PAPERS COMMUNICATED

**67. *Prince Shōtoku's Conception of the Ideal Leadership
in reference to the Doctrine of its Ten Stages.***

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In the preceding papers we have considered how Prince Shōtoku conceived the ideal leadership embodied in the life of a Bodhisattva or Mahāsattva. We have also seen that he followed largely the traditional doctrine of the ten stages of the Bodhisattvaship (Proc. 18, p. 429). This doctrine was derived from the stories of the Buddha's former lives and long training leading up to his attainment of Buddhahood. Naturally, the virtues and the items of conduct exhorted by him were distributed to the several stages of the moral and spiritual training for every genuine Buddhist; and the conception of Bodhisattva, or the being in search of Bodhi, was extended to the faithful followers who aimed at the same consummation through a similar discipline. A corollary to this conception was its contradistinction to those Buddhist doctors or sages who were content with self-training and enlightenment without any desire of leading others to the same attainment together with self. This idea implied that saving others was an integral part of saving self; the earnest desire and ways of inducing fellow beings to the broad communion of Buddhahood were regarded as essential to the Bodhisattva training. The branches of spiritual exercise and moral training for this high aim were gradually formulated and graded according to the progressive scheme of the Bodhisattva life. The result was an arrangement of the ten stages (十地 *Daśa-bhūmi*) of the Bodhisattvaship, preceded by its preliminary steps above the first awakening from the blind following of the instincts.

Apart from its changes and varieties, particularly concerning the preliminary steps, the idea of the ten stages was nearly an established dogma of Chinese Buddhism in the fifth century. Naturally, the Prince accepted this scheme of Buddhist perfection as a whole and made it a basis of his interpretation of many a point in his commentaries on the three scriptures,—this in spite of the fact that no explicit reference to the ten stages is found in the three texts. In this he was a follower of Kumārajīva, who was the translator of the Lotus and the Yuima, together with two other books discussing the *Daśa-bhūmi* (Nanjo, nos. 17 and 105). Though we cannot ascertain whether the Prince was in contact with these two latter, it is evident that he was well acquainted with the doctrine, as shown in his commenting remarks.

Now our interest lies in the way in which he made use of the traditional doctrine in his conception of the ideal leadership, which he elucidated not only for doctrinal purpose but in close touch with actual life. This last point in general has been considered in the

preceding papers and the theme of the present paper is concerned with the bearing of the Daśa-bhūmi idea upon his ideal leadership represented by the appellation Mahāsattva, 大士, the Great Being among men, the sage embodying the Dharma-kāya, 法身, as we shall see later.

In this consideration, the first point to be noted is that the Prince disregards in his remarks the subtle divisions and enumerations taught by his Chinese predecessors. This generalizing tendency is decidedly evident in his treatment of the ten stages. He mentions once or twice the training in the preliminary steps but it is only a casual note of no great importance, while he simply dismisses in other passages those distinctions postulated by some Chinese commentators. He refers to the ten stages at large but never mentions their titles, which are quite important for the Buddhist doctors, except that of the tenth, the Dharma-megha, 法雲. The first six are always summarized altogether, their distinctive marks and ways of training being never mentioned, if not explicitly rejected. The only distinction made is the boundary line between the seventh and eighth, which is generally emphasized by his predecessors, together with some remarks on the highest dignity of the tenth. In these, as in other points, his commentaries show how he endeavours to grasp ideas and ideals in their vital significance, largely discarding doctrinal subtleties and scholastic distinctions.

Now the boundary line taught by his predecessors and adopted by him plays an important part in his thought. The distinction is made to say that those below the seventh stage need effort (有用 *sābhoga*) for their spiritual progress, while those above the eighth do their work without effort (無功用 *anābhoga*)¹⁾. The Prince adopts this but uses another terminology, novice and mature, so to speak, 新發 "of the new start" and 久發 "of long standing," and also, amounting to the same, 墮退 "liable to fall" and 不退 "never to fall." Herein lies the clue to the several points of his ideas as considered in the preceding papers (Proc. 18, p. 161, pp. 429-31), in which he mentions those above the eighth as fully qualified Mahāsattvas. Yet he emphasizes on the other hand the potency of the desire and effort for spiritual perfection even in the lowest, because the tendency for and possibility of it is deeply seated in the Buddha-nature inherent in every one. Thus, in his conception of spiritual progress, continuity is no less significant than the distinctive boundary, which marks only a vital juncture in the continuous ascent of attainment²⁾. Herein he follows the traditional teaching but he does not follow his predecessors who assign specific virtues and practices to each successive stage running in many points to a striking array of decimal divisions. We can say that he accepts the important boundary line for marking the significant juncture but at the same time lays stress upon the continuity of the way and purpose.

