they are to be practiced simultaneously. The six *pāramitās* are the chief kind of bodhisattva instruction.

Tsong-kha-pa has explained the *pāramitās* in his own unique fashion. Śāntideva brings out the implication of *dāna* in terms of *nirvāna*: *sarvatyāgaśca nirvāṇam* (III. 112). If one has to renounce everything, best it be given to the sentient beings. *Dāna* includes

giving of the Law (*dharma*), teaching it without error; giving of security against fear; giving of material things. When a bodhisattva gives, he transfers his merit to other sentient beings, and he has the wisdom-eye to see through the illusion of the gift, the giver, and the receiver. *Śīla* is the abstinent thought that averts the mind from anything involving harm to another. Śāntideva says that when the abstinent thought is achieved, *śīla* is perfected: *labdhe virati citte tu śīla pāramitā mata* (V. 11). The person who falls from *śīla* is impotent even in what benefits himself, he cannot benefit others either. *Śīla* is threefold: the *śīla* of restraints, of a gathering a virtuous nature, and of acting for sentient beings. The *śīla* of gathering a virtuous nature means paying attention to all virtues associated with the six *pāramitās*, developing those not yet developed, and guarding and enhancing those already developed. The *śīla* of acting for the aim of sentient beings means paying attention to the aims of the various kinds of sentient beings, and pursuing them in a sinless manner.

*Kṣānti* is the forbearance of not retaliating in any case to another's harm-doing, the acceptance of suffering, and the unshakable conviction in the Law. Firstly, one cannot kill all the uncountable enemies that one may have. But when angry thought is slain, all enemies are slain. Anger is looked upon as a flash of fire that destroys all accumulated merit of *dāna* and *śīla*. Secondly, *kṣānti* as the acceptance of suffering refers to the first Noble Truth. Suffering at the personal level accomplishes no great aim. But ecstatic suffering that dispels the suffering of the whole world is something great. In its third aspect, *kṣānti* as conviction is realizable in the sense of both *pudgala* and *dharma nairātmya*.

*Vīrya pāramitā* is virtuous perseverance. Some texts proclaim it to be the chief among the host of virtues, because based thereon one subsequently attains that host. *Vīryapāramitā* can be threefold: the armoured striving, the striving that amasses virtuous natures, and the striving which performs the aim of sentient beings. The first presents a bodhisattva in a heroic form. He is patient and confident for the sentient beings, he does not desire to become a Buddha in a short time. Having donned such an armour, he practices the six *pāramitās*, and performs the aim of the sentient beings. A

striving bodhisattva is endowed with conviction, steadfastness, joy and giving up. These are called favourable circumstances for striving. Longing is said to form the basis for striving, and as such it is identified with conviction in the Law, which is the root of all virtuous natures. Steadfastness supports striving, and ensures that it will not swerve from the goal. Joy is present from the beginning of striving. Persons do not give up an activity that gives joy to them. So also with striving. It can be given up if need be, and then be resumed to reach higher than before. It is a much needed moral disposition.

The nature of *vīryapāramitā* is somewhat unique amongst the *pāramitās*. It is present with all the six. The virtue of determined effort or striving is pervasive, since no *pāramitā* can be perfected without it. As one rightly compares, *vīrya pāramitā* is like a river that flows day and night, year after year. So are we to practise virtues gently and constantly. One is to make a firm decision, and persevere till the goal is reached. The *Kathopaniṣad* calls one not only to arise but also to be *awake* till the highest end is achieved. In order to tread the Path it is necessary to be energetic and strenuous, not to give to weakness, and to keep one's resolutions strong. *Vīryapāramitā* looks back to the seventh step, *Sammnā vāyāma* of the Eight-fold Path.

Tsong-kha-pa devotes a major section of the *Lam rim*, under the heading “Calming”, for the means of engaging in the cultivation of meditation or *dhyāna*. *Dhyāna* can be various in terms of its essential nature, i.e., the virtuous one-pointed mind fixed without straying away from the meditative object. It has varieties in terms of its results as well. the point in the context is that a bodhisattva having himself mastered meditation then installs another in it. This is the giving of meditation. *Dhyāna* helps us on our path and prepare us for the realisation of *parātmasamatā*, the knowledge of the equality of oneself and one's neighbour and of the substitution of one's neighbour for oneself. This is, in fact, the realization of non-ego.

The essential nature of *prajñā* is the analysis of the nature of an examined entity. Tsong-kha-pa calls it ‘Clear Vision’. Nāgarjuna asks us to hold on to *prajñā*, and describes it as the

root of all virtues. We have already referred to his classification of *prajñā* consisting of hearing, of pondering, and of cultivation. Tsong-kha-pa adds that *prajñā* can be of three kinds: that which understands the *paramārtha*; that which understands *samvṛti*, and which understands what will serve the purpose of sentient beings.

*Prajñā* is the efficient cause of Enlightenment, effected by an intuitive awakening. It is the supreme virtue. Its complete possession is the same as *Nirvāṇa*. wisdom practised with *bodhicitta* motivation is perfection of wisdom. *Prajñā* is a virtuous mind that functions mainly to dispel doubt and confusion by understanding its object as it really is. It is unique in inducing peace of mind by clearly distinguishing what is virtuous and should be practised from what is non-virtuous and needs to be avoided. *Prajñā* provides virtue ethics with vision. Without *prajñā* the five *pāramitās* would be blind. Buddhists grant that the truths of Buddhism were discovered by the Buddha in the course of his meditations. Thus, meditation has a paramount role in Buddhism for indicating man's own ability to attain to truth. Accordingly, the two *pāramitās*, *dhyāna* and *prajñā*, form a special set. This implies that a direct realization of the ultimate truth can only be attained by *prajñā* that is conjoined with *dhyāna* or tranquil abiding. The mind has to be trained and matured for *prajñā* by *dhyāna*, otherwise it lies deeply buried under a heavy load of discursive understanding.

