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the Viṣṇusūkta and to praise God with the other important hymn, the Puruṣasūkta (ṚV. 10, 90).

The combination of the Viṣṇu- and Puruṣasūktas remains a rather frequent occurrence. According to Atri one should offer in the *āhavanīya* fire with the Puruṣa-, in the *anvāhārya* fire with the Viṣṇusūkta (6, 17 f.); at 25, 5 both *sūktas* combining with other texts accompany oblations introducing the ritual process of casting a metal image; cf. also 33, 66; 35, 29; 27, 28 (while performing a sacrifice after presenting the sprouts).

That the ritualists were well aware of the meaning and tenor of the hymn as well as of its applicability to definite ritual acts may appear from Kāśyapa's handbook, ch. 82. Discussing, in ch. 79 ff., the consecration, establishment and worship of images of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu this authority, after observing (ch. 81) that Viṣṇu appeared as the Dwarf in order to take away the threefold universe from Bali and when he had obtained it assumed the large form of Trivikrama (the one who strides over the universe in three steps), says that the consecration of the image of Viṣṇu-Trivikrama should take place whilst invoking him as "Trivikrama, Lord of the threefold universe, support of everything", repeating the formula "The one who has three forms" taken from the Pāramātmika-Upaniṣad and performing the establishment proper with the Viṣṇusūkta, which, we know, makes mention of the god's three wide strides. Images of the other incarnations are consecrated with other appropriate formulas.

THE ĀTMAN IN TWO PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ-SŪTRA-S

KAMALESWAR BHATTACHARYA

I do not intend to discuss here the problem of the *ātman* in Buddhism. I have recently studied that problem in a book¹. An attempt has been made there to show that the Buddha never denied the universal and absolute *ātman* (identical with the *brahman*) of the Upaniṣad-s; on the contrary, he affirmed it, indirectly, by denying various theories concerning an *individual ātman*. The purpose of the present paper is to draw attention to two *Prajñāpāramitā* passages about the universal and absolute *ātman*. One of these passages—that from the *Saptaśatikā Prajñāpāramitā* (*Mañjuśrīparivarta*)—is well known; but it does not seem that its meaning has always been understood by the modern interpreters. The other passage—that from the *Suvikrāntavikrāmapariṣecchā*—does not seem to have been noticed so far.

In the *Saptaśatikā*² we read: *evam ukte āyusmān Śāradvatīputro Mañjuśrīyaṃ kumārabhūtam etad avocat : Buddha iti, Mañjuśrīh, kasyaitad adhivacanam ? Mañjuśrīr āha : yat punar bhadanta Śāradvatīputra ucyate ātmeti, kasyaitad adhivacanam ? Śāradvatīputra āha : anutpādasyaitan Mañjuśrīr adhivacanam yad uta ātmeti. Mañjuśrīr āha : evam etad bhadanta Śāradvatīputra yasyaitad adhivacanam ātmeti, tasyaitad adhivacanam Buddha iti. api tu, bhadanta Śāradvatīputra, apadādhivacanam etad yad idam ucyate Buddha iti. na hy etad bhadanta Śāradvatīputra vācābhir vijñāpayitum Buddha iti. vāg api, bhadanta Śāradvatīputra, na sukarā nirūpayitum : iyaṃ vāg iti, kutaḥ punar Buddha iti. api tu, bhadanta Śāradvatīputra, yad evaṃ vadasi : kasyaitad adhivacanam Buddha iti, yo na samudāgato notpanno na nirotasyate, yo na kenacid dharmeṇa samanvāgato nāpy atra kiṃcit padam abhedam, apadasyaitad bhadanta Śāradvatīputra adhivacanam yad uta Buddha iti. Tathāgataṃ, bhadanta Śāradvatīputra, paryeṣitukāmena ātmā paryeṣitavyaḥ. ātmeti, bhadanta Śāradvatīputra, Buddhasyaitad adhivacanam. yathā ātmā atyantatayā na saṃvidyate nopalabhyate tathā Buddho 'py atyantatayā na saṃvidyate nopalabhyate. yathā ātmā na kenacid dharmeṇa vacanīyaḥ, tathā*

1. *L'ātman-brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien*, Paris 1973 (Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, Vol. XC).

