PAPERS COMMUNICATED

**39. *The Metaphysical Conception of Dharma
as the Basis of Prince Shōtoku's
Mahāsattva Ideal.***

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In the preceding papers on Prince Shōtoku we have pointed out that the general trend of his thought consists not so much in metaphysical speculation as the close connection between life and thought. This latter aspect, moreover, has an important bearing not only upon the personal life of the spiritual leader, Mahāsattva 大士 摩訶薩, but upon his act of leading fellow beings up to the same consummation of Buddhist perfection, culminating in the establishment of a Buddha-land (Proc. 19, pp. 2-3). Self-perfection is never complete without perfecting others together with self and founding a community of the enlightened souls, which means the realization of the Buddha-nature in all and everyone. This union of thought and act, of enlightening self and saving others, is emphasized in the Prince's writings and characterizes his statesmanship, which is an equivalent of Mahāsattva-ship on his part. However, we have to note, on the other hand, that all his ideas and ideals are based upon the Buddhist conception of Dharma which signifies a metaphysical interpretation of being and becoming. This has been referred, to in the remarks on the congruence of the person and dharma (Proc. 18, p. 156), on the metaphysical identity of the citta (Proc. 18, p. 429). Here we have to elucidate the meaning of dharma as the basis of the Prince's conception of the world and life.

The term *Dharma* 法 has a comprehensive connotation. It is, first of all, law or rule, the law governing the being of a thing and ruling its change and destiny, therefore the order of things and beings. Thus it means also things, particularly when used in plural, *dharmās* 諸法, not things as mere existences but their proper structure and concatenation working according to the law, in short, their nature, essential nature. As expressing the true nature of an existence or change, dharma means reality or truth. As a truth realized and comprehended by a true knower or sage well versed in the real nature of things, dharma means knowledge, wisdom, also idea nearly in the Platonic sense; as a truth revealed by a knower, it means teaching, instruction, and therefore norm, standard. A point to be well grasped is that dharma is one notion covering all these aspects and variations. Naturally emphasis varies according to the cases and contexts, yet the different aspects are never isolated but always and intrinsically connected with each other. Thus in the following statements the term

shall not be given in translation for every case but in pointing out its specific connotation in its particular use.¹⁾

Now, the cardinal point in the personality of a Mahāsattva is its congruence with the dharma of its being 人法相即 (Proc. 18, p. 156). This presupposes a certain contrast between the two, yet it implies at the same time the ultimate identity, a unity of the basis as well as of the consummation. Analogy can be drawn from the epistemological consideration that the right relationship between the subject and object of cognition amounts to a perfect union of the two, though epistemology does not play much part in the Prince's writings.

The Mahāsattva carries on his life and work of perfecting self together with others in embodying in his life the dharma of his being, his fundamental nature as well as his final destiny, which is made possible by realizing all acts even in one thought (一念備修萬行, Proc. 18, pp. 430 f). This is due to the "congruence between dharmās" 法々相即, i. e. the inherent basic connections between dharmās, the things, conditions, actions, existing and working according to their respective laws and orders. Further, this is possible because of the ultimate oneness of law and being, which is designated as *Dharmatā* or Dharma-nature 法性 (Proc. 18, p. 156). Things and conditions, basis and consummation, life and work, all these dharmās are interrelated because of their basic unity. This unity is realized in the focus, so to speak, of the Mahāsattva's citta, where all is illuminated and is thereby directed towards the realization of Buddha-nature by all. This is the working of the "enfolding" 攝受; the same is otherwise designated as the "one Road" 一乘 or all-embracing way²⁾ of Buddhahood, which the Prince explains as amounting to the oneness of cause and effect, of basis and consummation 一因一果, which means the all-pervading working of the same dharmatā³⁾.

The realization of this oneness, of the fundamental dharma-nature, on the part of the Mahāsattva, can be illustrated by contrasting it to the life of the common mortal (comp. Proc. 18, p. 159). The ordinary man lives in being guided chiefly by the instincts and desires, his mind is attracted to and distracted by external dharmās, things and conditions; therefore the intrinsic connections between these do not enter his ken. Rational knowledge goes one step further and comprehends the orderly connections between things within a certain limit, whether a sphere of practical interests or the domain of a specific science (comp. Proc. 18, p. 431). On the other hand, the soul of the secluded sage is contented

1) For this point and the present paper in general see: Anesaki, *Nichiren, the Buddhist Prophet* (Harvard, 1916), pp. 137-56.

2) The Lotus: S. B. E. 21, p. 53, verse 101-2; Sanskrit text, verse 102-3, ed. Kern-Nanjio, p. 53; ed. Wogihara, p. 51.

3) The term 因果 literally means causation but not mere sequence connected by it. The Prince distinguishes four categories: 習因 cumulative, 報因 compensative, 相似因 corresponding, and 相資因 reciprocal. But when he says of "one cause and one effect" as regards the attainment of Buddhahood, it means one continuity of cause and effect, or oneness of "basis and consummation," as is illustrated by his dictum 花實俱成, the "simultaneous blooming and fruition," as understood to be the case with lotus flower and fruit or bean,

within his own spiritual vision and therefore isolated from the dharmās of the wide world, of other beings. His life embodies the congruence of his person and his specific, exclusive dharma structure, but misses the intrinsic connections existing between dharmās, being blind to the universal basis of the dharma-nature.

