Published under the auspices of the
Government of West Bengal

OUR HERITAGE
SPECIAL NUMBER
150TH ANNIVERSARY VOLUME
(1824—1974)

Edited by
BISHNUPADA BHATTACHARYA
PRINCIPAL
SANSKRIT COLLEGE
CALCUTTA
OUR HERITAGE

Bulletin of the Department of Post-Graduate Training and Research, Sanskrit College, Calcutta

SPECIAL NUMBER

150TH ANNIVERSARY VOLUME

(1824—1974)

SANSKRIT COLLEGE
CALCUTTA
the Viṣṇuṣūkta and to praise God with the other important hymn, the Puruṣaṣūkta (RV. 10, 90).

The combination of the Viṣṇu- and Puruṣaṣūktas remains a rather frequent occurrence. According to Atri one should offer in the āhavanīya fire with the Puruṣa-, in the anvāhīya fire with the Viṣṇuṣūkta (6, 17 ff.); 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 Viṣṇuṣūkta, 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 Saptasātikā Prajñāpāramitā (Mañjuśrī-riparivarta)—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 Sūviktavārikānātāparipaścāḥ—does not seem to have been noticed so far.

In the Saptasātikā we read: evam ukte āyuṃṭaṇ Āravattiputra Mañjuśrīyaṃ kumārabhūtaṃ etad avocat: Buddha iti, Mañjuśrīḥ, kasyaitad adhivacanam? Mañjuśrīḥ āha: yat punar bhadanta Āravattiputra ucyate ātmeti, kasyaitad adhivacanam? Āravattiputra āha: anutpādasayaitan Mañjuśrīḥ adhivacanam yad uta ātmeti. Mañjuśrīḥ āha: evam etad bhadanta Āravattiputra yasyaitad adhivacanam ātmeti, tasyaitad adhivacanam Buddhā iti. api tu, bhadanta Āravattiputra, apaddhivacanam etad yad idam ucyate Buddha iti, na hy etad bhadanta Āravattiputra vacchābhī vijñāpayitum Buddha iti, vāg api, bhadanta Āravattiputra, na sukārā nirūpayitum: iyaṃ vāg iti, kutaḥ punar Buddha iti. api tu, bhadanta Āravattiputra, yad evam vadasī: kasyaitad adhivacanam Buddhā iti, yo na samudāgato notpanno na nirutsaye, yo na kenacid drhmareṣa samasvāgo mūpy atra kṣimeṇ padam abhedam, apadasayaitad bhadanta Āravattiputra adhivacanam yad uta Buddha iti. Tathāgataḥ, bhadanta Āravattiputra, paryēṣitukāmeno ātma paryēṣitavyaḥ. ātmeti, bhadanta Āravattiputra, Buddhāśayaitad adhivacanam. yathā ātma ātmanayā na sāṇāyate nopalabhya tathā Buddha 'py atantarataya na sāṇāyate nopalabhya. yathā ātma na kenacid drhmareṣa vacanīyā, tathā

Sanskrit College 150th Anniversary Volume [ Our Heritage

Buddha 'pi na kenacid dharmeça vacanyavya. yatra na kacit sānkhya sa ucayate Buddha iti. na ca itid bhadanta Śāradvatiputra, sukaram ajñātum ātmeti yad adhivacanam; evam. etad bhadanta Śāradvatiputra, na sukaram ajñātum Buddha iti yad adhivacanam.

The sentences Tathāgatam, bhadanta Śāradvatiputra, paryęptukāmena, ātma paryęptayaḥ. ātmeti, bhadanta Śāradvatiputra, Buddhasyayatad adhi vacanam are quoted by Vidhušekhara Bhāḍatārya in his comment on Āgamāśāstra IV, 92. He writes: Tathāgato Buddhā ceto paryayau, ābhūtābhāvyavāt sarve dharmā śāriputa eva sarveṇa dṛṣyante. castuvas tu te buddho vā bodho vā jñātām vā. In a footnote the author adds: buddha sakata Śāriyakabhāye (II, 1, 14) atmano brahma vīvegamayitaṁ "niitya śuddhabuddhamukta" ity asakṣa pravayuktastra. ārūṇa ca sa Veditānāri p (pp. 38-39, § 28). suviditaḥ khalv etad Vaitāntikānām.