2. P. L. Vaidya, *Mahāyāna-Sūtra-Saṃgraha* I (Darbhanga 1961), pp. 346-7.

Buddho 'pi na kenacid dharmeṇa vacanīyaḥ. yatra na kūcit samkhyā sa ucyate Buddha iti. na caitad bhadata Śāradvatīputra, sukaram ajñātum ātmeti yad adhivacanam; evam. etad bhadata Śāradvatīputra, na sukaram ajñātum Buddha iti yad adhivacanam.

The sentences *Tathāgataṃ, bhadata Śāradvatīputra, paryeṣitukāmena, ātmā paryeṣitavyaḥ. ātmeti, bhadata Śāradvatīputra, Buddhasyaitad adhivacanam* are quoted by Vidhuśekhara Bhaṭṭācārya in his comment on *Āgamaśāstra* IV, 92³. He writes : *Tathāgato Buddhaś ceti paryāyau. abhūṭābhīniveśāt sarve dharmā āropitenaiva rūpeṇa dṛśyante. vastutas tu te buddho vā bodho vā jñānam vā.* In a footnote the author adds : *buddhaśabdah Śāṅkareṇa Śārirakabhāṣye* (II, 1, 14) *ātmānam brahma vāvagamayitum "nityasuddhabuddhamukta" ity asakṛt prayuktas tatra. dṛṣṭas ca sa Vedānta-sāre' pi* (pp. 38-39, § 28). *suviditaṃ khalv etad Vaidāntikānām.*

I shall try, in a while, to bring out the Vedāntic import of the passage quoted above, as well as of some passages of the Pāli Canon with which it is related. But let us see, before that, how this passage has been interpreted by other scholars.

E. Conze makes the following statement : "In a bold and direct manner the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* explicitly proclaim the identity of contradictory opposites, and make no attempt to mitigate their paradoxes ... The 'self', which is the epitome of all that is unreal and false, deceptive and undesirable, is identified with perfect wisdom and with the Tathāgata"⁴. I regret to say that I have failed to read any such idea in the passage quoted above. More recently, D. S. Ruegg, in his monumental work, *La théorie du Tathāgatarbha et du Gotra : Etudes sur la Sotériologie et la Gnoséologie du Bouddhisme*⁵, has studied this passage in connexion with other Mahāyāna texts which speak of the *ātman*. He writes : "L'ātman ne se rencontre pas uniquement dans les textes bouddhiques mahāyānistes qui traitent du *tathāgatarbha* ou de doctrines étroitement apparentées et dans quelques traités du Vijñānavāda mais aussi dans la *Saptaśatikā-Prajñāpāramitā*". Then he gives a translation of the passage in question. I am not sure, however, whether the full import of the passage has been grasped.

One thing is certain : the Buddha and the *ātman* are one and the same thing. This identification gives to each of the concepts a new

3. *Gauḍapādīyam Āgamaśāstram* (University of Calcutta, 1950), p. 189.

4. E. Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India* (London 1962; "Ann Arbor Paperbacks", The University of Michigan Press, 1967), p. 263.

5. Paris 1969 (*Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, Vol. LXX), pp. 373-4.

dimension⁶ : the Buddha, identical with the *ātman*, is not the individual Buddha; and the *ātman*, identical with the Buddha, is not the individual *ātman*. The identification of the Buddha (= Tathāgata) and the *ātman* is not new in Buddhism : it is already found in *Samyutta-Nikāya* XXII, 85⁷. There we also find the term *anupalabbhiyamāna*, which is echoed in our text : *nopalabhyate*. What is meant by that term ? There was on this subject a long standing controversy between two great scholars, Hermann Oldenberg and Louis de la Vallée Poussin⁸. The former interpreted the term *anupalabbhiyamāna* (elsewhere *anupalabbhamāna*) in the sense of "beyond grasping", because applied to the transcendent Reality; while the latter, following the Theravāda tradition, interpreted it in the sense of "not perceived", therefore "nonexistent". Buddhaghosa, of course, when he comments on *Samyutta* XXII, 85 does not see in the term *Tathāgata* anything else than a designation for an "individual" (*satta*), who is "nonexistent"⁹. There is some justification for this interpretation. The text is concerned with the heresy of the monk Yamaka who holds the view that a monk whose impulses have been destroyed is utterly annihilated after the dissolution of his body : *tathāhaṃ Bhagavatā dhammaṃ desitaṃ ajānāmi, yathā khīṇāsavo bhikkhu kāyassa bheda ucchijjati vinassati, na hoti paraṃ maraṇā ti*. By a "monk whose impulses have been destroyed" (*khīṇāsavo bhikkhu*), or "Tathāgata", Yamaka evidently understands an "individual" who has reached perfection. We find elsewhere in the Pāli Canon similar discussions about the destiny of the Tathāgata after the dissolution of his body. Those who raised the question did it simply because they conceived of the Tathāgata as an "individual". Buddhaghosa and his continuator Dhammapāla interpret therefore correctly the term *Tathāgata* in that context : *satto Tathāgato ti adhippeto*¹⁰; *Tathāgato ti attā, taṃ hi diṭṭhigatiko kāraka-vedakādīsamkhātāṃ nicca-dhuvādi-samkhātāṃ vā Tathāgata-bhāvaṃ gato ti Tathāgato ti voharati*¹¹.—But when in our