X. Morality is based on responsibility. In Buddhism, the centre of gravity lies with the individual. What makes a man blessed is not belief, but the becoming conscious of reality, viewed from within. It is empiricism with a difference viewing truth from within that only furnishes proof of any truth. Hence, truth must disclose upon the path of inner experience. The Buddha always points to the *way*, the method to attain truth. It is not abstract truth, but the lived one that saves. It is the *method* that matters. And the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is a treatise on method for securing or realizing ethical wholesomeness in our thoughts and actions. The practice of *pāramitās* is the path.

There is much in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* that makes one look back to the Eight-fold path, and this holds true of the literature of this *genre*. It may be argued that the Eight-fold Path belongs to classical Buddhism, while the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is a later work

of Mahāyāna persuasion. But the argument is futile in the sense that the cleavage between Theravāda and Mahāyāna has never been firmly established. Sarvāstivādin Vinaya is followed in Tibet, and who would abjure the linkage between Buddhaghoṣa's *Viśuddhimagga* and Vāsubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*? How is one to account for Tsong-kha-pa's exegesis of the *brahmavihāra* in his *Lam Rim*? Even the concept of bodhisattva is not a Mahāyāna invention, and there can be no doubt as regards that. Even the Buddha was a bodhisattva prior to his Enlightenment. The *Jātaka* narratives are episodes in the lives of bodhisattvas. The paradigm of course, is Śākyamuni himself, and the ideal which he followed as a bodhisattva, specifically, morality (*śīla*), giving (*dāna*) and sacrifice (*tyāga*), and their necessary concomitant: merit (*puṇya*). It was only a matter of time that Śākyamuni the bodhisattva became Śākyamuni the Buddha. It is but natural that the attributes of the one tend to glide with those of the other. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* can unexceptionably be reckoned as a bodhisattva text, speaking of the ideal is always in the context of *the* bodhisattva. The bodhisattva ideal is derived from the Buddha. Reinterpretation of ideals is a natural historical process. There will always be those who are inclined to follow the old tradition, and refuse to accept new innovations. It could have been the case that the *prajñā* tradition developed alongside with the *śīla* tradition. Mahāyāna has been revolutionary in distinguishing from the traditional interpretation. Now the ideal was that of the bodhisattva as an *exemplar* of the path to be followed, and in view of the practical outlook, the bodhisattva became more important than the Buddha. It could also have been the case that the ancient distinction between monk and layman was, if not dissolved, somewhat erased, and lay *bodhisattvas*, man or woman, became a possibility. We are not concerned with the history of Buddhism as a religion, but with the conceptual mapping of the *natural* evolution of an ideal in a community.

Notwithstanding the interpretation of the teachings—the old and the new—it will not be untrue to say that Buddhism throughout its history has had the unity of an organism.

XI. A bodhisattva, in his ethical career, is said to ascend to *bhūmis* or terraces of progress. How do the *bhūmis* correspond to

the *pāramitās*? Śāntideva does not explicitly mention the hierarchy of *bhūmis*, which are connotative of a bodhisattva's moral maturity and achievements in the practice of ethical virtues. A correlation of the practice of *pāramitās* and the ascension to *bhūmis* may be made in the following manner.

<i>Bhūmis</i>	<i>Pāramitās</i>
1. <i>Pramuditā</i>	<i>Dāna</i>
2. <i>Vimalā</i>	<i>Śīla</i>
3. <i>Prabhaṃkarā</i>	<i>Kṣānti</i>
4. <i>Arciṣmatā</i>	<i>Vīrya</i>
5. <i>Sudurjaya</i>	<i>Dhyāna</i>
6. <i>Abhimukhā</i>	<i>Prajñā</i>

In some texts ten *pāramitās* are mentioned corresponding to the ten *bhūmis*. Śāntideva does not mention *dāna* and *śīla pāramitās* separately, rather, he clubs them together under *samprajanya-rakṣaṇa* (chapter V of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*). However, he refers to the idea of *bhūmi* (IV. 11), saying that one is delayed, owing to failing in one's attainment of the graded *bodhisattvapadas*, as also the *bhūmis* are called. The names of *bodhisattvapadas* vary in various texts. The first step is called *Muditā*, the second, *vimalā*. Sometimes the feminine forms of the names have been preferred by the writers. This is of no great moment for us. What is significant is the idea that the path is graded, and that one can make progress only if one practices with perseverance and vigilance. Of the rest of the *bhūmis* we may allocate the *pāramitās* as under:

7. <i>Dūrangamā</i>	<i>upāya</i>
8. <i>Acalā</i>	<i>praṇidhāna</i>
9. <i>Sādhumati</i>	<i>bala</i>
10. <i>Dharmamegha</i>	<i>prajñā</i>
11. <i>Tathāgata</i>	<i>buddha-buddhi</i>

Ascended thus by the aspirant, the *bodhisattva-pāramitā-bhūmis* are fulfilled. But what is of the greatest moment is that a bodhisattva does not conceive of himself, saying that I have fulfilled the ten *pāramitās*. Nor does *bodhi* conceive itself, saying I am *dharmakāya*. It is *apraṭiṣṭhita*, it is this state that Tsong-kha-pa referred to as *nirvāna* of no fixed abode. He who attains *bodhi* through non-attainment is a bodhisattva. *Asmī-māna* does not occur

to him. He does not say, I possess *bodhi*. Nor does *aham-māna* occur to him towards others. He lives an open and unobstructed life, all *āvaraṇas* having been removed.

