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PUBLICATIONS DE L'INSTITUT ORIENTALISTE DE LOUVAIN
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ÉTIENNE LAMOTTE
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en souvenir de

Mgr Étienne LAMOTTE
1903-1983

Professeur à l'Université catholique de Louvain
A NOTE ON ANĀTMAN
IN THE WORK OF E. LAMOTTE

Kamaleswar Bhattacharya*

In his *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, E. Lamotte honestly examined the question of anātman in early Buddhism. He took it up again in the fourth volume of his *Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse*. In the latter work, Lamotte does not agree with Oldenberg, Frauwallner, and myself (p. 2005). But his criticism is a model of elegant scholarship.

So far as I can see, Lamotte's argumentation is vitiated by the fact that he does not make a clear distinction — along with the majority of Buddhist scholars of our time — between the Upaniṣadic ātman and the ātmanas of other systems such as Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, Sāṃkhya, and Jainism. The specificity of the Upaniṣadic ātman was, however, already pointed out by Śaṅkara in *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 1, 1, 4.

The following passage from the *Traité* (p. 1995) is really confusing:


"Le Buddha l'écarte résolument et déclare: *Natthi nico dhuvo sassato aviparināmadhammo* (S. III, p. 144)."

I do not believe that the texts cited have anything to do with the Upaniṣadic doctrine of ātman-brahman. The last quote, from the *Samyutta-Nikāya*, is significant: the text condemns, not the belief in a timeless Absolute, which is "permanent", "stable", "eternal", "immutable", but the conception of a psychophysical individuality possessing all these qualities: *n' atthi kho, bhikkhu, kicci rupam yam rupam niccama*.

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1 Lamotte's observations have given rise to a controversy between Professors Frits Staal and J.W. de Jong; see *Cohors d'Extrême-Asie: Revue de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, Section de Kyoto, 1 (1985) and 3 (1987).
dhvān sassaṭaṁ avipariṇāmadhammaṁ sassatisamam tath' eva-ṭhassati. (Similarly with the other khandas, vedanā, etc.).

The problem exists in Buddhism, and it cannot be easily dispensed with, when we take into account the tension between ātman and anātman in Mahāyāna texts. (There were two interesting papers on this subject in this conference itself). It is, therefore, good that discussions on the subject, sometimes from new points of view, are going on².

There is one point upon which Professor Lamotte did not touch: the association between ātman and brahman in the Pāli Canon. It is not enough to say — as it is often done — that the term brahman in these texts means something different from what it means in the Upanisads (as, e.g., in Sāmkhya, it is used to designate the pradhāna). The contexts in which the term is used are important, and a study of the Āṭṭhakathās and the Tīkās has led me to believe that the authors of these commentaries are annoyed by the occurrence of this term in the Buddhist texts. In their eagerness to isolate Buddhism from the Brahmanical tradition, they sought to obscure the original meaning of this important term; but through their various attempts can be discerned — so it seems to me — this original meaning, which is the same as in the Upanisads³.

In a letter dated October 27, 1979, Professor Lamotte spoke to me, in a different connection, of “les progrès considérables accomplis par la science”. The little that is said in this note is said in that spirit.

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ON THE ĀTMAN THEORY IN THE MAHĀPARINIRVĀṆASŪTRA

Kyoko Fujii*

Mahāparinirvānasūtra of Mahāyāna (MPS) is one of the sūtras which expound the tathāgataagarbhavāda, as well as Tathāgataagarbhasūtra, Śrīmālasūtra and so on, in the Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. This sūtra expounds the ātman clearly and admires it highly, although Buddhism has been asserting the anātman-vāda. The sūtra is characterized by its ātman theory. Then, how and why can the ātman be explained in the sūtra? And what is the ātman the sūtra asserts? This paper is intended to approach these problems according to the explanation of the sūtra.

At first, as to the text of the sūtra, there are four Chinese translation and two Tibetan ones. The sanskrit text does not remain except in fragments. Concerning the four Chinese texts, the first text consists of 40 volumes and was translated by Tan-wu-chen [Taiho, No. 374]. The second is a revised edition of the first one, and consists of 36 volumes [Taiho, No. 375]. The third consists of 6 volumes, and was translated by Fa-xian for the first time in China at the beginning of the fifth century [Taiho, No. 376]. The fourth one consists of only 2 volumes, and it contains the last part of the sūtra. This text was translated by Jānabhadra during the Tang Dynasty [Taiho No. 377]. As to the two Tibetan texts, one is the retranslation from the first and the fourth Chinese texts [Peking ed. No. 787]. So this is not so important as a material for study. The other corresponds to the third Chinese text which has 6 volumes [Peking ed. No. 788].

Regarding the Sanskrit text, as mentioned above, it is unknown, and at the present only eight folios of manuscripts are known to exist. Their contents are all included in the third Chinese text and also in the part of volume 1-10 of the first Chinese text¹. According to this fact, conversely, on the formation of the sūtra, it is supposed that the contents of the sūtra included in the third Chinese text and in the part of volumes 1-10 of the first Chinese, was exactly composed in Indian

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