The Importance of Awakening to Oneself as Depicted in the Lotus Sutra

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1. *sarva-sattvāḥ*

1-0. In the Lotus Sutra, Sakyamuni Buddha reveals his attitude of including “all sentient beings (*sarva-sattvāḥ*)” within the collection of those who he thinks about. His attitude is extended to become the attitude of all the buddhas.

1-1. In chapter two, where the buddhas’ fundamental will and main task is expounded, the “way (*mārga*)” to the attainment of the buddhas’ perspective and wisdom is depicted as follows :

tathāgata-jñāna-darśana-mārgāvatāraṇa-hetu-nimittaṃ sattvānāṃ tathāgato ’rhan samyak-saṃbuddho loka utpadyate / {KN40.7 ; WT. 37.13}

(A buddha [*tathāgato ’rhan samyak-saṃbuddha*] appears in the world for the reason and aim of letting sentient beings walk in the way of the wisdom and perspective of a buddha [*tathāgata*])

1-2. The same attitude is expressed in the verse portion using “how (*kathaṃ*)” as follows:

evaṃ ca cintemy ahu Śāriputra

kathaṃ nu evaṃ bhavi sarva-sattvāḥ /

dvātriṃśatī-lakṣaṇa-rūpa-dhāriṇaḥ

svayaṃ-prabhā loka-vidū svayaṃ-bhūḥ //60// {KN47.9 ; WT. 44.7}

(*Śāriputra*, I am thinking like this ;

How, indeed, will all the sentient beings be like the one

Who possesses a figure with the thirty-two characteristics,

Who is radiant on his own, knows the world, and exists by himself)

2. *na vidyate*

2-0. Nevertheless, chapter two, on the other hand, emphasizes the fact that “no one is able to grasp (*na vidyate*)” the wisdom of the buddhas except buddhas themselves.

2-1. References concerning this are spoken from a perspective that is critical of the vari-

ous currensts of Buddhism that preceded the Lotus Sutra, as chapter two says :

*gambhīraṃ - - - durdṛṣaṃ duranubodhaṃ buddha-jñānaṃ tathāgatair arhadbhiḥ samyak-saṃ
buddhaiḥ pratibuddhaṃ durvijñeyaṃ sarva-śrāvaka-pratyekabuddhaiḥ / {KN29.2 ; WT. 28.2}
(Profound... difficult to see, difficult to grasp is the buddhas' wisdom which is awakened by
buddhas, difficult to understand by all of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas)*

2-2. The criticism includes the various *bodhisattva* streams existing at the time when the Sutra was compiled. The Sutra puts emphasis on the establishment within these streams, as chapter two also says in that verse portion :

avivartikā ye bhavi bodhisattvā

teṣāṃ pi cāsmiṃ viṣayo na vidyate //17// {KN32.11 ; WT. 31.11}

(The *bodhisattvas* who do not regress ---, also even by them this sphere is not known)

2-3. The Sutra employs the word and concept “*bodhisattva*” also as the nominal for followers of the Sutra. Nevertheless, the stance that the Sutra takes ultimately differs from that of *bodhisattva* streams existing prior to it.

We can glimpses the Sutra's actual stance in a raference from chapter thirteen :

*punar aparāṃ---bodhisattvo mahāsattvas---idaṃ sūtraṃ dhārayamāṇo--- na cānyeṣāṃ bodhisattva-
yānīyānāṃ pudgalānāṃ avaraṇaṃ bhāṣate nāpavadati nāvasādayati / na cānyeṣāṃ bhikṣu-
bhikṣuṇy-upāsakōpāsikānāṃ śrāvaka-yānīyānāṃ vā pratyekabuddha-yānīyānāṃ vā bodhisattva-
yānīyānāṃ vā kaukrīyam upasaṃharati / dūre yūyaṃ kulaputrā anuttarāyāḥ samyak-
saṃbodher na tasyāṃ yūyaṃ saṃdṛśyadhve /--- na pratibalāṃ taṃ jñānaṃ abhisamboddhum ity
evaṃ na kasya-cid bodhisattva-yānīyasya kaukrīyam upasaṃharati / {KN285.4 ; WT. 243.22}*

(Furthermore,... the *bodhisattva* ... who is possessing this sutra... and must not speak to the faults of persons who belong to other *bodhisattva-yānas*, not slander them or disdain them / and must not make the other monks, nuns, lay-men and lay-women of *śrāvaka-yānas* or *pratyekabuddha-yānas* or *bodhisattva-yānas* lament/ “*Kulaputras! You are away from anuttarā samyak-sambodhi. You are not seen there.... You cannot grasp the wisdom equally,*” must not make any one of the *bodhisattva-yānas* lament by speaking like this)

Here we can see the Sutra's recognition of the existence of different *bodhisattva-yānas*, and, furthermore, the Sutra's crucial insistence concerning *anuttarā samyak-sambodhi* can also be noted. The Sutra paradoxically asserts that even the *bodhisattvas* of other streams are far from the spiritual sphere, and cannot be found in the sphere called *anuttarā samyak-*

sambodhi.