It may also be added in this context that vehicles such as *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha* and *mahāyāna* are accounted for in terms of the *vāsanās* of the beings, neither of them cancel or cause the others to disappear. The *dharmakāya* cherishes all the *yānas*, and fulfills and integrates them all. In itself it is *apraṭiṣṭhita*. This might remind one of the *Gītā* phrase *acalapratiṣṭha* (II. 70) by way of a contrast in the conception of the Absolute. That, of course, is another story.

In a similar manner, we may relate the stages of the Eight-fold Path to a bodhisattva's moral career. Every item of the Path is directed towards *bodhi*, otherwise there would be just moral formalism. A *dṛṣṭi* could be called *samyak* only if it tends towards *bodhi*. Buddhism is not merely *śīla*. Moral formalism, *śīlabba taparāmsā* was condemned by the Buddha. It is viewed as a sort of immoderation, and *śīla* is essentially moderation. The generation of the wisdom-heart or *bodhicitta* marks the beginning of a bodhisattva's career. It could be said to parallel *samyakdṛṣṭi* as well. The *samyak* aspect can be said to be apprehended on the basis of *bhāvanā*, and dispelling false thoughts or *abhūta parikalpa* he works towards *sambodhi* (See *Khotanese Buddhist Texts*, H. W. Baily, ed. London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1951).

XII. Elucidation of the notion of *prajñā* has been problematic, in spite of its great importance in the bodhisattva discourse. It appears that it is something that is entailed by the notion of *samyakdṛṣṭi*, of course by travelling along the *bhavanāmārga*. The minimum that we can safely say is that *prajñā* is something which was attained by the Buddha and is also attainable by a bodhisattva.

*Prajñā* is opposed to *avidyā*, as these two are radically opposed modes of awareness. What is the object upon which the radical opposition focused? That should be "The Four Noble Truth". Isn't it a designative expression for "things as they are"? Getting to know things as they are or failing to do so spells the difference between salvation and a eons of suffering. The spiritual stakes here are of the highest order. Hence, the terms have been subject to the closest scrutiny.



*Dṛṣṭi* refers most particularly to belief in the false notion of a permanent self, and is held to be destroyed by attainment of the *darśana-mārga*. This may not be enough, for the extended practices of the *bhāvanā mārga* are also to be there. *Dṛṣṭi*, if it is not *samyak*, is judgemental, discriminatory, e.g., ‘x is not y’, and judgements could be either incorrect or correct. In the former case we have *mithyādrṣṭi*, and *satkāyadrṣṭi*, i.e., belief in a permanent self, is the most pernicious of *mithyādrṣṭis*. A correct view would be one if it is made in accord with the Buddha’s teachings, namely, that a self so-called is nothing but the five *skandhas*, it is characterized by suffering, it is impermanent. That would be the paradigm of *samyakdrṣṭi*. We may venture to suggest that *samyakdrṣṭi* is the functional equivalent of *prajñā*. In the practice of *bhāvanā mārga*, the presence of *samyakdrṣṭi* is to be increasingly felt, and gradually the mind matures in non-discrimination or free of concept formation. All that we may suggest is that *samyakdrṣṭi* is the highest form of insight prior to the *bhāvanā mārga*. Its application, together with that of the other limbs of the Eight-fold Path, entails the eventual eradication of all emotional attachments to the five *skandhas*, and only then would *prajñā* emerge.

A bodhisattva does not stop short of *puḍgalanairātmaya* in the manner stated above. He is said to embrace *dharmānairātmaya* as well. The objects of *samyakdrṣṭi* must also be left behind as well. In this matter, Mahāyāna was ahead of Vaibhāṣika in bringing out the radical implications of the Buddha’s parable of the raft.

XIII. As for the bodhisattva vows, the vows and their implementation, two positions are possible, one conservative and the other, liberal. It is customary to criticize the *arhat* and *pratyekabuddha* ideals in comparison with the expansive altruism of the bodhisattva. A bodhisattva is said to acquire and begins using his knowledge and power to help others. The conservative position would be that although good conduct and beneficial actions naturally accompany his pursuit of full Enlightenment, saving other being does not become his primary concern until after winning omniscience. A view such as this occurs in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñā pāramitā Sūtra* (377). Śāntideva appears to take the liberal stance in holding the belief that for a bodhisattva



saving all beings constitutes an essential part of his training. Apropos of the conservative stance an *arhat* and a bodhisattva do not differ in their intention and priorities till their enlightenment. They would run the risk that they might become more interested in their own pursuit of enlightenment than in the needs of all beings. Eventually, they may neither survey nor respond to their suffering. Even worse, when they win Tathāgatahood, they might be inclined to carefree non-action. As per the liberal interpretation of Śāntideva, implementation of a bodhisattva's vows is both a part of his practice and the goal.