6. *ātma-buddhaśabdayor itaretara-viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣyatvam*, as Śāṅkara and the Vedāntins would say.

7. Vol. III, pp. 109 ff. of the Pāli Text Society (PTS.) edition.

8. Cf. L. de la Vallée Poussin, *Nirvāna* (Paris-1925), p. 104, n. 1.

9. *Sāraṭhappakāsini* II, p. 311 (PTS.).

10. Buddhaghosa, *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* I, p. 118 (PTS.).

11. Dhammapāla, *Paramatthadīpanī : Udānaṭṭhakathā*, p. 340 (PTS.).—It is strange that, following Coomaraswamy (*Hinduism and Buddhism* [New York, n. d.], p. 73; *The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha* [London 1948], p. 27), D.S. Ruegg (*op. cit.*, p. 374, n. 3; cf. also the same author's *Le Traité du Tathāgatarbha de Bu Ston Rin Chen Grub* [Paris 1973; *Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, Vol. LXXXVIII], p. 114, n. 3 [p. 115]), finds a reference here to the authentic *ātman*. The word *attan* is, in fact, used here—as often in the Buddhist texts—only as a synonym of *satta = puggala*.

text¹² it is said : *diṭṭhe va dhamme saccato thetato Tathāgato anupalabhiyamāno*, it is not all meant that the Tathāgata—an “individual”—is “non-existent” as Buddhaghosa opines¹³. The meaning is rather that even in this life (*diṭṭhe va dhamme*) the Tathāgata is “beyond grasping” (*anupalabhiyamāna*); how, then, can one define his future condition? The “profundity” of the Tathāgata has been emphasized in other texts of the Pāli Canon¹⁴. And Buddhaghosa is nearer the mark when he says, commenting on *Samyutta* XLIV, 1 : the Tathāgata has transcended his empirical individuality; it is, therefore, impossible to speak of him as of an individual. *tassa evaṃ guṇagambhīrassa sato sabbāññu-Tathāgatassa yaṃ upādāya satta-saṃkhāto Tathāgato ti paññatti hoti, tadabhāvena tassā paññattiyā abhāvaṃ passantassa ayaṃ satta-saṃkhāto hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā ti idaṃ vacanaṃ na upeti, na yujjati; na hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā ti ādi vacanaṃ pi na upeti, na yujjati attho*¹⁵. Only our texts say something more, of which Buddhaghosa takes no notice. The Tathāgata is not a mere individual, but the Being itself; for that reason, he is “beyond grasping”. This thought has been clearly expressed in the *Prajñāpāramitā-Sūtra*-s. Thus the *Vajracchedikā* tells us, in a passage that has become famous : it is not in his individual appearance that one should seek the Buddha; the Buddha is the *Dharma/dharmatā*; but the *dharmatā* cannot be known objectively (*dharmatā ca na vijñeyā na sā śakyā vijñitum*)¹⁶. The same thought is also expressed in Nāgārjuna’s *Nirauṇḍya-stava*, v. 17¹⁷:

*na ca rūpeṇa dṛṣṭena dṛṣṭa ity abhidhīyase/
dharme dṛṣṭe sudṛṣṭo 'si dharmatā na ca dṛṣyate//*

Already in the Pāli Canon, the Buddha is identified with the Dhamma/Brahman : *Tathāgatassa h' etaṃ adhivacanam : Dhammakāyo iti pi Brahmakāyo iti pi, Dhammabhūto iti pi Brahmabhūto iti pi*¹⁸. In a celebrated passage, the Buddha is made to say : It is not in my “foul body” (*pūtīkāya*) that one should see me; “he who sees the Dhamma sees me, and

he who sees me sees the Dhamma” (*yo kho Dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati, yo maṃ passati so Dhammaṃ passati*)¹⁹. There are also passages in the Pāli Canon, which clearly identify the Dharma/Dhamma with the supra individual *ātman*. A full discussion of these passages will be found in my book mentioned above. A reference to Nāgārjuna’s (*Mūla-Madhyamaka-Kārikā*-s is here in order.