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”. 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 Tathāgatagarbha et du Gotra: Études sur la Sotériologie et la Gnoséologie du Bouddhisme, 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 tathāgatagarbha ou de doctrines étroitement apparentées et dans quelques traités du Vijnānāvāda mais aussi dans la Sāpatāni-kā-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 gives rise to each of the concepts a new


6. ātman-buddha-labdayar itetara-viṣṇuṣa-viṣṇuṣvatam, as Śākara and the Vedāntins would say.

9. Sāratthapakasīni I, p. 311 (PTS),
11. Dhammadā, Paramathadipati: Uddānathākathā, p. 340 (PTS).—It is strange that, following Coomarasawmy (Hindism 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 Tathāgatagarbha de Bu Ston Rin Chen Grub [Paris 1973; Publications de l’Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient, Vol. LXXXVI], p. 114, n. 3 [p. 115]), finds a reference here to the authentic ātman. The word ātman is, in fact, used here—as often in the Buddhist texts—only as a synonym of satta = puggala.
he who sees me sees the Dhamma” (yo kho Dhamman genu passati, yo man genu passati so Dhamman genu passati). 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 (Mīla-) 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 Tathāgatapurāṇa (XXII, 13-15), and then in the Nirvāṇapurāṇa (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”⁶⁰. 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 prapañcāh syah, avastu ca Tathāgataḥ). The Tathāgata is the Being itself, “imperishable” (aryaya), i.e., not subject to becoming: anutpādaśvabhāve ca svabhāvāntarōyaṃ punāt aṣṭamāñātthāny atayaya⁶¹. 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:

\[
\text{paraṃ nirodhād bhagavān bhavattī nohyate/}
\text{na bhavaty ubhayān ceti nobhavayō ceti nohyate/}
\text{tiṣṭhamanō pi bhagavān bhavattī eva nohyate/}
\text{na bhavaty ubhayān ceti nobhavayō ceti nohyate/}
\]

Now to return to the text of the Saṃtaṭikā Prajñāpāramitā. The terms ātman and Buddha designate the same thing—the Unconditioned (anutpāda)⁶². But they are mere “designations” of something that is beyond expression (apādaśvabhāva). There is indeed, no word that can adequately designate the Absolute by coinciding with it (nāpy atra kīcchit padam}

---

13. Cf. also Nyānatiloka, Buddhistisches Wörterbuch (Konstanz 1954), s.v. Tathāgata.
15. Sāratthapakāśini III, p. 113 (PTS); the reading has been modified in accordance with the Siamese edition, I. pp. 192.
18. Dīgha-Nikāya III, p. 84 (PTS.).
We can only express in words what we can grasp objectively. But the Absolute cannot be grasped objectively. 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 Prokṣṇāpāramitā 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 nirvāṇāḥ api anyḥ kācīt dharmo viṣṭātaraḥ syāt, tam api aham māyopamaḥ svapnopamaḥ iti vadeyam.

Whatever the name we give to the Absolute—ātman, brahman, budha, nirvāṇa, tathātā—it can only indicate but not express it directly. “Where there is absolutely no name, that is what is named ‘Buddha’” (yatra na kācit saṃkhyaḥ sa ucyate Buddha iti), says the Śāriputra, “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 ca tad bhuddanta Śrāvadatiputra, sukaram aṭṭhām ātmeti yad adhivacanan; evam etad bhuddanta Śrāvadatiputra, na sukaram aṭṭhām 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 sanyādyate napatihāyate). 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-Sūtraṅkāra:

yāvidyamānātā saiva paramā vidyamānātā sarvathānupalambhāś ca upalambhāḥ poro mathāḥ [27]

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

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 Śrāvadatiputra, na sukād nirupayatam; iyam vāg iti, kutaḥ punar Buddha iti.


The other text I wanted to mention runs as follows: yo hy advayam ātmānam praṇānāṁ sa Buddhaḥ Dharmam ca praṇānāṁ. —tat kasya heito ? —ātmabhāvānaḥ sa bhāvayati sarvadharmānāṁ yenādvayaparīṇāyā sarvadharmaḥ pariṇātāḥ; ātmavdbhāvanāyaḥ hi sarvadharmah. yo hy advaye dharmam praṇānāṁ sa buddhadvamānāṁ praṇānāṁ; advayadharma parīṇāyā buddhadvamānāḥ, ātmaparīṇāyā sarvatīdhātu parīṇāḥ. ātmaparīṇāṁ, Suskritāntavikrāmān, pariṇetāḥ sarvadharmānāṁ.

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.