This is all the difference between a pragmatist and an altruist. The conservative view is pragmatic. A bodhisattva's attitude towards the others helps him to advance towards Enlightenment, that he will use the benefits of his superior knowledge and power to aid others. "After I have won full enlightenment," so goes his thought. On the liberal interpretation the altruist a bodhisattva's practice of detachment means a mental state rather than physical separation from other beings. With Śāntideva, the virtue of charity, *dāna*, assumes a greater importance, *vis-à-vis* the elitist conservative view. A bodhisattva gives material gifts designed to free men from social and economic limitations, such as poverty, so that they can pursue good acts and eventually win *nirvāna*. Consequently, his attitude towards suffering changes. On the conservative side, the awareness of suffering may lead him more vigorously pursue enlightenment as a means of relieving suffering. He will be prepared to accept suffering as a part of the path. On the liberal assessment, he may either vicariously assume the suffering of others or appear to suffer. In both cases, suffering is assumed in order to help beings, not as a means of personal advancement. This attitude is nowhere expressed in more excellent and moving a manner than in the *parināmanā* section of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

Śāntideva writes from a different point of view. He shows a major concern in the ways of helping beings, accepts the classical Mahāyāna thesis, and then extends it to include ways that a bodhisattva helps others. He may give his life to satisfy the needs of men, and through his gift he personally advances along the path. Both the giver and the recipient benefit from the act. He

does not merely teach, but also takes the much more active role of establishing and maturing beings in beneficial practices and states. We may think of the reformulations and pressures from the community in bringing about the shift from elitist conservatism of the bodhisattva ideal to the paradigm of an active altruist.

XIV. In Buddhism, the process of knowing (psychology) and the formulation of the known (philosophy) are indivisibly bound up with each other. The Buddha teaches the way of practice in which the given form of consciousness may be overpassed. Every individual must himself tread the path, for only the knowledge that is won by experience has the living, i.e., life-giving value. The centre of gravity lies within the individual. What makes man blessed is not belief, the acceptance of a definite dogma, but the becoming conscious of reality. Viewed from within, as a form of reality, Buddhism is empiricism of a unique order. Truth is a condition of our mind; we cannot abstract the truth from the mind, just as we cannot abstract the health from the body. Both are relations that can be experienced *subjectively* only. Nobody can ever explain what is health as such. But we may be told the method of how to obtain and to preserve health. It is the *method* that matters. It is the method behind Buddhist ideas and ideals that is important. *Caryā* and *mārga* are inalienably entwined. *Bodhisattvahood* is a matter of *caryā*, and ethical life consists in following the eight-limbed *mārga*. Morality is just not *śīla*, it is the practical expression of *samyakdr̥ṣṭi*; it is not the cause but the outcome of our spiritual attitude. The harmony between the attitude and our actions, our inner truthfulness is the real meaning of *śīla* or morality. In following the *mārga*, we give up all thoughts of ‘I’ and ‘mine’. This giving up does not make us poorer, it actually makes us richer, since what we renounce and destroy are the walls that kept us imprisoned; and what we gain is supreme freedom. This freedom is the experience of an infinite relationship: every individual is essentially connected with all that exists. We embrace all living beings in our own mind, and take part in their deepest experience and share their sorrow and joy.

The Buddhist Path charts out a revolution in conventional views. The *nairātmya* idea does not deny the existence of things,

only their permanence, and more importantly, that the ‘I’ or ‘self’ is not an absolute magnitude, but a designation for the relation limitation. The *nairātmya* idea does not make the world less real. This exclusively consists in action. Nowhere is there stagnation, nowhere any limitation. Nothing exists for itself or separately for itself. By shifting the centre of gravitation from the ‘ego’ to the ‘non-ego’, we find within ourselves such abundance that are denied to us as long as we seek it in the phantasmagoria of an eternal world or of a separate little ego. Buddhist ethics does not entertain such ideas as opposing or changing the ‘world’ or of creating something in contrast to it, something entirely new and existing only in some sort of idealistic imagination. It is simply a question of removing hindrances which prevent us from seeing reality as it *is*. It is only the saint, the wise one, the bodhisattva who can raze to the ground all the barriers within himself, and thus become conscious of reality. There are, it is held, root-causes, *hetus* of psychic attitudes of all morally unwhole one acts of consciousness. These are mentioned in positive terms, *lobha*, *dveṣa* (or *dosa*) and *moha*. They are the *leit-motif* of the world-concert, the three forms of *avidyā*. Buddhist ethical teachings and psychology are dedicated to annihilation of them by *negative* root-causes *alobha*, *adveṣa* and *amoha*, greedlessness, hatelessness and non-delusion. There are *negative* in so far as they negate and eliminate the original positively unwholesome *hetus* or hindrances. Ethical life consists in overcoming of the motives, naturalistic predispositions of character, a revaluation of ordinarily conditional values or habitual prejudices. The habitual prejudices are the hindrances and designated as unwholesome, it is these that make us sick, or morally ill. If such a state is attained as when the prejudices do not make their appearance any more, the moral agent become whole, unified within himself, mentally healthy. In the absence of any idea of *sin*, there is only error, mistaken *drṣṭi*, delusion. Every thought and act connected with it creates suffering. Only the overcoming of illusion, entailing *alobha* and *adveṣa* (or *adosa*) and *amoha* spells detachment and sympathy in world-embracing measures. A bodhisattva not only strives for rooting out the *bad* portion of human qualities, with the *good* ones to be left over. In

terms of the scintillating phrase, he *has done what was to be done*, all polarities are removed in him, he has become *enlightened*. This may be a distant, far-away, almost incomprehensible ideal for us, we who are ordinary mortals. But equivalently, he will be one of us, holding us our by our hand, as we tread with faltering steps and walk along in love and sympathy. That is the beauty of the ideal.