Nāgārjuna speaks of the ineffability of the Buddha/Tathāgata in two contexts in the *Madhyamaka-Kārikā*-s : first in the *Tathāgataparikṣā* (XXII, 13-15), and then in the *Nirvāṇaparikṣā* (XXV, 17-18). “Those who speak of the Buddha, who is imperishable and beyond words, do not see the Tathāgata; they are destroyed by their own words”²⁰. Candrakīrti, in his comment on this verse, quotes the *Vajracchedikā* passage cited above and himself observes : “Words are bound up with objects; the Tathāgata, however, is not an object” (*vastunibandhanā hi prapañcāḥ syuḥ, avastukā ca Tathāgataḥ*). The Tathāgata is the Being itself, “imperishable” (*avyaya*), i.e., not subject to becoming : *anutpādasvabhāvāc ca svabhāvāntarāgamanād avyayaḥ*²¹. The two *Kārikā*-s, XXV, 17-18, support the interpretation of the Pāli texts given above, and can be regarded as an antidote to the unmetaphysical Theravāda interpretation :

*paraṃ nirodhād bhagavān bhavati nohyate/
na bhavaty ubhayaṃ ceti nobhayaṃ ceti nohyate//
tiṣṭhamāno 'pi bhagavān bhavati eva nohyate/
na bhavaty ubhayaṃ ceti nobhayaṃ ceti nohyate//*

Now to return to the text of the *Saptaśatikā Prajñāpāramitā*. The terms *ātman* and *Buddha* designate the same thing—the Unconditioned (*anutpāda*)²². But they are mere “designations” of something that is beyond expression (*apadādhivacana*)²³. There is indeed, no word that can adequately designate the Absolute by coinciding with it (*nāpy atra kiṃcit padam*

12. Cf. also *Samyutta* XXII, 86; XLIV, 2 (Vols. III, pp. 112, 118; IV, p. 384).

13. Cf. also Nyānatiloka, *Buddhistisches Wörterbuch* (Konstanz 1954), s.v. *Tathāgata*.

14. Cf. H. Oldenberg, *Buddha : sein Leben, seine Lehre, seine Gemeinde* (herausgegeben von Helmuth von Glasenapp, “Goldmanns Gelbe Taschenbücher”, Band 708/709, München 1961), pp. 259 ff.; E. Frauwallner, *Geschichte der indischen Philosophie I* (Salzburg 1953), pp. 227 ff.; *Die Philosophie des Buddhismus*³ (Berlin 1969), pp. 19 ff.

15. *Sāratthappakāsinī* III, p. 113 (PTS.); the reading has been modified in accordance with the Siamese edition. III, p. 192.

16. P. L. Vaidya, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

17. G. Tucci, “Two Hymns of the Catuḥ-stava of Nāgārjuna”, *JRAS.* 1932, p. 318.

18. *Dīgha-Nikāya* III, p. 84 (PTS.).

19. *Samyutta-Nikāya* III, p. 120 (PTS.); cf. *Itivuttaka*, p. 91 (PTS.).

20. *Prapañcayanti ye Buddhaṃ prapañcāntam avyayam/
te prapañcāhatāḥ sarve na paśyanti Tathāgatam// Madhyamaka-Kārikā* XXII, 15.

21. Cf. also below.

22. *anutpādasayitā...adhivacanāṃ yad uta ātmeti...yasyaitad adhvāvacanam ātmeti tasyaitad adhvāvacanaṃ Buddha itī...yo na samudāgato notpanno na nirotsyate.*—The same text says a little earlier (Vaidya, *op. cit.*, p. 345) : *Buddha itī paramārthato 'nutpādasayitad adhvāvacanam.* See also above., p. 40.

