The Characteristic of the Bodhisattva Concept in the Lotus Sutra

—The Apostle-idea—

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I. The Formation Process

According to extant commentaries on the Lotus Sutra, Tao-shêng 道生 (?—434) and Fa-yün 法雲 (Kuang-chai-ssŭ 光宅寺 467—529) drew a line between Chapter 13, “Peaceful Life” (安樂行品), and Chapter 14, “Issuing of Bodhisattvas from the Gaps of the Earth” (從地踊出品); and regarded the former as the realm of cause, which reveals the unity of the dharma, and the latter as the realm of effect, which reveals the eternity of the Buddha. Chih-i 智顗 (T’ien-t’ai Ta-shih 天台大師 538—597), adopting the above division, defined the former half as the realm of trace (*shakumon* 迹門) and the latter half as the realm of origin (*honmon* 本門). His classification has been generally accepted.

Of late, however, other classifications have appeared. Dr. Daijō Tokiwa 常盤大定 and Dr. Taiken Kimura 木村泰賢 drew a line between Chapter 10, “The Preacher” (法師品), and Chapter 11, “Apparition of a Stūpa” (見寶塔品), for the reason that at Chapter 11 the pulpit changed from earth to heaven. Dr. Kōgaku Fuse 布施浩岳 drew a line between Chapter 9,

(1) This chapter is the 14th in the existing translation by Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什 350—409). It now contains the Chapter on Devadatta (提婆達多品) (Chapter 12), which is believed to have been added in the sixth century.

(2) A translation by Hendrick Kern, *The Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* (The Lotus of the True Law), *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXI.

(3) Daijō Tokiwa, *Budden no Kaisetsu* 佛典の解説 (Exposition on Buddhist Canons), 1918, p. 59. Taiken Kimura, *Shinkū yori Myōu e* 眞空より妙有へ (From the True Voidness to the Wonderful Existence), 1929, p. 133.

“Announcement of the Future Destiny of Ānanda, Rāhula, and the Two-Thousand Monks” (授學無學人記品), and Chapter 10, “The Preacher” (法師品). He examined the Sutra from several viewpoints, such as the relationship between its prose and verse, the context in relation to form and matter; and classified it into three groups according to their dates of origin; chapters 1 to 9 and Chapter 17 are considered to have been composed about 50 A. D., Chapter 10 to 20, except 17, about 100 A. D., and Chapter 21 to 27 about 150 A. D.⁽⁴⁾

The second group is the nucleus of the Sutra, so to grasp its purpose and find the reason for adding it to the first group will clarify the central concept of the entire Sutra. When we examine the second group, we learn that the concept of the body of the Buddha, the idea of the entrusting of the dharma to bodhisattvas, the worship of sutras, and the construction of pagodas are all important subjects. Dr. Fuse formerly insisted that the construction of pagodas was the most essential problem in the second group, and that the reason for adding it to the first was in order to settle this problem. From this viewpoint he drew the following conclusion: the second group was composed about 100 A. D. in the northwest section of India where the construction of pagodas for the worship of sutras (*caitya*) became prevalent about the middle of the first century A. D. His opinion in a way seems to be reasonable, because the second group advocates the construction of pagodas for the worship of sutras (*caitya*) as against the construction of pagodas for the worship of relics (*stupa*) which is advocated in the first group. Chapter 10 says, “On any spot of the earth when this Dharmaparyāya is expounded, preached, written, studied, or recited in chorus,.....one should build a Tathāgata-shrine (*tathāgatacaitya*),.....but it is not necessary to depose in it relics of the Tathāgata.”⁽⁵⁾ Chapter 16, “Of Piety” (分別功德品), says, “He who, after my complete extinction, shall keep this Dharmaparyāya, read, promulgate, or write it,.....need not build Stūpas of relics,.....And

(4) See Kōgaku Fuse, Hokekyō Seiritsu Shi 法華經成立史 (History of the Formation of the Lotus Sutra), 1934.

(5) A translation by H. Kern, SBE, Vol. XXI, p. 220.

where that young man or young lady of good family.....stands, sits, or walks, there one should make a shrine (*caitya*), dedicated to the Tathāgata.⁽⁶⁾ Chapter 20, "Conception of the Transcendent Power of the Tathāgata" (如來神力品), says, "Wherever on earth,.....this Dharmaparyāya shall be made known, read, written, meditated, expounded, studied or collected into a volume,.....on that spot one should erect a shrine (*caitya*) in dedication to the Tathāgata."⁽⁷⁾ Chapter 11, "Apparition of a Stūpa" (見寶塔品), uses only the word *stūpa*. Dr. Fuse presumed that this shows the complete identification of *stūpa* and *caitya*, that is, the worship of relics and the worship of the dharma.⁽⁸⁾

In the second group, however, the consistent subject from the beginning to the end is the entrusting of the dharma to bodhisattvas which Dr. Fuse also recognized. This subject would appear to indicate that chapters 10 to 20 and Chapter 27, "The Period" (囑累品), constitute one group, and that this group is the central part of the Lotus Sutra. In other words, the entrusting of the dharma to bodhisattvas is the keynote of the second group, and the practice of bodhisattva in accordance with the entrusting of the dharma to bodhisattvas is the central concept of the Lotus Sutra.