## Afterword

Let me stop at this point. There will be no end to this investigation. Here and now, this is still a moment for investigation, not the moment of truth. There will be no end to this exploration.

The work presented here is not to be regarded as a transcript of a fully developed thought. If I could ever reach such a moment of perfection I should have further delayed.

I am inclined to believe that thought does not escape the law of impermanence. The full-stop at the end of the last page is not the end of a quest. I am handing this text over to my readers only in recognition of the endless need for improvement.

May any auspicious power (*punya*) generated by writing this work be for the benefit of all those who were connected with this project, all who read this book, and indeed all beings.

## Postscript

I have said little or nothing about the author of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, since it did not form part of the Project undertaken. Nor is there a content-wise statement of the ten chapters of the text. Usually, the *pāramitās* are said to be ten, but these are often collapsed into six. Again, Sāntideva has some novelty in dealing with *dānapāramitā*. The glory of *dāna*, in Buddhist discourses, is sung in prolific utterances and highest possible terms. Our author, while agreeing to the view that *dānapāramitā* is the harbinger of Buddhahood, does not devote a separate chapter for elucidating the virtue. On the contrary, he mentions and explains *dānapāramitā* in the third and tenth chapters. The *śīlapāramitās* is discoursed in two chapters, namely, the fourth and the fifth. As for *dānapāramitā*, there are reasons for it. The very act of *parināmaṇa* itself is an offering of one's merits accrued from the perfection in practicing the *pāramitās*. The concept of *dāna* at once strikes at the root of the attachment to one's possessions, and thereby at the root of the idea of an owner self as well. We cannot keep the one and give away the other.

The six *pāramitās*, when perfected, go to build up the reserve of merits, *puṇyasambhāra*, while perfection of *prajñā* leads to *jñānasambhāra*, the reserve of wisdom or insight into the nature of things as they really are. Both are equally needed, neither *pāramitās*, sans *prajñāna*, nor *prajñāna* sans the *pāramitās* will ever do. The biunity of both is the secret of a *bodhisattva*'s life and mission. The *pāramitās* are the *upāya* for the attainment of *prajñā*. To vary the terminology, the six *pāramitās* are denoted by one great word of Mahāyāna ethics, i.e., *karuṇā*. *Karuṇā* and *prajñā*

are to be in mutual embrace, as found depicted in the esoteric iconography and paintings of *Vajrayāna* persuasion. Neither alone is effectual in bringing about the moral aspiration of Buddhahood. Two streams of thought mingle in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. The aspect of *upāya* is projected in accordance with the teachings of Maitreyañāth and Asanga. While in deliberating on *prajñā*, *Sāntideva* has modelled his thoughts on those of Nāgarjuna, Āryadeva and *Candrakīrti*. There are echoes of the *Abhisamayālamkāra* and the *Sūtrālamkāra* as well, as of the *Ratnāvalī* for the arousal and nurturing of the *bodhicitta*. In point of fact, *Sāntideva*'s two paradigms of *parātmasamātā* and *parātmaparivartana* are taken over from the *Ratnāvalī*. Such has been the concourse of traditions in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Its another name is lineage.

One of the most fascinating ideas that I found in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* may be termed as an ethic of pride. The word used in the text (VII. 49, 55-59) is *māna*, which I take to be pride, and this should be unexceptionable.

Pride is usually derided in ethical and spiritually-oriented literature. Pride is juxtaposed with humility, which is praised as a virtue. Hume dismissed humility as a monkish virtue, and gives an analysis of pride in Book II of *A Treatise of Human Nature*. We learn from Hume that the object of pride is the self of the proud person, and further that it is an agreeable feeling, and that one feels proud of things that are somehow or other associated with one's self. This conceptual point would be of help in understanding *Sāntideva*'s ethics of pride.

## I

At the hands of *Sāntideva*, *māna* has both positive and negative senses. As per the *Dharmasamgraha* (LXIX), pride is one of the twenty-four *upakleśas* or secondary defilements; it is secondary, since it is derivable from *kleśas* proper, i.e., greed, hatred and delusion, of which the first two are affective, while the third is cognitive.

In VII. 56, *Sāntideva*, has recourse to ahistorical device in

dealing with the two senses of pride. In verse 58, it reaches the height, though the theme of the verses 46-61 is pride. *Māna* is one of the six terms (*chanda*, *rati*, *tyāga*, *tātparya* and *vaśitā*) upon which the cultivation of *vīrya* hinges. Desire is, of course, righteous desire, desire for what is good, *dharmachanda*. Pride makes one willing to act, even alone. It is expressed as a revulsion against the influence of any *upakleśa*, which incapacitates, and it determines one's perception of what one is able to do. An interesting feature of the chapter is the differentiation of positive and negative aspects of emotions, or motives, which one might suppose should properly be rejected. Pride is despised on all sides, *sarvataḥ paribhūtaḥ*, yet, taken as a pun, it suggests the idea of never despising. Does this expression look back to a famous *bodhisattva*, named *Sadāparibhūta* in the *Saddharmapundarikasūtra* (chapter 20), who, against virulent adversities, said that he never despised *māna*? On the contrary, he was supported, helped and sustained by pride, *māna-stabdḥāḥ*?