3. *adhimukti*

3-0. Of course, the Sutra refers definitely to the *mārga*.

3-1. In the first part of the verse portion of chapter two, the Sutra says :

anyatra bodhisattvebhyo adhimukṭīya ye sthītāḥ {vs 7 : KN31.63 ; WT. 29.23} (Except the *bodhisattvas* who stand on the *adhimukti* [whose minds incline to seek for what Buddha is])

Through its context, the reference “except the *bodhisattvas* who stand on the *adhimukti*” can be read to say “except the *bodhisattvas* whose minds incline to seek for what Buddha is.” As far as the meaning of the word *adhimukti* is concerned, Edgerton indicates as follows : strong inclination ; attachment ; earnest, zealous application ; good will.

3-2. In chapter two of the Lotus Sutra, Śāriputra requests Sakyamuni Buddha to expound the *dharma* and the *artha* of it, and Sakyamuni gives Śāriputra this command :

yaṃ Śāriputra sugataḥ prabhāsate adhimukti-sampanna bhavāhi tatra / {KN32.15 ; WT31.19}
(Śāriputra! To what the *Sugata* expounds, be perfect in application)

In his dictionary, Edgerton translated this part as “what the Buddha says, be perfect in zealous application to that.” This command takes form as a fundamental requirement to trust and accept what the Buddha is going to teach in the story of the Sutra. Thus, *adhimukti* has conclusive significance in the Sutra’s philosophy.

4. *hīnādhimukti*

4-0. In the context of the Lotus Sutra, the word *adhimukti* is used widely and consistently to refer to the condition of the mind of human beings. Readers should grasp the concept of the word as constantly indicating the condition of the mind itself, rather than indicating different meanings relative to whether or not the objectives are religious.

4-1. The reference from chapter three quoted below supports this premise :

sa ca puruṣas teṣāṃ kumārakāṇāṃ āśaya-jño bhaved adhimuktiṃ ca vijāniyāt /
{KN73.14 ; WT. 71.2}

(And that person has known the wishes of these children, and distinguished their every inclination)

4-2. Instead of the cases from chapter two quoted at 3-1 and 3-2 above, we can find a case of *hīnādhimukti* not indicating a lack of enthusiasm to a Buddhistic approach, but the normal interests of human beings. Quoting a section from the famous story in chapter four, when

he is given to realize that he is the real son of the father and he has been told that all that belongs to the father now belongs to him, the son reflects on his former condition :

āścarya-prāptaś ca bhaven naro 'sau

daridra-bhāvaṃ purimaṃ smaritvā /

hīnādhimuktiṃ ca pituś ca tān guṇāṃ /

labdhvā kuṇḍamaṃ sukhito 'smi adya // {chapter IV vs 35 ; KN115.12 ; WT108.19}

(This man then gets the unprecedented feeling,

Remembering his life of poverty in days past

And his lowly inclination and these virtues of his father.

“Now I and happy to get home!”)

The usage in thought to correlate to that of *adhimukta*, like :

drṣṭvā ca so paṇḍitu taṃ mahā-dhānī

hīnādhimukto ayu bālā durmatih / {chapter IV vs 20 ; KN113.9 ; WT106.4}

(And he, the wise man, the wealthy person, sees him.

“This low-minded fool has little inclination.”)

hīnādhimukto ayu mahya putraḥ

saṃkāra-dhānaṃ śudikaṃ karoti // {chapter IV vs 24 ; KN114.4 ; WT107.1}

(This son of mine who has little inclination

Cleans up the lavatory pots)

4-3. Incidentally, vs 36 of chapter four, following vs 35 quoted above, says :

tathāiva cāsmāka vināyakena

hīnādhimuktiva vijānityāna /

na śrāviṭaṃ buddha bhaviṣyathēti

yūyaṃ kila śrāvaka mahya putrāḥ // {chapter IV vs 36 ; KN115.14 ; WT108.23}

(And like this, we, by the Buddha [*vināyaka*]

Who has recognized our condition of little inclination /

Are not told that we “will be Buddha”

“You *śrāvakas* are indeed my children” //36)

Using the same word, the Sutra switches its theme from the normal interests of human beings to Buddhistic will as the aim. The Sutra’s inherent philosophy puts emphasis on the normal interests of human beings ; the condition of the human mind and the human will itself. Sakyamuni stresses the importance of awakening to oneself by telling us through the Sutra that the definite key for followers is “that your mind inclines to *bodhi*.”