II. The Central Concept

In regard to the inference that this central part is the second group, attention should first be paid to the fact that the intermediaries for the Buddha's address to the assembly are bodhisattvas in the second group, while in the first group, except Chapter 1, they are disciples. The intermediaries of Chapter 1 are also bodhisattvas. This shows that Chapter 1 is a later work. Dr. Fuse moved Chapter 17 to the first group, because of its context, but judging from the fact that the intermediary of this chapter is a bodhisattva,⁽⁹⁾ it should be put back into the second group.

Next we should take notice of the fact that the entrusting (*parindanā*,

(6) Ibid., pp. 323-4.

(7) Ibid., p. 367.

(8) Kōgaku Fuse, Hokekyō Seiritsu Shi, p. 287.

(9) Ibid., pp. 107-111.

nikṣepa) of the dharma to bodhisattvas is stressed in the second group, while the announcement (*vyākaraṇa*) of the future enlightenment is emphasized in the first group. *Vyākaraṇa* means the Buddha's assurance or prophecy of enlightenment in the future, and has a close relation to the bodhisattva concept in Mahayana Buddhism. *Parindanā* (or *nikṣepa*), however, has a closer relation to it as a manifestation of the practice of the Mahayana bodhisattva. *Parindanā* (or *nikṣepa*) means the conferring of the mission of propagation after the Buddha's extinction.

The idea of *parindanā* is seen also in Chapter 27. The title of this chapter is *Anuparindanā Parivarto* in Sanskrit, and *Chu-lei P'in* 囑累品 in Chinese. It means the chapter on the entrusting of the dharma or the conferring of the mission. In the extant Sanskrit original and other translations, except the one by Kumārajīva, this chapter is placed last. In the translation by Kumārajīva this chapter is placed next to Chapter 20, "Transcendent Power of the Tathāgata" (如來神力品). Judging from the title and contents of Chapter 27, the translation by Kumārajīva, in which this is Chapter 21, can be said to be the most satisfactory text. Dr. Fuse in his former book put this chapter in the third group, because like the other chapters of the third group it consists only of prose. But if we examine its contents, we can understand that it is not connected with the third group but with the second group. Incidentally Dr. Hendrick Kern, dividing the Lotus Sutra into the ancient text and the later additions, put Chapter 27 in the former part. He says in the introduction of his translation, "The more ancient text of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka contained 21 chapters and an epilogue, i. e. the matter of chaps. i-xx and of chap. xxvii. Dr. Bunzaburō Matsumoto 松本文三郎 expressed the opinion that Chapter 27 is considered to have been originally Chapter 21, because its contents are closely related

(10) See Ryūshō Higata 干潟龍祥, *Jātaka Gaikan* ジャータカ概観 (General View of Jātaka), 1961, p. 22, pp. 34-5.

(11) Op. cit., p. 120.

(12) The Saddharma-puṇḍarīka (The Lotus of the True Law), SBE, Vol. XXI, p. xxii.

with the former part; but after six chapters were added, Chapter 21 was moved to the end. Dr. Fuse in his later treatise changed his opinion and put Chapter 27⁽¹³⁾(21) in the second group.⁽¹⁴⁾

As a conclusion, it may be stated that the Lotus Sutra can be classified into three groups, that the second group (chaps. 10-21) is the central part of the Sutra, and that the practice of bodhisattva as a deputy of the Buddha is the central concept of the second group and, accordingly, of the Lotus Sutra itself.

III. The Apostle-idea

As to the bodhisattva concept, it is worth noting that the Lotus Sutra contains the apostle-idea. *Tathāgata-dūta* and *tathāgata-saṃpreṣita* in Chapter 10 are its equivalent. *Tathāgata-dūta* means “the apostle of the Tathagata” (*nyorai-shi* 如來使), and *tathāgata-saṃpreṣita* means “one sent by the Tathagata” (*nyorai-shoken* 如來所遣). Also in the same chapter the following expressions are found: “sent by the Lord of the World” (*preṣito loka-nāthena*, 佛所使), and “he has been sent by me to the world of men” (*mayā ca so preṣitu mānuṣaṃ bhavam*, 我遣在人中). The word *dūta* is often used in the Āgama sutras, but in this case its meaning is no more than a messenger in the ordinary sense. In No. 411-2 of the Suttanipāṭa there is the word *rāja-dūta*, which means simply a king’s messenger. Another interesting word is *deva-dūta*⁽¹⁵⁾, which is found in the Devadūta-vagga of the Aṅguttara-nikāya and in the Devadūta-sutta of the Majjhima-nikāya. It literally means “the divine messenger” (*tenshi* 天使), but in the above-mentioned chapter and sutra it is used in an allegorical sense to mean birth, age, disease,