Whatever it be, the point remains that it is possible to metabolize pride or *māna* into *dharmachanda*, and as a matter of *upāyakaūśalya*, it can be pressed into the service of a *bodhisattva*'s training.

*Upāyakaūśala* is an ethical strategy, and it is resorted to in the face of a crisis. *Vīrya* consists in the act of facing, *not* the annihilation of what may impede it. Given the understanding of *vīrya*—that is effort and motivation—it is in the last analysis just a skilful means to maintain a conversion of the mind toward or literally facing what is beneficial. *Vīrya* is an inclination towards what is beneficial, while the opposite factors are lethargy, attachment to what is contemptible, despondency and self-contempt. Having identified the causes of these, Sāntideva creates a sense of crisis or urgency by pointing to imminent mortality and possible torments of hell. The sense of crisis gives the right direction one should give one's mind to. Fear, purposefully aroused, may bring about a sort of conversion by intensification. It is within the context of conversion that the specific function of *māna* may be found.

The ethical use of pride or *māna* is to help the *bodhisattva*



face adversities. “This can be done only by me alone”—this is the case of being proud of action. In this context, *māna* somewhat means perseverance on account self-confidence. It can also be considered as a synonym of *sthama*, or perseverance in what has been undertaken.

## II

Lexically, *māna* gathers around it a cluster of meanings, negative and positive. Among the negative ones, arrogance and derision are unwholesome, ethically bad as they lead to suffering, strengthens the ego-sense. On the positive side, *māna* is self-confidence, to arise and keep awake till the end or goal is not achieved. Be it or not an echo of *uttisthita jāgrata*, *a la* the *Kathopaniṣad*, *māna* takes a long and distant view of the goal, casting off defeatism. It entails freedom from despair in the matter of regarding oneself and others as equal, and the exchange of self and others (VIII. 16). In Hume’s terminology, the passion of pride is then no longer violent; it is now a “calm passion” rendering benevolence and altruism possible. The aspect of conversion, *samatā* and *parivartana* are ways of cultivating an awareness of the fact that there is no difference between oneself and the others. In other words, it is the realization of emptiness, the highest goal of the aspirant to Enlightenment. Till the goal is not reached *prāpta varāna*, the conversion would remain a regulative image, and *māna* is practically potent in rendering the image *constitutive*. Thinking of the possibility is both a lure and a challenge. In the concluding paragraph of his *Ethics*, Spinoza said that all noble and virtuous things are difficult. If liberation were easily reachable at hand, who would have endeavoured for it? This observation rings true in the context of our discourse so well.

It is of interest to note in passing that pride is termed a demon in the *Chöd* lineage of Machig Labdröm. Pride or arrogance is synonymous with attachment to the self. It is called the demon of ego: *b’Dag dzin*, ego-clinging, and hence ego. Since egoism is

defined as an excursive attachment to oneself, with the provision that, from a Buddhist point of view, the self or ego is devoid of inherent existence. [*Machig Labdron and the Foundations of Chöd*, Jerome Edon, Snow Lion Publication, New York, 1996]. The demon has to be cut through.

### III

There is the problem of situating the text of the *Bodhicaryavatara*. Who could have been the target audience for Śāntideva? Our author, as the accounts go, was a member of the faculty at the university at Nalanda. Naturally, he was accustomed to talking to intellectuals. But the test of what he talked surely lay outside the campus. Śāntideva says that he composed the *Bodhicaryāvātara* for his own mental edification (1.2). This may be the author's politeness. But considering the immense popularity of the text, it can be surmised that wherever there was a following of the *bodhisattva* ideal, the text was sought for and perused. It so happened in Tibet, where all the schools had endeared the text. The *Bodhisattva* section of Tsong-Kha-Pa's *Lam Rim* is a clear indication of the importance accorded to the text. So it is in all the Mahayānā countries.

Let us take the *Dhammapada*. A cursory look at the text may give rise to the impression that Couplets (*gāthās*) are isolated, devoid of contexts. But it was not really the case. Buddhaghōṣa has adduced *Nidāna* episodes to explain and understand the contexts in which the Buddha had uttered those *gāthās*. We learn from Buddhaghōṣa that not only mendicants and renunciates were around the Buddha but also women, merchants, kings and queens, and people from various walks of life met him and talked him. It could have been the case likewise with Śāntideva at Nalanda. He knew his *prthagjana*.

I have tried to situate the *Bodhicaryāvātara* on the highway of moral thinking in India, cutting across the artificiality of Hinayāna and Mahāyāna debate. Śāntideva himself supports such a manner of viewing his work. At places I have not hesitated in going beyond the ken of Buddhism and alluding to Brahminical

and even Christian texts. As for philosophy, I have been a cross-country walker. I have always taken great delight in finding resembling insights from far and near, and sought them to bring under the focus of study.

Buddhism had developed hermeneutical principles in the context of interpreting *Buddhavacanas*. It is said that between *neyārtha* and *nitārtha*, one should go by the latter, and even in the case of *nitārtha*, care should be taken of the insight projected by the meaning. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is, of course, not *Buddhavacana* per se, hence it has not been necessary on my part to strictly adhere to the hermeneutical directives. I have studied my text as an open-ended discourse, looking for its message on the human predicament. Its message on the human predicament, I believe, has great things to say on that score: how to get our love for others released from inhibitions, both affective (*rāga* and *dvesa*) and cognitive (*moha*). These are the enemies within, hard to vanquish and require constant vigilance; we need to awaken to their presence, and devise and adopt moral strategies against them. The call is clear and sharp and this is one of the reasons for the text's unfailing appeal to generations 'hat have followed since its composition.