5. *harṣa* / *tṛṣṇā*, *duḥkha*

5-0. So, the *adhimukti* depicted in this Sutra is that which can be the cause of *tṛṣṇā*, *kāma*, and, as a result, *duḥkha*, and which, on the other hand, can be the origin of *harṣa* as the decisive factor for *bodhi*.

5-1. In chapter four, the Sutra says that the worldly things to which human beings are generally drawn become the fundamental causes of *duḥkha* :

*vayaṃ ca bhagavaṃs tisṛbhir duḥkhatābhiḥ sampiditā abhūma /katamābhis tisṛbhir yad uta
duḥkha-duḥkhatayā saṃskāra-duḥkhatayā vipariṇāma-duḥkhatayā ca saṃsāre ca
hīnādhimuktikāḥ / {KN108.17 ; WT. 101.30} (And, *Bhagavat!* we were worried about three
sufferings. What are the three? These are the suffering from suffering, the suffering from change,
and the suffering from separation. And we were inclined to have low aspirations in worldly life)*

5-2. According to the Sutra, *adhimukti* becomes the cause of *duḥkha* because *hīnādhimukti* creates *tṛṣṇā* and *kāma* in one's mind. The Buddha understands the mind of human beings, and his approach is to let the human mind attain *harṣa* through his *upāya*. The Sutra's philosophy can be seen in the following verse from chapter two :

*deśemi dharmam ca bahū-prakāram
adhimuktim adhyāśaya jñātva prāṇinām /
saṃharṣayāmi vividhair upāyair
pratyātmikam jñāna-balam mamāitat //109//
aham pi paśyāmi daridra-sattvān
prajñāya punyehi ca viprahiṇān /
praskanna saṃsāri niruddha durge
magnāḥ punaḥ duḥkha-paramparāsu //110//
tṛṣṇā-vilagnāś camarī 'va vālo
kāmair ihāndhī-kṛta sarva-kālam/
na buddham eṣanti mahā 'nubhāvaṃ
na dharma mārganti dukhānta-gāminam //111//
gaṭīṣu ṣaṭsū parigraddha-cittāḥ
kudṛṣṭi-drṣṭīṣu sthitā akampyāḥ/
duḥkhātu duḥkham prativadamānāḥ
kārunya mahyam balavan tu teṣu //112// {chapter II vv 109~112 ; WT. 52.16 ; KN54.5,
saṃharṣayāmi (vs 109c), praskanda (vs 110c), vilagnāms (vs 111a), ṣaṭsu (vs 112a),*

pariruddhadha (vs 112a), *duḥkkena duḥkhānupradhāvamānāḥ* (vs 112c)}

(And I show many kinds of teachings,

Knowing the inclinations and wishes of the people/

By various ways, I give them joy.

This is my own power of wisdom. //109

I, indeed, look at the sentient beings in poverty

Who are lacking wisdom and virtue/

Being in the flow of worldly affairs, being confined to the worst life,

Being drowned, furthermore, in a succession of sufferings //110

Being attached to thirsts like the tail is to the mountain cow

They always become blinded by desire in this existence /

They don't seek for Buddha, who has great power,

Or the teaching which leads to the end of suffering //111

In the six states of existence, their attached minds

Do not move, standing on the thoughts of false views/

Encountering suffering after suffering.

However, my compassion for them has the power //112)

6. *bodhisattva caryā*

6-0. According to the Sutra's philosophy, the actual *caryā* as a *bodhisattva* is most important. The Sutra looks at the motivation for *caryā* found in the normal condition of our mind and endeavors to direct it to the level of *caryā* as a *bodhisattva*.

6-1. At the beginning of the Lotus Sutra in chapter one, the world of the buddhas is depicted as follows :

ye ca teṣu buddha-kṣetreṣu bodhisattvā mahāsattvā aneka-vividha-śravaṇ'ārambaṇādadhimukti-hetu-kāraṇair upāya-kauśalyair bodhisattva-caryāṃ caranti te 'pi sarve saṅdrśyante sma/ (WT. 4.28 ; KN6.13, *vididhās*..... , cf. Edg. BHS. Dict. p. 110a, ? *āśravaṇa*-. q. v.} (And in

these Buddha-worlds, those *bodhisattvas mahāsattvas* who performed *bodhisattva* acts because of their various different studies, bases, and *adhimukti* [inclinations], all of them were also shown.)

Here we can note the Sutra's basic attitude to find people's motivation for *bodhisattva-caryā* in the *adhimukti* of the human mind, likewise their *śravaṇa* and *ārambaṇa*.

〈Key Words〉 the Lotus Sutra, *adhimukti*, mind

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