(13) Bunzaburō Matsumoto, Būten Hihan Ron 佛典批判論 (Criticism on Buddhist Scriptures), Tetsugaku Zasshi 哲學雜誌, No. 412, June, 1921, p. 206 f.

(14) Kōgaku Fuse, Hokekyō no Seishin to Yakuge no Mondai 法華經の精神と譯解の問題 (True Teachings of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra), Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū 印度學佛教學研究, Vol. V, No. 1, pp. 73-82.

(15) Vol. III, 4, Pāli Text Society, Vol. I, p. 132.

(16) Vol. III, 130, PTS, Vol. III, p. 178.

death, etc. That is to say, the word *deva-dāta* is an allegorical expression of the existential affairs of human life. However, the word *tathāgata-dāta* and the other above-mentioned words in Chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra refer to the active practice of bodhisattva in human life. In this chapter it is stated that one who propagates the dharma in the latter days is regarded as the apostle of the Tathagata who has been sent from the Buddha Land to this world in order to convert people. It is the unique expression of the bodhisattva practice. In conclusion martyrdom with compassion, forbearance, and voidness is advocated.

In Chapter 11, this kind of the bodhisattva practice is also stressed, and the entrusting (*nikṣepa*) of the dharma to bodhisattvas is mentioned. Therefore, the problem of pagoda in this chapter should be re-examined from the viewpoint of the practice of bodhisattva. In Chapter 12, "Exertion" (勸持品), bodhisattvas take the vow of dying as a martyr for the propagation of the Buddha-entrusted-dharma (*nikṣepa*). The significant words in this chapter are "the command of the Lord of the world" (*ājñapti loka-nāthasya*, 佛告勅) and "King of the world, your message (*preṣaṇa tava lokendra*, 世尊使). The idea "the command of the Buddha or Tathagata" is also seen in Chapter 21 (27): "the Tathāgata commands" (*tathāgata ajñāpayati*) and "the commands of Tathāgatas" (*tathāgatānām ajñā*, 世尊勅). Chapter 13, "Peaceful Life" (安樂行品), instructs the way of propagation in the latter days.

In Chapter 14, innumerable bodhisattvas issue from the gaps of the earth, and they prove to be the very apostle of the Buddha upon whom the mission of propagation in the latter days has been confirmed. In Chapter 15, "Duration of Life of the Tathāgata" (如來壽量品), the eternity of the Buddha is clarified through the endless practice of bodhisattva. Chapters 16-18 praise the merit of having faith in the doctrine of the Sutra and its propagation. Chapter 19, "Sadāparibhūta" (常不輕品), introduces the typical practice of bodhidattva. In Chapter 20 and 21 (27), the entrusting of the dharma to such bodhisattvas comes as its climax.

In conclusion, the principal object of the Lotus Sutra is the practice of

bodhisattva and this shows that the Lotus Sutra was formed in the early days of Mahayana Buddhism. For instance, in the Buddha concept of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha remains the object outside us and his eternity is not the ultimate, because it is only the prolongation of time, which Hōun 法雲 has already discussed, while in the Nirvana Sutra the idea of the immanent Buddha within us, that is, the buddha-nature (*buddha-dhatu*) or tathagata-matrix (*tathāgata-garbha*) is developed, and at the same time the concept of ultimate eternity transcending time is introduced. However, from the viewpoint of the bodhisattva practice, such a limitation of the Lotus Sutra may be said to be its strong point.

— 新 刊 紹 介 (8) —

増 谷 文 雄 「アーガマ資料による 佛傳の研究」

- 第 1 章 アーガマ (阿含) 資料について (一)
- 第 2 章 アーガマ (阿含) 資料について (二)
- 第 3 章 佛傳の最初のころみ (一)
- 第 4 章 佛傳の最初のころみ (二)
- 第 5 章 佛傳の最初のころみ (三)
- 第 6 章 惡魔相應の諸經
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- 第 8 章 最初の説法の成立について
- 第 9 章 第三資料群の假説
- 第 10 章 相應部經典 (および雜阿含經) の佛傳資料としての價值について
- 第 11 章 アーガマ (阿含) 資料による佛陀の生涯の輪廓

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