1) See *Daśabhūmika*, ed. Rahder, p. 67.

2) This point can be compared with the boiling or freezing point of water, or the breaking of cocoon in the insect life. This remark is associated with Prince's idea of the birth by mutation, to be spoken of below.

Naturally, those who have reached the state "never to fall" can freely exercise their power for saving others without any scrupulosity about themselves. When this aspect is taken alone, the stages below can be regarded as the arena of self-training (自行) and those above as for others' sake (他分行). But we know that the Prince ever insists on the inseparability of these two aspects of Bodhisattvaship (Proc. 18, p. 159), and the distinction along this line made by others¹⁾ is used by him in a broad sense, to give a large marking along the long road of training.

Seeing in this light the larger distinction of the spiritual progress adopted by the Prince, we can now proceed to his conception of the higher stages. He characterizes the eighth stage as the one where the *Dharmakāya* 法身 is fully grasped or embodied, in other words, the dharmatā, the essential nature of Buddhahood, is realized. In technical terminology, one attains the anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti 不起法忍, i. e. endurance in the law of non-growth (and non-perishing). This means, to speak in a concrete way, mastery over birth and death and therefore the ability to take any form of living being at any moment. The Mahāsattva can adopt freely any existence, whether man or beast, even devil, as he deems necessary or desirable for inducing the temporary fellow beings to the realization of the Buddha-nature. This means, on the other hand, that those below the sixth stage are still controlled in their life by the bondages of karma, while those on the seventh stage occupy an intermediary position, wavering between the two. The life controlled by karma is called 分段, "in bound sequence," while the voluntary birth and death 變易, "by mutation," mutation through free will, therefore also called 意生 "birth by will."

This free adoption of birth and death means a full liberation from all bondages conditioned by time, space, causation. Therein is realized the one continuity of the perfect attainment with the long, arduous way of training, the oneness of all lives and disciplines passed through during the long pilgrimage, the intrinsic tie connecting the potential capacity of the vow-taking (發願 *praṇidhāna*) with the actual realization of the prophetic assurance (授記 *vyākaraṇa*) given by the Master at the outset²⁾ Similarly, the oneness of thought and act, the presence of all virtues in one thought, the mutual immanence of all good, all is here realized; the free adoption of birth is only an aspect of the freedom of the ways and methods of saving others (Proc. 19, p. 1) and the life thereof is kept intact from the evils and vices of

1) Chitsan 吉藏 is one of them, referred to in Proc. 18, p. 430. He applies the titles Bodhisattva and Mahāsattva distinctively to each of the two larger classes. In some places the Prince designates those above the eighth stage as Mahāsattva, though not in a definite contradistinction to the Bodhisattvas of the lower stages. On the other hand he applies in several passages the appellation Mahāsattva to Bodhisattva in general.

2) The continuity of the *praṇidhāna* and *vyākaraṇa* means, expressed in terms of time, the oneness of the present and future. Similarly, the idea of *nirmita*, to be spoken of below, implies the oneness of the present and past, the past attainment of a Mahāsattva continuing to work in the present task of saving others.

the fellow beings, among whom a Mahāsattva would live and work. In short a complete freedom in the acts of perfecting self together with saving others.