In contrast to these, the life of the Mahāsattva embodies the law of his being and realizes the aim of his perfection. His soul penetrates into the depth of the universal dharmatā, and his life covers the whole extent of being and becoming, of a dharma-dhātu 法界. This is the state where the soul and life are in union, where the spirit and work are one. The “enfolding” 攝受, which is the life work of a Mahāsattva and the chief theme of the Shōman-gyō, means both enfolding the righteous law and embracing others into the same, which amount to the same on account of the oneness of the soul and work (comp. Proc. 18, p. 429). The Prince comments upon this point as follows :

能攝之心無異所攝萬行正法, ... 心法一體更無二相 (勝 24 b).

The citta 心 which enfolds the righteous law is not otherwise than the righteous law of all acts which is enfolding. .... The Mahāsattva above the eighth stage has already attained the Dharmakāya 法身 (the being of dharma), whereby the righteous law of all acts is identified with his soul (citta), and the soul is identified with the righteous law of all acts. The soul and the dharma are one, there is no differentiating mark in either.

Now the perfection of this state is indeed the position of the Tathāgata 如來⁴⁾, who is the perfect and ultimate embodiment of the Dharmakāya 法身, the “body” or personality in which the fundamental Dharmatā is fully realized. The knowledge or wisdom of the Tathāgata is the theme of the second chapter of the Lotus, and the Prince’s commentaries are most copious on this chapter. In the Prince’s words, the Tathāgata comprehends all dharmās and penetrates into the innermost dharmatā; his wisdom exhausts all the secrets of cosmic existence, which are not fully realized even by the highest Mahāsattva. In short the Tathāgata’s soul is identical with the essential nature of all, *Dharma-svabhāva* 諸法實相⁵⁾, or reality in the full sense, the reality of dharmatā revealed in the illumination of the Buddha-soul. It is in and through this illumination that all diverse sorts of good culminate in the realization of the Buddha-nature; that the “congruence” and “enfolding” as stated above make up “one cause and one effect,” are unified in the One Road, *Ekayāna* 一乘, of the attainment of Buddhahood by all.

This theme of *Ekayāna* as expounded in the Lotus has its counterpart in the chapter on *Advaita* 不二, Non-duality, in the Yuima. This is a *via negativa* of illumination and amounts to say that every thesis is relative to its antithesis, and consequently the ultimate meaning of

4) See Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, art. *Tathāgata*; Anessaki, *Katam Karanīyam*, pp. 240-50.

5) See S. B. E. 21, p. 47, verse 58; Sanskrit text, verse 59 (Kern-Nanjio, p. 47; Wogihara p. 44). Another passage analyzing reality into categories shows a certain discrepancy between the Chinese version and the Sanskrit text (S. B. E., p. 32), though amounting to the same in the general effect.

either lies in neither alone but beyond either, that is, in a higher synthesis. The chapter arrays a whole series of contrasts, life and death, pure and stained, made and unmade, ego and non-ego, and the dialogues end in the final silence, *mauna* 默, of the elder sage himself (Proc. 18, p. 158). The meaning of this *mauna* can be more or less caught in the Prince's introductory words to the chapter. There he says :—

菩薩觀在有不失空、在空成萬化 ..... (維下末 55 a).

The insight of the Bodhisattva penetrates into reality 有 but never loses sight of vacuity 空; abiding in vacuity he accomplishes all works. (For him) vacuity means reality, and reality means vacuity. He does not stay one-sidedly in either being 有 or non-being 無, but synthesizes both altogether in non-duality, *advaita*.

The same is expressed in a positive manner in the Prince's comments on the verse in praise of Buddha at the opening of the Shōman. There the Sanskrit word *jñeyam* 爾炎 is used and the commentary says :

爾炎梁言智母, 智母謂真諦 ..... (勝 8 a).

Jñeyam means, rendered into Chinese, the Mother of Wisdom, which has as its object the ultimate truth, *tattva* 真諦; vacuity is the source where wisdom originates, therefore it is called mother. Since vacuity is unmade, wisdom originating therein is unfettered..... (The same wisdom) encloses all the dharmās; in illuminating all the varieties of reality (beings and existences) it encloses all the objects.

To the similar effect runs a passage in the fifteenth chapter of the Lotus. There the ways of instruction and the theses of preaching adopted by Buddha are elucidated as aiming at the final liquidation of all seeming contradictions. The triple world of the common mortals and celestial beings is full of contradictions, but the Tathāgata sees it not as they see it. He sees it "as it really is", *yathābhūtam* 如實, i. e. according to the ultimate reality of the dharma-svabhāva⁶. The Prince's comments are lucid in words and incisive in style, perhaps more so than in other passages. This may show the depth of his insight into the truth of the ultimate synthesis of contradictories, the unity of all the dharmās in the dharmatā as illuminated in the wisdom of the Tathāgata.

Thus we see that the Mahāsattva ideal as conceived by Prince Shōtoku is based upon the Buddhist metaphysical thought centering in the conception of dharma and dharmatā. And the important point is that dharma is never conceived apart from the person of the Tathāgata, who is the full embodiment of dharmatā. On the other hand we have seen that the universal dharmatā fuses all contradictions, and is beyond this and that, life and death. Then a consequence should be that Tathāgata's "life measure," *āyuspramāṇa* 壽量, is naturally beyond the measures of birth and death. This central theme of the Lotus as propounded particularly in its fifteenth chapter lies in the background of all the points in the Prince's idea of the Mahāsattva-ship. The question of the "life-measure" of the Tathāgata, which makes up the pivot of the three scriptures as comprehended by the Prince, will be further pursued later on.

6) S. B. E. 21, p. 302; Sanskrit text, Kern-Nanjio, p. 318, Wogihara. p. 271.