If we should have to characterize Śāntideva's ethic, it could be appropriately called trans-historical, not a-historical, and never trans-empirici'. It is firmly grounded on the human condition and its predicament, and, fascinatingly indeed, he talks to us in the first person. There are elements of his time, esoteric devotionism, etc., but these need not deter us. His message reaches us directly, and he diagnoses our malady as unmistakably as any classic of ethics does.

## APPENDIX I

### *Bodhicaryāvatāra*: IX.1 Unity of the *Pāramitās*

The *pāramitās* were spoken of by the Buddha as a sort of road map to *prajñā*. So goes the opening verse of the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

The intention of the verse is encapsulated in the word *parikara*, i.e., the *pāramitās* are attendants to serve *prajñā*, and again the causative term *utpādayet* brings home the idea of their teleological orientation. Could we not say, borrowing the Kantian fashionable mode, that without *prajñā*, the *pāramitās* are blind, and without the *pāramitās*, *prajñā* should be hollow? In the context of Buddhism, we can hardly fail to notice the inter-connectivity of *prajñā*, *śīla* and *samādhi*. *Tattva* and value do not fall apart. Ethics is a part of the final illumination, there is no disengagement of the moral from the intellectual. The cognitive faculties are crucially involved in moral virtue. There is no paradigm-crossing for Śāntideva.

The phrase *prajñāpāramitā* suggests that *prajñā* is the highest virtue, poised as it is on the apex of the pyramid of virtues. If this should be unexceptionable a thought, then could we say also that Śāntideva has an idea of *unity* of virtues?

Śāntideva's virtue theory puts emphasis in the idea of a *good person*, someone who could also be described as an ethically admirable person, of course keeping the soteriological implications (*duḥkhanivṛtti*) in the mind. The emphasis on the *pāramitās* does not

exclude cognitivism, but morality is not a system of propositions, what matters is the embodiment of virtues in psychological (and hence, eventually social) in individual dispositions of action, thought and emotional reaction. The bodhisattva is the image of a perfected man, both ethically and cognitively.

Virtues are dispositions of character, acquired by *śīla* or ethical training, displayed not just in action but in patterns of emotional reaction. Virtues are not rigid habits. Such a view of the *pāramitās* may be commended from the perspective of Buddhism.

The conceptions of human nature and human circumstances play a large part in philosophical formulations and cultural realizations of the virtues. For example, kindness is not an Aristotelian virtue at all. To have a historical variation, Aquinas, who developed Aristotle's account, modified it to accommodate the virtue called *charity*. The whole of ethical life is properly grounded in that virtue. So did Mahāyāna in respect of *karuṇā*.

To come to the question of unity of the *pāramitās*. This has an homologue in the Greek ethical thought. Aristotle, inheriting from Plato, and ultimately from Socrates, seems to have held that there was basically only one virtue, which he called wisdom or knowledge. The conventional distinctions between the various virtues: justice, self-control, courage and the rest, were taken to mark only different fields of application of this power. Aristotle did think that there were separate virtues but, nevertheless, his view came almost to the same things as Socrates', since he thought that one could not have one virtue without having then all. One could not properly possess any one virtue unless one had the intellectual virtue, *phronesis*. If one had this quality, then one had all the virtues. It is not hard to see the general idea underlying this position. Generosity is linked to justice; someone who gives only what justice demands is not being generous. Similar points can be made about the interrelations of some other virtues.

In a similar vein, Buddhism accords the *amoha* view of life in its ancient most rendering, *Amoha* is intellectual or cognitive in import and corresponds to *prajñā* in the sense of the supreme *pāramitā*. Analogically, the *bhāvanās* of *maitrī*, *karuṇā* and *muditā* have to be completed or fulfilled by *upekṣā* or dispassion. Dispassionateness

is an inalienable qualifier of any ethical disposition, properly so-called. One who is dispassionate can be friendly or loving or sympathetically joyful without *limitation*.

The unity of the *pāramitās* does not imply that there is only one moral disposition, e.g., benevolence in Utilitarianism, or the primacy of a sense of duty in Kant. Śāntideva allows a more complex account of ethical motivation. His theory is opposed to the sharp boundaries between the moral and the non-moral, and he acknowledges that there is a spectrum of desirable characteristics. He holds to the idea that no firm or helpful line can be drawn round them. His own terminology distinguishes only between excellences or *pāramitās* of character and *prajñā*, which is itself necessary to the excellences of character.

## APPENDIX II

### The Bodhisattva Ideal and its Recent Assertions in India

If the world passes on in tears how could I sit alone pursuing my own salvation?

Rabindranath Tagore

Of what consequence is it to the world if you or I attain mukti? We have to take the whole world to mukti.

Swami Vivekananda

If, for the greater good of living beings, I had to be reincarnated as, say a bridge or an insect, as a monk who follows the Mahāyāna it is my duty to do it. As long as there are beings who suffer, I shall return.

The Dalai Lama  
in Conversation to Claude B. Levenson

The bodhisattva lives and dies for others. In Mahāyāna as against the ideals of *arhat* and *pratyekabuddha*, the bodhisattva ideal has stood out through centuries as a paradigm of moral perfection. The *jīvana mukta* may live for others, but does not die for them. Altruism is the *raison d'être* of a bodhisattva's existence. The ideal has spiritually nourished several countries in Asia for many centuries.