The Prince adduces the persons of the Queen Shōman and the Elder Yuima as the exemplary instances of the Mahāsattva above the eighth stage (Proc. 18, pp. 157-58), whereby we can well imagine how he was in communion with these saints, whether in pious adoration or in moral emulation. Besides, the Lotus contains the cases of several Mahāsattvas who freely manifest themselves in various forms of existence for saving others and showing models for those who would work for the perpetuation of the truth. The Lotus also represents some of the Buddha's disciples, śrāvakas, as disguised manifestations of Bodhisattvas¹⁾. The Prince extends the same idea to some figures told in the two other books, and his comments upon the point naturally follow the traditional doctrine of voluntary manifestation. But it is certain that he looks at these manifestations not as specific instances remote from us, if not to say mere mythical beings, but as model cases in close touch with us, perhaps both as objects of adoration and sources of inspiration.

The appearance of a Mahāsattva in an inferior form of existence is an adaptive manifestation (應化 *nirmīta*) for the sake of the fellow beings of lower capacities, as it is the case with the realms established for them (Proc. 19, pp. 2-3). That is too the case with the human manifestation of Buddha himself, but there is another category of his manifestation called 分身 *vigraha*. We have rendered this term simply as "a manifestation" in the case of the Queen Shōman (Proc. 19, p. 157). In this case the term conveys nothing else than the manifestation as described above, while in other cases the term *vigraha* has an association of temporary apparition, somewhat ephemeral. In fact, no definite notion of *vigraha* is at hand anywhere, but it is used to characterize eminent persons like the queen and the sage elder, though rather vaguely. The Prince uses the term side by side with *nirmīta* as if they were almost equivalents, simply saying this or that.

Legend says that he sat from time to time in his chapel in worship and meditation before a statue of Kannon (Avalokiteśvara), one of the saints in the Lotus. The statue preserved there today is certainly of his time and makes us imagine how he faced in piety that statue of dreamy expression and slender stature covered by hovering robes. We may ask him whether he regarded the saint as a *nirmīta* or a *vigraha*; he would give no answer but a mysterious smile like the statue itself.

However, this is not to say that he was a mere visionary. On the contrary, his conception of the ideal leadership was not a mere vision nor pious imagination, but implied an earnest thought of life in general, and of his spiritual and political leadership in particular. This can be gathered from what we have seen in the preceding papers concerning his Constitution in seventeen articles, his notions of truth

1) See, for the case of Pūrṇa, S. B. E. 21, pp. 196-97.

and expediency, his ideas of thought and act, and finally his aim of establishing an ideal Land of Purity. The traditional idea of the Bodhisattvaship was thus adopted by the Prince and made an inspiring guide in his active life.

Before concluding we have to note a special category of the Bodhisattvas who are neither those on the ten stages nor *vigraha*. They are the Bodhisattvas who issue out of the depths of earth, of whom we have spoken in a preceding paper (Proc. 19, p. 4). The Prince interpretes their appearance to amount to evidencing the eternal life of Buddha, and what we are concerned here is the peculiar nature of these beings. Nothing is mentioned of their vow-taking, nor their training, nor assurance of their attainment of Buddhahood, i. e. they are entirely out of the pale of the regular Bodhisattvaship. They belong for ever to Buddha but work somewhat as separate existences. In this respect we can hardly distinguish them from *vigraha*, but they are not called so. In short they make up a special category named 地涌 *samudgama* Bodhisattva¹⁾.

Beside this question of their nature, the Prince's commentary emphasizes that they are of this world, the *Sahā* world centered in the Vulture Peak, the paradise of the Buddha Śākyamuni, in contradistinction to the Buddha-lands of other Buddhas (Proc. 19, p. 4). The Prince's comment does not go further than these general observations, but we have to note that the idea was later developed by Dengyō to the aspiration that the Vulture Peak is to be realized in this country (cf. Proc. 18, pp. 33-34) and further by Nichiren to the conviction that the Bodhisattvas issuing out of the earth are or ought to be ourselves, all of us²⁾. We can say that the Mahāsattva ideal of the Prince had opened way to these later developments of Japanese Buddhism.

1) See S. B. E. 21, p. 281 f.

2) See Anesaki, Nichiren, the Buddhist Prophet, p. 63. In fact Nichiren identified himself with Viśiṣṭacāritra, one of their four leaders. These four leaders are sometimes interpreted to represent the four elements, earth, water, fire, air; they may be counterparts of the Christian archangels.