23. I take *apada* here as a synonym of *anākṣara* or *akṣaravarjita*. Ruegg leaves the word untranslated.

abhedam)²⁴. We can only express in words what we can grasp objectively. But the Absolute cannot be grasped objectively²⁵. As an object, the Absolute is no longer the Absolute but only an empirical reality, a *dharma* among others,—no longer the Being in itself but only a determinate Being that stands in relation, on one hand, with the thinking subject, and, on the other, with other objects. It is in this sense that the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* declares: the Buddha and the Nirvāṇa—just like the other empirical realities—are comparable to illusions, to dreams; if there were a reality superior to Nirvāṇa itself, it would also be comparable to an illusion, to a dream: *yadi nirvāṇād apy anyah kaścīd dharmo viśiṣṭatarah syāt, tam apy ahaṃ māyopamaṃ svapnopamaṃ iti vadeyam*²⁶.

Whatever the name we give to the Absolute—*ātman*, *brahman*, *buddha*, *nirvāṇa*, *tathatā*—it can only *indicate* but not express it directly. “Where there is absolutely no name, that is what is named ‘Buddha’” (*yatra na kācīd samkhyā sa ucyate Buddha iti*), says the *Saptaśatikā*. “It is not easy to understand the meaning of the designation ‘ātman’; similarly, it is not easy to understand the meaning of the designation ‘Buddha’” (*na caitad bhadanta Śāradvatīputra, sukaram ājñātum ātmeti yad adhivacanam; evam etad bhadanta Śāradvatīputra, na sukaram ājñātum Buddha iti yad adhivacanam*). —With the help of words, we must go beyond words. There nothing is “grasped”, because we become one with the Absolute, which is our Self, *ātman*. From the objective standpoint, it is true, that which is not grasped is utterly “nonexistent (*atyantatayā na samvidyate nopalabhyate*). But its objective “nonexistence” does not at all mean its “unreality.” On the contrary, it is a proof of its highest metaphysical “existence”—as its “not being grasped” in the highest metaphysical sense, i.e., beyond the subject-object split (*grāhya-grāhakabheda*). This has been beautifully expressed in another Mahāyāna work, the *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṅkāra* :

*yāvidyamānatā saiva paramā vidyamānatā/
sarvathānupalambhaś ca upalambhaḥ paro mataḥ*||²⁷

24. Ruegg translates: “là où il n’y a pas de *pada*: la non-différence (*abhedā*)”. Evidently, the text literally means: “là où il n’y a pas de mot (*pada*) qui soit non différent (*abhedā*)”.

25. As a matter of fact, nothing that is objectively grasped expresses the true essence of a thing. So our text says: *vāg api, bhadanta Śāradvatīputra, na sukarā nirūpayitum: iyaṃ vāg iti, kutaḥ punar Buddha iti*.

26. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, p. 20 (P. L. Vaidya’s edition, Darbhanga 1960). See also Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā Madhyamakavyūṭi*, pp. 449-50, 540-1 (La Vallée Poussin’s edition, *Bibliotheca Buddhica* IV, Saint-Petersbourg 1903-13).

27. *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṅkāra* IX, 78 (S. Lévi’s edition, Paris 1907).

The other text I wanted to mention runs as follows: *yo hy advayaṃ ātmānaṃ prajānāti sa Buddhaṃ Dharmaṃ ca prajānāti. —tat kasya hetoḥ? —ātmabhāvaṃ sa bhāvayati sarvadharmāṇāṃ yenādvayaparijñāyā sarvadharmāḥ pariñātāḥ; ātmasvabhāvanīyatā hi sarvadharmāḥ. yo hy advayadharmāṃ prajānīte sa buddhadharmān prajānīte; advayadharmapariñāyā buddhadharmapariñā, ātmapariñāyā sarvatraidhātukapariñā. ātmapariñīti, Suvikrāntavikrāmin, pāram etat sarvadharmāṇām*²⁸.

Like the Upaniṣad-s, our text posits the non-dual (*advaya*) *ātman* as the foundation of all our authentic knowledge. That knowledge is authentic in which the subject-object split is transcended. We can, however, transcend that split only by realizing the *advaya ātman*, in other words, by realizing our identity with all things.

28. *Suvikrāntavikrāmipariṣcchā-Prajñāpāramitā-Sūtra* : P. L. Vaidya, *Mahāyāna-Sūtra-Saṃgraha* I, p. 11.