In India it was Appayya Dikṣita who adumbrated the ideal of *sarvamukti*, as the logical goal of Vedāntic ethical development. For him, *sarvamukti* was theological necessity, an implication for *eka-jīva-vāda*, the doctrine of the unity of all *jīvas*. It suggests that there is only one *jīva*, *Hiranyagarbha*, who is mirrored as the plurality of *jīvas* owing to differences in the adjuncts or predicates (*upādhi*). It follows, then, that all *jīvas* can attain *mukti* only collectively with the *Hiranyagarbha* at the end of the cosmic cycle. However, Appayya Dikṣita did not get a hearing from the orthodox Vedantins. For them, *mukti* was a solitary ritual. On the other hand, the details of the bodhisattva ideal had changed, interpretations had differed, certain ideas had evolved, others lost in importance, refinements were made in the stages of the path. It was a dynamic, living ideal. And at the hands of recent Indian thinkers, the ideal has been adapted to modern needs. The heart of the ideal, its essence, has always remained the same. It has received a new life, new expression and new authority through the writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.

Over and over again Vivekananda said that to seek one's own liberation selfishly is morally wrong, that one should also seek the well-being of others. On the eve of his departure for the West in 1899 he said to the younger monks of his Order: "Let all our actions tend towards the sacrifice of our self... In our country, the old idea is to sit in a cave and meditate and die. To go ahead of others in salvation is wrong. One must learn sooner or later that one cannot get salvation if one does not try to seek the salvation of his brothers. (*Complete Works* III, pp. 446-47). Vivekananda took adoring delight in mentioning about the Buddha's 'Boundless heart' (*ibid.* VIII, p. 133), wherein wisdom and compassion get intermingled. He thought that one cause of India's decline was the loss of the Buddha's heart form Hinduism.

The bodhisattva ideal has surfaced in the writings of recent Indian thinkers as though like the mythical bird from its ashes. Sri Aurobindo's notion of the gnostic being in *The Life Divine* is a remarkable case in point. The notion forms an inalienable part of Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary philosophy and integral to



his metaphysical structure. The gnostic being is one who has experienced the supramental transformation, and keeps working amongst those who are yet on the lower rungs of the evolutionary ladder. He remains labouring and toiling for others.

Radhakrishnan's *An Idealist of Life* holds the ideal of *sarvamukti*, looking back both to Appayya Dikṣita and Mahāyāna Buddhism. His introduction to the translation of the *Dharmapoda* bears the point out.

Gandhi's idea of *sarvodaya* is obviously bears the streaks of bodhisattva inspiration. His idea of Truth, as the unity of all living beings, implies the ethics of non-violence. The is on record that Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* was Gandhi's favourite.

The stress on the ethical side, on passionate selfless service to others, the ideal, namely, "May the suffering millions be the object of worship to you" (Vivekananda), Rabindranath's interpretation of the Vedic phrase, *viśva-karmā* in *The Religion of Man*, is an unmistakable signs of the resurrection of the bodhisattva ideal after centuries of neglect and slumbering in oblivion.

One might ask, was there not been admonition of compassion in the tradition, beside Buddhism? Of course it was there, but perhaps not in the sense of one's readiness to stand the sufferings of *samsāra* for all time in order to bring Enlightenment to *jīvas* in bondage. With the recent Indian thinkers, compassion is a compulsion of the heart, outgoing in nature, intensely altruistic marked by social intentionality. I have no doubt that it is an orientation inherited from the bodhisattva ideal, and which is no less a glorious part of the tradition, and one of the most beautiful fruits of man's moral consciousness.

I have mentioned only the pointers in the direction of the assertion of the ideal of the Bodhisattva in recent Indian thought. A fuller study waits to be undertaken.

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## Glossary

<b>Altruism</b>	The ethical theory which requires benefiting others merely for their sake, to act for the sake of others is to take their good as a sufficient reason for action. If 'altruism' is used to refer to behaviour that not only benefits others, but is undertaken for their sake, then egoism is opposed to altruism.
<b>Consequentialism</b>	Consequentialism assesses the rightness or wrongness of actions in terms of the value of their consequences. The most popular version is act-consequentialism, which states that, of all the actions open to the agent, the right one is that which produces the most good.
<b>Deontology</b>	Deontology asserts that there are several distinct duties, Certain kinds of act are intrinsically right and other kinds intrinsically wrong. The rightness or wrongness of any particular act is thus not (or not wholly) determined by the goodness or badness of its consequences. 'Deontology' means 'one must'. It is agent-relative moral theory, in contrast to act-consequentialism, which is an agent-neutral theory.
<b>Eudaimonia</b>	The literal sense of the Greek word <i>eudaimonia</i> is having a good guardian spirit, that is, the state of having an objectively desirable life, the supreme human good.



**Virtue ethics**

Virtue ethics has its origin in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. It has been revived following an article by G.E.M. Anscombe critical of modern ethics and advocating a return to the virtue ethics. Anscombe suggested philosophers might return to moral philosophy through an ethics of virtue.

One's doing a virtuous action may be seen as doing the action a virtuous person would do in those certain circumstances, though one may not oneself be a virtuous person. There is a difference between acting virtuously and doing a virtuous action. Virtue ethics, then, concerns itself not only with isolated actions but with the character of the agent. There are reasons for doing certain things (such as kind things), and also for being a certain type of person (a kind person).

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Tel: 0177-2830006, 2831375

E-mail: [proiiias@gmail.com](mailto:proiiias@gmail.com).

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